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BJP pits Suvendu against Didi

Bharati Ghosh, pacer Ashok Dinda in BJP list of 57 candidates

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The high-profile Nandigram Assembly seat will see a titanic clash in the West Bengal polls with the BJP fielding Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's former close aide Suvendu Adhikari against her. The BJP on Saturday released the first list of its 57 candidates for the first two phases of Bengal Assembly elections starting from March 27.

The list released a day ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Brigade rally in Kolkata carries the names of the party's star campaigner Suvendu Adhikari who will contest from the high-profile seat of Nandigram against Mamata Banerjee.

The other two notable names on the list are former India pacer Ashok Dinda, who will contest from Moyna in East Midnapore, and former IPS officer Bharati Ghosh, who will take on another retired IPS officer Humayun Kabir from Debra Assembly seat in West Midnapore.

The saffron outfit announced candidates for all but three of the 60 seats which will go to polls in the first two of the eight-phase elections that will start from March 27 and end on April 27. One seat of Bagmundi in Purulia district has been left for alliance partner AJSU.

Adhikari who reached Nandigram from Delhi — to a rousing welcome by party supporters shouting Jai Shri Ram slogans — hours before the list was published by the party top brass in the national Capital, attacked the Chief Minister for remembering Nandigram during the elections time only.

"She is a rank outsider here and I am the Bhumiputra (son of the soil)… she remembers Nandigram that catapulted her to power in 2011 only when the polls are round the corner… the people of Nandigram have decided to teach her a lesson," said Adhikari, who has already vowed to defeat the Chief Minister by half-a-lakh votes.

Reacting to his statements, senior TMC leader Saugato Roy said, "The Trinamool does not want to talk about traitors who have stabbed in the back of Mamata Banerjee. The people will give him a befitting reply."

Adhikari, a former MP and State Minister left the TMC in December last year. He had been the Man Friday of the Bengal Chief Minister handling the party organisational affairs in about a dozen districts before he left the party.

Mamata had released the list of Trinamool Congress candidates on Friday. The TMC released the list for all the 291 seats and left three seats for alliance partner Gorkha Janmukti Morcha. The Left too had released its list of candidates for the first two phases on Friday.

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Trivedi joins BJP; right man in right party now: Nadda

Former Union Minister Dinesh Trivedi joins BJP in the presence of the party president JP Nadda in New Delhi on Saturday PTI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the West Bengal polls, former Railway Minister and Trinamool Congress Member of Parliament Dinesh Trivedi on Saturday joined the BJP.

BJP president JP Nadda welcomed him into the party's fold claiming that Trivedi crossed over not on account of "opportunism" but for the "ideological reasons".

The 70-year-old Trivedi maintained that he has switched sides to "serve the country better".

"This was the golden moment I had been waiting for," Trivedi said after joining the BJP at party headquarters here in the presence of Nadda and Union Minister Piyush Goyal.

Trivedi resigned his Rajya Sabha and Trinamool membership on February 12, saying he felt "suffocated" because of the violence in West Bengal and his inability to do anything about it.Alluding to 'parivar' in West Bengal, he said after joining the BJP he felt being with the "janta parivar".

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Centre rushes teams to resurgent Maha, Punjab

Return to Covid test, track, treat, Health Ministry tells States, UTs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Elderly people wait to get vaccinated against Covid-19 at Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation hospital at Vashi, Navi Mumbai on Saturday PTI

The Centre has rushed high-level multi-disciplinary public health teams to Maharashtra and Punjab in view of the increase in the number of daily Covid-19 cases being reported by these States. It has also asked high-case load States and Union Territories like Maharashtra and Gujarat to continue with the strategy of "test, track and treat" that had yielded rich dividends at the height of the pandemic.

The States have been asked to collaborate with private hospitals to open up vaccination time-table for a minimum of 15 days and a maximum of 28 days at a time.

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan and NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr Vinod Paul on Saturday interacted with health secretaries and MDs of Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi and Chandigarh, which have reported increased number of Covid cases in the last few days.

These States and UTs were urged to return to fundamentals of "Test, Track and Treat," said the Ministry in a statement here.

They have also been asked to increase the share of RT-PCR tests in districts dependent on high levels of antigen testing, refocus on surveillance and stringent containment of those areas in selected districts that are seeing a cluster of cases. They will be required to carry out an average close contact tracing of a minimum of 20 persons per positive case.

The senior health officials reviewed the ongoing public health measures of surveillance, containment and management of Covid cases. The Ministry said that nine districts in Delhi, 15 in Haryana, 10 in Andhra Pradesh, 10 in Odisha, nine in Himachal Pradesh, seven in Uttarakhand, two in Goa, one in Chandigarh continue to be of concern as these districts are seeing a decrease in total tests being conducted, low share of RT-PCR tests, increase in weekly positivity and low number of contact tracing of the Covid positive cases.

"These together can pose high risk of transmission to the neighbouring States and UTs. A granular analysis of the coronovirus response in the districts was shared with the States and UTs for further action," said the Ministry.

"Accelerate vaccination for priority population groups in districts reporting higher cases. Make optimal use of the available vaccine doses and focus on critical districts," the Ministry said.

Adopt world-class systems, PM exhorts defence forces

Modi addresses Combined Commanders' meet in Guj

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits an exhibition of innovations by our armed forces during Combined Commanders' Conference at Kevadia, in Narmada district PTI

Urging the defence forces to keep pace with rapid advancements in war fighting capabilities all over world, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday asked them to "rid themselves of legacy systems and practices that have outlived their utility and relevance."

Making this observation while addressing the Combined Commanders' Conference in Kevadia, Gujarat, Modi also conveyed his appreciation for the "resolute dedication" shown by the armed forces over the past year in the context of the corona pandemic and the challenging situation on the northern border with China.

He stressed the importance of enhancing indigenisation in the national security system, not just in sourcing equipment and weapons but also in the doctrines, procedures and customs practised in the armed forces, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

Modi was briefed by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) about the discussions during this year's conference, the statement said. He particularly appreciated the inclusion of Junior Commissioned Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers this year.

Incidentally, this was the first time that personnel below officer rank were part of the high-level meeting held annually. The jawans shared their views on operational matters with the top military leadership besides the Prime Minister.

Emphasising the need for planning in both military and civilian parts of the National security architecture, Modi also called for a "holistic approach, focused on breaking down civil-military silos and on expediting the speed of decision making."

Turn on Page 4

Remove Modi's photo from jab certificates in poll-bound States: EC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the run-up to Assembly elections in four States and a Union Territory, the Election Commission (EC) has asked the Centre to remove Prime Minister Narendra Modi's picture from coronavirus vaccination certificates being offered to beneficiaries in these States.

The EC directive came after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress registered a complaint saying that it violates the Model Code of Conduct.

In its letter to the Health Ministry, the EC referred to certain provisions of the Model Code related to the use of advertisement at the cost of the public exchequer. The direction to the Ministry does not mention Prime Minister Narendra Modi's name but says the Ministry has to follow the Model Code of Conduct in letter and spirit. The Government may have used filters to hide the PM's picture from the certificate, which could take some time for the Ministry to fully implement these directions on the certificates given to those who take the Covid-19 vaccine in poll-bound West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry.

The poll body had first asked the Chief Electoral Officer of West Bengal for a report on why Modi's photo was being used on vaccination certificates generated through the Co-WIN platform. The CEO responded by informing the poll panel that the vaccination drive was a Central scheme. The panel then took up the matter with the Health Ministry and sought its response on the "factual position" on the use of the photographs. In its reply, the Ministry said the vaccination drive was an ongoing Government initiative that had started much before the Model Code of Conduct came into force.

The Mamata Banerjee-led party had approached the poll panel this week, citing violation of the model code as PM Modi's image reflected on vaccination certificates generated through the Co-Win platform.

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Mental health problems in 20% Covid survivors: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

One in every five Covid-19 survivors are showing symptoms including fatigue, cognitive problems and a range of psychiatric problems, a research review led by Oxford Brookes University has noted. It also painted a gloomy picture for the future, warning that more number of people will be affected by neuropsychiatric and cognitive complications.

The study has come close on the heels of similar observation from the World Health Organization (WHO) officials who recently noted that the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic has caused more "mass trauma" than World War II.

The observation hold importance in the context of India where more number of people with mental health disorder could pose further burden on the already patchy mental health care system. One in seven people or a total of 197.3 million people live with mental illness in India, according to the 2019 Global Burden of Disease Study.

Psychologists at Oxford Brookes University and a psychiatrist from Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, had evaluated published research papers in order to understand more about the possible effects of the SARS-COV-2 infection on the brain, and the extent people can expect to experience short and long-term mental health issues. The study found that in the short-term, a wide range of neuropsychiatric problems were reported. In one examined study, 95 per cent of clinically stable Covid-19 patients had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other studies found between 17-42 per cent of patients experienced affective disorders, such as depression.

The main short-term cognitive problems were found to be impaired attention (reported by 45 per cent patients) and impaired memory (between 13-28 per cent of patients) while in the long-term, neuropsychiatric problems were mostly affective disorders and fatigue, as well as impaired attention (reported by 44 per cent of patients) and memory (reported between 28-50 per cent of patients).

Dr Sanjay Kumar, senior lecturer in Psychology at Oxford Brookes University said: "Understanding the neuropsychiatric and cognitive consequences of Covid-19 is important as millions of people have been affected by the virus, and many cases go undetected. "These conditions affect people's capacity to work effectively, drive, manage finances, make informed decisions and participate in daily family activities."If even just a fraction of patients experience neuropsychiatric complications, the impact on public health services could be significant."

Academics say that there is likely to be an increase in patients with psychiatric and cognitive problems who were otherwise healthy prior to COVID-19 infection.

"Detailed cognitive evaluation and robust monitoring of patients should be considered in order to detect new neurological cases," Dr Kumar continued adding that "This will also enable health care providers to plan adequate health care and resources, and improve the quality of life for many Covid-19 survivors.

Co-author Dr Tina Malhotra, Consultant Psychiatrist working in Oxford

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CAPSULE

PAK PM IMRAN KHAN WINS TRUST VOTE

Islamabad: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday comfortably won a trust vote in the National Assembly amid Opposition boycott, bolstering his Government's position after an embarrassing defeat in this week's Senate elections.

NOTED KANNADA POET NSL BHATTA NO MORE

Bengaluru: Noted Kannada poet, critic and translator NS Lakshminarayana Bhatta died here early on Saturday. He was 84 and was suffering from age related ailments.

RAPE VICTIM SET ABLAZE DIES OF BURNS IN JAIPUR

Jaipur: A 30-year-old rape victim who was allegedly set on fire at her home in Rajasthan's Hanumangarh succumbed to her burn injuries at Jaipur's SMS Hospital.

Farmer block KMP to mark 100th protest day

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Farmers during Kisan Ekta Morcha protest at KMP Expressway near Kundli in Haryana on Saturday PTI

Farmers protesting the Centre's three farm laws on Saturday blocked the six-lane Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway at some places in Haryana to mark the completion of 100 days of their agitation at the Delhi borders.

The road blockade began at 11 am and continued till 4 pm. Farmers holding black flags and wearing black armbands and some women protesters with black "dupattas" shouted slogans against the BJP-led Government for not acceding to their demands.

Protesters in Sonipat and Jhajjar districts and some other places brought their tractor-trolleys and other vehicles and parked them in the middle of the KMP Expressway in some stretches. The Haryana Police had made arrangements for traffic diversions and deployed adequate personnel.

The call for blocking the expressway was given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of protesting farmer unions which is spearheading the agitation against the legislations.

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150 Rohingyas detained in J&K for illegal stay

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In a major crackdown on illegal immigrants staying in Jammu & Kashmir more than 150 Rohingyas have been detained at a holding centre in Sub Jail Hiranagar at the end of the verification process of their travel documents.

According to official sources during the special drive conducted at the Maulana Azad stadium in Jammu on Saturday police authorities verified travel documents and collected biometrics of large numbers of illegal immigrants including Rohingyas from Myanmar.

During the verification process the stadium was kept out of bounds for local media persons and none were permitted to enter the premises.

Spinners demolish England

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Indian cricket team captain Virat Kohli holds the torphy after defeating England during the third day's play of the 4th and last test match of the series between India and England, at Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Saturday PTI

Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin once again made a mockery of an eternally confused English batting line-up as India cantered into the inaugural World Test Championship final with a resounding innings and 25 run victory on the third afternoon of the fourth and final Test here on Saturday.

All India needed was a draw to book a Lord's date in June with Kane Williamson's New Zealand but Patel (24-6-48-5), in company of Ashwin (22.5-4-47-5), literally blew England away in a session and half for a paltry 135 in 54.5 overs to complete a 3-1 rout, ensuring that the Anthony De Mello Trophy will stay at the Cricket Centre in Mumbai.

Related reports on P12

Yogi dedicates 10 power sub-stations

...lays foundation stones of 17

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday dedicated to the people 10 power transmission sub-stations and laid the foundation stones of 17 sub-stations via virtual mode.

The total cost of the 10 sub-stations dedicated to the people on Saturday is Rs 572 crore while the rest of the 17 sub-stations are estimated to cost Rs 1,347 crore. The new sub-stations dedicated are in Bulandshahr, Muzaffarnagar, Ayodhya, Chitrakoot, Sitapur, Mirzapur, Lucknow, Varanasi, Fatehpur and Gonda. The new transmission sub-stations will considerably strengthen the overall power transmission and the power grid network in the state and handle the load of spurt in demand for electricity during summers that is expected to cross 27,000 megawatts.

Out of the sub-stations of which the chief minister laid the foundation stones, 10 are of 220 kV capacities and seven of 132 kV capacities. These sub-stations will come up in Lucknow, Jhansi, Farrukhabad, Agra, Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur, Meerut, Maharajganj, Bhadohi, Firozabad, Basti, Banda, Baghpat and Kushinagar.

Yogi Adityanath said the state government was working to meet the aspirations of the people and it was the result of the government's commitment that the UP Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL) was able to supply uninterrupted power to the consumers in all parts of the state.

Congratulating the UPPCL while inaugurating the sub-stations, Yogi Adityanath said that it had succeeded in strengthening the trust of the common man by promoting a better work culture. "The power corporation has achieved a big milestone in the state in ensuring power supply amid the lockdown," he said.

"The power corporation has worked towards making arrangements for distribution of electricity within the state to every citizen, supply of electricity to district headquarters for 23- 24 hours, for 20-21 hours to tehsil headquarters, for 17-18 hours to rural areas and 20-21 hours to Bundelkhand region as well," he added.

The chief minister said that electricity was being provided to farmers of the state, and it had helped reduce the cost of farming and improve productivity. Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya and UP Power Minister Shrikant Sharma were present at the dedication function.

Yogi Adityanath said the present power transmission capacity available with the UP Power Transmission Corporation was 25,000 MW and there had been 53 per cent addition of fresh capacity of power transmission in the last four years. He said power transmission projects worth Rs 1,000 crore were being implemented on PPP mode. He said the state government had in principle taken a decision for implementation of all power transmission power projects of capacity of 400 KV and above. The chief minister on this occasion held virtual dialogue with the elected people's representatives and reminded them that the consumers should pay their power bills on time to ensure uninterrupted power supply.

'Ramayana, Mahabharata give us the best life lessons'

Lucknow (PNS): The stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata not only give us the best life lessons but also tell us a lot about the expansion of Indian boundaries. These stories of our epic Hindu literature help us envision a better India, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said during the release of the Global Encyclopedia of Ramayana on Saturday.

Stating that historical facts could not be denied, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said, "Pakistan was a part of India before 1947 and Maryada Purushottam Lord Shree Ram had extended the boundaries of India during his time by making his brother's son the ruler of Pakistan." He added that still there were some people who raised questions on the existence of Shree Ram in Ayodhya.

On the pious occasion of Janaki Navami on Saturday, Yogi Adityanath released the first edition of the Global Encyclopedia of Ramayana.

Launching the encyclopedia as an e-book prepared by the Ayodhya Research Institute, the chief minister said that the construction of a grand Ram Mandir at Ayodhya made this launch of the Global Encyclopedia of Ramayana more special. He said, "This encyclopedia will motivate us to visit Ayodhya as it will introduce you all to the untouched aspects of science and spirituality."

The chief minister urged the people who had reverence for Ramayana, Shree Ram and India to actively participate in the launch of the global encyclopedia.

"There are seven holy cities of Sapta Puri which are considered as the holiest Hindu teerths, out of which Ayodhya, Mathura, and Kashi are within Uttar Pradesh. It should be our endeavour to have Ramlila staged all over the world," the chief minister said.

He said that the tradition of Indian saints represented the culture of the nation.

"Even the opponents could not speak anything negative about Prayagraj Kumbh of 2019," the chief minister said, adding that after his government assumed power, Kumbh exhibited a new standard of India's culture, cleanliness, orderliness and security and the entire world including the UNESCO had to say that Kumbh was a intangible heritage of humanity of the world.

"Earlier, people used to ignore taking a holy dip during the Kumbh Mela. However, as soon as our government assumed power, we took every possible measure to ensure the cleanliness of the rivers and made complete arrangements for the convenience of the devotees," he said.

Hitting out at the opposition parties, Yogi Adityanath said people who were misleading the public for their own profit and betraying the country would not be spared. "People who are spreading false propaganda about India for a meager sum of money will face the heat. Bharat ke prati dushprachar karne wale, na ghar ke hain na ghat ke," the chief minister said.

He urged the people to not lose the harmonious spirit of the country by getting involved in petty communal disputes. He asked the people to maintain India's grace internationally which had been enhanced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The first edition of the encyclopedia has been released in English language and has been designed by the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. The first edition in Hindi and Tamil languages will also be published in the coming month.

Director Information, Shishir Singh, said that there was a plan to publish the Ramayana Encyclopedia in over 200 volumes and for this, the Ayodhya Research Institute had set up a board of editors and advisors across the country and the world.

The publication of Ramayana will also be released in Oriya, Malayalam, Urdu, and Assamese languages along with the first edition of the Global Encyclopedia of Ramayana.

CM Yogi meets representatives of khap panchayats

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday met the representatives of separate khap panchayats of the state who voiced their grievances.

The meeting is being considered important in view of the agitation going on since the past 100 days at the Delhi and Uttar Pradesh border against the three agricultural laws. The chief minister heard their issues and assured them of all possible assistance. The chief minister said the new farm laws were enacted with the objective to double the income of farmers.

"The farmers will get the benefit of the new agricultural laws implemented by the Central government. The farm laws have been enacted with the objective to double the income of farmers. These laws will ensure a continuous increase in farmers' income," Yogi Adityanath said in the meeting.

"The state government is implementing programmes and schemes in the interest of farmers. It is a result of this that under Prime Minister Kisan Samman Nidhi, Uttar Pradesh has been awarded the first prize for the best performance in the country," the chief minister said. He added that the state government was making sincere efforts for the welfare of farmers under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as farmers were the government's priority.

The khap representatives were accompanied by several Bharatiya Janata Party MLAs.

Earlier, the khap representatives, who had come with Budhana MLA Umesh Mallik and Shamli MLA Tejendra Birwal, had met BJP's state president Swatantra Dev Singh and Panchayati Raj Minister Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary at their residences on Friday. They had raised the electricity and sugarcane issues. The khap representatives said that there was resentment among the common farmers in western UP due to increased electricity tariff, delay in cane price payment and no increase in state advisory prices of sugarcane.

Harvir Singh of Phugana Thamba said that when irrigation from state tube wells and canals could be free, why the private tube wells of farmers could not be provided electricity free of cost or at low rates.

The khap representatives said that sugarcane was the main crop in western Uttar Pradesh and the government should focus on the betterment of sugarcane farmers. They said for a long time, the farmers were not getting the cane arrears while the interest they had to pay on loans taken to buy seeds kept increasing. They said the hike in power tariff was also causing a crisis in payment of the electricity bills.

Bhupendra Chaudhary explained the agricultural bills in detail to the khap representatives, saying there was nothing anti-farmer in them. He pointed out that in the coming time, agricultural investment could be increased only through the private sector.

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given by the undersigned for and on behalf of LIC Housing Finance Ltd., Lucknow, pursuant to circular No.422/Annexure-E of LIC HFL that the original sale-deed dated 27.07.2016 vide Serial No. 3760, registered in the office of Sub-Registrar-Sadar, Gajipur, U.P. executed by Mr. Om Prakash S/o Late Ram Avadh, R/o Vill-Chandanwaha, Pargana, Tehsil & Dist-Gazipur, in favour of Mr. Devendra Kumar Maurya S/o Late Ram Lal Singh Kushwaha, R/o Narayanpur, Gazipur, in respect of Plot , Part of Khasra No.26/2 Ka Min., admeasuring 95.25 sq.mt., situated at Mauja-Chank Asmani, Pargana, Tehsil & Dist-Gazipur, which have been lost. It is informed to us that the above noted original sale-deed is mortgage with any person(s), Financial Institution(s), Bank(s) or any other one, may inform immediately to LIC Housing Finance Ltd., Area Office Mau, Contact No. 9695640872 or Sanjay Kumar Singh Advocate, LIC HFL, Mobile No.9919972269 & 8765360669 otherwise the above noted proposal shall be finalize immediately after the expiry of 15 days of this publication.

बैंक ऑफ बड़ौदा Bank of Baroda
Roshnabad Branch
Yadav Chauraha, Roshnabad Village, Lucknow-226020

Corrigendum

In the E-Auction Sale Notice published on 26.02.2021 in The Pioneer, Lucknow Edition, in account of **M/s O.S.M. Group** in the description of property the **shop no. 302, 304** should be read as **Shop No. 302** All other terms & conditions remaining the same. **Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda**

Yogi: UP's jaggery will get international recognition

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Asserting that his government was working relentlessly to double the income of farmers by giving their products wider market besides providing all the facilities to increase the agri-production, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said that jaggery products of Uttar Pradesh would create a new identity in the world.

"The sustained efforts towards the welfare of farmers are reaping rich benefits in the state and the farmers are now getting better market and high prices for their produce," the chief minister said while inaugurating the two-day Jaggery Festival here on Saturday evening.

Recalling how bad the condition of sugarcane farmers was four years ago, with no sugarcane payment for five, six, seven years and the khandsari industry in a shambles, the chief minister said the situation improved only when his government assumed office in 2017.

He said that khandsari licences were not issued till four years ago but the present government ensured licence within a few hours of applying. "Now, the licence fee has been waived. Khandsari industry can be set up within a radius of 7 kilometres instead of 15 kilometres," he said, adding that as a result of this, the sugarcane produced in the districts of Muzaffarnagar, Shamli, Ayodhya, Lakhimpur Kheri, Shahjahanpur were getting market not only in the state but in the entire country.

Yogi Adityanath hoped that the 'gur' (jaggery) made from sugarcane would get an international market and the Jaggery Festival would open up new avenues of marketing of jaggery products.

He said the efforts of the state government to bring changes in the lives of lakhs of farmers of the state had resulted in such successful festivals being organised.

"These programmes have been started to enable the local products to get new markets, get branding to market besides getting best remunerative price to the farmer in the country and even abroad," he added.

Congratulating the team of the Cane Development Department, the chief minister said he visited some of the stalls in the festival and found amazing enthusiasm among the farmers.

"I can feel the new awareness of a new India which is now extended to cleanliness as well that has been created through the Swachh Bharat Mission of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

The chief minister said that unlike his childhood when the sugar price used to be high, the price of jaggery had increased compared to that of sugar due to its medicinal properties.

"There are seven lakh sugarcane farmers in the state. Sugarcane is cultivated in an area of 27 lakh hectares. We have connected the sugarcane farmers with the new system of issuing online slips. The sugarcane growers have been paid a total of Rs 1,25,600 crore," he pointed out.

The chief minister said Uttar Pradesh was the only state where the sugar mills continued to run during the coronavirus pandemic while the sugar mills in other states were closed. "We made such an arrangement that as long as there is a single crop of sugarcane, no sugar mill should be closed," he said.

Exuding confidence that the 'gur' of Uttar Pradesh would be a big brand elsewhere, the chief minister said. 'We have included jaggery as One District One Product (ODOP) of three districts namely Muzaffarnagar, Ayodhya and Lakhimpur. I am confident that the product will get international recognition and the farmers will get remunerative prices."

For the first time after Independence, the Gur Mahotsav (Jaggery Festival) is being organised in UP. The main objective of this event is to encourage the jaggery-producing farmers to produce quality jaggery and other products made from jaggery and to make the common man aware of the medicinal properties of jaggery.

Various stalls of jaggery and its products have been set up by jaggery producers from different districts of the state. These stalls include jaggery tea, jaggery ladoo, kulfi, jalebi, halwa, kheer, dry ginger, cardamom, sesame, groundnut, gajak, cashew, almond, saffron-containing jaggery and jaggery dumpling, jaggery chocolate etc.

Ram temple fundraising has unified the country: Rai

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Vishwa Hindu Parishad said the over month-long campaign since January 15 for mobilising donations for the Ram temple at Ayodhya had unified the country from east to west and north to south.

VHP vice-president and general secretary of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra (Trust) Champat Rai said here on Saturday that even after the campaign the devotees, who missed this samarpan (contribution) drive, could still make their contributions to the account of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra through the website, viz., https://srjbtkshetra.org/donation-options/.

"We have succeeded in achieving our goal of samarpan in four lakh villages. Contact was also made in all the wards of urban areas. Although the statistics of the families contacted are yet to be compiled, it is estimated that we have liaised with about 10 crore families and samarpan (contributions) have been received from people from every walk of life.

He said during the campaign there were many occasions and incidents which moved the hearts of the volunteers. At many places, while even beggars made their contributions, the daily wagers and small farmers also made their prayerful offerings. The samarpan of the Ram bhakt Muslim society is also significant. Devotees from outside Bharat are requested to wait a little more. They will be notified upon completion of FCRA formalities," Rai said.

He said that in this huge campaign, about nine lakh karyakartas in 1,75,000 teams contacted people from door-to-door. He said to maintain transparency of the entire campaign, while 49 control rooms were working across the country, 23 qualified karyakartas led by two chartered accountants at the main centre in Delhi, were constantly in touch with the entire network to monitor the accounts.

The app created by Dhanusha Infotech Company of Hyderabad did a commendable job as a meticulously-built digital network to act as a digital bridge among the karyakartas, banks and the trust.

Rai said that even as the final figures were yet to come, it could be said, based on the banks' receipts till February 4, that the samarpan amount would cross Rs 2,500 crore. He said this month, an audit of the campaign in every district of the country would also be completed.

Ram devotees in every nook and corner of the country have made their contributions. From the North Eastern region of Bharat, the people of Arunachal Pradesh have contributed Rs 4.5 crore, from Manipur Rs 2 crore, Mizoram Rs 20.1 lakh , Nagaland Rs 20.8 lakh, Meghalaya Rs 80.5 lakh, and from southern states, the people of Tamil Nadu contributed Rs 85 crore and from Kerala Rs 13 crore. On the work going on at the Janmabhoomi site, Champat Rai said that almost 60 per cent of the foundation digging and earth removal works were completed and it was expected that the foundation filling work would start in the first week of April 2021.

LIC भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA

LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA
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Manager (Estate)

U.P.RAJYA VIDYUT UTPADAN NIGAM LTD, OBRA-SONEBHADRA

E-Tender Notice

1. Tender No:T-15/SE-HQ/OTPS/FF&SD/2020-21 online e-Bids are invited for the work of **"Repairing & maintenance of fire tender no. UP-64-3304 & UGQ-9274, Obra".** E-tender has been uploaded on **22.02.2021** on http://etender.up.nic.in Estimated cost of work approximately **Rs. 2,54,428.00** only E.M.D. cost **Rs. 5500.00,** Tender Cost **Rs.590.00** Last date of submission **19.03.2021 up to 18.00 Hrs. S.E(HQ)**

2. Tender No:T-16/SE-II/BTPS/CHD-I/2020-21 online e-Bids are invited for the work of **"Operation and Routine Checking of BEML D-80A-12 and BD-155 Dozers of Coal handling plant".** E-tender has been uploaded on **20.02.2021** on http://etender.up.nic.in Estimated cost of work approximately **Rs. 6,85,968.00** only **time period 01 year.** E.M.D cost **Rs. 14000.00,** Tender Cost **Rs.1180.00** Last date of submission **20.03.2021 up to 16.00 Hrs.**

3. Tender No:T-17/SE-II/BTPS/CHD-I/2020-21 online e-Bids are invited for the work of **"Assistance in coal movement operation at Coal Handling Plant, BTPS Obra".** E-tender has been uploaded on **24.02.2021** on http://etender.up.nic.in Estimated cost of work approximately **Rs. 10,15,000.00** only **time period 01 year.** E.M.D cost **Rs. 20,500.00,** Tender Cost **Rs.1180.00** Last date of submission **25.03.2021 up to 17.00 Hrs.**

4. Tender No:T-18/SE-II/BTPS/CHD-I/2020-21 online e-Bids are invited for the work of **"Extinguishing Quenching of fire in Coal Yard of Coal Handling Plant, OTPS Obra".** E-tender has been uploaded on **20.02.2021** on http://etender.up.nic.in Estimated cost of work approximately **Rs. 6,95,325.00** only **time period 01 year.** E.M.D cost **Rs. 14,000.00**, Tender Cost Rs.1180.00 Last date of submission **25.03.2021 up to 17.00 Hrs. S.E.-II**

5. Tender No:T-34/O&MMC-V/BMD/BTPS/2020-21 online e-Bids are invited for the work of **"Routine and Breakdown maintenance of APH of unit no.12 & 13 BTPS, Obra".** E-tender has been uploaded on **24.02.2021** on http://etender.up.nic.in Estimated cost of work approximately **Rs. 748872.00** only **time period 01 year.** E.M.D cost **Rs. 14,000.00,** Tender Cost Rs.1180.00 Last date of submission **24.03.2021 up to 17.00 Hrs.**

6. Tender No:T-33/O&MMC-V/TMD/BTPS/2020-21 online e-Bids are invited for the work of **"Round the clock routine/preventive maintenance works of TMD, 2x200MW BTPS, Obra".** E-tender has been uploaded on **19.02.2021** on http://etender.up.nic.in Estimated cost of work approximately **Rs. 1430000.00** only **time period 01 year.** E.M.D cost **Rs. 28600.00,** Tender Cost **Rs.1180.00** Last date of submission **22.03.2021 up to 18.00 Hrs. S.E.-V**

7. Tender No:ST-83/SE(CMC-II)/CMD-IV/2020-21 online e-Bids are invited for the work of **"M&R and extension of senani Birsa munda road".** E-tender has been uploaded on **04.03.2021 at 10:00 Hrs** on http://etender.up.nic.in Estimated cost of work approximately **Rs. 28,71,757.35** only E.M.D cost **Rs. 57,500.00,** Tender Cost **Rs.1180.00** Last date of submission **17.03.2021 up to 17.00 Hrs. S.E,CMC-II**

Total Quality of work, tender specification and other terms & condition is as per tender document available on the e-tender portal. Concerned superintending engineer has right to cancel any or all e-Bids without assigning any reason. Corrigendum, addendum, Extension if any shall be uploaded only on the above website. Bidders are advised to visit the website regularly for updated information from time to time.

पत्रांक : 13/ज0 स0 का0/निविदा दिनांक 06.03.2021

"Save Electricity in interest of Nation"

the pioneer CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I Ankita Srivastava W/o Nitin Srivastava R/o SG/P/406, Sargam Apartment Sector J Extension Near Gudamba. Thana Jankipuram Kursi Road Lucknow, U.P.-226021 have changed my name to Asha Srivastava for all future purposes.

NOTICE

Be it known to all that my mother's name has been wrongly mentioned as Ramavati Singh in my mark sheet and certificate of Class 12th from CBSE Board New Delhi but correct name is Ramawati in future she will be known as Ramawati. Praveer Singh S/o Shri Jai Deo Singh R/o 78, Patel Nagar Yojana Indira Nagar Lucknow.

Verma: We will start afresh, take The Pioneer to a new height

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The revival of 'The Pioneer' media group is on the cards as there are plans to improve its content and increase its digital presence by introducing new technology so that 'The Pioneer' becomes the number one newspaper in Uttar Pradesh.

In his maiden interaction with the employees of 'The Pioneer' group here on Saturday, NCLT-appointed Interim Resolution Professional (IRP) Ranjeet Kumar Verma said that plans were in place to take 'The Pioneer' to its old glory.

"'The Pioneer', both English and Hindi, is a big brand and we will ensure that this brand reaches out to every section of society. We will start afresh and take the company to a new height. There are challenges and we will overcome them and make 'The Pioneer' the number one newspaper of Uttar Pradesh," he said.

Verma said that his priority would be to address serious issues raised by the employees.

"We will ensure all the facilities to the employees, including payment of the dues and timely clearance of the salary," he said and added that in future the performance of the employees would be incentivised. He also laid thrust on the digital edition of the newspaper and said it would soon be enhanced to extend the reach of the newspaper. Verma also called for better coordination among various editions of the newspaper.

IRP Ranjeet Kumar Verma addressing the employees

The Delhi bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) had last month Verma as the IRP. "I am here as a representative of the court and my main objective is to keep 'The Pioneer' group going. I can assure one and all that 'The Pioneer' is not going to close down," he said.

In the meeting, there was free exchange of ideas among senior members of the newspaper and the IRP. The employees shared their views on the revival of 'The Pioneer' and also discussed the problems they were facing. "I expect the working of the company to return to normal very soon," Verma said.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Lucknow only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

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Police recreate Girdhari encounter scene

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Police recreated the scene of Kanhaiya aka Girdhari's encounter in the presence of a team of forensic scientists on Saturday. Prime accused in the Ajit Singh murder case, sharpshooter Girdhari was killed in a controversial police encounter after he was arrested in Delhi and brought to Lucknow on transit remand.

The event was videographed and every angle related to the encounter was captured. Sources said the footage would be produced in the court. Earlier, Girdhari's family had filed a complaint in the court, pointing out that the encounter was fake, and requested for an FIR against the cops involved in it.

A court had directed the Hazratganj police to register a case but the high court stayed the order. Sources privy to the investigation said that the forensic team investigated the police account on the encounter.

"A man posing as Girdhari was asked to sit in a police jeep and he later pushed a sub-inspector and disappeared into the thickets. The team measured the steps towards the thickets and if he could fire on the police team. It was also examined how many shots were fired by Girdhari and if he spent all the bullets which the pistol was loaded with. The team also examined the direction towards which Girdhari opened fire," the sources said.

They said that the recreation of the encounter scene was conducted in daytime while the encounter had taken place in the night on February 15. The police said Girdhari was active in the crime world since 2001 and had amassed huge wealth. He was the prime accused in the murder of former block pramukh from Mau Ajit Singh, who was peppered with bullets on January 6.

After Ajit's aide Mohar Singh lodged a case against him and other his aides for murder and against Kuntu Singh and Akhand Singh (both languishing in jail) for criminal conspiracy, the police had launched a manhunt for Girdhari.

Girdhari had moved to Delhi where he was arrested in a dramatic way and his arrest by Lucknow police was stalled for some time. He was later brought to Lucknow on transit remand for interrogation and taken to the place where Ajit was gunned down. However, Girdhari allegedly tried to escape from the police custody and pushed down a sub-inspector and snatched his pistol from which he opened fire on policemen.

He was killed in the return fire by policemen. He was taken to a hospital where he was declared brought dead.

Police and forensic experts recreating the encounter scene of Girdhari on Saturday

Gold smuggler held at Amausi airport tests Covid positive

Lucknow (PNS): A 29-year-old man, who was held for allegedly smuggling 3 kg gold from Dubai on Saturday, was found to be Covid positive. He was identified as Rakesh Yadav, a resident of Azamgarh. District immunisation officer Dr MK Singh said the antigen test showed positive result and hence the sample was sent for RT-PCR testing. He was later referred to RMLIMS.

Besides, eight people tested positive for coronavirus infection in Lucknow on Saturday while 42 patients recovered. There are 223 active cases in the district. Across the state, 131 people tested Covid positive, including 15 from Gautam Buddh Nagar, 11 from Ghaziabad, five from Kanpur and two from Varanasi, taking the UP case tally to 6,04,164. There was no death due to Covid-19 reported from anywhere in the state. Besides, 416 patients recovered, pushing the recovery figures to 5,93,704 while there are 1,731 active cases in the state.

Meanwhile, a total of 3,294 people were vaccinated at nine government and 17 private hospitals on Saturday. Dr Singh said problems with the CoWIN portal continued even on Saturday, impacting the number of beneficiaries. Vaccinations were not carried out at KGMU, RMLIMS and SGPGI on March 6.

Class XII student hangs himself

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A class XII student ended his life at his house in PGI police station area on Saturday. Abhimanyu Bajpai (18) of South City Colony was found hanging from the ceiling with a rope tied around his neck. The incident came to light when his father Yogesh Bajpai gave him a call in the morning but Abhimanyu did not respond. Yogesh rapped the doors but Abhimanyu did not respond even then. Later, Yogesh, with the help of his neighbours, broke open the doors and found Abhimanyu hanging from the ceiling. He was rushed to hospital where he was declared brought dead.

In another incident, a 28-year-old woman, identified as Archana of Kailash Kunj Colony on Faizabad road, was found hanging at her house on Friday night. Police came to know of the incident when a memo was sent to them by RMLIMS. A team was sent to the hospital and later to the house of the deceased to collect details related to the incident.

Investigating officer sub-inspector Jitendra Singh Chauhan said Archana hanged herself around 9 pm on Friday and her family rushed her to hospital where she was declared brought dead.

Meanwhile, a 39-year-old woman, identified as Raj Kumari of Benti in Banthra, was electrocuted to death after she came in touch with a snapped electricity wire. She had gone to collect fodder for her cattle in the field and could not see the wire lying in the field. The incident took place around 8 am on Saturday morning.

Meanwhile, police claimed to have got a lead about the attackers who had injured a contestant in the fray for gram pradhan elections and Samajwadi Party worker Ram Prakash by opening fire on him in Gudamba.

The police said four accused were detained based on an FIR lodged by the victim's son on Friday night. "Those detained disclosed the names of some accused and accordingly, police teams were formed to conduct raids and nab them," sources said.

On the day of the incident, the victim was returning home on a motorcycle. When he was near the village where he resides, armed miscreants moving in an SUV overtook his motorcycle and opened fire. Yadav suffered injuries in the chest and he slumped down. Hearing the gunshot, local villagers rushed to the scene and the accused were forced to take to their heels.

STF busts gang which duped medical aspirants

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Special Task Force on Saturday claimed to have busted a gang which had duped several aspiring doctors of over Rs 15 crore after promising them admission to medical colleges. The gang was running a firm called 'Rise Group Pvt Ltd'. The STF team recovered data of 26 lakh candidates who had taken National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET). The data had been secured illegally.

Those arrested were identified as Saurabh Kumar aka Saurabh Gupta of Samastipur in Bihar, Ajitabh Mishra of Indiranagar and Vikas Soni of Chinhat. Saurabh and Ajitabh are directors of the company while Vikas the general manager. The STF team recovered three laptops, 30 mobile phones, 25 registers with details of money taken from different students, several other documents related to admission, an SUV and over Rs 19,000 in cash. The accused had duped several unsuspecting medical aspirants all across the country. They were arrested from Vijyant Khand in Gomtinagar following a tip-off.

THE STF TEAM RECOVERED DATA OF 26L CANDIDATES WHO HAD TAKEN NATIONAL ELIGIBILITY CUM ENTRANCE TEST. THE DATA HAD BEEN SECURED ILLEGALLY

The police said they were working on a case in which Saurabh had duped a Patna resident on the pretext of facilitating admission to a medical college. Saurabh, who had an office in Virat Khand, did a moonlight flit after collecting huge sum of money from aspirants in the past. He then opened an office in Vijyant Khand. The police were tipped off about it and the place was raided.

It surfaced that Saurabh and his aides used to get details of the candidates who appeared for NEET but could not clear it. His aides used to call those candidates. As they visited his office, they were made to sign on loan agreement papers.

The gang took Rs 5-6 lakh from each candidate after promising them admission to medical colleges. However, when the candidates questioned them about admission and sought a refund, the accused would intimidate them. They used to tell the candidates that they had given bribes and if they demanded their money back, so an action would be taken against them.

An engineering graduate, Saurabh was the regional director of an engineering college in Jharkhand. He later shifted to Lucknow and launched his own company. The police said the accused had defrauded unsuspecting medical aspirants in Delhi, UP, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.

AKTU granted 12B status by UGC

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After much efforts, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University (AKTU) has been granted 12B status by the University Grants Commission. AKTU spokesperson Asheesh Mishra said the university will now be able to conduct various research and educational activities with financial support from the Central government and UGC.

"AKTU had been striving to achieve this status from UGC for many years. In fact, the 12B status is necessary to get the benefits of Central government and UGC schemes. Universities and institutes have to face a tough test of compliance with the standards to achieve this status," he said.

He added that a university should also have its own institute under the classification of standards so that it can be considered as a university of residential nature.

"Earlier, when IET was made a constituent institute of the university, the same concept was in its perspective that it would restore the residential character of the university and achieve 12B status. Efforts for this were resumed by the university last year and a UGC team inspected the university thoroughly on February 26 and 27. The recommendations were tested by the Standing Committee of UGC and subsequently, the 12B status was granted. The university has also been advised by the commission to make efforts for NAAC accreditation," he added.

Meanwhile, an international-level webinar, 'Second doctoral symposium on computational intelligence',was organised under the chairmanship of AKTU Vice-Chancellor Prof VK Pathak. The webinar was organised under the joint aegis of AKTU's constituent institutes, including Institute of Engineering and Technology.

The chief guest was vice-president of All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) Prof MP Punia, who said that in the new Education Policy, major arrangements for research have been made and a separate section created.

He said that AICTE is running various schemes for technical institutions from its level. He added that research and innovation should be in the interest of the society, so that people's lives can be made easier.

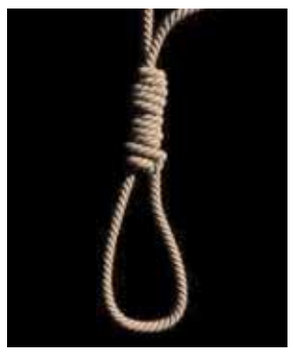
Jobless BTC holder girl ends life

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Unemployment pushed a Basic Training Certificate (BTC) holder in Farrukhabad into depression, forcing her to commit suicide.

She left a suicide note in which she stated that she was ending her life on her own and no one should be held responsible for it.

Reports said that Swati Rajput (27) hailing from Chaini Nagla locality of Kuankhera under Kaimganj police station of Farrukhabad was a BTC holder. She had also completed her post-graduation but her search for a job failed to give any positive result. The relatives of the deceased said that Swati became depressed after she failed to get a job even after completing the BTC course.



Last Wednesday, she left home for some work but when she did not return till evening, the family members tried to contact her on mobile phone but found it to be switched off. They informed the Kaimganj police about Swati's disappearance and the cops on Thursday morning traced her last location at Ataipur.

As Swati's father, Hetram Rajput, had one more house in Ataipur, the family members rushed there and were shocked to see her body hanging from the ceiling of a room.

The police found a suicide note in which Swati stated that she had hoped that the government would do something for the welfare of the children but now she found that they were going to do nothing. She also mentioned that not getting a job was the reason for her extreme step and the decision to end life was her own and no one should be held responsible for it. Sub-Inspector Deepak Bhati, who reached the spot, claimed that on the request of the family members, the body was not sent for post-mortem and was handed over to them after panchnama for the last rites.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY Notification No.: 50/2021

Important Notice for the Rail Passengers

It is notified for information of General Public that following Special Express train will run as per revised timings as under Train No. ***05065/05066 Gorakpur-Panvel-Gorakhpur.***

05065 Ex. Gorakhpur from 09-03-2021
05066 Ex. Panvel from 10-03-2021

Timings of 05065/05066 (Gorakhpur-Panvel-Gorakhpur)

05065 Gorakhpur-Panvel		Station	05066 Panvel-Gorakhpur	
Arr.	Dep.		Arr.	Dep.
--	05:30	Gorakhpur	00:20	--
06:15	06:20	Anand Nagar	23:06	23:11
06:45	06:47	Siddharth Nagar	22:35	22:37
07:06	07:08	Shohrathgarh	22:12	22:14
07:50	07:55	Barhni	21:50	21:55
08:30	08:35	Tulsipur	20:56	20:58
08:57	08:59	Jharkhandi	20:15	20:17
09:18	09:20	Balrampur	20:06	20:08
10:15	10:35	Gonda Jn.	19:05	19:25
12:48	12:50	Barabanki Jn.	16:53	16:55
13:40	14:05	Lucknow (NR)	15:35	15:45
16:00	16:05	Kanpur Central	13:45	13:50
17:30	17:32	Orai	11:08	11:10
19:50	19:58	Jhansi Jn.	09:15	09:23
23:48	23:50	Vidisha	05:58	06:00
00:45	00:50	Habibganj	05:05	05:10
02:30	02:40	Itarsi Jn.	03:30	03:40
03:32	03:34	Harda	02:24	02:26
05:38	05:40	Khandwa	01:05	01:10
07:25	07:30	Bhusawal Jn.	22:50	22:55
10:52	10:55	Nasik Road	19:20	19:25
13:42	13:45	Kalyan Jn.	16:17	16:20
14:50	--	**Panvel**	--	**15:50**

Please Note:- (1) These train will run with full reserved accommodation. **(2)** It is Mandatory for the passengers to follow the guidelines issued for prevention and safety from Covid-19.

CPRO/T-136 ***Chief Pass. Trans. Manager, Gorakhpur***

About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No.: 09794845955

Never travel on roof and foot boards.

Books on environment, climate change a hit among readers

Students of SRM Public School staging a play at the book fair on Saturday Pioneer

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Books on environment and climate change are key attractions at the 10-day Lucknow Book Fair, underway at Bal Sangrahalaya lawns in Charbagh. Dinesh, Incharge of Vani Prakashan, said they have brought a number of books on environment and the latest one is on Himalayas, 'Dastan-e-Himalaya' by Shekhar Pathak, who is a teacher at Kumaon University.

"The book has been appreciated by experts in this field and they said there may have been several books written on the Himalayas but it is unique because it gives 'puranic' as well as historical facts, the colourful cultural activities going on in its lap, people associated with the Himalayas and the various tales associated with these mighty mountains. The Himalayas are seamless but the writer has managed to present it in a very interesting manner," Dinesh said.

Talking about the author, he Pathak has carried out various research travels associated with the book and is also associated with 'Pahad Foundation'.

About the content of the book, he said it mentions that the Himalayas join the green hills on the north-eastern part with the cold deserts of Ladakh and also join the Ganga-Brahmaputra region with Tibet.

"The book also talks about how the Himalayas regulate the movement of the monsoons and are considered so vast that one corner is unfamiliar with the other. It is its history, the social and political protests associated with it which can help understand it better. The first two chapters of the book deal with the history of the Himalayas while the third deals with the advent of the Britishers. The remaining three articles deal with three personalities of the country who match the stature of the Himalayas. The next chapter is on the folk literature, the seventh chapter deals with the language of Uttarakhand while the last one deals with Kailash Mansarovar," he pointed out.

Pathak's earlier book 'Hari Bhari Umeed' has also seen good sales. The book deals with problems of afforestation, the Chipko Movement and its first wave, the contribution of the youth & women in the movement, and the activities post the Forest Act of 1980.

There is another book titled 'Oh Re Kisan' by Ankita Jain. In this book, the author says that the country is not only a 'krishi'-based country but also a 'rishi'-based country, and both are about the welfare of general public.

Bank Of India
Zonal Office : B-38/2, A, Mahmoorganj, Varanasi -221010
E-mail : Varanasi.legal@bankofindia.co.in

POSSESSION NOTICE (for Immovable Property)

Whereas, The undersinged being the authorized Officer of **BANK OF INDIA**, **TELIYABAG BRANCH** under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) Read with Rule 3 of the security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 Issued Demand notice calling upon the borrower to repay the amount as mentioned in the notice below within 60 days form the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower/Gurantor having failed to repay the amount, Notice is hereby given to the borrower/ Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described here in below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with rule 8 of the Security interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 on the **Date 2nd Day of March of the year 2021.**

The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charge of **BANK OF INDIA,** for an amount mentioned below along with interest and other charges incurred thereon.

The borrower's attentions is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assests.

S. No.	Name of Account Borrower/Guarantor Address, Due Amount/ Branch	Description of Mortgaged Property
1.	**Borrower- (1)** Mr Mohd. Ameen s/o Mohd. Suleman, **(2)** M/s Shaheena Enterprises, **Prop.-** Mohd. Ameen, **Address-** H No. C-19/6, Mohalla Lallapura Khurd, Ward-Chetganj Varanasi- 221001 **Date of Demand Notice : 24.08.2020** **Date of Possession Notice : 02.03.2021** **Outstandin Amount : Rs. 16,79,047.85/-** + interest thereon + other expenses **TELIYABAGH BRANCH**	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Part of Settlement at **House No. C-19/6, Mohalla-** Lallapura Khurd, **Ward-** Chetganj Varanasi, **District-** Varanasi within the registration Sub-District & Distt. Varanasi, **Area-** 868.4 sq. ft. in the name of **Mr Mohd. Ameen s/o Mohd. Suleman (Borrower), Boundary** (As per Deed)**: North-** 5 Feet Rast Khas thereafter Sanahida Part of Land Owner Sagir Alam Alias Chunna & Gulistan Parveen, **South-** House of Police and House of others, **East-** House of Rafiullah, **West-** House of Rafique Contractor

DATE : 07.03.2021 Place :Varanasi Authorised Officer, Bank of India

सेन्ट्रल बैंक ऑफ इंडिया
Central Bank of India

[Rule 8(1)]
POSSESSION NOTICE
(FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

Regional Office:
73, Hazratganj, Lucknow

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorized officer of the Central Bank Of India having its Central Office at Chandermukhi, Nariman Point, Mumbai 400021 and Branch Office, amongst others, at mentioned below Branch, **under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002** and in exercise of Powers conferred under section 13(2) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued a demand notice as detailed here in below calling upon the Borrower/s, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within the 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrowers having failed to repay the entire amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower/s and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic/Physical possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on dates mentioned below.

The borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to charges of the Central Bank of India, mentioned below Branch for amount mentioned below along with further interest thereon plus incidental, expenses, cost charges etc. Details as under:-

Sr. No.	Name and Address of the Borrowers/A/c No./Branch Name	Description of the mortgaged Property/ies	Date of Demand Notice / Date of Possession / Amt. Outstanding (Rs.)
1.	**Sri Ramesh Singh S/o Sri Late Ram Sundar Singh,** R/o Near Unity City, Mahcoli College, Gram Bahadurpur, Shankarpurwa, Ward 57, Kalyanpur, Lucknow **A/c No. 1233764500** **Branch:- Joppling Road Branch**	All the part and parcel of the property consisting of Property on Khasra No. 148, Plot No. 20 House at Khasra No. 148, Near Unity City, Mahcoli College, Gram Bahadurpur Shankarpurwa, Ward No. 57, Kalyanpur, Lucknow, **Area-1000 Sq.ft. Owned & Possessed by Sri Ramesh Singh, Boundaries (as per Sale Deed Dated-30.07.2001):- North-**Plot No. 19, **South-** Plot No. 21, **East-** Plot No. 11, **West-** 20 Ft. wide road	29.10.2020 02.03.2021 **Rs. 5,04,241/-** as on 29.10.2020 + Intt. w.e.f. 29.10.2020 & Other Charges
2.	**(1) Sri Pawan Kumar S/o Late Sri Bhagawati Prasad Ojha (2) Sri Vijay Kumar Ojha S/o Late Sri Bhagawati Prasad Ojha,** 559kha/278, Khasra No. 667, Sri Nagar Ward, Chitragupta Nagar, Lucknow **A/c No. 3207862833** **Branch:- Subhash Marg Branch**	All the part and parcel of the property consisting of Property on Khasra No., Plot No. House at 559Kha/278, Khasra No. 667Mi, Sri Nagar Ward, Chitragupta Nagar, Lucknow, **Area-112.918 Sq.mtr. Owned & Possessed by Sri Pawan Kumar, Boundaries (as per Sale Deed Dated-05.04.2007):- North-**Road, **South-** Propery of Basant Pandey, **East-** Property of Gyan Shankar, **West-** Property of Jagmohan Yadav	20.01.2020 01.03.2021 **Rs. 12,46,820/-** as on 28.02.2021 + Intt. w.e.f. 01.03.2021 & Other Charges

Date: 07.03.2021 Place: Lucknow Authorized Officer, Central Bank of India

Women can manage both home and office: Mayor

Lucknow (PNS): Women can manage the dual responsibility of home and office well and they are good at financial matters as well, Mayor Sanyukta Bhatia said while speaking at a walkathon, organised by a digital magazine and a micro-finance association to celebrate International Women's Day on Saturday.

The walkathon was flagged off by DCP Ruchita Choudhry from 1090 crossing. Key organiser Aparna Mishra, along with vice district governor of Alliance Clubs International Priyanka Dikshit were present on the occasion.

Other dignitaries were ADM Garima Swaroop, Vartika Shukla, Mahila Kalyan Adhikari Reshu Bhatia, social activists Reena Singh & Lalita Pandey, additional director of Education Prerna Mitra, principal of Army Public School Supriya Dwivedi, assistant commissioner of Commercial Tax Ekta Singh and Anup K Singh. More than 120 women participated in the walkathon. Various women achievers were felicitated. There was a musical programme and all the participants enjoyed dancing to the tunes of zumba. The event was supported by Mission Shakti.

KGMU selected by Cochrane to provide training to doctors

Lucknow (PNS): King George's Medical University has received International recognition from the United Kingdom. KGMU has been selected amongst the very few institutions in India to provide training to doctors for preparing guidelines for various diseases as well as for anyone interested in using high-quality information to make decisions for best treatment, diagnosis on any health issues.

"KGMU has been selected by Cochrane, which is the most reputed international organisation in the world in this field as World Health Organisation (WHO) frames guidelines with the help from it," Vice-Chancellor Dr Bipin Puri said. Top medical institutions of the world are training centres of Cochrane.

"Till now, doctors, policymakers and consumers in India have to go to Vellore to get training and now they can get world class, standardised training from KGMU very soon," he said. He added that KGMU faculty members and students are already involved in preparing high quality information in seven different health issues with experts from different parts of the world with Cochrane. Dr Puri congratulated the advisors and the team comprising Prof Balendra Pratap Singh, Prof Hardeep Singh Malhotra, Dr Anand Srivastava and Prof RD Singh for this achievement.

Inter-dental college quiz, singing contest mark Endo Awareness Day

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

On the occasion of Endo Awareness Day, the department of Conservative Dentistry and Endodontics, KGMU, organised the first all-India inter-dental college quiz and singing competition. The programme was inaugurated by KGMU Vice-Chancellor Dr Bipin Puri, founder-president of IES Dr Anil Kohli, Pro-VC of KGMU Dr Vineet Sharma, president of Indian Endodontic Society Dr Vivek Hegde and secretary general of Indian Endodontic Society Dr Sanjay Miglani.

Head of the department Conservative Dentistry and Endodontics Prof AP Tikku, and Dean, Faculty of Dental Sciences, Dr Anil Chandra welcomed all the teams and faculty members from other colleges and students. Dr Puri appreciated the initiative and said one positive effect of Covid-19 is that people have learnt to make full use of technology. PG students of conservative dentistry and endodontics from 24 dental colleges participated in the programme both online and offline.

Amal Singh Rana and Selventhra Savitha, PG students from All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, were awarded the winner's trophy of the event while the runners-up trophy went to Sumit Sharma and S Gopi Pavan Sudhir from Army Dental Research and Referral Hospital, New Delhi.

The quiz program was followed by a singing competition in which students from various colleges participated. Pallabi Sarkar from Seema Dental College, Rishikesh, lifted the winner's trophy while Raktim De from Carrer Post Graduate Institute of Dental Sciences, Lucknow, receiving the runner-up trophy.

Farmer block KMP to mark 100th protest day

From Page 1

Protesting farmers squatted on the expressway and criticised the Narendra Modi government for not withdrawing the farm legislations, which they called as "black laws".

"Our agitation against the three farm laws will continue unless the Centre withdraws these laws. We will not step back," said a protester in Sonipat.

Farmers held protest at the KMP Expressway near Mandothi village in Jhajjar district. Some people from nearby villages joined them.

"We are holding our protest in a peaceful manner," said a farmer, adding that they were also observing "black day" on Saturday.

Protesting farmers said the government should withdraw these laws. Farmer leader Balbir Singh Rajewal, while addressing a gathering on the KMP Expressway, asked the Modi Government to withdraw these laws.

This agitation will certainly put pressure on the Central Government, he said. Farmers claimed that their five-hour protest remained peaceful.

Sonipat Superintendent of Police Jashandeep Singh Randhawa said arrangements were made for traffic diversions. Heavy vehicles were diverted from Panipat and others from Ganaur to Delhi, said officials.

Traffic was also diverted from Murthal via Sonipat city to Narela and Bawana and from Bahadurgarh to Baghpat, they said. Officials said traffic resumed at KMP expressway after famers lifted their blockade at 4 pm.

In Palwal district also, farmers staged a 'dharna'. At some places in Haryana, farmers even put up black flags atop roof of their houses as a mark of their protest against the government for not withdrawing the farm laws.

The 136-km Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway is also known as the Western Peripheral Expressway. The 53-km Manesar-Palwal section was inaugurated by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari in 2016 and 83-km Kundli-Manesar section was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2018.

CITYBRIEFS

INAUGURATED

The newly-renovated Lakhimpur branch of Indian Overseas bank was inaugurated by vice-principal of Don Bosco (Lakhimpur) in presence of bank's chief regional manager (Lucknow region) Niranjan Panda, branch staff, senior officials and customers.

RESULT DAY

Annual Result Day of SKD Academy Pre-School to Class V of all the three branches in Rajajipuram was held on Saturday. All the three branches announced their annual results for which online examinations had been conducted. The students produced remarkable results and for their spectacular efforts, they were given away first, second and third prizes. The students those who attended maximum online classes were also given away prizes. The new session will commence from March 8.

FREE ENTRY

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash said on Saturday that entry would be free for female visitors to the Asafi (Bada) Imambara, Chhota Imambara and Picture Gallery on the occasion of International Women's Day on March 8.

CMS STUDENTS EXCEL IN IBT

Four meritorious students of City Montessori School, Kanpur Road Campus — Arush Ajeet Pratap (class IV), Rishan Haldar (class III), Siddhima Shukla (class VII) and Suman Kumar (class III) — secured 100 per cent marks in Science in International Benchmark Test (IBT), getting the top rank globally. CMS founder Jagdish Gandhi congratulated these students for their achievement, saying it is a great moment of pride for Lucknow. IBT is organised by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) once a year in many countries. In India, over 50,000 students appeared for IBT.

FROM PAGE 1

BJP PITS SUVENDU AGAINST DIDI

Meanwhile, intra-TMC unrest that spilled on the streets after many aspirants including sitting MLAs and Ministers were denied tickets by the Chief Minister even as senior leaders like Sonali Guha and Jatu Lahiri openly talked about joining the BJP.

Guha a former Deputy Speaker and four-time MLA from Satgachia seat --- once the bastion of late Chief Minister Jyoti Basu --- broke down saying she had "not expected this kind of treatment from Mamata Didi with whom I have spent decades fighting the Left Front."

She said that she would join the saffron outfit even as BJP vice president Mukul Roy said he had received a call from Guha. "I have received calls seeking entry in the BJP not only from Sonali but many others who have got tickets to contest even and the party will take a decision on this issue."

Another senior leader and former Howrah MLA Jatu Lahiri said he had already joined the BJP as "I was insulted by my party. I do not want a ticket in the BJP. I will work for that party but I want nobody to insult me," he said.

Similarly, supporters of TMC strongman and former MLA Arabul Islam continued to protest on the streets blocking traffic at many places even as the rebel leader said he would take a decision soon about the future course of action.

TRIVEDI JOINS BJP

"Bengal has huge potential but still people are going out to work to other cities. The State is full of corruption and gundaraj. Today, the people of Bengal are happy that a parivartan is going to take place under BJP," said Trivedi as he joined the saffron party.

Nadda said, "Former TMC leader Dinesh Trivedi was right person in wrong party, now he is in right party." The BJP president said Trivedi came over to the BJP on account of "ideological reasons" and not because of "opportunism".

A number of sitting and former Trinamool members have in recent weeks switched sides and defected to the BJP.

The party's former Rajya Sabha MP, actor Mithun Chakraborty is expected to share the stage with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday at a Kolkata parade ground rally. Among those who have moved from the Trinamool to the BJP are sitting MPs, State Ministers, MLAs, top leaders besides hordes of grassroots workers. This includes Trinamool stalwarts such as Suvendu Adhikari and Rajib Banerjee.

The State elections will be held across eight phases from March 27 to April 29, the results of which will be declared on May 2.

REMOVE MODI'S PHOTO ...

The clause 7 of the ECI Model Code of Conduct says that the "issue of advertisement at the cost of public exchequer... regarding achievements with a view to furthering the prospects of the party in power shall be scrupulously avoided". On March 5, the EC had directed all petrol pump dealers and other agencies to remove hoardings advertising the Centre's schemes that have Prime Minister Narendra Modi's photographs on the premises of the facilities within 72 hours.

ADOPT WORLD-CLASS SYSTEMS: PM

Highlighting rapidly changing technological landscape, the Prime Minister underlined the need to develop the Indian military into a 'future force', the statement said.

Pointing out that the country would be celebrating 75 years of its independence next year, Modi called upon the armed forces to use the occasion to undertake activities and initiatives that would inspire the youth of the country, the statement added. The top level meeting came days after the first phase of disengagement of troops of Indian and China from the flashpoint in the Pangong Tso (lake) in Eastern Ladakh. The meeting took place as armies of India and Pakistan reaffirmed their commitment, last week, for the 2003 ceasefire amid escalating firing across the Line of Control (LoC) and other areas.

The Prime Minister stressed the importance of enhancing indigenisation in the national security system, not just in sourcing equipment and weapons but also in the doctrines, procedures and customs practiced in the armed forces.

The Combined Commanders' conference this year was held near the statue of Sardar Vallabhai Patel in Kevadia and the entire brass stayed in tents for the three-day event. Since 2014, the top-level conclave was held many times outside the national capital. While the last edition was held at Air Force Station, Jodhpur, two other such high profile events were held at aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya and the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun.

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS ...

Health NHS Foundation Trust said: "We are already seeing an impact of Covid-19 on mental health. Patients are presenting with Long Covid syndrome which includes fatigue, cognitive problems and a range of psychiatric problems.

"It is estimated that these problems are experienced by 1 in 5 people who have had COVID. Management of such patients in long-Covid clinics should involve a multidisciplinary team including psychiatrists. "The world has experienced mass trauma because World War II affected many, many lives," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said recently. The WHO chief added that the pandemic-induced mass trauma is "beyond proportion and even bigger than what the world experienced" after the Second World War.

According to a 2017 profile of India by the World Health Organization, per 100,000 people, India has approximately 0.29 psychiatrists, 0.07 clinical psychologists, 0.06 social workers and 0.80 nurses, a poor doctor-patient ratio. The future is not encouraging in the sector.

"Even if we keep the population growth rates and attrition rates of psychiatrists at 0 per cent, we require 2700 new psychiatrists annually to fill in the gap in the next 10 years. However, every year only 700 psychiatrists are trained in PG seats, said Dr Kabir Garg, Dr Prabha S Chandra and Dr C Naveen Kumar Department of Psychiatry, National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru, Karnataka in their study 'Number of psychiatrists in India: Baby steps forward, but a long way to go' published in Indian Journal of Psychiatry in 2019.

उ0 प्र0 पावर ट्रान्समिशन कारपोरेशन लि0 खुली निविदा आमन्त्रण सूचना

अधोहस्ताक्षरकर्ता द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्यों हेतु अनुभवी ठेकेदारो/फर्मो से मोहर बन्द निविदा दो भागो में निविदा सख्या–104, दिनांक 12–03–2021 को 14.00 बजे तक आमन्त्रित की जाती है, जो उसी दिन 15.00 बजे सार्वजनिक रूप से उपस्थिति इच्छुक निविदादाताओ अथवा उनके प्रतिनिधियों की उपस्थिति में अधोहस्ताक्षरी अथवा अधिकृत प्रतिनिधि द्वारा खोली जायेंगी। निविदा के प्रथम भाग मे धरोहर धनराशि, अनुभव का विवरण, व्यापार कर/आयकर/सेवाकर का रजिस्ट्रेशन प्रमाणक तथा दूसरे भाग में दरे एवं वाणिज्यक नियम व शर्ते होंगी। निविदा की वैधता खुलने की तिथि से 90 दिन होगी। धरोहर राशि भी प्रत्येक निविदा के अनुसार होगी, जो बैक ड्राफ्ट/सी0डी0आर0/एफ0डी0आर0 के रूप में अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, गोण्डा के पदनाम में बन्धक होगी अथवा निविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क एवं ई0एम0डी0 अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, गोण्डा के बैंक खाते में (बैंक का नाम– पंजाब नैशनल बैंक, खाता सं– 0181002100120697, आईएफएससी कोड– PUNB0018100) आर0टी0जी0एस/एनईएफटी के माध्यम से जमा कराई जा सकती है तथा बैंक में जमा किये जाने का साक्ष्य यथा योज्य यूटीआर संख्या, खाते का नाम, निर्गतकर्ता बैंक अधिकारी द्वारा हस्ताक्षरित एवं निविदादाता द्वारा प्रतिहस्ताक्षरित पे–इन स्लिप की स्कैन्ड कापी, ईएमडी के लिए बैंक गारण्टी की स्कैण्ड कापी, जारीकर्ता बैंक के कन्फरमेशन मेल की प्रति टेण्डर प्रपत्रों के साथ जमा किया जाना अनिवार्य है। धरोहर धनराशि के बिना एवं सर्शत निविदाएं स्वीकार नहीं की जायेगी। निविदा प्रपत्र नकद या बैक ड्राफ्ट अथवा आर0टी0जी0एस द्वारा भुगतान कर निविदा खुलने की तिथि को 12.00 बजे तक अधिशाषी अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, गोण्डा के कार्यालय से क्रय/प्राप्त किये जा सकत हैं। निविदा का मूल्य रू0 236/– (कर सहित) निविदा खुलने की तिथि को अवकाश की स्थिति में, निविदा अगले कार्य दिवस में निर्धारित समय तक प्राप्त कर खोली जायेंगी। अधोहस्ताक्षरी को किसी या समस्त निविदाओं को निरस्त करने का आधकार सुरक्षित है। विस्तृत विवरण www.upptcl.org बेवसाइट पर भी देखा जा सकता है एवं निविदायें डाउनलोड करके उसके साथ निविदा मूल्य का ड्राफ्ट संलग्न कर भी स्वीकार्य है। **1. निविदा सं0–104/वि0पा0म0/गो0/2020–21:** विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड गोण्डा के अन्तर्गत उपखण्ड अधिकारी, विद्युत पारेषण उपखण्ड–प्रथम, गोण्डा हेतु 01 अदद वाहन उपलब्ध कराने सम्बन्धी कार्य। धरोहर राशि रु0 2,000/–मात्र। "राष्ट्र हित में बिजली बचायें साधारण बल्ब के स्थान पर एल0ई0डी0 बल्ब का प्रयोग करें" **अधीक्षण अभियन्ता विद्युत पारेषण मण्डल 220 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र परिसर जेल रोड, गोण्डा** संख्या–3031/वि0पा0म0/गो0/टेन्डर न0–104 ई0टी0सी0/गो0/2020–21, दिनांक– 03/03/2021

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता विद्युत पारेषण मण्डल गोण्डा ई–टेन्डरिंग निविदा सूचना अनुभवी फर्मों/ठेकेदारों से निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु सीलबन्द निविदायें दो भागों में दिनांक 22.03.2021 को 14.00 बजे तक आमन्त्रित की जाती है। **(1) ई–निविदा संख्या 110/ई0टी0सी0(गोण्डा)/2020–21:** विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, गोण्डा के अन्तर्गत प्रस्तावित 132 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र घारीघाट की भूमि का पिलर द्वारा चिन्हीकरण व सम्बन्धी कार्य। धरोहर राशि रू0 2000.00 निविदा भाग–1 खुलने की तिथि 22.03.2021 का 15:00 बजे, निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य रू0 236.00 (कर सहित)। **(2) ई–निविदा संख्या 111/ ई0टी0सी0(गोण्डा)/ 2020–21:** विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, गोण्डा के अन्तर्गत 132 के0वी0 उपकेन्द्र मनकापुर एव बलरामपुर पर पुराने कन्ट्रोल पैनल को बदलने सम्बन्धी कार्य। धरोहर राशि रू0 2000.00 निविदा भाग–1 खुलने की तिथि 22.03.2021 का 15:00 बजे, निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य रू0 236.00 (कर सहित)। **(3) ई–निविदा संख्या 112/ई0टी0सी0 (गोण्डा)/ 2020–21:** विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, गोण्डा के अन्तर्गत 220 के0वी0 बलरामपुर के वार्षिक परिचालन सम्बन्धी कार्य। धरोहर राशि रू0 15000.00 निविदा भाग–1 खुलने की तिथि 22.03.2021 को 15:00 बजे, निविदा प्रपत्र मूल्य रू0 1170.00 (कर सहित)। निविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क(नान रिफन्डेबिल) एवं ई0एम0डी0 अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत पारेषण खण्ड, गोण्डा के बैंक खाते में (बैंक का नाम–पंजाब नेशनल बैंक, खाता सं– 0181002100120697, आईएफएससी कोड–PUNB0018100) आर0टी0जी0एस/एनईएफटी के माध्यम से निविदा की अतिम अपलोड तिथि से एक दिन पूर्व तक जमा की जायेगी तथा बैक में जमा किये जाने का साक्ष्य यथा योज्य यू0टी0आर0 सं0, खाते का नाम निर्गतकर्ता बैंक अधिकारी द्वारा हस्ताक्षरित एवं निविदादाता द्वारा प्रतिहस्ताक्षरित पे इनस्लिप की स्कैन्डप्रति, ईएमडी के लिए बैंक गारण्टी का स्कैण्ड कापी, जारीकर्ता बैंक के कन्फरमेशनमेल की प्रति भी निविदाप्रपत्रों के साथ इलेक्ट्रानिकली साफ व पठनीय अपलोड की जायेगी, अन्यथा कि स्थिति में निविदादाता द्वारा प्रस्तुत निविदा को स्वतः निरस्त समझा जायेगा। साथ ही निविदा के भाग–1 में तकनीकी बिड (पैन कार्ड, इन्कमटैक्स रिटर्न, जी0एस0टी0 पंजीकरण की स्वयं प्रमाणित छायाप्रति एवं तकनीकी अनुभव इत्यादि), संलग्न करना अनिवार्य है। धरोहर राशि/निविदा शुल्क जमा न होने अथवा किसी प्रकार की त्रुटि होने पर निविदा का भाग–2 जिसमें दरें दी जानी है, नही खोली जायेगी। भाग–2 में दरें एंव वाणिज्यक नियम व शर्ते होनी चाहिये। तथा हार्ड कापी कार्यालय में जमा करने की आवश्यकता नहीं होगी। किसी भी स्थिति में निविदा के Retender होने पर निविदा की निविदा शुल्क(नान रिफन्डेबिल) एवं धरोहर धनराशि पुनः जमा की जानी अनिवार्य होगी, अन्यथा कि स्थिति में निविदादाता द्वारा प्रस्तुत निविदा को स्वतः निरस्त समझा जायेगा। निविदा का भाग प्रथम एवं द्वितीयः–(प्राइजबिड दरें एवं शर्ते) दिनांक 22.03.2021 को 14.00 बजे तक www.etender.up.nic.in पर अपलोड की जा सकती हैं। निविदा का प्रथम भाग दिनांक 22.03.2021 को 15.00 बजे एवं भाग–2 (प्राइज पार्ट) निविदा शुल्क एवं धरोहर धनराशि प्राप्ति की पुष्टि होने के पश्चात सार्वजनिक रूप से खोली जायेगी। निविदा खुलने की तिथि पर अवकाश होने की स्थिति में निविदा अगले कार्य दिवस पर निर्धारित समय पर खोली जायेगी। निविदाओं को बिना कोई कारण बताये निविदा/निविदाओं को अस्वीकार/विभाजित करने का अधिकार अधोहस्ताक्षरकर्ता के पास सुरक्षित रहेगा। धरोहर/निविदा राशि रहित व सशर्त निविदायें स्वीकार नहीं की जायेगी। कृपया विस्तृत जानकारी, डाउनलोड, अन्य संशोधनों एवं निविदा प्रस्तुत करने के दिनांक तक विस्तार आदि के सम्बन्ध में कृपया www.etenrder.up.nic.in की वेबसाईट पर लॉगआन करें। **मुख्य अभियन्ता विद्युत पारेषण मण्डल गोण्डा** संख्या – 3047/वि0पा0म0/गोण्डा/ ई–टेण्डर नं0–110 से 112/2020–21 दिनांक 05/03/2021 "राष्ट्र हित मे बिजली बचायें"

U.P. POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LTD. E-TENDER NOTICE

Following E-Tenders are invited from the experienced/reputed contractors for execution of following works For more details login on website **www.etender.up.nic.in.**

1- **Very Short Term E - Tender** No.77 (AETC/2020-21:- Work of erection, commissioning and testing of 500 MVA T/F at 400 kV S/s, Hafizpur, Azamgarh. Earnest Money: Rs. 25000.00 (Rs. Twenty Five Thousand) only. Tender Cost: Rs. 2950.00 (Rs. Two Thousand Nine Hundred Fifty) only. Earnest money will be in the shape of RTGS/NEFT duly pledged in favour of Superintending Engineer, Electy. Transmission Circle, UPPTCL, Azamgarh.Tenderers can upload their tender bids against the above tender upto 14.00 hrs. of 15.03.2021 and shall be opened on same day at 16.00 Hrs. In case the tender opening date is holiday or the undersigned remains out of headquarters, the date of opening of the tender will stand extended to the next working day. Undersigned has the right to reject/devide any tender without assigning any reason thereof. Conditional tenders shall not be accepted. ERINTENDING ENGINEER (TRANS.) 'AZAMGARH No. 315 Dt 6.3.21 SAVE ELECTRICITY IN THE INTEREST OF NATION

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF GENERAL MANAGER CONSTRUCTION & DESIGN SERVICES, (E/M), NALKOOP WING, U.P. JAL NIGAM, 5/381, VIRAM KHAND, GOMTI NAGAR, LUCKNOW

Letter No.: 295 / टेंण्डर एवं दरें/ (21)/2
Dated : 03.03.21
E-TENDER NOTICE

Digitally signed e-bids are invited on behalf of the Chairman, U.P. Jal Nigam against Letter No. 778(1)/52-1-2020 Dated 18.09.2020 of Additional Chief Secretary, Alpasankhyak Kalyan Vibhag for execution of : A-Design, supply, installation, construction, Testing and Commissioning work of 8.5 MLD STP and 15 M.L.D. MPS and other related works (Civil and E/M) as per tender documents including one year defect liability period in Zone 1, Package-1 (Phase-1) of Balrampur Nagar Palika Parishad Sewerage System, Balrampur including Handed Over of all work to Local Body at Distt. Balrampur. From eligible, reputed and experienced bidder. Detailed E-bid documents will be available for download from 08.03.2021 by 13:00 Hrs., submission of e-bid till 22.03.2021 up to 13:00 Hrs. and opening of e-bid on 22/03/2021 at 13:30 Hrs. EMD required as per details given N.I.T. & E-tender Cost is Rs. 20000.00+GST @18% for Each tender. Details are also available on U.P. Govt. e-procurement portal http://etender.up.nic.in & U.P.J.N. website www.jn.upsdc.gov.in

Rajasthan Skill & Livelihoods Development Corporation
EMI Campus, J-8-A, Jhalana Institutional Area, Jaipur- 302004 (Rajasthan)
Ph: +91-0141-2705817, 5103248, Fax: +91-0141-5103246, www.rajasthanlivelihoods.org

F () No: RSLDC/SDT/2021-22/30976 Dated: 05-03-2021

Office Order

Subject: - Extension of Bid submission last date and opening date for procurement of Services for providing Self-Defence Training to girls/womens through training partner for RSLDC.
Reference: - RFP No. RSLDC/ SDT/20/30473 dated 3rd Feb,2021

Due to some unavoidable circumstances the last date and Bid opening date of above reffered Bid is hereby extended as per the following –

Activity	Old Date & Time	New Date & Time
Last Date/Time for Submitting / uploading of offer/ Bid	8th March, 2021 up to 3:00 PM	18th March, 2021 up to 03:00 PM
Last Date / time for submitting original hard copy of Bid Security Demand Draft	8th March, 2021 up to 3:00 PM	18th March, 2021 up to 03:00 PM
Date & Time for opening of Technical Bid	8th March, 2021 up to 05:00 PM	18th March, 2021 at 05:00 PM

The interested bidders may submit the proposal as per the above amendments and all other terms & conditions will remain unchanged.
UBN No. SLD2021RFP0003
Raj.Samwad/C/20/10627 **Managing Director, RSLDC**

Office of The Executive Engineer Maintenance Division No.-1 (Civil) P.W.D., Lucknow
Re-Inviting Short Term E-Tender Notice

No. 562/ Tender / 2021 Date: 27.02.21

The EE Maintenance Division No.-1(Civil). U.P.P.W.D. Lucknow on behalf of Governor of Uttar Pradesh invites the percentage rate bids online from the eligible and approved Contractors registered with UP PWD, in class A/B/C/D in Building Category for the following work.

SL. No.	District	Name of work	Estimated cost (Rs.)	Bid Security (Rs.)	Cost of Document (in Rs.)	Time completion of work	Address of Executive Engineer	Address of Superintending Engineer	Address of Chief Engineer
1	Lucknow	Rodent and pest control services for Lizards, Rats Ants Cockroaches, Spiders. Beetles and insects in Main Building at Raj Bhawan, Lucknow	8.30	0.83	725.00	3 Months	E.E., Maintenance Maintenance Division no. 1 (Civil), PWD Lko.	S.E, 39th circle, PWD Lko	Chief Engineer (Building) PWD. Lucknow
2	Lucknow	Anti-termitecontrolment treatment in Main Building at Raj Bhawan, Lucknow	7.96	0.80	725.00	3 Months	E.E., Maintenance Maintenance Division no. 1 (Civil), PWD Lko.	S.E, 39th circle, PWD Lko	Chief Engineer (Building) PWD. Lucknow
3	Lucknow	Renovation with modular kitchen painting work in suite of K-16 and other work at Raj Bhawan, Lucknow	3.68	0.37	650.00	1 Months	E.E., Maintenance Maintenance Division no. 1 (Civil), PWD Lko.	S.E, 39th circle, PWD Lko	Chief Engineer (Building) PWD. Lucknow

Notice inviting tenders and bid document with detailed terms and conditions will be available online on website http://etender.up.nic.in from 08.03.2021 to 15.03.2021. upto 12:00 Noon. Bid must be submitted online only at e-tendering portal of http://etender.up.nic.in on or before 15.03.2021. at 12.00 Noon. Bids received online will be opened on 15.03.2021 at 12:30 PM

UP-161648 Dt. 4.3.21 विज्ञापन वेबसाइट www.upgov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

(AK Mishra) executive Engineer
Maintenance Division No.-1 (Civil) PWD. Lucknow meu

Office of the Executive Engineer, Construction Division-3, PWD, Sultanpur
E-mail Id- sepwdsuamethi01@gmail.com

E-Tender Notice
Short Term

No. 1997/4A/2020-21 Date : 25.02.2021

On behalf of Hon'ble Governor, U.P., Executive Engineer. C.D.-3, P.W.D. Sultanpur invites online bids for the following works from the registered eligible contractors. Building work in UP PWD.

Sl. No.	Division Name	Name of Work	Estimated Cost (Rs. In Lacs)	Bid Security (Rs. In Lacs)
1	2	3	4	5
1	C.D-3, Sultanpur	Special Repair of Roof Treatement and Painting Work in Type B officers Collony in District Sultanpur	10.80	1.08
2	CD-3 Sultanpur	Special Repair of Roof Treatement and Painting Work in Type-IV Officers Collony in District Sultanpur	11.00	1.10

The bid can be seen and downloaded online from 09.03.2021 and can be uploaded up to 12:00 Noon of 15.03.2021. The Technical bid shall be opened on 15.03.2021 at 12:30 afternoon.
All the conditions related to bid can be seen on http//etender.up.nic.in

UP-161599 Dt. 4.3.21
विज्ञापन वेबसाइट www.upgov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।

(R.K. Rajak),
Superintending Engineer
Working as Executive Engineer
Construction Division No.-3. PWD. Sultanpur

कार्यालय वनमंडल अधिकारी, नरसिंहपुर वनमंडल, नरसिंहपुर (म.प्र.)
E-mail: dfotnpur@mp.gov.in dfonsr@rediffmail.com, Phone 07792-230624

औद्योगिक बांस के अग्रिम विक्रय हेतु निविदा का विज्ञापन

अधिसूचना क्रमांक/राजस्व/औ.बांस/1281 दिनांक 02.03.2021

इस कार्यालय की अधिसूचना क्रमांक 1280 दिनांक 02.03.2021 के साथ संलग्न सूची में दर्शाये अनुसार वर्ष 2020–21 में उत्पादित औद्योगिक बांस की मात्रा के विक्रय हेतु उक्त अधिसूचना की शर्त के अन्तर्गत लॉटवार अग्रिम ई. निविदाए आमंत्रित की जाती है।

निविदा के संबंध में संक्षिप्त विवरण निम्नानुसार है :–

1. करारनामें की अवधि :– दिनांक 31.12.2021 तक।
2. निविदा देने की तिथि एवं स्थान :– नरसिंहपुर दिनांक 23.03.2021 सांय 5.30 बजे तक Online Web Portal www.mptenders.gov.in
3. सत्यांकार की राशि :– पोर्टल पर दर्शित राशि Online जमा करनी होगी।
4. निविदा खुलने की तिथि एवं स्थान :– नरसिंहपुर दिनांक 24.03.2021 वनमंडल कार्यालय नरसिंहपुर के कार्यालय में प्रातः 12.00 बजे।
5. टेण्डर फार्म :– टेण्डर फार्म पोर्टल पर उपलब्ध है।

निविदा की अन्य शर्ते पोर्टल पर उपलब्ध है।

औद्योगिक बांस की लॉटवार/डिपोवार अनुमानित मात्रा एवं निविदा शर्तो आदि की विस्तृत जानकारी संबंधित वनमंडल अधिकारी एवं वन वृत्त कार्यालय में कार्यालयीन समय में विभाग की वेबसाईट www.mpforest.gov.in अथवा उपरोक्त दर्शित पोर्टल www.mptenders.gov.in से प्राप्त की जा सकती है।

वनमंडल अधिकारी
नरसिंहपुर

G-20626/20 दो गज की दूरी, मास्क है जरूरी।

Markandey Mahadev temple to be developed as religious spot

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Union MInister for Skilled and Entrepreneurship Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey holding a programme at Kaithi on Saturday

The temple of Markandey Mahadev at Kaithi and its adjoining areas will be developed as the religious tourism on the pattern of religious city Haridwar and also to generate employment.

The Union Minister for Skilled and Entrepreneurship Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey on Saturday held a meeting with the PWD officers and informed, 'With an aim to generate employment and develop as destination of religious tourism, there is a plan of overall development of Markandey Mahadev Mandir and its adjoining areas in Kaithi.' There is a plan of developing the temple and adjoining areas like Haridwar, he added.

He appealed to the farmers whose lands are on the temple route; give their consent to keep the width of road 9 m and assured of providing an alternative route. The PWD will make beautification of temple and construct its boundary wall and gate with an estimated cost of ₹ 1.5 crore, he informed adding, a proposal regarding to construct the road from Ring Road to temple with an estimated cost of ₹3.5 crore and construct the road from the temple to Sangam Ghat with an estimated cost of ₹6.81 crore has been sent to be approved. A proposal regarding to construct the path way between Sangam Ghat and other ghats with an estimated cost of ₹7 crore has also been forwarded to be approved, he added.

The development of the region will provide employment to locals, he informed and directed the district magistrate to make arrangement of toilets at temple place particularly on the auspicious occasion of Mahashivratri, month of shravan, etc to facilitate the people. The floating jetty will be installed here in Ganga with an estimated cost of ₹45 lakh, he informed and added, the dolphins fish will be preserved. The boatmen will also be imparted training so that they could treat the foreign tourists very well, he said. The DM Kaushal Raj Sharma and other officers were present on occasion.

Many huts reduced to ashes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Fire incident took place at slum locality along the railway track in Dhelwaria area Pioneer

In a fire incident, about a dozen huts, made temporarily along the railway track in slum locality in Dhelwaria area, under the Jaitpura police station, were reduced to ashes and the fire fighting personnel had to struggle for hours to douse the fire.

According to information, there are a number of temporarily made huts along the railway track in the above mentioned area. It was said that late night on Friday, a hut caught fire and it took the other huts in its grip. The fire also took the urban community health centre situated adjacent to the slum locality in its grip.

On being informed, the local police and Fire department personnel reached the site. The fire fighting personnel took hours to extinguish the fire but by then, it was said that about a dozen huts were reduced to ashes. It was said that the properties in lakhs were gutted in the fire incident but no injury or human loss was reported. The cause behind the fire could not be ascertained and the police started investigation into the matter.

Vaccines administered on senior citizens

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

An old aged woman being administered Covid vaccine Pioneer

Under the mega COVID-19 vaccination drive, the vaccines were administered on the senior citizens and persons suffering with serious illness on Saturday.

The vaccination drive was conducted at Sir Sunderlal Hospital in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and Pt Deendayal Upadhyay District Government Hospital in Pandeypur. The vaccination drive began in the morning at 9 am and lasted till evening at 5 pm.

The vaccines were administered on senior citizen, aged above 60 years and apart from them, the persons, aged between 45 and 59 years and suffering with critical diseases were also administered the vaccine. It is mentioned that the target of administering the COVID-19 vaccine on 3,662 senior citizens and persons with critical diseases and aged between 45 and 59 years was set by the Health department in the district. The vaccines were administered on 1,586 senior citizens and persons with serious ailments on Friday.

In the meantime, a total of 420 passengers reached the international airport in Babatpur from Maharashtra on Friday and of them, the corona report of 199 passengers was already negative. The antigen test was conducted on as many as 221 passengers and their report yielded negative. All the passengers were advised to remain in home quarantine for one week following the guidelines of COVID-19. It is mentioned that the cases of COVID-19 are increasing in Maharashtra and thus keeping this in mind, the Health department decided to conduct an antigen test of passengers coming from this state as precautionary measure.

TWO MORE TEST POSITIVE: Two more have tested COVID-19 positive, increasing the tally of confirmed cases to 22,023 by Saturday evening. With no COVID-19 death being reported in the last 24 hours, the death toll remains at 377.

With one COVID-19 patient having been cured in home isolation, the number of COVID-19 patients recovered in the district so far is 21,592 including 18,612 in home isolation and 2,980 in Covid hospitals.

As present 54 active cases are under treatment in the district.

Street play organised by Safety dept

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Under the ongoing 50th National Safety Week, the street play and other programmes were organised by the Safety department of Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) on Saturday to aware the officers and employees about safety.

The Safety department of BLW is observing the 50th National Safety Week from March 4 and in this order, various programmes were organised on the third day on Saturday including street play staged by the artists to generate consciousness among officers and employees about the safety.

The officers and employees working in the engine division of BLW took a pledge to follow the norms while discharging their duty and they were also imparted training on how to control the fire using fire-extinguishing equipment.

The General Manager of BLW Anjali Goel will inaugurate the disaster management training hall 'Manthan' at eastern gate of workshop and thereafter, the personnel of Railway Protection Force, civil defense and St John's Ambulance Brigade and scout guides will show live demonstration of relief and rescue operation from fire, etc.

LJP TO SUBMIT MEMO TO DM: Accusing the government for having no control on the distribution companies of petro-products, the state president of Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) Mani Shankar Pandey on Saturday said that the party would submit a memorandum to District Magistrate to be forwarded to the President of India on March 9 regarding the skyrocketing price of petrol- diesel and domestic cylinder.

Talking to the presspersons at Paradkar Smriti Bhavan, here, Pandey accused the government for having no control on the distributing companies of petro-products and which resulted in the rise in the price of petrol, diesel and domestic cylinder and demanded the government to bring the petrol and diesel in the preview of GST to stop the highhandedness of these companies.

The Central and state governments should reduce their tax on petrol and diesel to lower the price of petro-products, he demanded and said that the reduction in the price of petrol and diesel will also reduce the price of essential commodities and foot items. The rising price of domestic cylinders has also laid adverse impact on the gas connection under Ujjawala scheme and the beneficiaries have now stopped purchasing the cylinder, he said and demanded the President of India to direct the government at Centre to reduce the petrol, diesel and cylinder to give a relief to the common people.

Railways moving closer towards goal of complete electrification by Dec 2023

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Indian Railways is moving closer towards the goal of complete electrification by December 2023. Pursuing same, the Railway Electrification, Ahmedabad under Central Organisation for Railway Electrification at Prayagraj has achieved yet another milestone in connecting first Port of Gujarat by introducing 25 KV AC Electric Traction fit for running Double Stack Container (DSC) which is first of its kind and a proud moment for our nation.

Electrification of Savarkundla - Pipavav commissioned on 21st February 2021. Its electrification will ease the introduction of 25 KV Electric traction from Palanpur-Surendranagar-Pipavav section, making a first step in Western Railway to move closer to complete electrification of Western Railway. The High-Rise OHE route opened for Freight traffic after a mandatory and intense Safety Inspections by Chief Commissioner of Railway Safety(CCRS) and his valuable technical suggestions as regards human and system safety during the inspections were also complied with.

On March 3, first electric goods train was flagged off from Dhola to Pipavav port thereby completing the last mile connectivity of DFC route from Palanpur to Pipavav port on electric traction.

YP Singh; General Manager of Central Organisation for Railway Electrification, has expressed his pleasure on this historical milestone despite the toughest challenges of new High Rise OHE and has appreciated the entire team of Railway Electrification Ahmedabad Unit for timely execution as well as quality work. The commendable feat was achieved by the team of Railway Electrification, Ahmedabad unit.

This is the first time in the entire world for successful running of double stack containers with Electric traction, which will also boost the ambitious mission of GREEN INDIA as a latest green Initiative over Indian Railway. The benefits of early completion of Railway Electrification are manifold from environmental and financial point of view and will reduce carbon footprint by reducing dependency on diesel locomotives. It is expected to save approximately ₹ 75,000-80,000 per train, which will reduce financial pressure on the Fiscal Deficit.

Earlier, OHE was designed suitably at a height of 5.8m for conventional OHE to meet existing demands of Indian Railway. However, an increasing demand on goods train felt to run Double stack container DSC suitably at same Line capacity and thereby increase in hauling capacity in same infrastructure. In order to facilitate Electrification of DSC routes, new OHE system for high rise was in development which was quite challenging as there was no such design available for running electric traction at OHE height 7.57 metre in all over the world. Successfully, introducing indigenous High-Rise OHE design by RDSO, which made it really possible to construct the High-Rise OHE and therefore the work of High-Rise OHE was carried out in very precise and accurate manner.

The electrification with High Rise OHE had its fair share of technical problems as regards Operational issues with existing electric locomotives and also negotiating existing over line structures suited for conventional OHE. The over line structures in the form of Foot Over Bridges, Road Over Bridges and Extra High-Tension lines which were required to be modified and required high level coordination with NHAI & State R&B departments and GETCO. The timely modification of Over line structures to suit High Rise OHE involved several statutory approvals of State & Central Government agencies which was duly executed well in advance.

Further, the Signalling system were required to upgraded for making it compatible for Electrified section involving high level of precision for ensuring safety.

For completing the project from Palanpur to Pipavav Port, total 414 km by Railway Electrification team of Ahmedabad, overall, 17901 m3 of Concrete, 6196.5 MT of steel, 715 MT of copper conductor & 93 Nos of Bridge masts have been used for construction of High-Rise OHE,with an approximate cost of Rs 385 crore for Electrical, Civil and Signalling & Telecom works. Accordingly, 4 Traction sub-station, one at Dharewada, one at Botad, one at Savarkundla and one at Surendranagar have been commissioned whose power supply arrangement has been provided in coordination with GETCO, as per latest Long-term Open access guidelines by CEA.

Further, first time in the history of CORE, a gigantic task of commissioning of 10 UFS Block Instruments (consisting of 6 stations) along with BP Axle counters has been completed on 30.12.2020 in Savarkundla-Pipavav section (RE Group 223), in a single disconnection block of about 5 Hours making the section fit for electric traction. FOBs at Sidhpapur, Mahesana,Katosan, Viramgam and Surendranagar were raised to suit high rise OHE fit for plying of Double stack container. In this context, some FOBs at Mahesana were dismantled. Similarly, ROBs at Savarkundla and Rajula were suitably raised to meet high rise OHE demand fit for introduction of 25 KV electric traction. The importance of the section from Palanpur to Pipavav can be summarised as only and major connectivity from Rajasthan to Pipavav port (Gujarat). Pipavav Port is known for India's first port build in Public Private Partnership model and a gateway port on the west coast India for handling containers, bulk cargos & Ro-Ro cargos. Having easy access to Rail network at Pipavav port provides logistical advantage connecting the port to critical markets in the northwest part of India.

BJP bags post of vice-president

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

BJP bagged the coveted post of executive vice-president of Prayagraj Municipal Corporation. On Saturday, BJP candidate Akhilesh Singh was elected unopposed to the post of vice-president. His supporters welcomed him with a garland and celebrated the occasion. Slogans were also raised during this period.

It is noteworthy that the nomination process for the post of vice-president of the 12-member Executive Committee of the Municipal Corporation started at 11:15 am on Saturday. The time was extended to 15 minutes due to non-fulfillment of quorum. Till 12:15 pm, only BJP candidate Akhilesh Singh filed nomination. His name was proposed by BJP corporator Kamlesh Tiwari.

Akhilesh Singh was elected unopposed by Mayor Abhilasha Gupta due to non-standing in the election of any other candidate for the post of vice-president of the Municipal Executive Committee.

Corporators Dilip Jaiswal, Amarjeet Yadav and Alpana Nishad did not attend the executive committee meeting. Only nine members were present at the meeting. The election of the Executive Committee was held under the chairmanship of Mayor Abhilasha Gupta. Additional Municipal Commissioner Mushir Ahmad, Secretary Council PK Mishra were also present during this period. At the same time, in view of the security, ACM Second, CO Civil Lines and heavy police force were present in the Municipal Corporation premises.

Prayagraj bandh on March 9

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The ongoing agitation of lawyers of Allahabad High Court took a new turn when the lawyers along with several other organisations resolved to observe Prayagraj 'bandh' on March 9 in protest against the Education Service Tribunal Bill.

Meanwhile, working in the Allahabad High Court remained disrupted as the boycott of work initiated by the lawyers in protest against the Education Service Tribunal Bill continued for the 10th consecutive day on Thursday.

The Allahabad High Court Bar Association (HCBA) had been protesting against the Bill, which provides for setting up of the principal bench of the Education Service Tribunal at Lucknow, instead at Prayagraj.

In a resolution passed on Friday, HCBA again resolved to continue to boycott judicial work on Friday on the same issue.

On Thursday, a meeting of the lawyers was organised near the High Court, which was addressed by former city MLA Anugrah Narain Singh and several leaders of employees' organisations in protest against the said Bill.

In the meeting, former MLA and other speakers criticised the state government for gradually shifting one by one, all important organisations from Prayagraj to Lucknow. They unanimously promised to extend their support to the bar association to make the bandh on March 9 a success.

Earlier, on previous days, the leaders of trade organisations, student leaders and councillors of Nagar Nigam have promised to extend their wholehearted support to the bandh on March 9.

According to HCBA joint secretary (press) Rajendra Kumar Singh, in the meeting, which was presided over by HCBA president Amrendra Nath Singh and conducted by secretary Prabha Shankar Mishra, it has been resolved to continue the agitation and make Allahabad bandh on March 9 a success.

NEGLIGENCE BY PVT HOSPITAL DOCS: In a bizarre incident, a three-year-old girl died after the doctors of a private hospital, who were performing an abdominal surgery on her, allegedly handed over the minor to the family without even giving stitches after they failed to clear the dues.

The family from Manjahanpur in Kaushambi had recently brought the girl to the hospital in Prayagraj after she complained of abdominal pain.

The case came to light after a twitter user posted a series of tweets sharing pictures and details of the inhuman treatment meted out to the family.

Taking cognizance of the matter, Prayagraj District Magistrate Bhanu Chandra Goswami constituted a two-member investigation committee comprising the chief medical officer and additional district magistrate (city).

According to officials, action has been initiated on the basis of the social media reports and it is not yet clear as to when the incident took place. The body has been sent for post-mortem examination. 'A detailed probe has been ordered after taking cognizance of the tweet that a minor girl was ousted from the private hospital with an open abdomen. It is a serious matter and we are trying to find out all details related to the girl's death,' the DM informed the reporters.

As the family belongs to Manjhanpur, the Kaushambi police has sent the body for autopsy to get the exact time and cause of her death, he added.

CMO (Prayagraj) Dr Prabhakar Rai said a detailed probe would be conducted into the incident.

Separate category for applying Covid vaccines to sick people

ALLAHABAD (PNS): The Uttar Pradesh government has definitely fixed the price in COVID- 19 vaccination for private hospitals. Many other rights have also been given to private hospitals. However, they will have to follow the rules which are the guideline of the government. They can charge only ₹ 250 for the vaccine, before the vaccine is given to the beneficiary, he/she has to get a certificate related to 20 types of diseases. The details of this will have to be given to the Health department on a daily basis. The Health department has set a separate category for applying corona vaccines to sick people between the ages of 45 and 60 years, while the category is different for people above 60 years of age. They are currently being vaccinated free of cost at government immunisation centres, while in the past, private hospitals have been empowered to charge ₹ 250 per beneficiary. If there is a complaint on charging more than this, then action will be taken. At the same time, it has also been decided that private hospitals will take a certificate from the beneficiary about which disease and under the supervision of which doctor, the former is undergoing treatment.

A prescribed proforma has been made for this purpose, vaccines can be given only after filling all the columns. According to Dr Rishi Sahai, the Nodal Officer of Corona vaccination, all the standards are set for private hospitals as well as government hospitals. The only difference is that private hospitals will charge ₹ 250 from the beneficiary.

Mayor Pramila Pandey along with Municipal Commissioner Akshay Tripathi inaugurates the newly-built Children Park in Motijheel. Pioneer

Mayor inaugurates children's park

View of newly-built Children Park Pioneer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The newly-built U-12 Children's Park developed in Kargil Park in Motijheel under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) project, was inaugurated by Kanpur Mayor Pramila Pandey and Municipal Commissioner Akshay Tripathi on Friday.

Such a park for children has been developed by the Kanpur Nagar Nigam in the city for the first time. With the use of Ethylene Propylene Diene Monomer (EPDM) rubber flooring and turf grass, the park consists of multi-play station, see-saw, climber, merry-go-round, dual station and many other kinds of swings for the young boys and girls of the city.

The park has been developed on the theme of Indian cartoon characters Chhota Bhim, Chacha Chaudhary, Motu-Patlu etc. using the latest technology by the city's famous company, MHPL Ltd.

After formal inspection of the park, Mayor Pramila Pandey and Municipal Commissioner Akshay Tripathi praised the efforts of MHPL Ltd and nagar nigam officers. They also enjoyed a ride on the swings and said other parks of the city would be developed on the same pattern in due course.

Zonal Engineer (Project) RK Singh said that apart from the children's park, work on four other projects — Riverfront, Food Court, Connecting Bridge and Lighting — was also in progress.

Additional Municipal Commissioner AK Rai, area corporator Namit Mishra, Udyan Superintendent Dr VK Singh, and officers and employees concerned were also present.

The park is spread over 1,500 square metres. Being the first of its kind amongst the 600 parks in the city, this complex will allow exclusive access to kids and youngsters, thereby, increasing their footfall in Motijheel. The latest complex consists of advanced and interesting swings in addition to well-paved specified areas for skating. Mending and strengthening the park boundaries, the fencing has been renovated with new railings. Given the long list of additions that have been worked upon, the park will soon evolve as a favourite destination among children.

Faceless tax assessment game changer: Ahuja

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Noted tax expert Girish Kumar Ahuja from New Delhi, while speaking on 'Faceless Tax Assessment' at CA the Bhawan in Lakhanpur, said one should keep in mind that the government possessed all the necessary information related to tax and in the current times there was no possibility of tax evasion and thus one should play one's card honestly and transparently.

Speaking at a seminar organised by the Central India Regional Council, Ahuja said 'Faceless Tax Assessment' was a major tax reform and game-changer because it sought to streamline and bring in greater transparency and accountability in the tax administration.

He said it was ironic that this transparency had been brought out by seeking to prop up an opaque wall between the taxpayer and the assessment officials.

Speaking on sections 143(3A) and (3B) of the Income-tax Act, 1961, he said these sub-section provided for "eliminating the interface between the assessing officer and the assessee to the extent feasible", "optimising the utilisation of resources to economies of scale and functional specialisation" and "introducing team based assessment with dynamic jurisdiction", and all in the name of imparting "greater efficiency, transparency and accountability".

Ahuja said the scheme seemed to prima facie give rise to constitutional problems by the very nature of the traditional role of the assessing officer in the tax administration.

He said it was well established that the assessing officer was a quasi judicial authority, fulfilling a judicial function while making an assessment. He said the procedure of assessment seemed to suggest that the national e-assessment centre may finalise the draft assessment order if it did not propose any modification or assign any review.

He said thus it was possible that the scheme could be interpreted in a way that did not make any provision of an assessee to have a video conference with the assessing officer in order to clarify any questions that the officer may have.

He added that the new scheme provided that after considering the material before him, the officer making the assessment shall pass a "draft assessment order" which shall then be sent to the National Reassessment Centre which then shall finalise the draft assessment order, propose a modification of the said order by providing the assessee an opportunity to be heard or assign the draft assessment order to review a unit in any of the regional assessment centres through an automated allocation system.

Ahuja said the Faceless Appeal Scheme, 2020, that had been brought out by the insertion of sub-sections (6B) and (6C) into Section 250 of the Income-tax Act, 1961, dealt with the procedure in appeal. He said the said scheme also sought in a manner similar to what the Faceless Assessment Scheme did to the assessing officer, to erode the judicial discretion of the Commissioner of Income-tax (Appeals), who undoubtedly was discharging a judicial function in the adjudication of appeals and must therefore by above fear or favour.

He said though recent events had shown that the administration had sought to be more friendly towards taxpayers, certain actions of the department had shown otherwise as well.

Prominent among those present were Anuj Goya, Manu Agarwal, DK Somani, Atul Mehrotra and Dinesh Jain.

'India is known for its culture & tradition in world'

VARANASI (PNS): Prof Anand Sharma, Visiting Professor, ICCR, CHAIR on Friday expressed, 'India is known for its culture and tradition in the world and Indian culture is source of all the culture of the world.' 'The new National Education Policy (NEP) is to attach this Indian culture and tradition and is also to enhance creative capability of students', he adds while putting his views on the fifth day of 14-days international workshop being held virtually under the joint auspices of Hindi dpartment, Vasanta College for Women, Raj Ghat, Shiksha Vidyapith, Mahatma Gandhi Antarrashtriya Vishwavidyalaya, Wardha.

Dr Priyadarshini expressed in second session of the day that the base of word 'lok' is not classical texts and added, it's base is the knowledge of world and result of memories of ancestors and it inherits human quality. Dr Pramod expressed, Hindi plays an important role in uniting the country with nationality, culturally and emotionally. Prof Suman Jain, Head of Hindi department, Mahila Mahavidyalay, BHU put her views on 'Gandhi and new education policy' and emphasised on paying attention on mother tongue for the development of education. We protect our culture by protecting our language, Dr Jain said and added, the new education policy is an effort to reestablishing the glory of the country. Dr Vibha Rani Patel and Dr Amit Sharma jointly conducted it, while Bandana Jha offered a formal vote of thanks.

CONTEMPLATION CAMP: With an aim to brainstorming about the condition and direction of the country, the Kamalapati Tripathi Foundation will organise a three-day contemplation camp on March 7, 8 and 9 at the foundation office in Englishialine, here. Talking to the presspersons, Vijay Shankar Pandey, Prof Anil Upadhyay, Baijnath Singh and Shailendra Singh informed that the contemplation camp will be inaugurated on Sunday at 2 pm by the seer of Sankatmochan Temple Prof Vishwambhar Nath Mishra and added that the camp will be held in two sessions each day from 2 pm to 6 pm.

Two farmers die in road accident

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Two farmers were fatally knocked down by a speeding pickup on Bairi-Rania road under Sheoli Kotwali police station of Kanpur Dehat late Friday night.

According to reports, Ram Shanker (50) of Kuriyanpur village and Deshraj Pal (48) of Madrapurwa village had gone to their fields on Friday. When they were returning home late in the night, a speeding pickup knocked them down on Bairi-Rania road, killing both on the spot. As the driver tried to escape, he lost control over the wheel and the pickup fell into a pit.

On Saturday morning, when the kin of the farmers did not find them on the field, they moved towards the Bairi-Rania road and saw their bodies lying on the road and a pickup overturned in a nearby pit.

Station House Officer Pramod Kumar Shukla said on the basis of the pickup's registration number, they were making efforts to trace the driver.

ELECTED: Satish Chandra Singh has been elected president of All India Defence Accounts Karmachari Sangh in the election held at its headquarters in Kolkata on Friday.

The Defence Accounts Karmachari Sangh will again be headed by a leader from Kanpur after 24 years, Anand Awasthi of Kanpur was also its president before his retirement.

All the officers and employees of defence organisations in the city and all over the country have hailed Singh's election as president of AIDAKS.

Midcap fund may hit investment market soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Noted investment expert Harshad Patwardhan, CIO, Equity of Edelweiss Asset Management Limited, in a virtual press conference said Midcap fund, after passing through ups and downs over the last 13 years, was likely to again hit the Indian investment markets soon.

He said over the past 3 to 5 years, ending December 2020, large cap index had delivered far better CAGR returns of 9.9 Per cent and 12 per cent respectively compared to -0.5 per cent and 9.2 per cent for midcap index.

He said a closer look revealed that MOF of it was due to severe underperformance of midcaps in years 2018 and 2019. He said this was a period of decelerating economic growth and a narrow rally where only a handful of stocks drove markets. With economic growth becoming more broad-based on the way up, he expects midcaps to reverse the recent underperformance.

Animal health mela held

VARANASI: A divisional level Pt Deendayal Upadhyay Animal Health Mela was held at Admapur Gram Panchayat in Sewapuri development block, here on Saturday.The registration of a total of 2672 cattle was made in Mela and the free treatment of a total of 1,845 cattle was made by a team of veterinary doctors. Besides, the artificial insemination of 12 cattle, sterilisation of 85 cattle, infertility prevention of 238 cattle and operation of 15 cattle were made. The medicine was also used on 1,465 cattle and the free requisite medicines were also distributed in the fair. The MLA and guest of honour Surendra Singh Aidhe honoured 21 animal keepers at a brief function for keeping the cattle in a better way. Three teachers and three students of a local school were also rewarded by him for the women empowerment. The Chief Veterinary Officer Dr VB Singh, Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer Dr Shiv Singh and others were present on the occasion.

DM reviews schemes

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

DM Praveen Kumar Laxkar while reviewing schemes being accorded priority by the government at Collectorate meeting hall on Friday, expressed discontent over tardy progress in distribution of golden cards under Ayushman Bharat scheme and directed the CMO to intensify it through camps as a special drive. The camps should be started from the village in which distribution was zero, he added. Referring to IGRS the DM made it clear that no laxity would be tolerated and directed to dispose of cent per cent matters on merit. The Jal Nigam was directed to install and rebore handpumps timely and identify villages where water supply was required through tankers. He directed the official concerned that no scarcity of water supply should be come to light so all arrangements should be done in advance. Reviewing AMRUT scheme the DM directed departments concerned to expedite the work and complete it with quality and ensure no inconvenience is faced by people. The DM was apprised by EE Sirsi dam division that due to shortage of water in Apar Khajuri dam they failed to irrigate fields located at tail end of canal. The DM told the officials to complete works of panchayat buildings and community toilets within the deadline and regarding the paucity of fund the DM asked the departments concerned to put up letter before him for demand of the required budget. All points of priority fixed by government were discussed. CDO Avinash Singh was also present on the occasion.

RUN OVER BY TRAIN: Maanti Devi (45) of Umariya village was run over by a train while she was crossing the railway track on Friday.

Gkp-Chhapra unreserved exp from tomorrow

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

For the convenience of passengers the railway administration will between Gorakhpur-Chhapra, Gorakhpur-Siwan and Gorakhpur-Narkatiaganj run one pair each of unreserved express special trains will be reduced. Keeping Covid-19 in mind these specials will be run as express (unreserved) special trains so that there is no extra rush in them and to ensure compliance of its safety standards, CPRO PK Singh said.

GKP-CHHAPRA EXP: The 05126 Gorakhpur (GKP)-Chhapra unreserved express special will from March 8 leave Gorakhpur daily at 09.00 hours and after stopping at Gorakhpur Cantt, Kusmhi, Sardarnagar, Chauri Chaura, Gauri Bazaar, Deoria Sadar, Ahilyapur, Nunkhar, Bhatni, Nonapar, Bhatpar Rani, Bankata, Mairwa, Karchhui, Jiradei, Siwan, Pachrukhi, Duraundha, Chainwa, Mahendranath, Ekma, Daudpur, Kopa Samhota and Teknewas and reach Chhapra at 14.20 hrs. Besides the 05125 Chhapra-Gorakhpur unreserved express special will from March 8 leave Chhapra at 16.45 hrs daily and after stopping at Teknewas, Kopa Samhota, Daudpur, Ekma, Mahendranath, Chainwa, Duraundha, Pachrukhi, Siwan, Jiradei, Karchhui, Mairwa, Bankata, Bhatpar Rani, Nonapar, Bhatni, Nunkhar, Ahilyapur, Deoria Sadar, Baitalpur, Gauri Bazar, Chauri Chaura, Sardarnagar, Kusamhi and Gorakhpur Cantt reach Gorakhpur at 21.40 hrs.

GKP-SIWAN EXP: The 05142 Gorakhpur-Siwan unreserved express special from March 7 will leave Gorakhpur at 18.30 hrs and after stopping at Gorakhpur Cantt, Kusmhi, Sardarnagar, Chauri Chaura, Gauri Bazar, Baitalpur, Deoria Sadar, Ahilyapur, Nunkhar, Bhatni, Nonapar, Bhatpar Rani, Bankata, Mairwa, Karchhui and Jiradei reach Siwan will arrive at 22.00 hrs. On the other hand, the 05141 Siwan-Gorakhpur unreserved express special will from March 7 leave Siwan daily at 05.40 hrs and after stopping at Jiradei, Karchhui, Mairwa, Bankata, Bhatpar Rani, Nonapar, Bhatni, Nunkhar, Ahilyapur, Deoria Sadar, Baitalpur, Gauri Bazaar, Chauri Chaura, Sardarnagar, Kusmhi and Gorakhpur Cantt reach Gorakhpur at 09.40 hrs.

GKP-NARKATIAGANJ EXP: The 05036 Gorakhpur-Narkatiaganj unreserved express special will from March 10 leave Gorakhpur daily at 06.55 hrs and after stopping at Gorakhpur Cantt, Unaula, Pipraich, Mahuva Khurd Halt, Bodarwar, Khushalnagar, Ghughuli, Siswa Bazar, Gurli Ramgarhwa, Khadda, Paniahwa, Valmikinagar Road, Awasani Halt, Bagaha, Kharpokhra, Bhairoganj, Harinagar and Chamua and reach Narkatiaganj at 11.40 hrs. On the other hand, the 05035 Narkatiaganj-Gorakhpur unreserved express special will from March 10 leave Narkatiaganj daily at 15.05 hrs and after stopping at Chamua, Bhairoganj, Kharpokhra, Bagaha, Awasani Halt, Valmikinagar Road, Paniahwa, Khadda, Gurli Ramgarhwa, Siswa Bazar, Ghughuli, Khushalnagar, Kaptanganj, Bodarwar, Mahuawa Khurd Halt, Pipraich, Unaula and Gorakhpur Cantt and reach Gorakhpur at 20.45 hrs. A total of 10 coaches will be attached in these trains.

Gkp-Sitapur unreserved exp from March 9

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration will between Gorakhpur-Sitapur run one pair and between Lucknow Jn-Mailani two pairs of unreserved express special trains. In view of Covid-19, these specials will be run as express (unreserved) special trains so that there is no extra rush and for ensuring compliance of Covid-19 safety standards, CPRO said. In the larger health interest of passengers travelling in these special trains and their co-passengers it is necessary to comply with Covid-19 safety norms.

05093 GKP-STP EXP: The 05093 Gorakhpur (GKP)-Sitapur (STP) unreserved express special will from March 9 leave Gorakhpur daily at 06.00 hrs and after stopping Dominagarh, Jagatbela, Sahjanwa, Sihapar, Maghar, Khalilabad, Chureb, Munderwa, Orwara, Basti, Govindnagar, Tinich, Gaur, Babhnan, Parsa Tiwari, Babhan Jotia Halt, Swami Narayan Chhapia, Maskanwa, Lakhpatnagar, Mankapur, Jhilahi, Motiganj, Barua Chak, Gonda, Gonda Kachahri, Kathola, Maijapur, Kasturi, Colonelganj, Sarju, Jarwal Road, Ghaghra Ghat, Chowka Ghat, Burhwal, Sundhiamau, Tehsil Fatehpur, Paintepur, Munda Gopal Ash, Mahmudabad Awadh, Babupur, Sarayan, Shankarpur, Biswan, Ramaipur, Parsendi and Tappa Khajuria reach Sitapur at 15.05 hrs. Whereas 05094 Sitapur-Gorakhpur unreserved express special will from March 9 leave Sitapur daily at 15.45 hrs and after stopping at Tappa Khajuria, Parsendi, Ramaipur, Biswan, Shankarpur, Sarayan, Babupur, Mahmudabad Avadh, Munda Gopal Ash, Paintepur, Tehsil Fatehpur, Sudhiamau, Burhwal, Chowkaghat, Ghaghra Ghat, Jarwal Road, Sarju, Colonelganj, Kasturi, Majapur, Kathola, Gonda Kachahri, Gonda Jn, Baruachak, Motiganj, Jhilahi, Mankapur, Lakhpatnagar, Masakanwa, Swami Narayan Chhapia, Bhabhan Jotia Halt, Parsa Tiwari, Babhnan, Gaur, Tinich, Govindnagar, Basti, Orwara, Munderwa, Chureb, Khalilabad, Maghar Sihapar, Sahjanwa, Jagatbela on the second day and Domingarh and reach Gorakhpur at 01.15 hrs.

05086 LJN-MAILANI EXP: The 05086 Lucknow Jn- Mailani unreserved express special will from March 7 daily leave Lucknow Jn at 06.20 hrs and after stopping at Aishbagh, Lucknow City, Daliganj, Mohibullapur, Bakshi Ka Talab, Itaunja, Ataria, Manwa, Sidhauli, Suraincha Halt, Kamlapur, Barai Jalalpur, Sitapur, Bhurjiha Bargaon, Jharekhapur, Parasehra Mal, Hargaon, Oel, Kadipur Sani Halt, Khiri Town, Lakhimpur, Deokali, Pharadahan, Razaganj, Baheliya Buzurg, Gola Gokaran Nath, Mailani and Banke Ganj reach Mailani at 12.45 hrs. In the return journey the 05085 Malani-Lucknow Jn unreserved express special will from March 7 leave Mailani daily at 15.00 hrs and after stopping at Banke Ganj, Gola Gokaran Nath, Bahelia Buzurg, Razaganj, Pharadahan, Deokali, Lakhimpur, Kheri Town, Kadipur Sani Halt, Oel, Hargaon, Parsehra Mal, Jharekapur, Bhurjiha Bargaon, Sitapur, Barai Jalalpur, Kamlapur Suraincha Halt, Sidhauli, Manwa, Ataria, Itaunja, Bakshi Ka Talab, Mohibullapur, Daliganj, Lucknow City and Aishbagh reach Lucknow Jn at 20.45 hrs.

05088 LJN-MAILANI EXP: The 05088 Lucknow Jn- Mailani unreserved express special will from March 7 daily leave Lucknow Jn at 13.45 hrs and after stopping at Aishbagh, Lucknow City, Daliganj, Mohibullapur, Bakshi Ka Talab, Itaunja, Ataria, Manwa, Sidhauli, Suraincha Halt, Kamlapur, Barai Jalalpur, Khaira Talab, Sitapur, Bhurjiha Baragaon, Jharekhapur, Parsehra Mal, Hargaon, Oel, Kadipur Sani Halt, Khiri Town, Lakhimpur, Deokali, Pharadahan, Razajganj, Bahelia Buzurg, Gola Gokaran Nath and Banke Ganj and reach Mailani at 19.50 hrs. In the return journey 05087 Mailani-LJN unreserved express special will from March 7 will leave Mailani daily at 06.05 hrs and after stopping at Banke Ganj, Gola Gokaran Nath, Bahelia Buzurg, Razaganj, Pharadahan, Deokali, Lakhimpur, Khiri Town, Kadipur Sani Halt, Oel Hargaon, Parsehra Mal, Jharekapur, Bhurjiha Bargaon, Sitapur, Khaira Talab, Barai Jalalpur, Kamlapur, Suraincha Halt, Sidhauli, Manwa, Ataria, Itaunja, Bakshi Ka Talab, Mohibullapur, Daliganj, Lucknow City and Aishbagh reach Lucknow Jn at 12.10 hrs. A total of 10 coaches will be attached in these special trains.

DRM inspects development works

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of NER (Varanasi division) Vijay Kumar Panjiar on Friday on Chhapra Diesel Lobby inspected development of facilities for railway employees and at Chhapra Jn railway station passenger facilities and traffic management. The DRM on his inspection vehicle first reached Chhapra Jn railway station and while pulling the trolley bag to be given to guard and loco pilot covered the distance from the platform of Chhapra Jn station to diesel lobby and cleared the doubts of various railway personnel. On the occasion the DRM opened the line box used by guards and loco pilots and new trolley bag doing comparative demonstration showed how the latter is more convenient and technically modern. He encouraged them to do running duty with less weight luggage on the lines of air travel. He said that trolley bag was being given in place of line box. This process is already in force in East Central Railway (ECR) and other zonal railways. These trolley bags are being given to increase the convenience and work efficiency of employees. In the trolley bag in place of heavy books (rule book) tabs are being given using which the guards and drivers will be technically proficient. The weight of this trolley bag with all the safety devices will not exceed five-six kg. He also did a thorough inspection of the ongoing passenger facility development works at Chhapra Jn station such as construction of new platform, entrance gate of the other end, extension of foot over bridge besides those regarding installation of lift and upgradation of operational arrangements. During this time he also inspected the guard and driver running room of Chhapra Jn and reviewed the work plan and methodology in relation to the expansion works of the under construction running room and gave directions to the concerned for possible changes. In a formal meeting with the press representatives of Saran region he informed about the completion of the Chhapra-Ballia doubling by 2023, encouraging guards and loco pilots to use trolley bags, re-running of unreserved trains and their stoppage. Thereafter the DRM by his inspection special train from Chhapra Jn railway station while conducting window trailing inspection then proceeded to Varanasi. During the inspection DRM was accompanied by SDOM Rohit Gupta, Senior Divisional Engineer (SDE)-II Manoj Kumar Singh, Senior Divisional Signal and Telecom Engineer (SDSTE) Trimbak Tiwari, SDEE (TRD) Pankaj Kesharwani, Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (O&F) Alok Kesharwani and senior supervisor were present.

Lookout notice against TMC leader's brother

CATTLESMUGGLINGCASE

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has issued a lookout notice against Bijay Mishra, brother of Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Binay Mishra who is a close confidant of party MP Abhishek Banerjee, in a cattle-smuggling case.

The agency is mulling over approaching Interpol to get a Red Corner Notice (RCN) issued against Binay Mishra, who has not joined the probe till now, officials said.

"A lookout notice has been issued against Bijay Mishra, the brother of TMC leader Binay Mishra," the official said, without divulging any other details.

The agency has also summoned two senior officers of the West Bengal police -- an Inspector General and a Superintendent of Police -- on Monday for questioning in connection with the case, they said.

The agency had named Binay Mishra as a co-accused in its supplementary chargesheet filed in the cattle-smuggling case last month.

Binay Mishra is suspected to be close to West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee, they further said.

In its chargesheet filed before a designated CBI court in Asansol (West Bengal), the agency has already mentioned Binay Mishra as absconding.

The CBI had filed a chargesheet on February 18 in the case against Border Security Force (BSF) Commandant Satish Kumar and six others for their alleged involvement in a cattle-smuggling racket operating at the India-Bangladesh border.

Recently, the CBI had also questioned Abhishek Banerjee's wife Rujira and sister-in-law Menaka Gambhir in a separate case pertaining to illegal coal mining and pilferage from the mines of the Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL).

ED arrests 2 directors of TN-based firm over ₹325 cr laundering

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday said it has arrested two directors of a Tamil Nadu-based firm in a money laundering case worth ₹325 crore, linked to a bank fraud case.

Hittesh Patel and Suresh N Patel, directors of Shinago Plantations Pvt Ltd, were sent to 10 days' ED custody by a special court on Saturday after they were placed under arrest under sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the agency said in a statement.

The two allegedly laundered funds to the tune of ₹325 crore by using a network of nearly 20 group entities located across Tamil Nadu.

The PMLA investigation revealed that "the accused in collusion with the valuers availed loans from erstwhile Corporation Bank (now Union Bank of India) on the basis of inflated value of the properties offered as collateral and indulged in wilful diversion of funds through various group accounts."

It said investigation further revealed that "the funds so availed by various individuals/group concerns in the form of Letter of Credit (LC) and Cash Credit (CC) limits/Agriculture term loans, were transferred within the group entities through circular rotation of money to avail more funds from the Bank without any actual business."

Donations for Ram Mandir cross more than ₹2,500 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Donations for the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya are estimated to have crossed ₹2,500 crore and construction is likely to be completed in three years.

Addressing the media, Ramjanmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust chairman Champat Rai on Saturday said that the construction will commence from April and as per banks' estimations till February 4, the donations have crossed ₹2,500 crore and house-to-house visits for donations have been stopped.

Now only online donations will be received, Rai said adding that 10 crore households in 4 lakh villages had been approached by 9 lakh volunteers in the past 45 days during the fund collection drive.

"Four lakh cubic stones will be used to complete construction within 3 years. While construction has not begun, the improvement of land for the foundation will start in April.

Around ₹2,500 cr have been received till 4th of March, but can't confirm the figures. We have reached 10 crore households with 9 lakh workers. The campaign is over doesn't mean that dedication towards God is over. Visit our website which has all the details of bank accounts and one can contribute accordingly."

He also said that a lot of responses were received from North East States and Southern States.

To a query, Rai said that donations from Rajasthan are expected to be bigger than Uttar Pradesh.

From Arunachal Pradesh donations are estimated to have crossed ₹4.5 crore, followed by ₹2 crore from Manipur. As per the press release issued by VHP, Rs.85 crore has been received from Tamil Nadu and ₹13 crore from Kerala.

Hybrid physical hearings in SC from March 15

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court, which is hearing cases through video-conferencing since March last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, will commence hybrid physical hearings from March 15.

The apex court has issued the standard operating procedure (SOP) for the hybrid physical hearings.

The top court has been hearing cases through video-conferencing since March last year due to the pandemic and several bar bodies and lawyers have been demanding that physical hearings should resume immediately.

"On an experimental basis, and as a pilot scheme, the final hearings/regular matters listed on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays may be heard in the hybrid mode, as may be decided by the bench, considering the number of parties in a matter as well as the limited capacity of the courtrooms; all other matters, including those listed on Mondays and Fridays, shall continue to be heard through video/tele-conferencing mode," said the SOP issued by the apex court.

"The hybrid physical hearings are to commence with effect from March 15, 2021," it added.

It said unless otherwise directed by a bench, the final hearings or regular matters where the number of lawyers for the parties is higher than the average working capacity of the courtrooms according to COVID-19 norms, that is 20 per courtroom at any given time, shall invariably be listed for hearing through the video or tele-conferencing mode.

"...However, in case the bench directs hearing of such matters to be held through the hybrid mode, the appearance of the parties, whether by physical presence or through video/tele-conferencing, will be facilitated as per the directions of the bench," the SOP said.

It said if the number of parties is higher than the specified number in a matter listed for hybrid hearing, then one advocate-on-record (AOR) and one arguing counsel per party would be allowed entry.

It said one registered clerk per party, as may be chosen by the AOR, shall be allowed entry to carry paper-books or journals of lawyers up to the courtrooms.

Cong: Kisan stir period black chapter in India's democracy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the farmers' protest against the Centre's new farm laws completed 100 days, the Congress on Saturday said the period was a "black chapter" in India's democracy for the treatment meted out to the protesters and also marked 100 days of the ruling BJP's "arrogance".

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi hit out at the Centre over the farmers' protest and said nails were laid at Delhi's borders for those, whose sons risk their lives at the country's borders.

His attack came after the farmers' agitation completed 100 days with the protesting union leaders asserting that their movement is far from over and they are "going strong". "Whose sons risk their lives at the country's borders, for them nails have been laid at the borders of Delhi. 'Annadaatas' demand their rights, government commits atrocities," Rahul said in his tweet,

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also hit out at the Centre saying, "100 days of farmers' struggle, of fight for rights, of respect for 'annadaatas', of the path shown by Gandhiji, Sardar (Vallabhbhai) Patel, Nehruji, (Lal Bahadur) Shastriji, Shaheed Bhagat Singh." With the hashtag '100DaysOfBJParrogance', she said, "100 days of BJP Government's arrogance, of assault on farmers, of lies and scorn for farmers."

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said the protesting farmers have been braving all odds — of nature and the might of the State — for the last 100 days.

"Each one of us, whichever category we may belong to, have our own struggles and that is the awareness on which the Government depends," Khera said.

There is one section of the society that has found time to come out and protest — farmers — against these "black laws" and they are "our voice", he added.

The Congress demands that the three new farm laws should immediately be repealed, Khera said.

Kerala gold smuggling case

CPM accuses Centre of misusing Central agencies against CM, Mins

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/KOCHI

The CPI(M) Polit Bureau on Saturday accused the BJP-led Government at the Centre of playing dirty tricks by misusing Central agencies like Customs Department to target Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and Ministers during the poll season with tutored affidavits of accused persons in the gold smuggling case.

For his part, Vijayan said: "After declaration of Assembly polls, central investigation agencies' attacks have intensified. The Customs Commissioner, who isn't party to gold smuggling case, included portions of confidential statement by accused (Swapna Suresh) in his statement in High Court. He has also leveled allegations against Kerala Speaker and Ministers to defame the LDF government."

The Customs Department in Kochi earlier alleged that a political party was trying to intimidate the investigation agency but made it clear that it will not work. "A political party trying intimidation, will not work," Customs (Preventive) Commissioner Sumit Kumar wrote on his Facebook page.

"She has stated with clarity about smuggling of foreign currency at the instance of the Hon'ble chief minister and the Hon'ble Speaker with the help of the Consulate," the Customs has said in a statement filed in the Kerala high court.

The CPI (M) Polit Bureau alleged that the tutored statements of the jailed accused was recorded months ago and leaked to malign the party during the election time.

"The Polit Bureau of the CPI(M) strongly condemns the Customs Authority's attempt to falsely implicate Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, three other ministers and the Speaker of the Assembly of Kerala in an alleged dollar smuggling case. The customs have cited an affidavit by one of the accused, who is in judicial custody in the gold smuggling case, for this purpose. The fact that this tutored statement was recorded some months ago and presented after the elections were announced shows the political game behind this move.

"The BJP Central government is systematically misusing the Central agencies for maligning the Chief Minister and the LDF government. The people of Kerala will see through this political chicanery and give a fitting rebuff to the dirty tactics adopted by the BJP and the UDF," said CPI(M).

In Kerala, the CPI(M) has staged protest marches at Customs offices. Recently, the Customs Department has filed an affidavit before the Court stating that the main accused Swapna Suresh has given statement before the investigators on the knowledge of the Chief Minister and three Ministers and Speaker of the Kerala Assembly about the illegal dollar trade and gold smuggling involving UAE consulate.

Frontier Gandhi's autobiography released in English

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

First published in Pashto in 1983, the autobiography of freedom fighter Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, fondly known as Bacha Khan or Badshah Khan, is now out in English, announced publishing house Roli Books.

The book, titled "The Frontier Gandhi: My Life and Struggle", is translated by former Pakistani civil servant and author Imitiaz Ahmad Sahibzada. This is the "first time" that Khan's autobiography is available in English. An earlier account of his life, published in English in 1969, and with the same title, was based on the interviews conducted with him and was not "his written autobiography".

".. Bacha Khan felt that the 1969 account of his life and struggle was not complete and began to write his own autobiography thereafter, with the help of numerous associates. Bacha Khan's autobiography was thus first published in Pukhto in 1983, in Kabul.. This book is a translation of Bacha Khan's only written, Pukhto autobiography," writes Sahibzada in the book.

Khan (1890–1988), popularly called the 'Frontier Gandhi', was born in Uthmanzai in the North-West Frontier Province of British India. His life was dedicated to the social reform of the Pukhtuns and he continues to be revered across the world by them. In India, he is known for his close association with Mahatma Gandhi and his leadership of the Khudai Khidmatgar (Servants of God) movement from 1930 – 47 – one of the most successful and sustained Gandhian non-violent campaigns anywhere in the world.

The book, whose foreword is written by historian and Mahatma Gandhi's grandson Rajmohan Gandhi, brings to life events and personalities of the independence movement as Khan records the untiring energy and sacrifices that went into winning freedom.

"If our world wants to picture non-violent defiance, or inter-faith partnership, .. Or a commitment to the rights of the vulnerable, it cannot do much better than study these two men together: Ghaffar Khan and, older by 21 years, Mohandas Gandhi, brothers in spirit, each armed with the swords of conscience and courage," writes Rajmohan, who is also the author of Khan's biography, "Ghaffar Khan: Nonviolent Badshah of the Pakhtuns".

"The Frontier Gandhi: My Life and Struggle", priced at ₹695, is available for sale in offline and online stores.

Scientists develop platform to detect effect of alcohol exposure on red blood cells

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Scientists have developed a platform to detect the effect of prolonged exposure to alcohol on red blood cells (RBC) through high-resolution measurements of their size, according to a statement on Saturday.

The high-resolution platform that shows the reduction in size of RBCs due to alcohol exposure can be tuned for a point-of-care screening of multiple conditions that alter the size and count of red cells in blood.

Although it is known that alcohol affects RBCs, the exact physiological changes are very subtle and difficult to measure.

In order to overcome this challenge, scientists led by Professor Gautam Soni from Raman Research Institute (RRI), an institution funded by the Department of Science & Technology (DST), have developed custom-made electro-fluidic platform that can detect the change by measuring the cell size in enhanced resolution.

The device made in RRI relies on the resistive pulse sensing principle.

The team first developed techniques for making tiny micron (1/1000th of a millimetre) sized holes or micropores at the tip of a glass capillary with careful fabrication, flame polishing, and image verification.

Pon Radhakrishnan BJP candidiate for bypoll to Kanyakumari LS seat

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday nominated senior party leader and former Union Minister Pon Radhakrishnan as its candidate for the April 6 bypoll to the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha constituency in Tamil Nadu.

As the campaign for the Assembly polls heats up, union Home Minister and former BJP president Amit Shah will also visit Tamil Nadu and Kerala on Sunday.

The bypoll was necessitated due to the death of Congress MP H Vasantha Kumar in August last year due to COVID-19.

The BJP's Central Election Committee (CEC), which met earlier under its National President JP Nadda and attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Home Minister Amit Shah, approved the candidature of Radhakrishnan. He is also a former BJP State president.

The BJP had on late Friday night finalised its seat-sharing deal with its ally AIADMK for the April 6 Assembly polls in the state where the latter, the lead partner, allocated 20 seats to the saffron party, besides the Kanyakumari parliamentary segment.

Radhakrishnan had won from Kanyakumari in the 2014 parliamentary and inducted in then Modi-led NDA dispensation as Minister of State.

He lost the subsequent 2019 Lok Sabha elections to Kumar from the same constituency. He was then MoS Finance and Shipping.

Union Home Minister and former BJP president Amit Shah will be on a one-day visit to Tamil Nadu and Kerala on Sunday to attend various important programmes.

According to a party statement here, Shah will first visit Suchindram Temple in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu ,and offer prayers. He will then launch "Vetri Kodi Eandhi" (Vijay Sankalp Mahasamaprk Abhiyaan - a door to door campaign) in Suchindram Town, Kanyakumari.

The BJP said Shah will hold a massive roadshow "Vetri Kodi Eandhi" fom Hindu college to Veppamoodu Kamaraj statue in Kanyakumari. After the roadshow, the Union Home Minister will address a Karyakarta Sabha of the party at Uduppi Hotel in Kanyakumari .

Shah will then proceed to Kerala where he will visit Shri Belur Math at Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala and offer prayers. After that, he will address the Valedictory function of BJP's Kerala Vijay Yatra at Shanghumukham in Thiruvananthapuram.

Medha Patkar defamation: Delhi court asks HC clerk to bring orginal case file

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi Court has ordered to summon the court clerk of the record room of Delhi High Court to bring original case file of the petition filed by Medha Patkar for quashing of the defamation case filed by VK Saxena, presently the chairman of Khadi and Village Industries Commission. The original case file will help settle the dispute about the existence of the so called "defamatory' press release issued by Patkar , something she has persistently denied in the court.

Saxena has filed two defamation cases against Patkar which are pending in the court of Metropolitan Magistrate, Saket, New Delhi. The one defamation case was related to a press note issued by Patkar on 24.11.2000, in which she claimed that Saxena visited Malegaon, praised Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), and donated a cheque of ₹40,000 to Lok Samiti, a support group of NBA. The news was published by a news portal rediff.com.

Saxena denied that he ever visited Malegaon or made any such donation to the NBA and said that the press note was full of false allegations and was defamatory. He subsequently issued a legal notice to Patkar. After receiving no response from the NBA leader , Saxena filed a defamation case in January 2001.

During the last 20 years on various occasions, Patkar denied that she ever issued any such press note and even claimed that it was fabricated by Saxena himself.

Interestingly, Patkar filed a criminal miscellaneous application No 6026 on 26.11.2018, U/S 482 of CrPC in the High Court of Delhi for quashing the proceedings in another defamation case filed by Saxena against her. An advance copy of the petition was also sent to Saxena by her advocate. In the said criminal petition, Patkar in the list of "dates and events", mentioned that on 24.11.2000, a press note was released by her which was subsequently published in the news portal rediff.com.

Incidentally, this was precisely the case made out by Saxena. Patkar later withdrew the petition.

Saxena on February 17, 2020 filed an application in the MM Court along with certified copies of the criminal miscellaneous application no. 6026 of 2018 filed by Patkar in the Delhi High Court with the request for calling upon additional witness in the case, i.e. the concerned court clerk of the Delhi High Court with original case file of the above case where she has admitted to have issued the press note in question. Counsel for Saxena pleaded that judicial admission cannot be withdrawn.

Metropolitan Magistrate Animesh Kumar after hearing both the sides said, "it is a case of the complainant (VK Saxena) that on 26.11.2018, accused (Medha Patkar) filed a petition bearing number Crl MC 6026 of 2018 before the Hon'ble Delhi High Court U/S 482 CrPC for quashing the proceedings of CC No. 2866/1/03 pending before this court. Ld Counsel for the complainant submits that the accused has made certain judicial admissions under oath in the said petition filed before the DHC where she has categorically admitted that she made averments against the complainant."

The Magistrate further said that relevant record related to Crl MC No. 6026 of 2018 titled "Medha Patkar Vs State of Delhi & Others" should be summoned in the present case.

"Hence, let summon be issued to the concerned clerk of the record room of Hon'ble Delhi High Court to bring the original case file on 19.03.2021," he ordered.

150 Rohingyas detained in J&K verification drive

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In a major crackdown on illegal immigrants staying in Jammu and Kashmir more than 150 Rohingyas have been detained at a holding centre in Sub Jail Hiranagar at the end of the verification process of their travel documents.

According to official sources, during the special drive conducted at the Maulana Azad stadium in Jammu on Saturday police authorities verified travel documents and collected biometrics of large numbers of illegal immigrants including Rohingyas from Myanmar.

During the verification process the sports stadium was kept out of bounds from the local media persons as none of them were permitted to enter the premises.

Their entry was restricted at the entry gate of the stadium where this verification drive was going on.

After completing the day-long exercise Inspector General of Police, Jammu range, Mukesh Singh in a press statement said, " 155 illegal immigrant Rohingyas staying in the Union Territory of J&K were sent to the holding center established vide Home department notification dated 5th March 2021 on Saturday". According to police, "sub jail Hiranagar in Kathua district has been converted into a holding centre to accommodate these illegal immigrants".

IG Jammu said, "This was done under section 3(2)e of the Foreigners Act. Due process of law was followed in this exercise. These immigrants were not holding valid travel documents required in terms of section (3) of the Passports Act".

The exercise of identifying more such immigrants is still in progress, Mukesh Singh added.

"After sending them to the holding center, the process of nationality verification will be done as per the prescribed process. After completion of the Nationality verification, the process of deportation of these illegal immigrants will be initiated", IG Jammu Mukesh Singh said.

According to J&k Home department report tabled in the state assembly on February 2, 2018, "a total number of 6523 Rohingyas were found camping across 39 different locations spread across five districts of Jammu and Kashmir". According to the Home department report, "6461 Rohingyas were staying in Jammu division and 62 in Kashmir division".

However, local activists and politicians, spearheading a campaign in support of their deportation, often contest these figures claiming large numbers of these illegal immigrants are scattered and even their bio metrics have not been collected by the security personnel.

Illegal immigrant Rohingyas being shifted to Sub Jail Hiranagar after a verification process late Saturday evening

Five killed, over a dozen hurt as two buses collide in Aligarh

PNS ■ ALIGARH

Five people were killed in collision of two buses near Lodha Karsua town of Aligarh on Saturday afternoon, while more than a dozen people were injured. Police reached on the information and admitted the injured to the hospital with the help of local people.

According to eyewitnesses, at about 12.30 pm on Saturday, the bus of Haryana Ballabhgarh depot was going from Aligarh to Ballabhgarh and as soon as it reached the village Karsua, the front wheel of the bus got bursted and the bus moved to the other side being uncontrolled. The police were informed about the accident and and they reached the spot with force of three police stations and the ambulance. Meanwhile, a bus coming from the front of Palwal hit into the bus. The collision was so horrific that the front of the bus was badly damaged. Hearing the noise, the villagers also ran.

Tempo overturns on Anoopshahar Road, three dead, 31 injured.

Three people were killed, while 31 people were injured when a Tempo overturned in a pit on late Friday evening on Anoopshahar Road in Jawan police station area. These people were returning from Rajghat after immersing the remains in the Ganges. On receiving the news, the police have admitted the injured to different hospitals in Aligarh. All three bodies have been sent for post-mortem.

Rajaram (75) died 13 days ago in Nagla Kalar of Bannadevi area of ??the city. On Friday, on the 14th day, 34 members of the family and kinship went to Rajghat to immerse the bones by a loader tempo. The Tempo driver himself rescued himself from the truck coming from the front on the bypass between the CDF and Jawan while returning, Meanwhile another vehicle arrived from the front overtaking the truck.

The tempo driver lost control and overturned into the pit near the road. The police and ambulance reached on the news. The injured trapped in it were sent to Deendayal Joint Hospital, District Hospital. Rajaram's son Darshan (40), his brother-in-law Bhagwandas alias Kalua (65), Kusma Devi (55), daughter-in-law of Delhi's Seemapur resident, were declared dead in the district hospital. The rest of the injured are undergoing treatment, the condition of the two injured remains critical.

In the accident in Jawan area, the injured are being treated by starting immediate relief and rescue operations. The deaths of three people have been confirmed at the level of doctors.

SHARE OF TAX DEVOLUTION TO STATES

15th Fin Comm opted for continuity: Singh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The 15th Finance Commission opted for continuity and predictability and hence retained the share of tax devolution to States at 41 per cent of the total pool, its chairman NK Singh said on Saturday.

Speaking at a webinar organised by the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), Singh said each Finance Commission in the past has somewhat increased the total amount of devolution to states, but the 15th Finance Commission weighed all the options considering that the fiscal space of both states and the Centre has shrunk on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rajya Sabha member Sushil Kumar Modi highlighted that the share of divisible pool is slowly shrinking as the "cess and surcharge" component in Gross Tax revenue is increasing.

The 15th Finance Commission has recommended that states be given 41 per cent of the divisible tax pool of the Centre during the period 2021-22 to 2025-26, which is at the same level as was recommended by the 14th Finance Commission.

Finance Commission is a constitutional body that gives suggestions on Centre-state financial relations.

As per the Commission, the gross tax revenue (GTR) for the 5-year period is expected to be Rs 135.2 lakh crore. Out of that, divisible pool (after deducting cesses and surcharges and cost of collection) is estimated to be Rs 103 lakh crore. States' share at 41 per cent of divisible pool comes to Rs 42.2 lakh crore for 2021-26 period.

The report of the 15th Finance Commission was tabled in Parliament on February 2.

Singh said each Finance Commission has somewhat increased the total amount of devolution as percentage of divisible pool.

"We had an option of continuing this trajectory, we had an option of enhancing this devolution to somewhat higher figure. We had the option of somewhat recalibrating downwards looking at the constraints on the fiscal space of the Central Government. Finance Commission is not an encounter with shock and awe, Finance Commission has a legacy which believes in stability, continuity and predictability. We opted for continuity and predictability," he said.

Modi, in his speech, said cess and surcharge which was 10.4 per cent of GTR in 2011-12, has increased to 20.2 per cent. Even after deducting GST compensation cess, it is 15 per cent.

Raped 27 years ago, woman files complaint against 2 after her son asked his father's name

Shahjahanpur (UP): Raped on several occasions by two men at the age of 12 about 27 years ago, the victim, who had become a mother, has now lodged a case against the accused on court orders after her son enquired about his father's name.

About 27 years ago, the victim was living in the city with her sister and brother-in-law. One Naki Hasan of her locality had entered the house when she was alone and allegedly raped her, Superintendent of Police (City) Sanjay Kumar told PTI on Saturday.

Referring to the police report lodged on the basis of the woman's complaint, Kumar said after the accused, his younger brother Guddu also raped her. The victim has alleged that she was raped by both the accused on multiple occasions.

She was 12 years of age at the time of the incident, the SP said.

According to the complainant, she became pregnant at the age of 13 and gave birth to a boy in 1994. The infant was given to a person belonging to the victim's native village Udhampur, located within the Shahabad police station limits, while she moved to Rampur as his brother-in-law got transferred there.

The SP said the victim's brother-in-law got her married to a man in Ghazipur district, but after 10 years, when her husband came to know that she was raped, he divorced her and she returned to Udhampur.

Meanwhile, the boy who had grown up by now enquired about his mother and father and was told his mother's name.

The boy met the victim and got to know about the incident, the SP said, adding that on Friday evening, a case of gangrape was lodged against the two accused at the Sadar Bazar police station on the basis of her complaint.

Kumar said the police are investigating the case and the DNA test of the boy would be conducted.

The woman had moved the court after the police refused to entertain her complaint. *PTI*

Class 9 girl raped by senior in school in Fatehpur: Police

Fatehpur (UP): A 15-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a 16-year-old boy while she was returning home from school in the Hathgam police station area of this Uttar Pradesh district, police said on Saturday.

Inspector-in-charge (SSI) of the Hathgam police station Ashish Singh said the incident occurred on Wednesday and an FIR was lodged on Friday.

He said the victim, a Class 9 student, was returning home from school when a Class 10 student of the same school, who is also her neighbour, allegedly caught hold of her, forcibly took here to a forest area nearby and raped her.

The SSI said the accused minor student has been held and will be produced before a juvenile court during the day.The girl has been sent to a government hospital for medical examination, he said, adding that further action is being taken. *PTI*

Woman sexually harassed, boy sodomised in Shamli

PTI ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP)

A 28-year-old woman was allegedly sexually harassed by a man in Uttar Pradesh's Shamli district, police said on Saturday.

SHO Shyambir Singh said the incident took place on Friday when the woman was alone at her house.

Rajbir entered her house and sexually harassed her, the SHO said.

A case was registered under Section 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty) and Section 452 (house-trespass after preparation for hurt, assault or wrongful restraint) of the IPC against Rajbir and a probe into the matter was underway, he added.

In another case, a six-year-old boy was allegedly sodomised at a village in Shamli district on Friday, the police said.

According to a complaint lodged at Jhinjhana police station, a 14-year-old boy took the alleged victim to a nearby field and sodomised him.

The police said an investigation into the matter was underway.

Patient given fake corona injection died: Gujarat Govt

Gandhinagar: The Gujarat government on Saturday admitted in the State Assembly that the Ahmedabad patient who was administered a dose of fake Tosilizumeb injection had died later. The state government had nabbed five involved in the manufacturing of the fake injections. Tosilizumeb, a costly drug, is believed to be vital in the corona infection treatment.

Answering an unstarred question raised by Vankaner legislator Mohammed Pirzada, the Deputy Chief Minister and also the health minister, Nitin Patel, replied that the Foods and Drugs Control Authority (FDCA) had nabbed five persons believed to be involved in the manufacturing of fake Tosilizumeb injections on July 27, 2020. The manufacturers of the fake injection had prepared 30 vials of one ml into 250 milligrams off the fake drug.

The Minister also informed the House that all the 30 vials of the fake drug were sold in Ahmedabad district. Out of that, only one vial was administered to a female patient in a private hospital in Ahmedabad.

"The female patient, Lataben Baldua (60) was a comorbid patient, with many complications. She was discharged from the private hospital and later she died at home," Hemant Koshiya, the FDCA Commissioner, told IANS. The Gujarat FDCA had unearthed a racket in the manufacture and sale of fake Tocilizumeb injections, seizing machinery and raw material valued at Rs 8 lakh from a Surat premises in July last year.

Dr Devang Shah, a medico in a private hospital, had stumbled upon the racket while using 400mg Tocilizumeb injection of dubious quality during the treatment of a patient from Memnagar. *IANS*

Govt open to evaluate, explore cryptocurrencies, says Thakur

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union minister Anurag Thakur on Saturday said the government is open to evaluate and explore new technologies, including cryptocurrencies, for improving governance.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself is a strong advocate of embracing technology in various aspects of governance, the Minister of State for Finance said while addressing an event organised by Entrepreneurs' Organisation - EO Punjab.

"Let me say that we welcome innovation and new technology...Blockchain is a new emerging technology. Cryptocurrency is a form of virtual currency. I firmly believe that we must always evaluate, explore and encourage new ideas with an open mind," he said.

A High-Level Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) was constituted under the Chairmanship of Economic Affairs Secretary on digital currencies and it has submitted its report.

The government would take a decision on the recommendations of the IMC and the legislative proposal, if any, would be introduced in Parliament following the due process, he said while inviting suggestions and views on this issue.

Cryptocurrencies are digital or virtual currencies in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of their units and verify the transfer of funds, operating independently of a central bank.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the government is still formulating its opinion on cryptocurrencies and will take a calibrated position.

Reserve Bank of India Governor Shaktikanta Das had last week said the apex bank has certain "major concerns" over the impact cryptocurrencies may have on the financial stability in the economy and has conveyed the same to the government.

The RBI had virtually banned cryptocurrency trading in 2018 and had directed all entities regulated by the central bank to cease dealing in virtual currencies. The Supreme Court had also asked the Centre in 2019 to frame policies for crypto, and in 2020, struck down the curbs imposed by the RBI.

The Reserve Bank had through various public notices on December 24, 2013, February 1, 2017 and December 5, 2017, cautioned users, holders and traders of virtual currencies, including bitcoins, regarding various risks associated in dealing with such virtual currencies.

The Govt would take a decision on the recommendations of the IMC and the legislative proposal, if any, would be introduced in Parliament following the due proces

Operations of 36 medical stores suspended in Jammu

Jammu: The J&K Drugs Control Organisation (DCO) has suspended the operations of 36 retail sale establishments across the Jammu province for violation of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, officials said on Saturday.

As per the DCO, surprise inspections of retail sale outlets, particularly those situated in the far flung and remote areas, were carried out by the concerned drugs control officers to ensure availability of quality drugs to the end users.

Following the inspections, operations of six stores were disallowed in Jammu, followed by six in Samba, two in Kathua, six in Kishtwar, four in Udhampur and 12 in Ramban district.

The reasons for suspension ranged from non-maintenance of sales records, impersonation, unhygienic/insanitary conditions, improper storage conditions etc.

The licence holders of the stores have been warned of severe action in case the deficiencies are not rectified within the stipulated period of time.

Statutory samples of more than 450 drugs formulations have been collected for determination of strength and purity.

The samples have been referred to the drug testing laboratories located within the Union Territory for framing legal opinion to ascertain their quality parameters. During the drive, two unlicenced establishments were found in operation in Marheen Tehsil in Kathua district. Action against the defaulters was initiated on spot. *IANS*

MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF MAN LINKED TO SUV FOUND NEAR AMBANI'S HOME

Encounter specialist Sachin Vaze under scanner

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Assistant police inspector and encounter specialist Sachin Vaze, who has gunned down 63 underworld gangsters during his three-decade-long controversial career, has come under scanner for his role in the mysterious death of Mansukh Hiren, whose "stolen" SUV laden with gelatin sticks from the vehicle was recovered by the police near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence in south Mumbai.

Known for his proximity to the ruling Shiv Sena, Vaze was incidentally the first person to reach the spot where a Mahindra Scorpio with 20 gelatin sticks and a letter threatening Ambanis lay abandoned near Mukesh Ambani's skyscraper mansion "Antilia" on Carmichael Road in south Mumbai on February 25.

While speaking in the State Assembly on Friday, former chief minister and current leader of the Opposition Devendra Fadnavis had raised several questions about the role of Vaze in the mysterious circumstances leading to Hiren's death.

Turning the needle of suspicion towards API Vaze who was investigating the case, Fadnavis had said that Hiren appeared to know Vaze, which bears out from his telephone records. "After the car was found abandoned near Ambani's home (on February 25), it was Vaze who reached the spot first and not the local Gamdevi police. He seized the car and also the letter. We were earlier told an Assistant Commissioner of Police will probe the incident. But Vaze was subsequently made in charge of the case. Why?," Fadnavis had asked.

Deshmukh said that Vaze was not the Investigation Officer as was being claimed by the leader of the Opposition, but Assistant Commissioner of Police Nitin Aluknare.

Contesting the Home Minister's statement, Fadnavis said that Hiren had said in his statement to the police that he had purchased the car from Newton.

On Saturday, BJP leader Ashish Shelar questioned the presence of an "encounter specialist" assistant police inspector Sachin Vaze at the time of Mansukh's post mortem.

"Vaze's presence at the post-mortem of Mansukh is suspicious as he is neither part of Thane police nor the ATS, which is probing the case. It gives an impression that there is something that this government wants to hide," Shelar said.

Attached to the Crime Intelligence Unit of the Crime Branch-CID of the Mumbai Police, 49-year-old Vaze is currently handling important cases like the sensational TRP rigging scam, the Anvay Naik suicide case in which he arrested TV anchor-editor Arnab Goswami, sports car scam involving Dilip Chhabria and Bollywood-TV-entertainment industry's casting couch racket

Vaze has in the past solved several cybercrime and financial frauds and an international credit card fraud.

After joining the police force in 1990 as a Sub-Inspector, Vaze was initially posted in the Naxalite-infested Gadchiroli district. Later on he was posted in Thane.

After joining the Mumbai Police force, Vaze became one of "encounter specialists" He eliminated several gangsters including those belonging to the Dawood Ibrahim and Chhota Rajan gangs.

He has in all 63 encounter killings to his credit. It may be recalled that on 3 March 2004, Vaze was suspended along with 14 other policemen for the alleged custodial death of Khwaja Yunus, a suspect in the December 2, 2002 Ghatkopar bomb blast case. Vaze subsequently resigned from the police on November 30 2007 after requests for his reinstatement were rejected by the Maharashtra government.

The Maharashtra government revoked his suspension and reinstated him in the Mumbai police on June 6, 2020 – after the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown during which there was shortage of police staff.

After Vaze's reinstatement, Khawaja Yunus's mother Asiya Begum has filed contempt pleas in the Bombay High Court against Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh and Additional Director General of Police Amitabh Gupta, who was the Principal Secretary of Home department and now Pune Police chief. She has challenged the reinstatement of Vaze in the high court.

Forensic doctors reserve opinion on cause of death; Sena deplores politicisation

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A four-member team of forensic doctors that conducted the post-mortem on late Mansukh Hiren -- whose body was recovered from the Mumbra creek near Thane on Friday -- reserved its opinion on Saturday, even as the Shiv Sena said that "it is wrong to politicise his death and cast aspersions on the MVA government".

A day after 45-year-old Hiren's body was recovered from the marshy Reti-Bunder creek Mumbra with the help of a crane by the local disaster management workers, the four-team that conducted the autopsy reserved its opinion on the cause of death, while his viscera has been kept in reserve while his viscera has been preserved for forensic analysis.

The post-mortem on Hiren's body was conducted at the Rajiv Gandhi Medical College & Shivaji Hospital, Kalwa, on Friday night. Among other things, the post-mortem report said that "Spine, Spinal intact, not opened".

Hiren, a Thane-based businessman whose "stolen" SUV with 20 gelatin sticks was recovered by the police near Industrialist Mukesh Ambani's skyscraper mansion "Antilia" in south Mumbai on February 25, hit the headlines after his body was found in mysterious circumstances on Friday afternoon. Hiren had reportedly been from missing from his Thane home since Thursday.

It may be recalled that the police had recovered 20 gelatin sticks and a letter were recovered from what was later described as Mahindra Scorpio that was found abandoned in the vicinity of Mukesh Ambani's 27-storey residence "Antilia" on Carmichael Road in south Mumbai.

The letter recovered from the car had among other things carried a message: "Ye to sirf ek trailer hai. Neeta Bhabhi, Mukesh Bhaiyya, family... ye to sirf ek jhalak hai. Agli baar ye saaman pura hokar tumhare pass aayega, aur pura intezaam ho gaya hai".

Meanwhile, ruling Shiv Sena spokesperson Sanjay Raut said: "It is wrong to politicise his (Hiren's) death and cast aspersions on the state government at a time when there are doubts whether Mansukh's death was a suicide or murder. He was an important witness in the case".

Raut said that the issue involved prestige and image of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government and it was essential for the State Home department to unearth the truth in the case.

"The Home department should unearth the truth at the earliest. It is important for the prestige and image of the MVA government," Raut said.While rejecting the Opposition BJP's demand for an NIA probe into Hiren's death, Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh announced the transfer of the investigations into the case from the Mumbai Crime Branch to the state Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS).

"If the state government were to hand over the case to the NIA as demanded by the Opposition would not have meant that it would be solved immediately. The State Home Minister has handed over the case to the ATS, which is capable of solving it. Let us have faith in ATS," he said.

Pakistan PM Imran wins trust vote

Supporters of the ruling Pakistan Tehree-e-Insaf political party gather near the National Assembly to celebrate Prime Minister Imran Khan winning a vote of confidence in Islamabad, Pakistan on Saturday AP

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday comfortably won a trust vote in the National Assembly amid opposition boycott, bolstering his Government's position after an embarrassing defeat in this week's hotly-contested Senate elections.

Prime Minister Khan secured 178 votes in the 342-member lower house of Parliament during a special session convened on the directives of President Arif Alvi. He required 172 votes for a simple majority. The floor test took place without the Opposition as the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) — an alliance of 11 parties — boycotted the voting, making it easier for Khan to secure the required numbers.

Khan decided to take a vote of confidence in the National Assembly after his finance minister Abdul Hafeez Shaikh was defeated in the Senate election by former prime minister Yusuf Raza Gilani on Wednesday. The Opposition demanded the Prime Minister's resignation after the debacle.

Addressing the House after securing the trust vote, the 68-year-old cricketer-turned politician thanked all lawmakers from his party and allies for supporting him in Parliament.

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi earlier tabled a single-point resolution in the House.

"That this House reposes confidence in the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mr Imran Khan, as required under clause (7) of Article 91 of the Constitution Islamic Republic of Pakistan," the resolution said. Speaker Asad Qaiser announced the result, saying Prime Minister Khan had been elected to the post with 176 votes following the 2018 general elections. "Today, he has secured 178 votes," he said.

The ruling coalition had 181 members but after the resignation of one of its lawmakers, Faisal Vowda, its strength was reduced to 180. The Opposition coalition has 160 members in the House. One seat was vacant. According to the breakdown, 155 PTI lawmakers out of 156 voted in favour of the prime minister, Dawn newspaper reported.

Seven lawmakers from the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), five each from the Pakistan Muslim League-Q and the Balochistan Awami Party, three from the Grand Democratic Alliance, and one each from the Awami Muslim League and the Jamhoori Watan Party voted in favour of the resolution. Independent candidate Aslam Bhotani also voted in favour of Khan.

Earlier, unruly scenes were witnessed outside Parliament building when supporters of the ruling alliance tried to disrupt a press conference of Opposition leaders belonging to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

PML-N leaders alleged that they had been manhandled by the ruling party members who were holding up banners and chanting slogans in favour of Khan. Security forces managed to separate the political workers of the two sides.

Pakistan Opp slams PM, terms vote of confidence 'meaningless'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's leading Opposition leaders on Saturday demanded Prime Minister Imran Khan's resignation and fresh elections, soon after he won a vote of confidence in the National Assembly.

Khan secured 178 votes in the 342-member lower house of Parliament during a special session convened on the directives of President Arif Alvi.

The floor test took place without the Opposition as the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) — an alliance of 11 parties — boycotted the voting.

The first to respond was chief of the PDM Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who told the media in Sukkur, Sindh that the vote of confidence has no meaning.

"This was not a confidence vote. We know which agencies watched the members of the assembly the entire night. [We know] who knocked on the doors of each member to ensure they were present," he said.

His reference was towards reports stating that the government kept its members inside lodges in Islamabad under strict watch so that all of them are present in Parliament during the floor test.

Rehman alleged that the lawmakers were forced to vote for Prime Minister Khan.

Pope Francis stands with religious leaders during an interreligious meeting near the archaeological area of the Sumerian city-state of Ur, 20 kilometers south-west of Nasiriyah, Iraq on Saturday AP

Pope Francis, Iraq's top Shia cleric hold historic meeting

AP ■ PLAINS OF UR (IRAQ)

Pope Francis and Iraq's top Shia cleric delivered a powerful message of peaceful coexistence on Saturday, urging Muslims in the war-weary Arab nation to embrace Iraq's long-beleaguered Christian minority during an historic meeting in the holy city of Najaf.

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani said religious authorities have a role in protecting Iraq's Christians, and that they should live in peace and enjoy the same rights as other Iraqis.

The Vatican said Francis thanked al-Sistani for having "raised his voice in defense of the weakest and most persecuted" during some of the most violent times in Iraq's recent history.

Al-Sistani, 90, is one of the most senior clerics in Shiite Islam and his rare but powerful political interventions have helped shape present-day Iraq.

He is a deeply revered figure in Shiite-majority Iraq and his opinions on religious and other matters are sought by Shiites worldwide.

The historic meeting in al-Sistani's humble home was months in the making, with every detail painstakingly discussed and negotiated between the ayatollah's office and the Vatican.

Early Saturday, the 84-year-old pontiff's convoy, led by a bullet-proof Mercedes-Benz, pulled up along Najaf's narrow and column-lined Rasool Street, which culminates at the golden-domed Imam Ali Shrine, one of the most revered sites in Shiite Islam.

He then walked the few meters (yards) to al-Sistani's modest home, which the cleric has rented for decades.

A group of Iraqis wearing traditional clothes welcomed him outside. As a masked Francis entered the doorway, a few white doves were released in a sign of peace.

He emerged just under an hour later, still limping from an apparent flare-up of sciatica nerve pain that makes walking difficult.

The "very positive" meeting lasted a total of 40 minutes, said a religious official in Najaf, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to brief media.

Imran bats for electoral reforms for fair elections; to introduce EVMs

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Saturday that his government will introduce electoral reforms and electronic voting machines to ensure fair and transparent elections in the country.

Delivering a speech after winning a trust vote in the National Assembly, the cricketer-turned-politician said his government plans to introduce electronic voting, enabling millions of Pakistanis abroad to vote in elections.

"We are bringing modern technology in elections for a transparent election process. We have decided to use Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) in the future. It is important to use them to counter the voter fraud claims made by the candidates who lose the polls. We are also working on putting up a system so that the overseas Pakistanis can cast their votes," Khan said.

"Just like in the US where former president Donald Trump's repeated allegations of electoral malpractice were debunked by a transparent system, Pakistan will also put in place the same system to ensure fair and transparent elections in the country.

"As captain in Cricket, I brought the concept of neutral umpiring, similarly my government will set in motion a fair electoral system," he said.

Khan's remarks came after Pakistan's election commission on Friday expressed shock and disappointment over the prime minister's allegations against it, asserting that the Senate elections were held as per the Constitution and it has "never come under any sort of pressure and God willing, will not in future as well."

Protests, tear gas in Myanmar after UN envoy urges action

AP ■ YANGON

Security forces in Myanmar again used force Saturday to disperse anti-coup protesters, a day after a UN special envoy urged the Security Council to take action to quell junta violence that this past week left more than 50 peaceful demonstrators dead and scores injured.

Protests were reported Saturday morning in the country's biggest city, Yangon, where stun grenades and tear gas were used against demonstrators. On Wednesday, 18 people were reported killed there.

Protests also took place in several other cities, including Mandalay, the second-biggest city, Myitkyina, the capital of the northern state of Kachin, Myeik in the far south, where police fired tear gas at students, and Dawei in the southeast, where tear gas was also used.

Officials are believed to have exhumed the body of a young woman who was killed during Wednesday's suppression of protests in Mandalay. The woman, Kyal Sin, had been photographed taking part in the protests before her death, and images of her on the front lines have made her a high-profile martyr.

Security forces on Friday night sealed off the cemetery where she was buried, and when residents visited in the morning, her grave was freshly plastered over and shovels and other evidence of digging were found at the site.

Anti-coup protesters prepare water and wet cloths to help extinguish tear gas canisters during a demonstration in Yangon, Myanmar on Saturday AP

Pope to visit Iraq church damaged by ISIS terrorists

AP ■ BAGHDAD

The scenes are seared in the memory of the Rev. Ammar Altony Yako: A church that for decades has been the pride of the town of Qaraqosh, a center for Christian life in Iraq, stood badly scarred.

Yako saw it in 2016 when Qaraqosh was liberated from more than two years of Islamic State group rule. Scrawled on a wall was the proclamation, the "Islamic State will remain." Strewn amid the rubble in a courtyard were bullet-riddled mannequins and other telltale signs of a militants' makeshift firing range for target practice.

On Sunday, a new scene will play out for the world to watch at the Church of the Immaculate Conception and new memories will be created. Where the extremists once damaged, Pope Francis will now pray.

"I never could have imagined that his holiness, the pope, would visit this church, not even in my dreams," said Yako, who has been overseeing reconstruction at the church. "It's a very, very unexpected event and a very happy one."

It is also one rich in symbolism. Coming amid a pandemic and security challenges, the pope's historic trip is taking him to Christian communities, like Yako's, ravaged by the IS onslaught in 2014. Christians in the area were forced to escape ancestral towns and villages as the militants swept through northern Iraq. Many have since scattered abroad, their exodus fueling existential anxieties about Iraq's already dwindling Christian population.

Many hope the pope's trip can focus attention on their struggles and send a message of encouragement, but they also point to security, economic and social challenges deterring many Christians from returning.

Senate works through night, virus aid on path to passage

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Bleary-eyed lawmakers worked through a mountain of amendments Saturday as the Senate plodded toward passage of a $1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill that President Joe Biden and Democrats say is crucial for hoisting the country out of the pandemic.

The Senate commenced a dreaded "vote-a-thon" — a continuous series of votes on amendments — shortly before midnight Friday, and by midmorning Saturday had dispensed with over two dozen.

Democrats were hoping for final passage by around midday so the Senate could send the modestly revamped bill back to the House, and then to Biden this coming week for his signature.

The Senate had been in session since 9 a.M. EST Friday. Its work on the bill was proving to be a test of both lawmakers' physical stamina and Democrats' ability to pass legislation backed by every senator in the party.

The chamber is divided 50-50, with Vice President Kamala Harris' tiebreaking vote their only edge, and Republicans are arrayed against the legislation. Overnight, the Senate was like an experiment in the best techniques for staying awake. Several lawmakers appeared to rest their eyes or doze at their desks, often burying their faces in their hands. At one point, Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, at 48 one of the younger senators, trotted into the chamber and did a prolonged stretch.

Biden White House: message discipline, no news conference

Washington: No news conference. No Oval Office address. No primetime speech to a joint session of Congress.

President Joe Biden is the first executive in four decades to reach this point in his term without holding a formal question and answer session.

It reflects a White House media strategy meant both to reserve major media set-pieces for the celebration of a legislative victory and to limit unforced errors from a historically gaffe-prone politician. Biden has opted to take questions about as often as most of his recent predecessors, but he tends to field just one or two informal inquiries at a time, usually in a hurried setting at the end of an event.

In a sharp contrast with the previous administration, the White House is exerting extreme message discipline, empowering staff to speak but doing so with caution.

Recalling both Biden's largely leak-free campaign and the buttoned-up Obama administration, the new White House team has carefully managed the president's appearances, trying to lower the temperature from Donald Trump's Washington and to save a big media moment to mark what could soon be a signature accomplishment: passage of the Covid-19 bill.

The message control may serve the president's purposes but it denies the media opportunities to directly press Biden on major policy issues and to engage in the kind of back-and-forth that can draw out information and thoughts that go beyond the administration's curated talking points. *AP*

Europe staggers as infectious variants power virus surge

AP ■ MILAN

The virus swept through a nursery school and an adjacent elementary school in the Milan suburb of Bollate with amazing speed. In a matter of just days, 45 children and 14 staff members had tested positive. Genetic analysis confirmed what officials already suspected: The highly contagious coronavirus variant first identified in England was racing through the community, a densely packed city of nearly 40,000 with a chemical plant and a Pirelli bicycle tire factory a 15-minute drive from the heart of Milan.

"This demonstrates that the virus has a sort of intelligence. ... We can put up all the barriers in the world and imagine that they work, but in the end, it adapts and penetrates them," lamented Bollate Mayor Francesco Vassallo.

Bollate was the first city in Lombardy, the northern region that has been the epicenter in each of Italy's three surges, to be sealed off from neighbors because of virus variants that the World Health Organization says are powering another uptick in infections across Europe. The variants also include versions first identified in South Africa and Brazil.

Europe recorded 1 million new Covid-19 cases last week, an increase of 9 per cent from the previous week and a reversal that ended a six-week decline in new infections, WHO said on Thursday.

GLOBE TROTTING

6 DIE, DOZENS INJURED IN BUS CRASH IN POLAND

Warsaw: A bus carrying dozens of Ukrainian citizens rolled off an embankment into a ditch in Poland, killing six people and injuring 41, Polish media reported on Saturday.

EGYPT PREZ VISITS SUDAN AMID RAPPROCHEMENT

Cairo: Egypt's President arrived in Sudan on Saturday, his first visit to the country since a popular uprising led to the military's overthrow of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir in 2019. The visit came amid a rapprochement between the two Governments.

DEATH TOLL IN BOMBING IN SOMALIA RISES TO 20

Nairobi: The death toll has risen to at least 20 after a vehicle packed with explosives rammed into a popular restaurant in Somalia's capital on Friday night, with 30 wounded, the Government news agency reported Saturday.

18 DIE AS TRUCK CRASHES INTO BUS OUTSIDE CAIRO

Cairo: A trailer-truck crashed into a microbus, killing at least 18 people and injuring five others south of the Egyptian capital.

KABUL: CAR BOMBER KILLS PROSECUTOR, BODYGUARD

Kabul: A suicide car bombing killed the Afghan intelligence directorate's chief prosecutor Saturday, an official said, amid an increase in violence in the war-ravaged country. Sayed Mahmood Agha was on his way to his office in the southern city of Lashkargah when an attacker driving a car full of explosives targeted Agha's convoy, killing him, said Attaullah Afghan, provincial council chief for Helmand province.

NASA's Perseverance rover performs first test drive on Mars

PTI ■ LOS ANGELES

NASA's latest Mars rover, Perseverance, performed its first test drive on the Red Planet, covering a distance of about 6.5 metres across the Martian landscape, a "major milestone" before it begins its science operations.

The drive lasted about 33 minutes, propelling the rover forward by four metres, where it then turned to the left by 150 degrees and backed up 2.5 metres into its new temporary parking space, the American space agency noted in a statement.

According to NASA, the drive served as a mobility test to check out and calibrate every system, subsystem, and instrument on the Perseverance rover, which it said is a major milestone before the science operations get underway.

This photo made available by NASA was taken during the first drive of the Perseverance rover on Mars. Perseverance landed on February 18, 2021 AP

"When it comes to wheeled vehicles on other planets, there are few first-time events that measure up in significance to that of the first drive," said Anais Zarifian, the mobility test bed engineer of the Mars 2020 Perseverance rover at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Southern California.

ROVING ON RED PLANET

- The drive lasted about 33 minutes, propelling the rover forward by four metres, where it then turned to the left by 150 degrees and backed up 2.5 metres into its new temporary parking space
- The drive served as a mobility test to check out and calibrate every system, subsystem, and instrument on the Perseverance rover
- All the while, the space agency said the rover continues to send down images from Mars using the most advanced suite of cameras ever to travel to the Red Planet

"This was our first chance to 'kick the tires' and take Perseverance out for a spin. The rover's six-wheel drive responded superbly. We are now confident our drive system is good to go, capable of taking us wherever the science leads us over the next two years," Zarifian said.

Regular commutes of over 200 metres are expected once the rover begins pursuing its science goals, including the search for signs of ancient microbial life, NASA said.

As part of its mission, the rover would characterise the Red Planet's geology and past climate, and pave the way for human exploration of Mars.

It is also expected to be the first to collect and cache Martian rock and soil.

Since its landing on Mars on February 18, the rover has undergone several routine checks, including a a software update, replacing the computer program that helped land Perseverance with one NASA will rely on to analyse the planet.

On March 2, NASA said its engineers unstowed the rover's 2-metre-long robotic arm for the first time, flexing each of its five joints over the course of two hours.

All the while, the space agency said the rover continues to send down images from Mars using the most advanced suite of cameras ever to travel to the Red Planet.

"Every picture from Perseverance is relayed by either the European Space Agency's Trace Gas Orbiter, or NASA's MAVEN, Mars Odyssey, or Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter. They are important partners in our explorations and our discoveries," said Justin Maki, chief engineer for imaging and the imaging scientist for the Mars 2020 Perseverance rover mission at JPL.

HOME THEATRE

Big disappointment

COMING TO AMERICA 2
Amazon
***ing: Eddie Murphy, Arsenio Hall, Jermaine Fowler, Wesley Snipes, James Earl Jones**
Rated: 3/10

It is not only strange but bizarre that a movie's sequel would be released 33 years after the prequel. However, what is even worse is that while *Coming To America* (the original) directed by John Landis and based on a story originally created by Eddie Murphy was a rom-com that managed to keep one engrossed in the film — at the end it was a love story, part two is anything but funny or even remotely romantic in nature. Unless one considers a few scenes spent on two young people talking alone with one of them aspiring to open a salon of her own.

Here she befriends a prince no less and supposedly in love and her dream is to open a salon of her own!

One does manage to get over this rather strange dream but what one can't get over is the unfunny dialogues. Not only are the risque, the hand gestures are even worse. And what the hell was Wesley Snipes thinking when he agreed to this boggles the mind. It does obliviate his better work — *Blade* series comes to mind.

Directed by Craig Brewer and produced by Kevin Misher and Eddie Murphy, this sequel may have started off on a good note but unfortunately all it manages to do in the 110 minutes is make you cringe.

May be Murphy thought that revisiting the original that had a cult following would be a great idea but all he manages to do is makes one wonder why he needed to do this in this horrible manner that take away from its prequel.

Coming To America, the must awaited film ends up disappointing and is a huge bore.

Watch only if you have nothing else to do and want to catch up on the stars of the original movie.

— Shalini Saksena

Riveting true story told well

MURDER AMONG THE MORMONS
Netflix
***ing: A true-Crime**
Rated: 5/10

Off late Netflix has been releasing true-crime sagas. Take for example *The Night Stalker* or *The Cecil Hotel* that recently found their way on the OTT platform. However bizarre or strange such docu-movies may be, one can't shy away from the truth that they are absolutely riveting and unfold rather brilliantly. It could stem from the fact that if there is a murder and then another coupled with a Church in the middle of it all, facts and and how the investigation proceeds are bound to be filled with intrigue and throw up a few suspects.

Murder Among The Mormons relate to a true investigation into twin blasts that killed two people in Salt Lake City, Utah, US. These murders were unlike anything that came to light in the October of 1985. May be because it relates to religion, murder and deception — a lethal combination.

The three-part mini-series — each of approximately 46 minutes — is paced out well with part one giving the history of the town where the blasts occurred, the people who live here and the Mormon Church and the history of the Mormons — a religious group that embrace concepts of Christianity and revelations made by their founder, Joseph Smith. They primarily belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

Of course, the intrigue is already there and the next two part are all about the build up up to the murders and who and why they were killed in the first place.

Though the entire mini-series manages to keep one's interest — anything related to the Church is more so if it involves debunking the faith of the people and making them question the very basis on which the Church stands. It is the second half of part three that makes one sit up straight and watch as the master criminal emerges — a criminal who has perfected his craft since he was a only a teenager.

How he not only managed to dupe the Church but his friends and wife without remorse or guilt for his own gain; a power hungry Mark Hofmann — regarded as one of the most accomplished forger in history. He is infamous for forgering documents related to the history of the Latter Day Saint movement. What is more interesting to know is that one doesn't know how many of his forged yet authenticated documents are still in circulation.

Hofmann was given life sentence with no parole since it was found that he felt no guilt or remorse for what he had done. He is now in Central Utah Correctional Facility in Gunnison, Colorado, US.

— Shalini Saksena

Plan Your Day

Treat for all women

Venue: All MOD Outlets
When: March 8, 2021
Time: 1 pm onwards

Age is just a number! Well, the greater the number, the sweeter your treat at Mad Over Donuts. Mad Over Donuts has consistently managed to delight its customers with its new launches and festive offers. They are at it again and this time, the surprise is bigger and better!

Mad Over Donuts is celebrating women's day in order to thank the contribution of women to the society by running a "celebrate your age" campaign. Simply walk into any Mad Over Donuts store on Women's Day to get a treat of their fresh, handmade donuts and get a discount that is equal to your age. That's a sweet treat that's hard to beat, is it not?

Mark your calendar right away and set up a date with your girl gang. After a rollicking day out and about, end it on a delectable note with some of the scrumptious donuts offered by Mad Over Donuts.

Celebrate womanhood

Venue: Horizon Plaza- Artisanal Market, Sec-43, Golf Course road, DLF Phase-5
When: March 7, 2021
Time: 3:30 PM-8:30 pm

This Women's Day, let's celebrate the #Womanhood by appreciating the efforts of our all inspiring women, who empower the Artisanal Market. Join us on Sunday browsing especially curated Artisanal products and produce by our Women Founders, Chefs, Bakers at one of its kind Artisanal Market, handpicked by PC. Well! your weekend mornings just got healthy with a dose of refreshing handpicked homegrown products at Artisanal Market Handpicked by PC.

Shop and mingle with passionate home bakers, food curators and urban farmers who grow, produce and hand-craft breads, jams, honeys, turmeric, cakes and other eclectic cuisines from different parts of the world with natural ingredients and a whole lot of love.

Get a freshly brewed coffee or a smoothie, select your fruits and veggies to cook your favorite dish. Stock up natural honey, masala and pickles from different regions of India. Bring your friends and family and to enjoy artisanals flavours.

Flower lovers take home some fresh flowers from our special lady "Phuloon Ki Rani" by Rani Chadha, the 80 year-old entrepreneur. Home chefs get ready to shop your favorite food stuff from our different stalls.

Look no forward, spend this weekend with your family and friends at Artisanal Market and make your day.

TELLY TALE

MANISH DONS EUNUCH LOOK

Zee TV's second season of its immensely successful weekend thriller *Brahmarakshas* has been keeping the audience hooked with the gripping account of the *rakshas* who has returned with twice as much power and is on a mission for immortality. Having enthralled the viewers with unpredictable twists and turns in Kalindi's life, the show recently took a two-year leap, bringing in a package of surprises for its viewers. While a grieving Angad (Pearl V Puri) is seen mourning the loss of his beloved Kalindi (Nikki Sharma) who he believes has died as a result of his own actions, Kalindi's look alike — Chandni enters as the modern *chorni* and is set to bring much chaos in his life. Amidst all of this, actor Manish Khanna who earlier played a pivotal role in the show is all set to return, this time in the character of a eunuch.

Having previously portrayed the character of Jwala, the *tantric*, Khanna will now be seen playing the role of his transgender brother, Irawat who bears a connection with the Brahmarakshas and enters as the new villain in Angad's life and unknowingly in Chandni's life too. The actor couldn't be more thrilled to have returned with yet another interesting character and in fact will be seen donning a look similar to Bollywood actor Ashutosh Rana's character in Sangharsh.

Sharing his thoughts, Khanna said: "From the numerous roles that I have essayed on television, this character is one of the most unique and challenging ones I have had to play until now. I was required to bring a considerable change in my body language and even practise a bit of voice modulation to bring out the perfect essence of this role. Ashutosh Rana, who has been a dear friend became my immediate source of reference when it came to styling this character. He played the role of a eunuch in the film Sangharsh and I absolutely loved his performance including the way his character was showcased. We have tried to bring out a similar look in my character while bringing in a few unique and creative elements to the appearance as well. I just hope the viewers love this comeback of mine."

YASH TURNS RUDE TO PRANALI

An actor has to look 100 per cent natural on screen, even if he has to act angry, drunk, insane or even a *yogi*. Yash Tonk has been a method actor and has been known to give his takes naturally for every scene in just two takes maximum! While he is known to play comic characters in the past, it was easy for him to deliver in comedy scenes, but what happened when he had to deliver his part in a serious role like Brij Kishore in Sony TV's *Kyun Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye*.

To look natural and to not scare off Pranali with his harsh tone and loud pitch, Yash Tonk rehearses his harsh fighting scenes with Pranali prior to the final take. Those are the scenes where he has to act in a negative zone or even raise his voice on his on screen wife, Tonk could not do that in just the final take without rehearsing it because he considers Pranali as his dear friend. While rehearsing their quarrel scenes, Pranali eases out Tonk saying it's okay to raise his voice on her or even take a rude tone with her for a particular scene to look flawless.

Talking about these quarrel sequences, Tonk says: "I might be a method actor, but I'm a soft hearted person too when it comes to my friends and family. Pranali has become a dear friend ever since we started shooting for *Kyun Utthe Dil Chhod Aaye*. I don't feel like raising my voice at her even for a scene. So for the final take to be flawless, I rehearse my harsh fighting scenes prior to the final take. She eases me out and asks me to yell at her even if that's what the scene demands."

SHAAN'S VIRTUAL ANTAKSHARI

In a clutter-breaking format innovation, Zee TV launched the world's first-ever music league championship Indian Pro Music League (IPML) on February 26, 2021. While the world of sports has seen several league competitions, this unique music league has six teams representing different regions of India, battling it out against each other in a musical championship. Each of these six teams supported by leading Bollywood and sports celebrities has top playback singers as their captains, one reality show star, and one fresh voice. Celebrated singers — Mika Singh, Kailash Kher, Sajid Khan, Shaan, Ankit Tiwari, Javed Ali, Asees Kaur, Bhoomi Trivedi, AkritiKakar, Payal Dev, Neha Bhasin, Shilpa Rao are captains of these six zonal teams.

After the epic opening ceremony, the six teams are ready to battle it out and the first set of league matches have kicked off. The upcoming episode has a Kishore Kumar theme and during the shoot, Bengal Tigers captains Shaan and Akriti Kakkar gave a spectacular performance to the song *Mere Saamne Wali Khidki Mein*. Right after the act, Shaan shared an emotional memory of his father while speaking to host Karan Wahi about Kishore Kumar. The Bengal Tigers captain mentioned how he lost his father — music composer Manas Mukherjee, in October 1986, but just before that, the legendary composer had written his last song *Ei Jiboner path soja noy jeno* that was sung by Kishore Kumar. The song came out later, but it was a big deal for the whole family, as Shaan revealed: "I felt that if Kishore Kumar is singing a song written by my father, I am sure my father was a well-known man. I have this one last image of them together, where I am walking behind my father and Kishore da. It was raining and they were discussing this song. It's a sweet memory I have of both of them."

After this sweet revelation, Shaan also kicked off a virtual *antakshari* with ace musicians like Lisa Mishra, Amit Trivedi, Babul Supriyo and others joining in to sing a few Kishore Kumar classics. But wait till you see the mega battle between UP Dabbangs and Bengal Tigers. Shaan, Akriti's and their team will come out all guns blazing as they face off Ankit Tiwari, Payal Dev and their team.

MEHER & SIDDHI'S MAHASANGAM

Colors' latest show *Bawara Dil* has won the audience's heart with its captivating drama and powerful storytelling. The show is about two strong personalities Siddhi (played by Kinjal Dhamecha) and Shiva (played by Aditya Redij) who hate each other yet are brought together by destiny. While fate brings them together, the two vow to destroy each other.

In the current track of the show, Shiva and Siddhi are at loggerheads as Siddhi throws a stone inside Shiva's house and breaks his TV after being upset with his behaviour. She seeks help from Meher from *Choti Sarrdaarni* (played by Nimrit Kaur Ahluwalia), who help her with some useful advice and motivates her. Meher gives her the much-needed courage to do the right thing.

Commenting on the Mahasangam episode, Dhamecha said, "As a viewer, I have enjoyed watching *Choti Sarrdaarni* and I truly admire Nimrit. When I heard that we are going to shoot the *Mahasangam* episode together, I was excited as I knew it will be a great learning experience for me. We are very excited for the episode and I hope that our viewers are too."

SPOTIFY PRESENTS SUPERHEROES

When it comes to Indian epics such as the Mahabharat or Ramayan, the familiar faces of Krishna, Ram or Hanuman hold dear to many of us. The fascinating characters of these books have come to excite, captivate and inspire generations of readers. However, these mythological tales record thousands of heroes and heroines, with many either overlooked or whose feats simply remain unheard. Spotify's newest podcast *Superheroes of Indian Mythology* spotlights the gamut of these larger-than-life characters — both big and small.

What popular culture refers to as 'supporting roles', often turn out to have the most interesting stories to tell. Let's look at unique names who played a pivotal role in history.

Bheeshma, revered as the eighth son of Goddess Ganga, was a learned scholar and one of the greatest examples of an honorable, loyal, duty-bound commander.

Karna, famously referred to as

'Crime stories don't bother but astonish me'

MUSBA HASHMI speaks with MANOJ TIWARI about why he chose to come on board &TV's latest offering Mauka-E-Vardaat, a lesson that he learnt while hosting these shows and how such stories leave him astonished

■ What made you come on board &TV's Mauka-E-Vardaat?

I was on look out for a show that creates awareness among people and this show fits best in the criteria. Also, I was missing my screen appearances and with this show I got to do both. Hence, I decided to take it up.

■ How is this show different from all the other crime-based shows?

I don't know what other shows are doing, but with this show our aim is to show the audience real stories and bring out the truth. However, our bigger aim is to teach people to stay alert and create awareness. This is what I think is the USP of this show.

■ What kinds of stories will be shown?

We will be showcasing shocking stories wherein the culprit has taken to such impossible ways of committing crimes that it becomes hard to understand it. Once the audience will see the show, they will get to know how strangely crimes have been committed.

■ You haven't been a part of many crime-based shows. Is there a particular reason?

Yes, I don't want to take up a show for the sake of it. I want to resonate with it. It should have something interesting to offer. For this particular show, I have two other people with me — Ravi Kishan and Sapna Choudhary — I believe all three of us can make this show a huge success and do good to people by creating awareness.

■ Is there a lesson that you learnt while being a part of such shows?

Definitely. When I was doing my previous shows, I realised that I would have not been able to understand the different facets of life and gather so many different thoughts by reading a 100 books that I have learnt during these shows. There is one line that I always remember: *Abhi samaaj mein log apni twarit safaltaon ke liye vyakti aur vastu mein farq karna bhulte jaa rahe hain* (people have forgotten to differentiate between people and things for their own benefits). This holds true and I hope people start realising what is more important and learn to differentiate between good and bad.

> **One such story left me shocked. It is about a group which would take fingerprints of dead bodies at the crematorium and used them for getting fake IDs. When they were caught committing a crime, it was revealed that the identities they were using were of people who died years ago**

■ Did getting to know so many crimes so closely bother you in any way?

We are narrating the stories that have already happened with the aim of informing people about ways to safeguard themselves and their families. I don't get bothered by it. But yes, I do get astonished with such stories.

■ What makes crime-based shows so popular?

People love to see a story that can shook them up. This is not imaginary, hence the interest level goes even up. The interest factor also depends on how a show has been shot and who is narrating these stories. If the person telling these stories holds a value in the minds of the people, the audience automatically wants to see more such stories.

■ Was there a case that left you shattered?

There is one such story that left me shocked. It is about a group which would take fingerprints of dead bodies at the crematorium and used them for getting fake IDs. When they were caught committing a crime, it was revealed that the identities they were using were of people who died years ago I told my team that it is important to put across such stories. The team too agreed and told me it has to be done in a way where people take lessons from it and stay alert. This story will be shown in *Mauka-E-Vardaat*.

HARVEST OF HOPE

There are some who believe in going with the flow and there are others who take the road less travelled. To mark the International Women's Day, BISWAJEET BANERJEE brings you one such story of a rebel who brushed aside toughest of circumstances to eke out a living

It was October. Economic activities have started. The hum of the machines in factories is back all across the country. There was a sense of hope. Amid this euphoria many migrant labourers in a nondescript village of Nibi, in the rugged Banda district in Bundelkhand, decided not to go back to factories in Vapi in Gujarat. They were working in a cloth factory before lockdown was announced and had returned home during lockdown. Phula Devi, one of them, decided to stay back in her village. The agony and humiliation which she and her family faced during lockdown was fresh in her memory.

She communicated her decision to the women of the group who had returned with her to the village. "My resolve was to stay back and try to earn my living in my own village. I was not ready to face the humiliation yet again of being treated as an outsider. There was a fear that if anything 'bad' happens it will push the family to the brink of starvation yet again," she told this reporter in her village compound which was surrounded by other women, men and small children.

She had no idea what she would do. She was a landless farmer. Majority of the villagers who had shifted to Vaapi with her were landless too and were forced to move out of the village to eke out their earning because of the deprivation they faced in the village.

The Covid pandemic and the subsequent lockdown announced to arrest the spread of Coronavirus pushed them to the same crossroads of deprivation. The factory was closed in March. Devi along with around two dozen village-mates including relatives, who were working as labourers, preferred to stay put with a hope that the situation will improve and they will find work in the city.

The situation deteriorated with every passing day. The owner of the factory refused to help them. He even did not pay ₹8000 as a salary which was due saying he does not have money. They were then forced to dig deep into their savings. When the Gujarat Government announced relief, they were treated as outsiders and were deprived of the Government benefits. Once they exhausted their savings they were left with no option but to return to their village.

It was last week of June. With no money in their pockets they decided to walk down over 1300 km distance on foot from Vaapi to Banda. They were a group of 19 people including five children. For a day and a half they walked braving scorching sun. They tried to hitch a ride but the truck drivers asked exorbitant fare of ₹3,000 per person. They preferred to walk. They survived on the food and water which some NGOs provided them en route.

They reached Nashik where they got a train that brought them to Jhansi and from there they came to Banda.

"It was a second life for us. We fought hunger, frustration and exhaustion to reach our village so that we can live again. And when people started talking about going back after the situation improved, old images started flashing in my mind and I decided not to leave the village again," Devi tells you.

Her friend Kusuma too agreed to stay back. But the big question staring at their face was what will they do in the village as there are not enough employment opportunities there. The construction work in the village and adjoining Attarra block was limited. The work under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was not easily available. The villagers complained that the Pradhan of the Gram Sabha, who is from upper caste, ignored the residents of the Nibi village because majority of them were from the *dalit* community.

The social barriers which are well defined by caste, proved an impediment in Devi's entrepreneurial dream. The majority of the farmers were landless and belonged to marginalised communities. The village is dominated by upper caste, followed by backward and intermediary caste people. They have the ownership of the majority of the land. The *dalits*, who like Hindu caste hierarchy, are at the bottom of the resources available in the village.

The *gram sabha* record shows that the village has around 400 households that share 1500 hectare of agricultural land between them. The ownership of land is very skewed. The record says that 15 per cent of the population (which is around 60 households) owns around 60 per cent (around 900 hectares) of land. These are all upper caste people.

There are 140 households of the Backward Community who own almost 600 hectare of land. The rest of the households are *dalits* and they are landless.

Interestingly, Jai Kumar Chaturvedi owns around 100 hectare of land in that village which they give to the landless farmers of the village on sharecropping. In rural India share cropping is a common practice where a landless villager takes the land for tillage for a year on an agreed term and after harvest both can share the crop. In UP the process in local parlance is called 'Batohi'.

Devi decided to go for farming. "Initially, surviving was not an issue. We got a free ration from the Yogi Government and once got ₹1,000 too. Then the local NGO Vidya Dham Samiti provided us help as and when required and so we decided to take this risk," she tells you.

As they did not have land she decided to take one on *batohi*. "It was a risk worth taking. I know the area is water scarce but this is also a fact that during good monsoon we can have bumper crops here," she explains.

She met Raman Chaturvedi, son of Jai Kumar Chaturvedi and asked for a piece of land where they can do farming. "He looked at us with disbelief because previously we were not in talking terms. '*Hamara jhagda ho gaya tha*' (we had quarreled)," she tells you sheepishly.

Chaturvedi was perplexed when he saw a group of women come one fine morning and ask land for sharecropping. "I was a bit surprised because it is generally men who come to us to discuss the terms and conditions of share cropping. But when I was told these women who are *pravasi mazdoor* want to stay back in the village, we decided to give a small portion of land to them," he tells you.

Raman agreed to give six *bigha* of land on a 50-50 sharing basis, thus meaning that he will share the cost of agriculture input and will take 50 per cent of the grain produced.

The word spread in the village like fire that Devi was planning farming. Other women like Vimla, Koiri, Murri and Kusuma too joined her. Devi went around the village advising women of the migrant families, who were planning to go back to Vaapi, to stay back. "We had faith in Phula. We had seen the worst in Vaapi and were ready to give new resolve shown by Phula a try," Murri Devi tells you.

Rajani nods her head in affirmation. "I and my husband had made up our minds to go back and work in a factory. We postponed our visit for a few days to see how things shape up in the village. It is three months since then and have decided to stay back," she tells you with a smile.

The initial skepticism turned to self belief when villagers saw Devi and Kusuma working in fields. Devi sowed wheat and vegetables while Kusuma opted for vegetables. In between the words spread about the death of Ram Dayal, a villager from Nibi, in Vaapi and how the contractor forced his wife and son to work in the factory to repay a loan Dayal had taken from him.

Slowly the courtyard of Devi's house became the meeting point for the villagers. Women used to come and sit with Phula discussing the nitty-gritty of farming. This all started with whisper but soon the women became vocal and the resolve to stay back started gathering momentum.

"I am illiterate. I don't know anything about farming. Initially, I was a labourer and then when I was shifted to Vaapi my work was to sift soiled cloth pieces from fresh ones. So, my knowledge about farming was almost zero," she says.

Her relative Raju came to her rescue. He provided all the basic information like which seed and fertilizer to use and when. Fortunately, the rains were normal and it came as a big relief.

The heads started turning when Kusuma had a good harvest of vegetables like cabbage, potato, cauliflower and other seasonal vegetables. She opened a small makeshift shop inside her house and sold vegetables. "I earn anything between ₹125 and ₹150 per day. Some days, I even earned close to ₹250," Kusuma tells you with a smile.

Kusuma, with her husband, Shiv Avtaar, have even repaired a defunct well near the field which they had taken for *batohi*. "Irrigation is not a big issue now for us as we get water from the well which has been neglected for many decades," Avtaar says.

More and more women are now ready to take farming. "Phula motivated us. Kusuma showed us the way and now we have dropped the idea of going back to the factory," Koili says. Many in the group nodded in unison as a mark of confirmation of what Koili said.

The women of this non-descript village have become entrepreneurial. When they realized individually they do not have enough money, they joined hands to do farming. Four friends — Phula, Bimla, Koili and Murri — have entered into their own contract farming where they will share the agricultural input as well as the profit.

All of them have chipped in with ₹3,000 each and the money collected is used for irrigation, seeds and fertilizers. They have grown varieties of vegetables, onion and wheat. "We will give half of the crop to the land owner and share the rest among ourselves. This will be enough for us," Bimla tells you.

The words have spread around that women in Nibi village have brought a revolution. Around 20 families, all *pravasi mazdoor*, have not gone back despite a call from *thekedar* (contractor). Even people in a village Bhujyari purwan, around 20 kms from Nibi, narrate how some have brought a social change in the village. "We have heard that some women in nearby villages have opted for farming rather than going back to work in factories. People are talking about the revolution brewing in the villages of Attara," Vinod Singh, a resident of Bhujyari Purwan said.

Singh, in his early 20s, is also a land owner and gives their land on sharecropping. "Now in villages too women are coming forward and taking decisions themselves," he says in a sarcastic tone.

"Generally, at this time of the year padlocks could be seen at doors and a deadly silence drapes the Nibi village. This year it is different. The sounds of laughter, cries and chatter emanates from all the houses because the villagers have stayed back. Thanks to the women, life is back in the villages," Raja Bhaiya of Vidya Dham samiti, an NGO that works in the region, says.

Bimla, Koila, Bhuri and Phula, friends who gave new meaning to contract farming by sharing agri inputs as well as profits

Lending a hand

Raja Bhaiya with women at Nibi village

The decision women took to stay back in the village after unlock was not easy. They needed support from the Government and the local society at every step. The local NGO Vidya Dham Samiti came to their rescue.

"We were there just as a support group. The Vidya Dham Samiti (VDS) extended all possible help including the technical know-how and sometimes we helped these women with money. But the credit goes to these women who showed a resolve to fight back adversities and turned the crisis into an opportunity," Raja Bhaiya of VDS tells you.

The Samiti works with the marginalised section of the society in Banda and adjoining regions.

Raja Bhaiya tells you that he has seen the plight of migrant workers during lockdown. They came back to villages empty stomach and practically had nothing with them. "Condition of Phula and her relatives was no different. Our Samiti helped them initially and later supported them when they decided to stay back despite getting calls from the factory," he says.

Regular meetings are held between Samiti members and villagers. "I saw the seeds of women empowerment sowing in the adverse condition of Covid pandemic. These women were coming out of the shadow of their husbands. We allowed these women to spread their wings and now the result is for everyone to see," Raja Bhaiya tells you.

I AM ILLITERATE. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT FARMING. INITIALLY, I WAS A LABOURER AND THEN WHEN I WAS SHIFTED TO VAAPI, MY WORK WAS TO SIFT SOILED CLOTH PIECES FROM FRESH ONES. SO, MY KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FARMING WAS ALMOST ZERO
— PHULA DEVI

Fighting water woes

Kusuma at the well

The decision to opt for farming was not easy for the women. The primary reason being the region is water scarce. So, when Kusuma opted to grow vegetables the first thought that came to her mind was from where to get water for irrigation.

This time her caste came to her rescue. Being a *dalit* her house was at the corner of the village. There was a well at one corner of the field which was lying defunct for many years. The well was built by upper caste people of the village but they stopped using it after they installed pumps in their houses.

"This well was in very bad shape. One day sitting at the base of the well my husband and I discussed if we can install a pump then withdrawing water from the well would be easy. This way we will be able to solve the irrigation problem too," Kusuma tells you.

Initially, the husband-wife duo had used a bucket to pull water and then irrigated the vegetable with a mug. This was a tedious and time consuming job.

Shiv Avtaar, husband of Kusuma, had a little bit of knowledge of machines as he had helped electricians in the factory in Vapi. They took a little loan from a private moneylender and installed a pump.

"The water problem is solved to a large extent. After success in the vegetable business I am looking for diversification. My husband is looking for avenues in fisheries and poultry," she tells you.

INDIA FIX LORD'S DATE

Virat & Co will face Black Caps in WTC final after Axar, Ashwin take five each to thrash England by innings & 25 runs to seal series

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Axar Patel and Ravichandran Ashwin once again made a mockery of an eternally confused English batting line-up as India enter into the inaugural World Test Championship final with a resounding innings and 25 run victory on the third afternoon of the fourth and final Test here on Saturday.

All India needed was a draw to book a Lord's date in June with Kane Williamson's New Zealand but Axar (24-6-48-5), in company of Ashwin (22.5-4-47-5), literally blew England away in a session and half for a paltry 135 in 54.5 overs to complete a 3-1 rout, ensuring that the *Anthony De Mello Trophy* will stay at the Cricket Centre in Mumbai.

It was another two and half days finish but even the most partisan England experts like their former skipper Michael Vaughan have admitted that the 22-yard strip had almost nothing to do with their side's abject surrender.

A case in point could be India's first innings score of 365 and a lead of 160 on the same track where England could cumulatively manage only 340 runs across two innings.

This was one Test match where Indians, even before a ball being bowled, created an illusion of a turning track. It was a ploy of playing with the minds of a team that was already in a negative zone.

There wasn't much turn but enough to ensure that the visitors wilted under pressure as Patel's series tally stood at highest for a newcomer (27) while man of the series Ashwin was peerless as ever with 32 scalps in his kitty.

A lot of credit for this victory should go to the indomitable Rishabh Pant, who played the enforcer on the second day with a magnificent hundred, and Washington Sundar, who notched up a chiselled 96.

These two knocks literally made it impossible for England to make a comeback as a total of 365 seemed like 650.

The coming of age of Pant as a real replacement for the iconic Mahendra Singh Dhoni and emergence of Washington as a potent batting all-rounder only augurs well for the team.

So formidable is India's bench strength right now that Hanuma Vihari, who saved an epic Test in Sydney only a couple of months back, may not get to play a Test in near future.

World's best wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha will also find it difficult to add to his 38 Tests unless the *Roorkee Rockstar* gets injured.

Patel, in his debut Test series, was a powerhouse performer but he also knows that once Ravindra Jadeja is fit and available, he will have to wait for his next Test.

The story of the third day was similar to the one that has played out for most of the series.

With shoulders already drooping after the humilation inflicted by Pant and Washington, England's openers Zak Crawley (5, 16 balls), Dom Sibley (3, 21 balls) and Jonny Bairstow (0, 1 ball) seemed like "walking wickets" at the start of the post-lunch session.

One had expected two of England's best players in Joe Root (30) and Ben Stokes (2 off 9 balls) to put up a fight but the all-rounder failed to gauge the extra bounce as he went for a sweep shot off Patel.

Kohli accepted the dolly at leg slip as England's resistance was blown away at 30 for 4.

Ollie Pope (15) hit Ashwin for a six, which was more desperation than finesse, and it was only a matter of time before he yorked himself as Pant fumbled while gathering but managed to effect a stumping to make it 65 for 5.

The England skipper could only helplessly look how his colleagues made a mess of Test match batting and Ashwin finally had his number trapping him leg before on the back-foot with another straight ball.

The remaining wickets in the post tea session were a mere formality which the spinners completed in due course of time.

The morning session belonged to Washington, whose 96 off 174 balls was as important as Pant's second day hundred in the final context of the match.

Washington and Axar Patel (43 off 97 balls) added an invaluable 106 runs for the eighth wicket, which ended even a miniscule chance for England to stage a recovery.

Indian captain Virat Kohli along with teammates Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Mohammed Siraj and Rishabh Pant pose with winners trophy PTI

"Every team in International cricket is a quality side and we need to work hard to beat them, even at home. Keeping that intensity going is most important and is the hallmark of our team."
—VIRAT KOHLI

"We haven't matched India in the last three, and we need to keep learning and keep getting better for this experience and this series, and we need to keep evolving and move forward."
—JOE ROOT

India top WTC table

Dubai: India on Saturday finished on top of the league phase of the ICC World Test Championship standings after crushing England by an innings and 25 runs in the fourth Test.

"That victory against England means India finish the league phase of the inaugural ICC World Test Championship with a fine view from the top of the table," the ICC tweeted.

India finished the league phase with 520 points, which includes 12 wins, four loses and one draw.

New Zealand finished in the second spot with 420 points, including seven wins and four loses.

Australia finished third with 332 points ahead of England and Pakistan.

Our bench strength is extremely strong: Kohli

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India's supremely talented bench strength has made skipper Virat Kohli quite confident that the team will have a relatively smooth ride when the transition period dawns upon it in the next few years.

With the rise of several young players like Washington Sundar, Mohammed Siraj and the maverick Rishabh Pant, India have been on a roll both at home and abroad.

"Our bench strength is extremely strong and that's a good sign for Indian cricket. When the transition happens, the standards won't fall and Rishabh and *Washy's* partnership showed exactly that in a crucial juncture of the match," Kohli said at the post-match presentation.

After notching up victories in the second and third Tests respectively, India won the fourth match inside three days.

"We had to pick up our body language after the first game in Chennai. Every team in International cricket is a quality side and we need to work hard to beat them, even at home. Keeping that intensity going is most important and is the hallmark of our team," Kohli said.

Star opener Rohit Sharma scored 161 in the first innings of the second Test and the skipper feels the knock changed the complexion of the series alongside seasoned spinner Ravichandran Ashwin's performance of 32 wickets.

"Rohit's knock was the defining moment in Chennai, and Ashwin has been our most bankable player over the years so they have been our best players this series.

"Now we can accept that the World Test Championship final, which was a distraction in New Zealand in 2020, but now it's a reality," Kohli said.

Ashwin, who ended the series with 32 wickets and a century, was named *Man of the series* and the spinner was delighted to qualify for the WTC final, adding that the win was a collective effort.

"The fact that we qualified for the WTC final is very important. The intensity was low after Chennai, despite the high in Australia. Every time there was a challenging time in the series, someone put their hand up, so this series win was right up there," Ashwin said. England skipper Joe Root conceded that his team was outplayed by the hosts in the series.

"The first game was a positive. We haven't matched India in the last three, and we need to keep learning and keep getting better for this experience and this series," Root said.

Ashwin wants to leave his own legacy

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

To become the best version of himself while learning something new everyday is Ravichandran Ashwin's endeavour as he aims to leave his lasting legacy in the pantheon of Indian cricket greats.

Ashwin has now won eight Man-of-the-Series awards in his 10-year career and is only eight wickets short of equalling Harbhajan Singh's 417 Test wickets.

It could well happen in England this summer but he doesn't want to entertain any such thoughts.

"Honestly, that's not even crossed my mind and if you want me to put my thoughts on it. He is a fantastic bowler. There's a lot that I have learnt from him. I wasn't even an off-spinner when *Bhajju paa* started playing for the Indian team," Ashwin's respect for another practitioner of the same craft was there for all to see.

"He (Harbhajan) was also an inspiration because of the 2001 famous series (32 wickets in 3 Tests). I never imagined in 2001 that I will be an off-spinner, and I mean who would have imagined those things.

"I was fortunate to play alongside *Bhajju paa* when I came into the team and also play under Anil *bhai* but I would now like to leave my own legacy," Ashwin said.

Being a student of the game Ashwin wants to evolve as a cricketer and a person everyday.

"My growth as a cricketer is a direct synonym to the person I am. I want to keep evolving, keep learning and that's my second nature, directly proportional to the kind of cricketer I am and whatever I do, the best that I can be."

Ashwin's apathy for all those pitch critics is well documented and he would love to see how the global media reacts when a green top is given to India when they go for a game outside the sub-continent.

"The series win is a testament to the fact that this is a really good Indian cricket team. That's all I would like to say. Other day, I was listening to what Sunny *bhai* (Sunil Gavaskar) was saying, makes sense," Ashwin said referring to Gavaskar's statement about not giving too much credence to the British pundits, whose favourite day job had been criticising the Indian tracks.

"Only because we are giving attention to people who are making a mockery of it, we are encouraging them to do it non-stop," he said.

He then sarcastically said that he would keenly watch how foreign media cover the criticism from Indian commentators about the pitches provided when India is on tour abroad.

"I would like to a pitch covered with grass somewhere else in the world and some of our Indian commentators, taking picture and putting an Instagram post and I will like to see how the global media takes notice and then we will know who's at faulty end."

'Motera track produced fantastic entertainment'

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

There is no reason to cry over the nature of the Motera track, India head coach Ravi Shastri asserted on Saturday, saying the curator prepared pitches that produced "fantastic entertainment" in the last two matches here.

The pitch for the third Test came in for sharp criticism from a few former England players after the visitors were bowled out for 112 and 81 in the Day/Night match.

"Why should I hold back? I attribute it to the groundsman," Shastri said after India dismissed England for 135 to register an innings and 25 run win.

"Who will complain against a track like this? It is fantastic entertainment, for both teams and the game and the result 3-1 doesn't really suggest how close the series was."

Shastri lauded the team for making it to the WTC final despite the ICC changing the qualification criteria last year.

"For us to be on the top of the table in World Test championship is two-and-a-half years of work and for those years to be successful, it's been six years prior to that," he said.

"The boys took one series at a time, they were not really bothered about the World Test Championship because the goal post gets shifted every time.

"We were heading the table and some rule change came of percentage system when we were not even playing but never mind all that, we have got 520 points, we deserve to be on top of the table and playing that final."

The 58-year-old said it is very satisfying to see the youngsters perform.

"... When you see youngsters coming through the ranks and performing in such situation which are really tough. Not one individual calling the shots. We've given opportunities for youngsters and they have grabbed those and delivered," he said.

"They have been in a corner but they have fought from there. This side refuses to give up. We were irrepressible in Australia and we are the same here too.

"What Pant and Sundar pulled off yesterday was unreal because the pressure was on us and we were trailing by 50 and from there to get 360 was an outstanding achievement."

We failed to grab opportunities: Root

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

England captain Joe Root on Saturday mourned the opportunities his team squandered in the lost fourth Test, saying they let slip the advantageous position from where they could have been on top of the game.

India at one stage were 121 for five but ended up taking a 160-run lead in the first innings which proved to be match-winning.

Rishabh Pant, Washington Sundar and Axar Patel took the game away from England with their fearless approach.

"There have been times we had a chance to wrestle the game in our favour, to get on top, just didn't manage to do it," Root said at the post-match conference.

"India played those important, key moments better than us in these last three games and credit for being able to do that better than we do.

"So, it has been disappointing, it has been frustrating to finish the series on a note that we have but we are going to keep looking forward as a team," said Root.

The England skipper acknowledged Indian batsman Rishabh Pant's remarkable ability to take the attack by the scruff of its neck. "The way he bats, he makes it difficult for bowlers to build pressure on him. Sometimes he pulls a reverse sweep to a guy, who has 600 Test wickets.

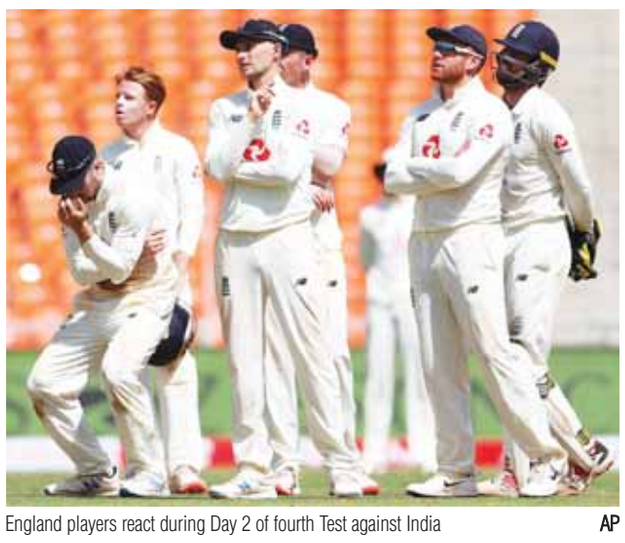
"So it is quite a skill and a brave move to do and it came off for him and got themselves (India) to a very good position on that wicket," said Root, referring to the reverse sweep which Pant played off James Anderson.

For India, Ravichandran Ashwin grabbed 32 wickets in the series, while Axar snared 27 wickets to leave England floored.

Root lavished praise on the Gujarat left-arm spinner saying he was relentless in his lengths.

"In this series, Axar in particular, has been very accurate and has asked very good questions. He has been relentless with his length and some balls have skidded, some have spun quite big and we are going to just find a way to manage it well."

But not all was doom and gloom for Root, who found solace in the fact that his wicket-keeper Ben Foakes and left-arm spinner Jack Leach performed their roles to the best of their abilities.


England players react during Day 2 of fourth Test against India AP

Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar was on Saturday felicitated by the BCCI on the 50th anniversary of his Test debut. The 71-year-old former skipper received a commemorative Test cap from BCCI Secretary Jay Shah during the lunch break on Day three of the fourth and final Test between India and England at the Narendra Modi Stadium here in Ahmedabad PTI

Pant's 101 best counter-attacking knock on Indian soil: Shastri

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India coach Ravi Shastri on Saturday said Rishabh Pant's game-changing hundred against England in the fourth Test here was the best counter-attacking knock that he has seen by a number six Indian batsman on home soil.

Pant, in an innings that was just the right mix of caution and aggression, notched up 101 off just 118 balls, playing a crucial role in India winning the match by an innings and 25 runs.

Speaking highly of Pant, Shastri said the stumper's hard work is now showing results.

"He has worked like hell in the last three or four months and the results are showing. Yesterday's innings is the best counter attacking innings, I have seen in India by an Indian, especially at number six when the ball was turning," Shastri said after India's emphatic win in the fourth Test.

"We were hard on him. Nothing comes easy and he was told in no uncertain terms that he has got to respect the game a little more. He has got to lose some weight and work hard on his keeping.

"We know the talent he has. He is a genuine match winner and he has responded."

Pant's potential was never in doubt but he struggled to do justice to his talent, often inviting criticism for his shoddy work behind the wickets and average batting show.

However, the Australia tour changed everything for him as he played match-winning knocks in India's historic victory. Since then he has only grown in confidence.

India Eves finally begin WC preparation

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The Indian women's team will finally get to shake off the rust after 12 months of no International cricket and start their ODI World Cup preparation with the five-match series against South Africa beginning here on Sunday.

While the South Africans come into the series fresh from their home rubber against Pakistan last month, the Indians last played on March 8, 2020 when they lost to Australia in the T20 World Cup final.

The quarantine protocol in Covid-19 times have given only two days of nets to both the teams, making it tougher for the players to be at their best from the word go.

It can be safely said that the Indians have fallen behind in their World Cup preparation compared to the likes of England, New Zealand and Australia, who have played more regularly amid the pandemic.

The new selection committee has come in with its own vision and picked six uncapped players for the eight match contest also comprising three T20Is, leaving out senior players like Shikha Pandey, Taniya Bhatia and Veda Krishnamurthy. The non- selection of T20 star Shafali Verma for the ODIs has also raised a few eyebrows.

Harmanpreet Kaur, who is Mithali Raj's deputy in ODIs and T20 captain, insisted that rustiness will not be an issue for them and the players are itching to take the field after a long gap.

Though the players did not get much game time over the past one year, they ensured their fitness remained unaffected. Some of the players, including Jemimah Rodrigues and Deepti Sharma, used the free time to play in club tournaments as they did not know when the next India assignment would come.

With the ODI World Cup scheduled in New Zealand early next year, the team needs to explore options in the middle-order and the pace department.

South Africa, who recently beat Pakistan 3-0, will miss the services of their regular skipper Dane van Niekerk and all-rounder Chloe Tyron for the India tour. Sune Luus will lead the side in Niekerk's absence.

The visitors got very little time to get used to the conditions but they go into the series with a lot more match time than the hosts.

All the games will be played at state of the art Ekana Stadium with crowd capacity capped at 10 per cent.

TEAMS

India: Mithali Raj (captain), Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Punam Raut, Priya Punia, Yastika Bhatia, Harmanpreet Kaur, D Hemalatha, Deepti Sharma, Sushma Verma (wicket-keeper), Swetha Verma, Radha Yadav, Rajeshwari Gayakwad, Jhulan Goswami, Mansi Joshi, Poonam Yadav, C Prathyusha, Monica Patel.

South Africa: Sune Luus (captain), Ayabonga Khaka, Shabnim Ismail, Laura Wolvaardt, Trisha Chetty, Sinalo Jafta, Tasmin Britz, Marizanne Kapp, Nondumiso Shangase, Lizelle Lee, Anneke Bosch, Faye Tunnicliffe, Nonkululeko Mlaba, Mignon du Preez, Nadine de Klerk, Lara Goodall, Tumi Sekhukhune.

Lack of game time won't be an issue: Mithali

Lucknow: Indian women's ODI captain Mithali Raj on Saturday said lack of game time won't be an issue for the players and they are ready to hit top gear against South Africa in the limited over series as the team begins its World Cup preparation.

"Clearly they had a game time, but we are playing after a gap. Having said that we definitely have put in the efforts, trained ourselves, have these short camps, four days of sessions here," Mithali said during a virtual news conference on the eve of the first ODI here.

"It doesn't look like we are rusty or anything ... I think the girls clearly are quite excited to get on the field and start putting our best performances because it's time that we start our campaign for World Cup, and start playing some cricket."

The Neetu David-led selection committee sprung a few surprises by excluding Shafali Verma from the ODI team but the skipper said the explosive opener was very much in their radar.

"She is definitely in the scheme of things. She is in the radar. I think we need to have a little bit of patience and you see her very soon," Mithali said.

The ODI skipper said the series is very important to set their combination right for the World cup slated in New Zealand around this time next year.

"This series is very important in that context. We will try to see the composition of the team but at the same time also see that the team as a unit start to get that momentum right," Mithali said.

"...The series is very important for two reasons, one is to give the young players the right platform, to give them opportunities in the home condition.

"And at the same time, it's important to see that the core players get enough game time to get out there and start to develop that rhythm, and as a unit we come together. And take it from there," she added.

The 38-year-old was last seen in action in the away series against West Indies in November 2019. Mithali said she will look to carry on her good batting form which had helped India beat Windies 2-1.

"It's just like how I prepare myself before any series, it's been no different. In terms of gametime 'yes', we've not really played any matches as such. But in terms of training or preparation at home or back in the academy, I've prepared myself ...," she said.

"All these years we've trained like that and I am definitely looking forward to getting more runs, because the last series against West Indies in 2019 I was in rhythm and I would like to continue from there." **PTI**

LOCAL SPORT

Myneni-Bhambri win doubles title

Lucknow: Saketh Myneni set himself in line for the coveted double crown as he won the doubles title and set up a singles final clash with Zane Khan of USA at the UP open World Tennis Tour ITF Men's $15000 event at the Vaijyantkhand Mini Stadium here on Saturday.

In the doubles final, wildcards Yuki Bhambri and Saketh Myneni eased past giant-killers Kaza Vinayak Sharma and N Vijay Sundar Prashanth 6-2,6-3.

In the singles semifinals, Saketh Myneni ended the challenge of third seed Great Britain's Aidan McHugh 6-3,6-4 while Zane Khan kept up his splendid run In the tournament ousting fifth-seeded Ukrainian Eric Vanshelboim 6-4, 6-1.

The experienced Myneni broke McHugh in the 6th game of the first set. In the second set, Myneni raced to a 3-1 lead breaking the young British player in the second game.

But McHugh hung on and broke Myneni in the 5th game and then held on to his serve to level the score at 3-3. Myneni did not let McHugh comeback immediately breaking him in the 8th game of the set and race to the finals.

In the second semifinal finals, Zane Khan of USA upset Fifth-seeded Ukrainian Eric Vanshelboim 6-4, 6-1 in a match of 19-year-olds.

Commissioner Lucknow Ranjan Kumar gave away the prizes to the doubles event winners. Indian Olympic Association treasurer Anandeshwar Pandey and tournament director Punit Agarwal were also present during the prize-distribution ceremony.

Team announced

Uttar Pradesh Hockey on Saturday announced the sub-junior girl's team for the 11th Sub-Junior Girl's National Championship from March 10 to be held at Jharkhand.

Team: Anju Yadav, Ashika Verma, Simran Hussain, Nikki Singh, Shreyanshi Gupta, Manisha Patel, Sunita Kumari, Jyoti Vishwakarma, Preeti Patel, Sheela Thapa, Julie Bhardwaj, Vandana Patel, Kushi Rathore, Pushpanjali Sonkar, Poornima Yadav, Kanchan Kumari, Jainab Kursheed, Pitambari Kumari. (Reserves) Renuka Patel, Pooja Chaudhary, Mansi Yadav, Rabia Khan.

IPL to begin on April 9

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The 2021 edition of the Indian Premier League will begin on April 9, exactly 12 days after the Indian cricket team completes its ongoing assignment against England, a BCCI source revealed on Saturday.

The third and last match of the ODI series against England will be held on March 28 in Pune. The duration of the popular T20 league has been fixed keeping in mind India's International schedule.

"We have provisionally decided that IPL will start on April 9 and end on May 30," a senior BCCI source said.

"The formal approval of dates and venues will be done during Governing Council meeting next week," the source added.

Considering the prevailing circumstances when efforts are being made to minimise the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the BCCI has decided to host IPL matches in five cities - Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Delhi and Ahmedabad.

The allotment of matches to Chennai and Kolkata would be done, keeping in mind the state Assembly election scheduled there in the next few weeks.

Also, the Asia Cup, that was scheduled in June this year in India, stands cancelled "now that India have qualified for the World Test Championship final, courtesy their 3-1 series win over England."

Spinners lead SL to series-levelling win

AFP ■ ST JOHNS

Sri Lanka's spinners bamboozled world champions West Indies to claim a 43-run win in the second T20I at Coolidge Cricket Ground on Friday.

Having lost by four wickets in the opening game on Wednesday, in a game where West Indies skipper Kieron Pollard launched six sixes in an over, the tourists successfully defended 160 on Friday to level the three-match series.

West Indies were all out for 117 in the 19th over as Sri Lanka ended an eight-game losing streak in T20.

The final match is at the same venue on Sunday.

Leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga finished with 3-17, off-break bowler Akila Dananjaya, who was the victim of Pollard's midweek assault but also claimed a hat-rick, had 1-13.

Wrist spinner Lakshan Sandakan took 3-10, including Pollard who made just 13.

"The wicket was a bit slow. I tried not to give away any boundaries. That's why I was able to bowl well," man-of-the-match Hasaranga told the post-match presentation.

Earlier, veteran all-rounder Bravo slammed the brakes on Sri Lanka with two wickets and a run-out.

Sri Lanka got off to a flying start after winning the toss and openers Danusha Gunathilaka and Pathum Nissanka put on a blistering 94 off the first 10 overs.

But then 37-year-old Bravo was called into action and he responded by running out Nissanka for 37.

Gunathilaka followed just four balls later in the 11th over, caught by Kevin Sinclair off Bravo at mid-off.

The runs then dried up for Sri Lanka.

Having hit eight fours and three sixes in the first 10 overs, they managed just three more fours and one six in the second half of the innings.

That included an eight-over stretch where the ball never crossed the boundary ropes.

SINGLES

IBRA POISED FOR COMEBACK

Stockholm: Indian paddlers Sutirtha Mukherjee and Ahyika Mukherjee started their campaign at WTT Star Contender Doha with comfortable victories in the first round of the women's singles qualifying event. While the World No 95 Sutirtha registered a dominating 11-9, 11-3, 11-6 victory over Ala Mohamed of Qatar, World No 131 Ahyika notched up an easy 11-8, 11-3, 11-5 win against Qatar's Maha Faramarzi.

INDIA HOLD BRITAIN TO A DRAW

Antwerp: Simranjeet Singh produced a late strike as a resilient Indian men's hockey team held Great Britain to a 1-1 draw in its third match of the Europe Tour on Saturday. Simranjeet's late equaliser in the 57th minute ensured India remained unbeaten on the tour. For Britain, Alan Forsyth scored in the 2nd quarter.

Manish Kaushik strikes Gold

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic-bound Indian boxer Manish Kaushik (63kg) struck Gold in his first competitive outing in a year even as five others signed off with Silver medals in the 35th Boxam International Tournament in Castellon.

Manish defeated Denmark's Nikolai Terteryan in a split decision.

However, Mohammed Hussamuddin (57kg) and Vikas Krishan (69kg) ended with Silver medals among men.

Hussamuddin gave a walkover to Jean Paul Rivera of Puerto Rico, which was struck by a positive Covid-19 case. The reasons for the Indian's pullout were not immediately not known.

Vikas Krishan (69kg), however, lost a gruelling final to Youba Sissokho, a bout in which the Indian was left with a cut above his right eye.

Among women, Simranjit Kaur (60kg), Pooja Rani (75kg) and Jasmine (57kg) ended with Silver medals among women.

The Indian women boxers thus ended their campaign with three Silver and one Bronze medal. Six-time world champion M C Mary Kom (51kg) had ended with a Bronze after a semifinal loss.

Debutant Jasmine (57kg) also ended with a Silver after going down to European champion Irma Testa of Italy.

Sindhu vs Marin
Live from 6:40pm IST
STAR SPORTS 3 NETWORK

Sindhu vs Marin in Swiss final

PTI ■ BASEL

Olympic Silver medallist P V Sindhu dished out a superlative performance to outclass Mia Blichfeldt of Denmark in straight games and enter the women's singles final of the Swiss Open Super 300 tournament here on Saturday.

Sindhu, the reigning world champion, beat fourth seeded Blichfeldt 22-20, 21-10 in 43 minutes to avenge her first-round loss to the Danish world number 12 at the Yonex Thailand Open in January.

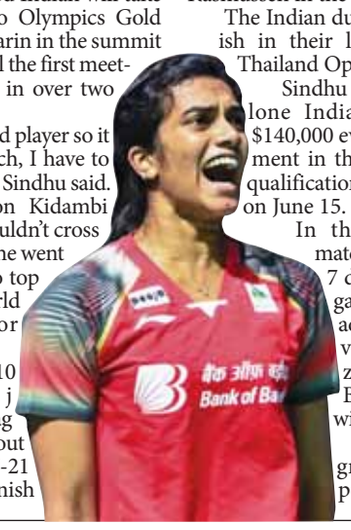
"It's been a good win today for me and playing against Mia was a kind of a revenge because in Thailand I had lost to her, so it was very important for me and yeah really looking forward to the finals," Sindhu said.

This is Sindhu's first final appearance since the World championships here in 2019.

The second seeded Indian will take on top seed and Rio Olympics Gold medallist Carolina Marin in the summit clash on Sunday. It will the first meeting between the two in over two years.

"Carolina is a good player so it won't be an easy match, I have to play my 100 per cent," Sindhu said.

Former champion Kidambi Srikanth, however, couldn't cross the semifinal stage as he went down 13-21, 19-21 to top seed and former world champion Viktor Axelsen.



World number 10 Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also bowed out after losing 10-21, 17-21 to sixth seeded Danish pair of Kim Astrup and Anders Skaarup Rasmussen in the last-four stage.

The Indian duo had a last four finish in their last event at Toyota Thailand Open in January.

Sindhu thus emerged as the lone Indian survivor in the $140,000 event, the first tournament in the extended Olympic qualification period which ends on June 15.

In the women's singles match, Sindhu erased a 5-7 deficit in the opening game to grab a 11-8 advantage at the interval. The Indian then zoomed to 17-12 but Blichfeldt clawed back with five straight points.

Sindhu soon grabbed three game points but again her rival managed to level the score. However, the Indian ensured she had the last laugh as she pocketed the opening game.

Sindhu dominated the proceedings in the second game as she was up 5-2 first and kept moving ahead. She enjoyed a 11-6 lead at the break and continued her good run to eventually shut the door on her opponent.

Indian Olympic hopefuls have been training at the Gachibowli complex for last few days to prepare for the Tokyo Games.

"Training at a bigger stadium, similar to this stadium as I got used to it and it has helped me a lot here," Sindhu said.

"I would once again thank everyone, BAI, SAI, Telangana State and Sports Minister for all the support and helping me with whatever I needed for training and preparation at the Gachibowli Stadium. It has helped me a lot."

Leipzig move top of Bundesliga

AFP ■ BERLIN

RB Leipzig climbed top of the Bundesliga on Saturday with a 3-0 romp at Freiburg to replace previous leaders Bayern Munich.

Christopher Nkunku, Alexander Sorloth, and Emil Forsberg scored the goals in Freiburg which lifted Leipzig one point ahead of Bayern.

"That was a mature performance," Leipzig sports director Markus Krosche told *Sky*.

"Anything is possible," he replied when asked if Leipzig can stop Bayern winning a ninth straight league title this season.

Leipzig took the lead at Freiburg after a first-half blunder by home goalkeeper Florian Muller.

His loose pass from the back was snapped up by Leipzig striker Yussuf Poulsen, who squared for French winger Nkunku to tap home four minutes before the break.

Sorloth continued his great form and midway through the second half he converted Nkunku's assist.

The Norwegian, who scored the last-gasp winner over Monchengladbach a week ago, then set up Forsberg who banged in Leipzig's third goal 11 minutes from time.

Third-placed Wolfsburg are now eight points adrift of Leipzig having stumbled to a 2-1 defeat at mid-table Hoffenheim whose striker Andrej Kramaric scored the hosts' winning goal just before half-time.

Eintracht Frankfurt stay fourth after Filip Kostic equalised for the home team in a 1-1 draw against Stuttgart.

A late goal by Leverkusen striker Patrik Schick sealed their 1-0 win at Moenchengladbach, who drop to 10th as their miserable run continues.

Vinesh in final, Sarita settles for Silver

PTI ■ ROME

Star wrestler Vinesh Phogat put herself in contention for a second consecutive Gold by reaching the 53kg final in a jiffy while Sarita Mor settled for a Silver medal at the Matteo Pellicone Ranking Series event, here.

In her four bouts, Vinesh had to wrestle only twice as she got walkovers in the other two on Saturday.

And the two bouts that she fought, Vinesh won those by pinning her rivals — first her compatriot Nandini Bajirao Saolkhe in the first round and then Canadian Samantha Leigh Stewart in the semifinal, which lasted a mere 42 seconds.

She did not have to move a sinew in the second round against Kazakhstan's Tatyana Akhmetova Amanzhol and Ecuador's Luisa Elizabeth as they forfeited their bouts against the Indian due to their respective injuries.

Vinesh came into the competition after wining a Gold in Kiev, Ukraine.

In the wee hours of Saturday, Sarita went down 2-4 to Giullia Penalber of Bulgaria in the title bout to settle for the Silver. The other Indian in the same weight category, Anshu Malik forfeited her Bronze play-off against Italy's Francesca Indelicato due to an injury.

Greco Rooman wrestler Kuldeep Malik though grabbed his chance by winning the 72kg Bronze play-off against Russia's Chingiz Labazanov.

Meanwhile in the men's freestyle competition, Satywart Kadian bowed from the 97kg competition after suffering a crushing 1-8 defeat at the hands of Turkey's Ibrahim Ciftci.

In the 125kg, Sumit Malik could win only one of his four bouts.

Nagal out of Argentina Open

PTI ■ BUENOS AIRES

Playing fearless brand of tennis, India's Sumit Nagal ran world number 46 Albert Ramos-Vinolas close before exiting the ATP Argentina Open after suffering a three-set defeat in the men's singles quarter-final here.

His relentless hitting kept Nagal in the match despite trailing 2-5 in the decider. Eventually errors at key moments spelled his ouster, losing 6-4, 2-6, 5-7 in the quarter-final contest that lasted two hours and 26 minutes.

It is Nagal's best performance on the ATP tour after entering the event as a qualifier.

The gutsy show earned Nagal 45 main draw ranking points that will push him to 132 from the current 150th slot.

Yet again Nagal's trademark inside-out forehand was at work as he put the Spaniard under the pump.

Had it not been for some marginal errors from Nagal and luck that favoured Ramos-Vinolas, it would have been a different result for the Indian, who had shocked world number 22 Christian Garin in the previous round.

Nagal said the performance has strengthened his belief that he can compete at this level.

"I always felt that. I have had lot of close matches with top-60 players recently. So I am there and I am glad I am playing at a higher level," Nagal said.

Asked about the powerful shots that he kept producing in the marathon match, Nagal said, "I thought that was the right thing to do."

"I still need to improve a lot and be able to keep hitting those with less errors. I am building it (fitness) back as it is different to practice. Mental stress also affects your body a lot," he said.

Nagal admitted that on clay courts, he expresses himself better but he won't put himself under pressure to get into top-100 in this clay court season.

"Definitely, it suits my game. I enjoy it more on clay but at the same time I am getting better on hard courts day by day. It was unfortunate I was so rusty during the Australian trip but those were the circumstances," he said.

"I just want to keep competing and be well. I am not putting myself under any pressure (for breaking into top-100). Let's see," he said.

Nagal earned $9240 as prize money for his effort.

'I've finally stepped out of my father's shadow'

Talktime

JAMIE LEVER

The comedienne who has been entertaining her fans with hilarious mimicry videos on social media, speaks with Shalini Saksena *about how she has finally stepped out of her father's shadow, why and how she ended up with the title Queen of Mimicry and her latest web series LiveItUp 2021*

What is LiveItUp 2021 about?

It is an interesting series by Godrej L'Affaire. It is about what everyone went through in 2020 — all things that they complained about or were happy about; we can't meet our friends, we can't travel, we are under complete lockdown and sitting and working from home. Then there were good moments when we got to spend time with family. The series is about celebs and their complaints — what they went through during the lockdown. This is a brilliant concept. For me, 2020 had been significant as an actor and as an artist I jumped on the opportunity when the team approached me. They felt I could bring out all the emotions that we underwent last year. We want people to live it up this year and hence the title.

How did you come on board this project?

When I received the call from the team, they were sure they wanted me on board for this project. The emotions that one went through last year, they were sure I could emote them well through my expressions and body language. I am extremely expressive during my shows and the team was sure I would be a perfect fit and be the year 2020.

Why choose social media to entertain people?

It is very different. Before last, I was doing stage shows and concentrating on Tv and films. It was only in 2020 that I took social media as a means to entertain. This is because I was locked up. As an artist I felt that I needed to entertain people. As an artist I have a small fan base. As soon as the lockdown happened there was little in terms of entertainment on TV. Performing on social media is different in terms of the kind of response one gets from the viewers. While on the stage, you will know within a second whether you cracked it or not through the laughter. On social media, people just comment even if they are articulate. But I managed to develop a strong fan base and people enjoyed it. I even had a few viral videos.

Have you finally stepped out of your father's shadow?

I can now say that right now, I have an identity of my own. I have made a mark in the industry. People approach me for what I do. When I first started off, without his help, the minute they would hear the surname Lever, they would know I am his daughter. When people started giving me work, they thought that since I am his daughter, my surname would also be Lever. To being with, I had insisted that I use the initial J as a surname for Janumala since Lever comes with a lot of responsibilities. I wanted to step away from all this. Also, my father's name is not Johnny Lever, it is his identity; something that he has created for himself. Now, after seven-eight years people know my work and offer me things because of it rather than due to my father.

I understand that besides your dad, you take inspiration from Kapil Sharma and Krushna Abhishek. Why?

Kapil Sharma is known for his spontaneity. The kind of comedy that my father and I do need a lot of preparation and rehearsals. You will see us using hand gestures, doing mimicry, dancing or enacting something. But there are some comedians like Kapil Sharma who just stands at one place and entertains people. These are different styles and I always look at inspiration from them. Bharti is witty. There are many English stand-up comedians from whom I study and learn.

How did you end up with the title of Queen on Mimicry?

Mimicry is definitely tough but it comes naturally to me. As a child I would mimic my teachers or copy siblings or people around you; that is how it starts. I would go to Church and come back home and replicate an accent. I would pick on their body language and expressions. My father was taking notice of this but never encouraged it since he wanted me to finish studies. Marketing is in my background but comedy is in my DNA. Since I am good at mimicry, I just went with it.

What are the traits for a comedian in order to excel?

It is important to have a voice of your own and have a unique point of view. Many comedians copy styles of others; this is a strict no-no. It is important to have strong observational powers, something that my father taught me. A comedian looks at things differently and he must capture that and have a USP.

What is keeping you busy these days?

I am currently shooting a show that I have on Flipkart app — *For Your Information*. The show is live on the app. It is my first solo show. Apart from this, there is a release in September this year – a web series. I have an interesting character here. I shot for it in Himachal Pradesh once the lock down opened. I am also doing shows on social media since I don't want to abandon my fans.

HEART OF BEAUTY

A breathtaking view of Lakshmi Temple in Orchha on a bright sunny day, (right) Interior of Lakshmi Temple with paintings engraved on the walls that speak of the Temple's rich history *Photos: Musba Hashmi*

MUSBA HASHMI travels to the hidden gems of Madhya Pradesh to explore what the cities have on offer and how these destinations of eternal beauty call for attention, making them a must visit on your travel list

A not-so-dense forest with rocks up for a toss and an enchanting zigzag road canopied by the trees leading towards nothing less than heaven sound like a faraway fancy land. Often underrated because of famous tourist hubs and numerous hill stations, the place leaves you spellbound with a wish to revisit it innumerable times. A place that gives you a peek into India's culture and history, Orchha makes you fall for its beauty. Known for its temples, one of the most famous being Raja Ram Temple, Orchha gives you a walk down the memory lane of the country's remarkable past.

The owl-shaped Lakshmi Temple, now non-functional, takes the visitors on otherworldly experiences filled with spirituality. The exquisite interior and the exterior of the temple are hard to ignore, with every wall telling the history through engraved paintings of mythological stories. According to a local tourist guide, though the paintings have faded with time, the preservation work is trying to bring it back to old glory or save other paintings from a similar fate.

Madhya Pradesh does not fail to mesmerize you when you venture out in search of peace, tranquility, and a slice of history. When you drive around and look beyond the usual humdrum of life, Chhatris on River Betwa will open up the book of Bundela dynasty rulers' grand life as if you are living in that era. These 15 chhatris, resembling a semi-open umbrella, are built in the memory of the rulers and their members.

Not only taking you on a trip down memory lane and bask in the glory of the past, but Madhya Pradesh also gives you a lesson or two on conservation of nature's balance. Being developed as Vulture Conservation Centre by Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board, Chhatris allow you to relive the times when it was normal to spot vultures near your city. Once in abundance, this beautiful bird has been listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List since 2002. It is magical to witness these regal birds going about their daily life and providing the much-needed balance to life. It takes you back to the question: Why humans had to intervene when Mother Nature has provided these scavengers to save us from the rotting carcasses strewn all over the place. Well, the question calls for a different debate altogether; the fact remains that such commendable work needs appreciation as you see these birds happily frolicking here on a piece of land in Madhya Pradesh.

When in Orchha, how can you not hop, skip and jump to a place that is merely at a distance of 200 kms. It is a place that sometimes evokes smirks, but the glimpse it gives in the past life is incomparable. This mystical land is of Khajuraho, which magnetically pulls you towards its highly decorated temple walls with engravings of love etched intricately to make you feel the innate emotions and divinity behind it. A stroll amidst the well-preserved ruins is a must to understand the deeper meaning hid behind the engravings. Well, you might also have to ignore the voyeurs in between. Known for nagara-style architectural symbolism and erotic sculptures, Khajuraho also attracts visitors to the Khajuraho Dance Festival, a one-week long annual fest that is held in February 20 to February 26, that showcases all the classical dance forms and lots of Bundelkhandi food along with options of taking souvenirs for an unforgettable visit.

After a long day, a well-deserved rest is a must and MP Tourism's Kutni Island, less than 25 minutes away from Khajuraho, having a scenic view of a river makes you forget all the leg work you did to capture the history, culture, and nature of the state. Situated near Kutni Dam, this stay-over place will make your heart skip a beat as you get drown in the sound of flowing water as you grab a cup of coffee sitting at Sunset Point to watch the scorching sun go down to make way for a cool Moon.

Last, but not the least, a trip to The Tiger State of India is definitely incomplete without visitng a National Park.

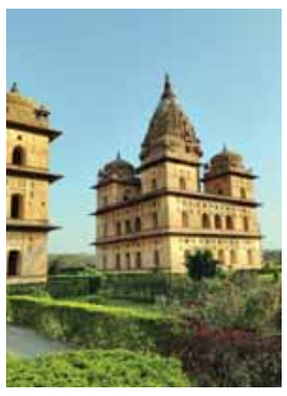
With only a 15 minutes drive away, Panna National Park, spread over 542.7 sq km calls for your attention. More so, if you want to catch a glimpse of P1 51's (tigress, P stand for born in Panna, 5 stands for fifth generation) recently born cubs who are seen playing in the core area, but only if you are lucky enough.

The rich fauna of the National Park includes leopard, chital (spotted deer), chinkara, nilgai, sambhar, and sloth bear. It is also home to more than 200 species of birds including the bar-headed goose, honey buzzard, king vulture, blossom-headed parakeet, changeable hawk-eagle and Indian vulture.

However, this is not the sole reason why one should visit Panna, one must go there to experience the serenity of the jungle. And if you dig deep into the forest, you can also experience the wild talking to you.

Even a four-hour safari will fall short to experience and talk to the wild. There are chances that you might not be lucky enough to see too many animals, but don't be disappointed, you will return rejuvenated and with tranquility because this is what the power of the wild can do to you.

A magnificent view of the Western Group of Temples



Chhatris in Orchha

A herd of spotted deers enjoying the morning sun in Panna National Park

FOR A LUXURIOUS STAY

Any trip is incomplete without a beautiful place to stay in. And no matter how enchanting your destination is, if your stay doesn't speak of luxury, it will definitely leave you with a bad taste. To solve all your travel woes, we have a few options that will make your stay as pleasant as your trip.

WHEN IN ORCHHA, CHOOSE BEST

This beautiful property is situated overlooking the Betwa River and is appealing enough to catch your attention. However, what makes Betwa Retreat, Orchha stand out of the clutter is its half-tent rooms. Yes, you read that right. Giving you a cozy feel, the half-tents gives you a slight feeling of living in a forest. The scenic view of the property also speaks the same.

WELCOME TO KHAJURAHO

This one will definitely give you a luxurious experience. Less than 10 minutes away from Khajuraho Dance Festival, MPT Payal and its staff makes sure that there is nothing to complaint about. The best part of these spacious rooms is the view from the window. You open the curtains only to see loads of greenery and langoors soaking in the sun, if you are lucky to make it there on a bright sunny day.

TRUE EXPERIENCE OF PANNA

If you are to visit Panna Tiger Reserve, Tendu Leaf Resort is waiting to give you a grand welcome to the jungle. This beautiful location will small hut-shaped cozy rooms makes you feel at home.

If you are a sea food lover, the resort is heaven for you. The greenery makes sure you to give you a detox so that you can go back home rejuvenated.

'Directors like Ray, Tarantino and Fellini inspire me'

DURBA SAHAY, filmmaker-writer who made her directorial debut with The Pen, released her latest venture Aavartan recently. SHALINI SAKSENA chats her up

How did you get the idea for the movie?

A few years back, I used to write for a Hindi literary magazine called *Hans*. Rajendra Yadav was the owner. I have penned a book as well titled *Raftaar*, it is a collection of 11 short stories. When I would meet him, we would talk of many things and stories would come from the conversations. I once asked him how he felt when somebody wrote better than him and is younger to him? His answer was an eye-opener. I feel jealous but I want them to fly and make a place for themselves.

Why choose guru-shishya as a subject?

I like art. It could have been a painter or a singer or any other artist. But I love Kathak and wanted Gen Z to know about various dance forms like Odissi, Mohiniyattam and Bharatanatyam. Today's generation only knows item dance numbers. In every movie there is an item number. I want the youth to watch this movie. I know for sure that if they watch it, they will like it.

Was it tough to make a film on this subject?

It was definitely tough. Choosing the location was an issue. There were financial constraints as well. But otherwise, things panned out smoothly.

Why is it that the so-called 'art films' not get financial backing? What and where are the roadblocks?

This is because a film that has no item song and no known actors has no takers. Financers want names of big actors. My film has neither. But I was determined to make this film and financed it myself.

How did you get into directing from being an actor?

I wanted to direct films from the very beginning – from the time I used to watch Satyajit Ray movies. When I saw his movies, something clicked inside me and when I got the opportunity, I took it. I have seen many world classics. I have seen the work of directors like Quentin Tarantino and Federico Fellini. If a person wants to make a brilliant film, they must first watch movies made by them.

You have experimented with new and somewhat unconventional ideas. Why?

Like I mentioned, I have been highly motivated and inspired by the work of people like Ray, Tarantino and Fellini. Hence, choosing unconventional subjects comes organically to me.

Such movies have few takers. Why make them?

I made *Aavartan* because I love Kathak and the thought that I must make a movie on this came to me and stuck a few years back.

What is Aavartan about?

The film is about *guru-shishya parampara* and *pratispardha*; how life is cyclic in nature but in this relationship the evolution takes place. *Aavartan* is a story of a *guru* and her *shishya* and features the cycle of it. Aavartan means cycle.

In the review last week, the starcast was incorrect. Apologies for the same. Why and how did you zero in on Sushma Seth, Shovana Narayan and Sunit Razdan?

Shovana Narayan is a friend; I have known her for 25 years. She is like an elder sister to me. When I started writing the story for this movie, I wanted to make a short length film. But there was so much information and things in my mind that they didn't fit in the 30-40-minute screenplay that I was writing at the same time. In 2018, I finally decided to make it into a full-length film and completed it in 2020. Sushma Seth, I chose because first, she stays in Delhi and second, she is easily accessible. I love her acting as well. She is such a nice person and extremely accommodating. Sunit Razdan is a family friend.

You own a cultural centre with an auditorium which has produced several plays. Tell us about that.

I was introduced to theatre during my school days. But the real magic became in 2003. We had our well-equipped theatre and started theatre repertoire titled Renaissance. This produced several plays and travelled across India. At the same time, we hosted several professional plays.

What next?

I have already started on my next project. I have the subject in my mind though I have yet to begin writing it. But I intend to do so soon.

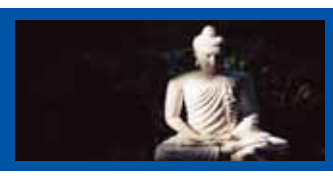
sunday magazine
March 7, 2021

the pioneer
agenda

I think that an actor is more likely to be forgiven in the public's eye than an actress
— Mila Kunis

FROM THE INSIDE

The power of attention
The connection to God is not hard to make. It is just a matter of making the choice that this is what we want to do 2



4 **Calm mind for *dhyana***
Train your mind to remain disengaged as a silent witness. Only when you pay attention, you get affected

MAPPING THE SACRED DWELLINGS OF SHAKTI

Renowned writer and historian DR ALKA PANDE narrates that while the Shakti Peethas represent a single philosophical fold, they are a testament to the diverse legends of Shakti. An edited excerpt:

Originating from Sanskrit, the word 'Peetha' means 'seat, altar, shrine or dwelling'. In the case of the Shakti Peethas, it is very specific. It is the sacred space where the Supreme Goddess rakes a strong, well-founded sear on Earth. Each of the Peethas have been turned into shrines for the Goddess by the very people who believe in the absolute power of the feminine. Each site where the 51 body parts of Sati fell, came to be known as a Shakti Peetha.

A teertha is a crossing. As with most Sanskrit words, there are multiple meanings of this too. Teertha is also the passing of the *atman* to the *parmatman* the crossing from the physical world to the metaphysical world. These 51 sacred sites are also linked by theologists and scholars to the 51 alphabets of the Sanskrit language. In each of the Peethas also resides *Kaalbhairava*, which is another name of Shiva. Most of the Shakti Peetha shrines contain a naturally appearing stone which becomes the object of worship around which the temple shrine is built.

Vindhyavasini is an additional Shakti Peetha, which I have deliberately not included in the 51 Peethas. While a powerful dwelling of Shakti, Vindhyavasini is not the abode of Shakti as Sati's body parts. It is, however, the preferred choice and home of Yogamaya, the sister of Krishna, who escaped from Kamsa's prison at Mathura.

Kalika Purana indicates that there are four Adi Shakti Peethas, which is further affirmed in the commentary and text of *Brihat Samhita*. It lists the names of the location at various places in India such as Vimla temple, Odisha, where her feet fell, Tara Tarini temple in Behrampur, Odisha, where her breasts fell, Kamakhya temple in Guwahati, Assam, where her *yoni* or vagina fell and lastly, the Kalighat temple in West Bengal, where her right toe fell.

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Kottari Devi (Hinglaj Mata) Temple, Pakistan

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE DEVI

Since antiquity, Goddess worship has been part of the Indic tradition of India. In fact, the Goddess is even more popular than Shiva and Vishnu. All the manifestations, avataras or appearances of the many forms of Devi belong to the pantheon of the Shakti cult. The Supreme Goddess can be a gentle life-giver as in the case of Lakshmi, Saraswati or Parvati, or as the mistress of death in the form of Durga, Kali and Chamunda. She is a fascinating juxtaposition, both life-perpetuating and potently destructive. In her life-giving form, Shakti can be represented as beautiful, benevolent, maternal, knowledgeable, compassionate and even desirable to the best. She invigorates, cheers and brightens the entire universe. She is represented and described as an idealized woman who is imbued with beauty, virtue and righteousness, and adorned with jewels. In fact, her iconography is drawn from the pre-modern depictions of the *salabanjikas*, *apsaras* and *surasundaris*. In this form, Shakti embraces and enlivens all aspects of reality. As the goddess of destruction and disease, she takes on rather unattractive and repulsive forms. As Sitala Devi Manasa, or Kali, the Devi is shown as haggard, ugly, unkempt and emaciated. However, whatever the form, it is always powerful.

I have dipped into both Puranic and Shakta texts to read the many interpretations and mythologies associated with the iconography, rituals of worship, devotion and representation of the Shakti Peetha as sites of immense power and energy. Each devotee enters the site of the Peetha through their own path of worship, through their respective understanding of the Great Goddess. The *wama panthis* or Shakt worshippers, for whom Shakti/Devi is supreme, enter through the tantric path, which is a sectarian movement.

The 51 Peethas have their own singular iconography and their own specific modes of rituals, worship and even prasada, with some standard common offerings like flowers, sweets and vermilion.

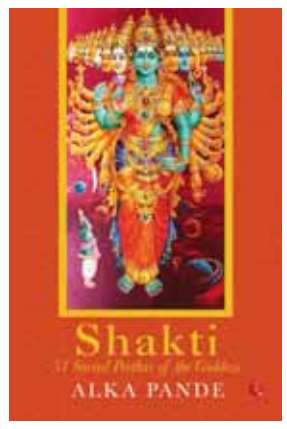
RITUALS OF PRAYER AND DARSHAN

While the Shakti Peethas were specific to the body parts of Sati, the rituals of adoration, prayer and worship differed from region to region, given the culture and history of the place. Over time, the Peethas became linked to their respective regions. The local people took ownership of them and started claiming rights over the teerthas and sites. Naturally, the local food and religious and cultural traditions started getting preference over the stated Puranic or standard Sanatan *dharmashastras*.

In the temples, the daily rituals of worship were similar to the presiding deity, who was normally male, i.e. Vishnu or Shiva, and the feminine was worshipped in the form of their consorts. However, in the Shakti Peethas, the presiding deity was a body part, which while having its own specific service or prayer, was enfolded in the larger narrative of the worship of Shakti in the form of Devi.

The purpose of puja (prayer) is to appease, soothe and mollify the powerful Goddess and embrace the divine energy expressed as life force. The life force itself has many variations, from auspiciousness, health, desire for children, wealth and success, gaining power over intellectual and artistic skill, even victory over enemies. The ritual of puja is heavily invested in darshan. While doing puja, the concept of making eye contact with the deity is the key. Darshan is a two-way concept where the devotee sees the divinity and in turn, the divinity sees the devotee. The concept of darshan crosses all spaces, from intimate puja corners at home in domestic spaces to large public temples including the 51 Shakti Peethas.

The very act of darshan/view is the crucial key that creates the iconic moment where the devotee and the divine are in complete sync. This is the reason why 'Shakt' worshippers make long and arduous journeys to the Shakti Peethas. The idea is to take the energy of the Supreme Goddess while receiving her blessings. The religious rites have three distinct classifications: *Nitya*, which is daily, normally done at home; *Naimittika*, which are important days of the deity, and particular festivals (some special to the *ishta deva* at home or to the presiding deity of the temple); and finally *Kamya*, which are optional, but a highly desired teertha being one of them.



> SINCE ANTIQUITY, GODDESS WORSHIP HAS BEEN PART OF THE INDIC TRADITION OF INDIA. IN FACT, THE GODDESS IS EVEN MORE POPULAR THAN SHIVA AND VISHNU. ALL THE MANIFESTATIONS, AVATARAS OR APPEARANCES OF THE MANY FORMS OF DEVI BELONG TO THE PANTHEON OF THE SHAKTI CULT

The ritual of prayer to Shakti is also vested in the *panchbhootas*, where the five *jnanaindriyas*, or senses, are included in the aspect of puja:

Panchbhoota	Jnanndriya	Sense	Puja	
Akash	Space	Ear	Hear	Pushpam
Vayu	Air	Skin	Touch	Dhoopam
Agni	Fire	Eye	Vision	Lamp
Jal	Water	Tongue	Taste	Water/Ghee
Bhoomi	Earth	Nose	Smell	Chandan

PRASADA

Prasada is both an offering and a blessing. It is offered by the devotee when he/she begins the ritual of puja. In domestic spaces, the devotee performs the puja at an individual, intimate level, often making prasada or an offering of fruits, and a rice and milk pudding with saffron strands and sprinkled with mewa/ nuts, particularly almonds and raisins. What I have observed in the offerings by the devotees, is that for Shakti, it is a bali, or animal sacrifice, normally a lamb and sometimes even a buffalo. The very basic prasada for Shakti is meat, alcohol for Bhairava, and a sweet, normally a rice pudding. Since the Shakti Peethas have been appropriated by the devotees of the region, naturally the prasada of the Peetha also acquires a local flavour. In Eastern India, it is primarily khichdi and kheer with poori and potato curry; in South India, it is a variation of the local rice, i.e. pulihora; in Andhra Pradesh, a jaggery laddoo; and in Western India, at the Amba temple in Banaskantha, a delicious sweet made of chickpea flour, the mohanthal, is offered along with sindoor, and makhanas, or dried lotus seeds. In this way, almost every region brings in its regional flavour and speciality as part of the prasada offered at the Shakti Peethas.

Meat as prasada is served in the temple community kitchens only on special occasions when specific sacrifices are conducted. Holding water in the palm of their hands, or *achaman*, the devotee asks for forgiveness and blessings before beginning their prayer. In the large public temples, it is the priest who becomes the conduit of devotion and reverence. He is the intermediary who while performing the ritual acts, offers food and flowers to the presiding deity of the temple. Worship in a temple begins by circumambulating the temple and the *garbhagriha* where the deity lives.

The myth of Sati and the 5l Peethas is an important myth in the worship of the Supreme Goddess. It lays down the template for all those who believe in the Absolute Power of the Mother Goddess, crossing borders from Tantra to Mantra, from *Devi Bhagwat Purana* to *Yogini Hridya Tantra*, right down to the popular Grama Devi in a village to the Kula Devi of a Rajput clan.

>> p2

REALISE DEEPLY THAT THE PRESENT MOMENT IS ALL YOU EVER HAVE. MAKE THE NOW THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF YOUR LIFE
— ECKHART TOLLE

THE POWER OF ATTENTION

The connection to God is not hard to make. It is just a matter of making the choice that this is what we want to do, writes SANT RAJINDER SINGH

A soul is sent to a life in the human body for a certain period of time. When the soul inhabits a body, the soul is still a part of God and is still one with God. The soul, however, is now overpowered by powerful forces, such as the mind, the body and the outer world, which cause the soul, over time, to forget itself. The soul slowly begins to identify itself with the body and mind and world outside. It suddenly begins to think that it can only receive information from the outer world through the senses. Thus the soul has become attuned to only one channel — the channel of the world.

If we think about our life as watching a television programme, we have multiple choices as to what to watch. Just as there are a dozen network stations and then dozens if not hundreds of cable stations from which to choose, so, too, there are many activities in this world that we can engage in.

Now, let us take a look at the other choices available to us. This physical planet is not a separate offshoot from all of creation and God. Most religions believe that there are higher regions or existence to which the soul goes after it dies. Scientists and doctors have tried to verify this by documenting accounts of people who were declared clinically dead but had near-death experiences and described something beyond this world. The question is, where are these realms? They are not zones in outer space delineated by borders. All these realms exist concurrently with this one. The reason we are not aware of them is because they operate on a different frequency or vibration.

The saints and mystics tell us that we have the choice to either stay tuned to this physical world, or to tune into the channels of God. God wants us to watch God's programming. God is available twenty-four hours of the day, three hundred sixty five days of a year. God's programming does not turn off at three a.m. like some networks do. It is a free station broadcasting all the time without any cable fees. We only need to know how to tune into God's station.

The connection to God is not hard. It is just a matter of making the choice that this is what we want to do. The steps to do this are simple.

ONCE WE IDENTIFY WITH THE SOUL, WE WILL BE ABLE TO PICK UP FREQUENCIES THAT THE SOUL IS CAPABLE OF RECEIVING. WE CAN MAKE A GRADUAL SHIFT IN WHICH WE GO FROM THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF ONE REGION TO CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE SPIRITUAL REALMS

- Step one is to stop identifying with the body, mind, and world outside, and identify with the soul.
- Step two requires that when we identify with our soul that we shift our attention to the frequency or the higher realms and ultimately to God.

That is all we have to do. God did not make it hard for us to become aware of our true Home. It is we who have made it complicated.

So how do we accomplish step one and step two? To accomplish step one, we must withdraw our attention from our body, mind, and the world outside. We must decide to turn off the outer programming. When that programming is in the off mode, then in the silence we will experience ourselves as soul. That is the step that we call self-knowledge.

Once we identify with the soul, we will be able to pick up frequencies that the soul is capable of receiving. We can make a gradual shift in which we go from the consciousness of one region to consciousness of the spiritual realms.

In this process we are not going anywhere physically; we are merely shifting our attention from one state of consciousness to the other. The other state of consciousness does not exist in time or space. They are operating concurrently. We are simultaneously in the other realms and in God at the same time but we are not aware of it because our attention is only focused on one region-the physical.

So, for step one, if we meditate accurately we will experience ourselves as soul. Once we identify with the soul, then we will also be aware of the inner Light and Sound that is the radiance and vibratory sound of God within us. If we absorb ourselves in the Light and Sound within, we can then attain step two. We can shift our attention into the Light and Sound, which attracts our soul to higher levels of vibration.

It is simply a matter of choosing where we want to put our attention. This is the simplicity of spirituality. God did not make things complicated. It is simple, we just have to choose to transplant the flower of our attention from the world into God's garden.

The writer is a spiritual leader

HIDDENSOULS
PRAMOD PATHAK

Best to mind your mind

We are at our wits end as no end to the pandemic appears to be in sight. Return to normalcy appears to be a shifting goal post something like a mirage on the highways in a hot summer afternoon. The society is witnessing all kinds of negative emotions reigning over human thinking. Depression is on the rise. Aggression is on the rise. Fear and anxiety are on the rise. Human response is completely clueless. With jobs disappearing, careers jeopardised and businesses vanishing, talks of positive thinking appear hollow. Rather a gimmick of a few who have the support system to hold the fort. But can something be done about it. No not about Corona. That will take its own course and hopefully it has covered most of its journey. In the times of distress, frustration can take many forms, from most undesirable behaviours too weird responses. However, the source of all this is not Corona. Coronavirus is what it is. The problem is how we perceive corona and its consequences. It is the perceived world that is the real world and the problem lies in how we perceive Corona. So tempering the perception is the answer. But the source of this perception is the mind which is giving all kinds of warning signals and anxious moments. We can take a cue from the definition of *Bhram* or illusion as described in Indian philosophy. The famous rope and snake illusion. If you see a snake and believe it's a rope your response will be as if it's a rope. On the other hand if you see a rope and believe it's a snake you will behave like you do when you see a snake. To sum it up then the perception of Corona is like that. For some it is like snake so they are over anxious and for some it is a rope, not to be bothered at all. Both these positions are erroneous and the truth is somewhere in between. The solution lies in mind management. But mind management is easier said than done. It is both a science and an art. In fact it is a practice and one needs a lot of training to do it. It is important to understand the science first. We must realise that mind generates thousands of thoughts everyday, more distressful then the pleasant ones. The way out is to control that. One of the most popular idioms explain the way to control the mind very simply. An empty mind is a devils workshop. So the way out is engaging the mind constructively. That calls for the art. This has to be developed. By doing, by training. That is why practice is important. Experience of calmness or agitation depends on the mind. To train the mind there is a need to reorient the thought process. The greatest problem is in our assumption that we are entitled to a certain way of life. This is a conditioned state as we have taken many things for granted. So even the slightest disruption throws us out of gear. That way Corona has become a major disruption. Naturally we are completely off balance. The mind needs to be reassured. Our previous generations have gone through even more difficult times, and the world did not come to an end. This time also it won't. Just keep on counselling the mind to take things in its stride and think of ways to cope with the disruption. It works.

Pathak is a professor of management, writer, and an acclaimed public speaker. He can be reached at ppathak.ism@gmail.com

FROM PAGE 1

MAPPING THE SACRED DWELLINGS OF SHAKTI

SHAKTI AND HER BHAIRAVA

A typical feature in each Shakti Peetha is the presence of a manifestation of Shiva in the form of Bhairava. Sati, whose body parts create the Shakti Peethas, is married to the primordial god, Shiva. However, the Shakti Peethas are completed with a Bhairava shrine within the complex.

In each of the 51 Shakti Peethas, Shiva meditates as Bhairava. Each of the Bhairavas have their own unique iconography and indicators. To understand the cult of Bhairava and the different forms of Bhairavas, it is important to understand the origin, markers, manifestations, representations and expressions of the Bhairavas.

The fierce form of Shiva is Bhairava, who himself has many manifestations. He is even present in Buddhist and Jaina iconographies. In Vajrayana Buddhism, he is known as the Bodhisattva Majushri, Heruka, Vajrabhairava and Yamantaka.

Bhairava is also known as the wandering form of Shiva-the fearful form who is the annihilator. As Mahakaal Bhairava, he is the keeper of time. As Dandapani, he holds a *danda*/rod to punish the sinners. And as Swaswas, he is one whose mount or vehicle is a dog.

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Kamakhya Temple

Bhairava moves into the realm of the tantric and with his consort Bhairavi. In this, he is prayed to at midnight during which time, the couple give darshan to their faithful devotees. It is believed that there are 64 Bhairavas, who are divided into eight categories, known as Astabhairavas, the guardians of the eight directions. They are Asithaanga Bhairava, Ruru Bhairava, Chanda Bhairava, Krodha Bhairava, Unmattha Bhairava, Kapaala Bhairava, Bheeshana Bhairava and Samhaara Bhairava.

The Bhairavas are ruled and controlled by the Maha Kaalbhairava, or Kaalbhairava, who as per the Shaivite tantric texts, is also the supreme ruler of the world. In the Trikha system, Bhairava as Para Brahman is also the supreme reality.

Along with Ganesha and Hanuman, the two most popular gods of the Hindu pantheon, the Mother Goddess or Maa is present in every home in the form of the domestic mother herself. I would like to end with a *shloka* from Devi Upanishad where the complement of man and woman in the form of Shiv and Shakti is expressed, which is also the base of the Samkhya Philosophy:

'It is only when Shiva unites with thee, O Shakti, that he becomes the all-powerful Lord. Left to himself, he lacks even the strength to raise his little finger.'

Excerpted with permission from Shakti: 51 Sacred Peethas of the Goddess *by Alka Pande, Rupa, ₹295*

Thank God, we have you

We all have divine qualities that help us protect ourselves from the demons within us and outside, writes AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

In the sixteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna states that there are two types of persons in this world. These either possess divine qualities or demonic qualities. Every person will have predominance of either of the two. (*16.6*) We know what divine qualities are: these are non-violence, truthfulness, not given to anger, modesty, etc. (*16.2*) The demonic qualities are: deceitful behaviour, arrogance, anger, etc. (16.4) Demons, having little intelligence, take birth to cause harm to the world. (*16.9*)

So, we, having divine qualities, must protect ourselves from these demonic characters. Consider what happened during the *Mahabharat* era. Evil forces led by Duryodhan and company came to power. Pandavas — the rightful occupants of the throne were ousted. In the same period, Kansa — a demon was wrecking havoc on good people and there was no check on him. God incarnated as Lord Krishna and set the matter right. However, God does not incarnate so frequently. Then, what are we to do? In the present times, many despots have managed to take control of their nations. What should their citizens do? Good people in these countries must come together to protect themselves, and, if possible, bring change in the government as and when there is a opportune moment.

Let me explain this philosophy of coming together. I will cite my own example. I don't like many things which happen in the country, but that does not prevent me from protecting myself from evil forces. I try to associate with mostly good people. Fortunately for me, my family consists of really good souls; I couldn't have asked for better. As far as relatives go, I am very careful in choosing with whom I associate. I try to maintain close relationships with only the really good ones. For others, my rule is to be strictly formal with them, i.e. what is the minimum required. Going further, I worship "*Shanideva*", as advised by my astrologer, and I do so quite seriously. Gaining favour of gods and goddesses is also important for me. I worship "*Durga Ma*" by chanting a particular mantra suggested by my spiritual friend. All these getting together with good people, "*grahas*" and gods and goddesses is very satisfactory. However, I still felt a lot of vacuum.

Over a period of many decades, I have realised that this vacuum can only be filled by God. Only He, the omnipotent, can help in certain circumstances; only He, the omniscient, can guide me in the most difficult situations; only He, the omnipresent, can be available to me at all times; and only He, the Master of the universe, can provide whatever I need, whenever I need.

Additionally, I have realised that God is forever watching all of us; hearing whatever we say; and being aware of what we are thinking. And the purpose is simply to help, guide and reward in order to encourage us good people; the task of punishing is with the divine authorities. It took me quite some time to fully realise the fact that God, who is everything (*7.19*) has taken this duty upon Himself. This is true as realised by many. Due to this fact, I can live peacefully; I feel secure in spite of presence of many negative forces. I am so gratified that I spend fifteen minutes daily prior to going to sleep thanking the Lord for various things. The underlying emotion is: God, we have you. Without your presence I or anyone cannot gain peace, bliss or sense of security. Thank God that you are very much with us.

Bishnoi is a spiritual writer and can be reached at spiritual@ajitbishnoi.com

Syrian quagmire: How long and for what?

The Syrian Civil War started as a non-violent uprising in the middle of March 2011. Today it is a full-fledged war which involves several nations and world's prominent jehadi outfits such as Islamic State (ISIS), al-Qaeda and splinter groups of these two mainstream groups. However, the Baathist Syrian Arab Republic headed by President Bashar al-Assad has survived a decade in power despite military challenges from all corners of the country.

Estimates emerging from various human rights agencies and independent media reports say that by end of December last year, the death toll in the war was between 3,87,000 and 5,93,000. The UN reports that more than 5.6 million have already fled the country and over 6 million have been internally displaced so far.

Although many complex events pushed the Syrians into this war, one that stands out is the historic Arab Spring, started in the early months of 2011. This 21st century movement mainly inspired by digital platforms across North Africa through the West Asia finally triggered the uprising in Syria. But then quickly, the Arab Spring had turned into mass gathering in the form of non-violent protests against the authoritarian and family-ruled regimes in all these countries.

In Syria, in the month of March, 15 schoolchildren were arrested and tortured for writing graffiti which was rightly inspired by the Arab Spring. One of the boys was killed as well. The arrest of these schoolchildren sparked outrage across Syria. Soon after, people came out on the road and demanded the release of all the children and raised slogans for basic freedoms for all in the country. The Assad regime responded by killing many protesters and this led to the demand for his resignation by the demonstrators. Subsequently, the clashes broke out between the masses and the supporters of the Government. This gradually spiralled into the full-blown war, what the whole world is witnessing today, involving terror groups of various nations of the world. But at its heart, the conflict highlights the tragic Shia-Sunni divide among the Muslims in the entire region.

The failure of the UN-led efforts to bring the warring parties to the negotiation table last month in Geneva has once again brought war clouds over this West Asian nation. The United Nations should take the lead and restart the Geneva process. So far, the UN strategies have broadly failed for Syria. If it moves in the same direction, can it be so that the organisation is complicit in the crimes committed by the Assad regime?

Now, what America is doing to bring peace to Syria is that it is back again. The latest American strike in Syria has signalled President Joe Biden's new war game in West Asia.

The so-called messenger of peace and reunion of America badly divided by former President Donald Trump, Biden is now targeting Iran-backed militias in Syria. His administration is justifying the attack as the missile sallies are directed towards rebels that are propping up the Assad regime. The US Air Forces dropped 500-hundred-pound joint direct attack munitions at a crossing used by Iranian backed groups reportedly killing 17. The particular groups hit by the limited US strike are Kataib Hezbollah and Kataib Syyaid al-Shuhada. Meanwhile, Deniss Ross, a former Senior US official and West Asian expert, says the attack was designed to show that there would be a military response if US forces were targeted, or the militias continued to strike. The Assad administration was quick to remind Biden that the American attacks were a cowardly act and urged Biden not to follow the law of the jungle.

The country's Foreign Ministry condemned the attack on areas in Deir al-Zor, near the Syrian-Iraqi border. The statement released by the Ministry highlighted that Biden Administration is supposed to stick to international legitimacy, not to the law of the jungle as did by the previous administration.

It's really ironic that Biden and Harris, the duo is repeating what once Trump simply did. When Trump ordered a strike on Iran in 2019, Biden sharply reacted and tried to offer a sermon to him: "Trump's erratic, impulsive actions are the last things we need as Commander-in-Chief. No President should order a military strike without fully understanding the consequences. We do not need another war in the Middle East, but Trump's actions toward Iran only make that likely."

And what Biden is doing now? He knows very well how an American President responds to the crisis zones in the "Middle East". Precisely, nothing has changed in Washington, except the man giving orders. What Obama did, Trump followed and now Biden is taking it forward. America clearly has no strategy for the West Asia and North African (WANA) region. Its policy towards the region is outdated and dangerous. It's meddling carelessly with Iraq, Iran and Syria. Washington has no coherent policy to deal with Tehran, Damascus and Baghdad. So obviously, finding out a solution for the Syrian war demands a new approach with a purely humanitarian concern.

Only with the collective efforts of the US, Russia, Iran and Turkey, peace can be brought to war-torn Syria. Biden's engagement with Putin, Erdogan, Rouhani and Kadhimi (Iraq) would matter the most in bringing a permanent solution to the chaos in Syria. That is why the stability in West Asia demands more than a deal with Iran from Washington. The experts and policy practitioners opine that regional issues in this part of Asia could no way be comprehensively addressed.

They all agree that Iran would no way concede its sustained support for regional proxies and halt its ballistic missile programme in the near future. It is widely felt that isolating Iran was purely counterproductive. So to address, Tehran's troublesome behaviour in the region, it is better to handle each regional conflict through separate and parallel platforms at the same time.

Why is Moscow equally concerned about the chaos in Syria? It is not only to save the embattled Assad regime, an old ally of Russia, but also to stave off the growth of the Islamic terror in Russia. Hence, the Syrian conflict is not just a far-away battle for Putin regime. The life-time monarch is longing for stability at any cost. He knows fully well that the jehadists may get enough ground for their subversive models in his vast country. Of course, this might alter Putin's long-term strategies to keep the opposition and western pressure at bay. His regime is not best equipped to counter the ISIS, the way it is raging its ugly head in the WANA region. Russia's relationship with Syria dates back to 1950s and the Cold War. In those days, the USSR used to train the top brass of the Syrian military.

What lies ahead in Syria? By 2020, the Syrian civilians faced another year confronting life-threatening challenges. It is all about their survival as all of them are fighting for basic amenities such as food and medicines.

However, the last year saw the discernible decrease in violent conflicts across the country. But this does not mean that warring groups are retreating. No single rebel group is considering withdrawing from the war zones. The reason behind is that all these groups are backed by strong allies and they want to pursue the war till the fall of the Assad Government.

The Human Rights Watch notes, "With the unprecedented depreciation of national currency, the imposition of further international sanctions and crises in neighboring countries, the Syrian economy went into freefall for much of 2020. For ordinary Syrians, this translated into an inability to procure food, essential drugs, and other basic necessities. As a result, more than 9.3 million Syrians have become food insecure and over 80 per cent of Syrians live below the poverty line."

This correctly reflects the situation on the ground and insurmountable challenges faced by the millions who are caught between warring zones.

Only way to solve the imbroglio in Syria is to establish a UN-backed transitional regime and pressurise Assad to step down. A presidential election is meant to be taking place in Syria this summer. It would be a total disregard to millions of those who are suffering and a sham on global governance platforms such as the UN. The world body is not talking anything about this. And it is abandoning the Geneva peace process.

In fact, the Syria Constitutional Committee that demands a political process would be useless if the UN does not stop the upcoming presidential poll for Assad. This election would offer full immunity and legitimacy to the torturous and autocratic regime in Damascus. It's time to act. Ensure that no more civilians die. There is no need to secure peace when hardly anyone will be there to share the joy of the same. Washington should not employ the old tactics to handle the dictators in WANA.

(The writer is an expert on international affairs)

The failure of the UN-led efforts to bring the warring parties to the negotiation table last month in Geneva has once again brought war clouds over Syria. Only with the collective efforts of the US, Russia, Iran and Turkey, peace can be brought to war-torn Syria. Also it demands a new approach with a purely humanitarian concern

MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE

India's collective responsibility to eradicate TB

While the prioritisation of TB at the national level has been commendable, States must sustain this momentum by effectively implementing the policies and ensuring optimum fund allocation and utilisation. It is only with the collective approach we will be able to rid the country of this deadly disease

DIGAMBAR BEHERA

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the value of awareness on infectious diseases. Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease that needs our attention as much as the SARS-CoV2 because it affects over 26.4 lakh Indians each year. An estimated 4.45 lakh Indians lose the battle to this ancient disease that is both preventable and curable.

It has therefore been extremely encouraging to see the heightened commitment towards TB elimination from the highest levels of Government leadership. Since the announcement by the Prime Minister to eliminate TB by 2025, five years ahead of the UN Sustainable Development Goal target, at the End TB Summit in New Delhi in 2018, comprehensive plans have been developed to achieve this goal.

The launch of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for TB Elimination introduced pivotal interventions, including a four-fold increase in funding, launch of private sector engagement to improve access to care as well as initiation of social support schemes to support patients in completing their treatment. However, there is still more to be done.

While the prioritisation of TB at the national level has been commendable, States must sustain this momentum by effectively implementing the policies and NSP interventions and ensuring optimum fund allocation and utilisation.

The funding of the NTEP is divided on a 60:40 ratio, where 60 per cent of the total funding is provided by the Central Government, and State Governments are expected to fund the remaining 40 per cent. However, in addition to fund allocation, fund utilisation and efficient implementation of the programme at the State level remains a challenge.

The Central TB Division has developed a State TB Index that highlights the performance of States based on targets achieved, funds utilised, among others towards achieving the goal of TB elimination. While some States have made significant progress towards these goals, with Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala (among the large States) performing well on all indicators, including fund utilisation, many large States such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal still reflect poor fund utilisation and thus have challenges in the implementation of the programme. Another critical challenge at the State level remains the paucity of human resources — with vacancies in critical positions required to be filled.

The other challenge that the programme faces is the lack of awareness about the disease that negatively impacts health seeking behaviour. In the past year, the pandemic has brought about a positive change in people and their appetite for information on health, thereby giving us an opportunity on this positive behaviour to generate awareness about TB.

The launch of the TB Harega Desh Jeetega campaign in 2014, with the country's biggest movie star Amitabh Bachchan as the face of the campaign, was a game changer at the national level. However, there is a need to amplify the campaign at all levels, including States, districts, blocks and villages, to improve access to information and generate the demand for TB care.

Along with improving communications for awareness generation, it is also critical for the programme to directly engage with the community at all levels. Not only do community champions aid in generating awareness to destigmatise the disease, but their voices also serve as an important feedback mechanism for the programme.

Under the NSP, the National TB Elimination Programme established TB forums at the State and district levels to bring to the fore community voices, patient perspectives and understand ground-level challenges faced by patients in accessing care. Continued and effective functioning of these forums will provide the programme with independent monitors who can help in highlighting localised gaps that need to be addressed. At the district levels, elected representatives can also serve as independent monitors of the programme providing oversight and aid in addressing localised challenges to ensure effective implementation.

The call for a Jan Andolan by Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan is timely and aims to engage 1.3 billion people of this country to take ownership of the programme and ensure we achieve the target of a TB free India. It is crucial for the programme to take cue from this call to action and reflect the targets and initiatives through direct and relatable messaging which will generate awareness among the people on where to seek treatments, what incentives they are entitled to, and thereby improve health seeking behaviours. It is only with the collective approach we will be able to rid the country of this deadly disease.

(The author is chairman, National Taskforce, National TB Elimination Programme, and Professor and former HoD, Department of Pulmonary Medicine, PGIMER, Chandigarh)

A SINGLE DAY IS ENOUGH TO MAKE US A LITTLE LARGER OR, ANOTHER TIME, A LITTLE SMALLER
— PAUL KLEE

YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA

ARIES March 21-April 19

You are filled with energy this week. Health remains good and you take charge of your near and dear ones. Your theory of 'Prevention is better than cure' will work well and you bear the fruits of your determination. On the work front, your creativity is reflected in your work. You will finish pending tasks. You are a workaholic and attain the favour of your seniors. You may leave your colleagues and rivals surprised and overwhelmed. In the matters of heart, you will be lucky, as this week your search for the right partner will come to an end. There will be true bonding between you and your partner. The support for each other will be strengthening and increase your work efficiency.

Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Saturday

TAURUS April 20-May 20

On the health front, you may encounter some health challenges. Don't try to avoid them, rather deal with them. Managing your stress level is important to stay in good health. Get enough rest and heal both physically and emotionally. On the career front, a good time is on the cards. You will experience happiness and satisfaction at work. Your near and dear ones will be happy to see your progress. Promotion, success in a project will be yours. Those awaiting interview results will get good news and will get their desired job. On the personal front, you may have to face some issues in love relationships. At such a time, don't get tensed and give yourself and your partner some space to deal with the problem.

Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Beige
Lucky day Sunday

GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week you may work yourself into exhaustion. Stress may take a serious toll on your body. There are things you need to do to rebuild yourself. Calm down and take adequate rest. You need to priorities your activities so that you can balance your work and health. On the career front, you may have a difficult time. Your feelings or ego might get bruised by something that happens to your work. You need to follow a different approach now and should take some assistance in this regard. Those looking for employment should probably look in a different way or a different field. On the relationship front, you need to be open to the other person for a relationship to work. Don't avoid any issues in your relations and because it will only make things worse.

Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Mauve
Lucky day Monday

CANCER June 21-July 22

Moderation and balance is the key to good health. Ensure that you are eating well, sleeping well and exercising the right amount. Look where you are out of balance and try to remedy it. Work-wise, this week you will be enthusiastic about your job. Your confidence levels will be high and you are ready to take on new projects. However, you also tend to be impulsive. Don't rush into things and take into account what consequences of your actions can be in the future. On the personal front, you will rejoice in friendship and harmonious relationships. You are open to helping others which in turn means others are helping you. Some of you will be celebrating some special occasions with your loved ones.

Lucky number 18
Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Wednesday

LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week is a great time for rest. Take a break from difficult times such as health worries and stress. Develop your mental strength. Meditate and do some spiritual thinking. This is a time to count your blessings and take things easy. Professionally, your life is full of hope and good things. Things are going extremely well. If you are currently not happy, then, new opportunities will come knocking at your door. A deeper understanding of yourself and others with mental stability will help you ease out any difficulty at the workplace. On the personal front, you may not be in a very comfortable position in your relationship at this point. It may be that either you or your beloved is having a tough time. You need to give your support.

Lucky number 17
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Saturday

VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week your health will be good. If you are having physical problems then pay attention to diet, exercise and take some rest. You may feel disconnected or demotivated in general and try to cut yourself out from the world. This may not be the right thing to do. On the career front, things are likely to go well. If you are facing some challenges then follow a compassionate approach towards work. You may experience a sense of calm and emotional connectedness with others. Trust your intuition to bring balance. In the matter of heart, this is a make or break period. Evaluate everything and be true to yourself and your needs. Be very clear about what you want from life and your relationships and take steps to make it happen.

Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Tuesday

LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week you may be down with health problems or some illness but don't lose heart. You need to take a spiritual leap and heal yourself with meditation and positive thinking. Undoubtedly, this will do wonders for you. Take care of yourself and allow yourself to get in touch with your inner strength to heal faster. Work-wise, stay positive. You will have to make this your ally in difficult times. You may worry and be full of anxiety about something concerning your work. Understand that this is not going to help, rather leave your anxiety and focus on what you can control. On the relationship front, be resilient in your relationship with others. There will be challenges but if you give space to yourself and your partner, any differences can be resolved.

Lucky number 3
Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Sunday

SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

Your energy and vitality will be high this week. Though this is a positive sign and you'll be quite active, make sure to take out time for adequate rest as well. You can take care of yourself. With a positive mindset, you will be able to conquer any health challenges. At your workplace, you may find yourself engaging in conflict or disagreeing with others. This might be due to your behaviour. Trying to accomplish your personal goals with disregard to their consequences on others, you might think to be a winner but still, end up being a loser. On the personal front, maybe you or your partner is working very hard in your jobs but this might be interfering with your relationship. The workload is not letting you take out time for each other.

Lucky number 14
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Thursday

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week is not too good in terms of health. Anxiety, stress and worry will affect your life. Health challenges are likely to come your way. Make sure to treat yourself well. A balanced diet, exercise and fluid intake will help you. Meditation and yoga would help. Work-wise, things are going well and you are happy with your work. You may be bonding with colleagues at work and enjoying social get together with them. The work environment is also constructive. Money inflow is good. On the personal front, if you are in a committed relationship, then the bonds with your lover are stronger than before. You are tolerant of others, easily forgiving their imperfections. In doing so, you create a safe and trusting environment.

Lucky number 6
Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Friday

CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week there will be an abundance of opportunities to entertain yourself and spend quality time. This will be reflected in your health. The charm and attraction in your persona will be magnetic and others will feel positive vibes in your company. Family plays a major role in your success, whether it is personal or professional. On the career front, something good is likely to happen. The dilemma you had been facing last few days will get over now and you can look forward to a bright future. Your colleague or friend is quite supportive of you. If you are in the line of promotion it may come to you soon. On the personal front, love and romance are in the air. Those seeking love will meet the partner of their liking this week.

Lucky number 15
Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Thursday

AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week you will enjoy the warmth of relations and a healthy lifestyle. Things are at their right place making you tension free. Heart and BP patients will recover well with proper medical attention and their will power. Career-wise, the week promises monetary gains. Those in business could earn good money. The income may come from more than one source. Business expansion plans are successfully started. You may meet an influential person who could prove highly beneficial in terms of your career. On the personal front, you are a positive and caring person. You work for the benefit of others, and this will work very well in terms of your relations too. Love demands your attention which probably you won't be able to pay much.

Lucky number 19
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Tuesday

PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week is not so lucky in terms of health. You may be hit by some seasonal ailments. Drink plenty of water and consume green salads. You are advised to avoid tea, coffee, or any kind of addiction this week. Avoid black colour too and wear more yellow and pastel colours in your dresses. On the work front, your wish could be accomplished this week. Those who are searching for a job will get a call from the company they have been aspiring for. Your family and friends support will boost your morale high. In the matters of love, you need to be a little soft and considerate in relations else you may end up spoiling them. Avoid any conflicts and confrontations which are likely to occur this week.

Lucky number 8
Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Friday

Madhu Kotiya is a tarot card reader, spiritual healer, and Founder, MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination. Contact details: madhu@indiatarot.com, www.indiatarot.com, M: 9873283331

ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Calm mind for *dhyana*

Attaining the state of yoga is something like a river stream merging with the ocean, when the river water loses its own identity and becomes one with the sea. Having thus, struck upon the core of existence, mind realises its wholesome power, when it has nothing more to explore. Similarly, during yoga, the unitary mind gets dropped, and so too the sense of individualistic existence, leaving no scope for any differentiation. So, one is at peace.

You may ask: If mind is devoid of any thought, what purpose would it serve? For, thoughts drive all actions on our part. Let me make it clear here that attaining *samadhi* is not the end game. It is a self-empowerment process, which brings into play full human potential, when one would know no limits. Also, mind regains its sense of orderliness, when all its functional constituents begin to spontaneously operate in coordinated manner. Mind then becomes free from any preconditioning, when full mind-space becomes available. The scope of vision thus expands to its optimum best. Intelligence gets sharpened. Armed as such, mind explores the targeted subject with an open mind, and so is able to perceive things in the right perspective, and accordingly make right moves. In fact, you then look at things from the highest centre of consciousness, whereupon nothing remains hidden from you. Intuitively, you may get to root of whatever is looked at.

The process does not end with *samadhi*. Patanjali must have realised the danger of those having attained *samadhi* developing the tendency to get mentally disinterested from the usual course of life and get stuck to an abstract imaginary world. But that is not the purpose of *samadhi*. We are not only supposed to just improve our own lot, but also lead others towards that end. And that will not be possible if the seeker gets mentally cut off from the living world. Accordingly, Patanjali suggested a backward integration process, which he has termed as the process of *samanvaya*. It involves backward integration of *samadhi*, *dhyana*, and *dharana*. Having established in the process, when due attention is given to an issue and reflected upon, one may intuitively get to the root of the subject in hand. Following which, one may be able to spontaneously pick up the right lead. This is what in Kashmir Saivism is termed as being in *Sahaja Samadhi*.

Having thus discussed the concept of Yoga, it is time now to get down to its application. There are hundred and odd methods of meditation in circulation, followed by various cultures all across. There is no fun in comparing and being judgmental about which one of them is superior to other. For, as already experienced by Swami Ram Krishna Paramhansa, you may follow different paths, but at the end of the day, the same sense of love overtakes you. A fresher would, however, be keen to know what particular mode of *dhyana* to follow. Experientially speaking, a three-course process is suggested — Calming down the Mind, Mind Detoxification and Contextual Meditation — that run in conformity with the above laid principles.

Calming the Mind: A fresher, before taking up the *Dhyana* process, needs to first create a favourable inner mental climate. The method calls for trying to relatively calm down the restive mind, flirting with unwieldly thought crowd playing within in immediate terms, mostly inconsequential and negative. Otherwise, the state of mind would not be conducive to pursue *dhyana* process in right earnest.

The method is simple, true to the callings of *Pratyahara*. You need to lie down on your back in a relaxed posture with no pillow support, preferably on a hard bed, in order that spinal-cord remains straight. Close your eyes. All your sensory instruments will naturally get disengaged from the outer world and thereby waking state consciousness. The subconscious mind immediately comes into full play, bringing into focus random thoughts picked up in immediate past that would be playing at the surface level. Persistent desires and feelings too may keep knocking your inner space. Evidently then, you will be flooded with thoughts, unnerving you from within. Allow the thoughts to naturally flow in and flow out. Continue the process for at least 20 minutes. Don't pay any attention to the thoughts visiting you again and again. Just train your mind to remain disengaged from them as a silent witness. Remember, only when you pay attention that you get affected. The irony, however, is that it is not easy to remain unaffected.

The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at
Tel: 91-11-9818037273/9871037272
Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com

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