

OPINION 8
EXORCISING THE
OROP CONUNDRUM**WORLD 11**
WHERE ISIS RULED, POPE CALLS ON
CHRISTIANS TO FORGIVE, REBUILD**SPORT 14**
SA BEAT INDIA
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LUCKNOW, MONDAY MARCH 8, 2021; PAGES 14 ₹3



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Lotus blooming in mire created by TMC: Modi

PM raps Didi for insulting people of Bengal, vows ashol poriborton; Mithun joins BJP



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses a public meeting ahead of West Bengal Assembly elections at Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata on Sunday

AP

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi explained the "poriborton" narrative during the Sunday's mega election rally at Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata even as he launched a blistering attack on Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for "letting down and insulting the people of Bengal" who had reposed faith in her by voting her to power in 2011.

"This will be the ashol

poriborton (real change) and not the fake one unleashed by the Trinamool Congress when people brought Mamata didi to power with great hopes, but she betrayed them and chose to play the limited role of a bua (aunt) to her own bhatija (nephew) considering not for once the plights of lakhs of other nephews that looked up to her for respite," said the PM, taking a dig at the Chief Minister for allegedly unleashing a regime marked by "cor-

ruption and nepotism."

Cine star Mithun Chakrabarty on Sunday joined the BJP in front of a massive saffron crowd at the historic Brigade Parade Ground in Kolkata. The megastar, who received praises from Modi, said he had been inspired by the PM's ideas.

"Yes I have been involved in some kind of extreme politics in my early years as I wanted to do something for the poor and downtrodden ...

now I have joined the BJP as I have seen the PM doing the works that correlate with my dreams... So I have joined this party and will campaign for it," the former TMC Rajya Sabha member who shared an excellent chemistry with the erstwhile Left Government too said.

Reciting a dialogue from one of his movies where he said, "I am a cobra ... whose one bite will transform you into a photo frame."

Attacking Mamata for allowing "syndicate raj, tolabaji (extortion) and corruption" to flourish during her rule, Modi said, "Your Government has seen so many scams that a 'scam Olympics' can easily be organised here.

The PM reminded "nepotism" and "cut money" had been the only considerations for getting an appointment in Government jobs. "But after the BJP comes to power on May 2, things will change forever... we will bring ashol poriborton and not the fake one.

"Bengal will become sonar Bangla (golden Bengal) and from city of joy Kolkata will graduate into city of opportunities... new flyovers will be constructed, new infrastructures will be developed, industrial investment which had become a story of the past will return to Bengal...

"The smaller cities and towns will get adequate infra-

structure to sustain a self-supporting economy, food processing and port land development which have great prospects in Bengal will be developed ... there will be new opportunity for the farmers, workers and businessmen, slum dwellers will no-longer have to live in shanties and they will be given pucca houses," the PM said.

Taking a jibe at Mamata for often abusing him Modi said the Chief Minister often gets

angry at him and calls him Ravan, daitya and danav (demon).

"I want to ask you Didi that why you are so angry at me for the rise of BJP in Bengal" he said, adding that Lotus bloomed only in swamps.

"The mire (read misrule) that the Trinamool Government has created in Bengal has led to the blooming of Lotus," he said.

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CBI summons two IPS officers in cross-border cattle smuggling case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has summoned two senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officers for questioning in connection with the illegal cross-border cattle smuggling case. The agency has asked IPS officer of DIG rank Kallol Ganai and SP rank officer Anshuman Saha to appear for questioning at the CBI office in Kolkata on Monday, sources said.

Ganai was earlier posted as DIG of Murshidabad Range, while Saha was posted as

Additional SP of Murshidabad district where the alleged kingpin of the cattle trade Mohammad Enamul Haque operated.

The CBI had registered the case on September 21 last year against four persons, including some Border Security Force and Customs officers, who were allegedly bribed by the international cattle smugglers to facilitate the passage of bovines from their jurisdiction along the international border with Bangladesh.

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Didi hits back, says Modi, Shah India's biggest extortionists



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during a protest rally against the hike in fuel and LPG prices, in Siliguri on Sunday

PTI

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Sunday responded to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vitriolic attack launching a scathing counterattack calling "him and Home Minister Amit Shah the biggest tolabaj (extortionist) and syndicate" operators of the country.

Mamata, who led a massive march against rising fuel and cooking gas prices in North

Bengal city of Siliguri, said, "Here the PM is calling TMC a syndicate and our men tolabaj ... but I must say there is no bigger tolabaj than him and Shah and no bigger syndicate run by him and the HM."

She said the PM is "peddling lies to mislead the voters," adding "the lesser people cannot extort more than ₹500 or ₹1,000, but what could be the amount when the people up there do the same."

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Cong accepts 25 seats as DMK fails to yield

DMK to fight on 180 seats, deal inked

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

After weeks of dilly-dallying, the DMK allocated 25 seats to the Indian National Congress on Sunday for the upcoming election to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. The DMK will contest on 180 seats in the House of 234.

The deal was signed by DMK chief MK Stalin and president of Tamil Nadu Congress Committee KS Alagiri in the presence of All India Congress Committee leader Dinesh Gundu Rao.

"The DMK and the Congress have sealed the seat-sharing deal. The Congress will contest on 25 Assembly seats and the Kanyakumari



DMK president MK Stalin and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee president KS Alagiri pose with the agreement paper of seat-sharing for upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly polls at Anna Arivalayam in Chennai on Sunday

PTI

Lok Sabha seat. Both cadre will now work together. We will win big," Rao said.

The gloom on the face of Alagiri and Rao during the photo session made it clear that the Congress had to eat humble pie in the negotiations with the DMK. The Congress had asked for at least 40 seats, a seat lesser than what it was allocat-

ed by the DMK for the 2016 Assembly election. But the party that ruled singlehandedly till 1967 and had contributed all-time greats like K Kamaraj, N Sathyaamoorthi, C Rajagopalachari, R Venkittaraman and C Subramanian to the nation was at the mercy of the DMK

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India's Covid cases cross 18K in 24 hrs

Maha, Kerala, Punjab, Guj account for 84.71% of new cases

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India reported more than 18,000 fresh Covid-19 cases for the first time since January in the last 24 hours with six States, including Maharashtra, Kerala, Punjab and Gujarat, continuing to form a major chunk of infections, accounting for 84.71 per cent of the 18,711 new cases.

Though cases are on the rise, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Sunday said, "We are in the end game of the Covid-19 pandemic in India" and to succeed at this stage, politics should be kept out of the Covid-19 vaccination drive.

"People should trust the science behind vaccines and ensure that their near and dear ones get vaccinated on time," he said while speaking at the Delhi Medical Association's (DMA's) 62nd Annual Delhi State Medical Conference (MEDICON 2021) in collaboration with Dharamshila Narayana Hospital on Sunday. Vardhan said over 2 crore



Covid-19 vaccine shots have been administered so far and the vaccination rate has been increased to 15 lakh per day.

Around 14,392 people were discharged and 100 deaths reported in the last 24 hours, as per the Union Health Ministry. Maharashtra continues to report the highest daily new cases at 10,187, followed by Kerala with 2,791 while Punjab reported 1,159 new cases.

The active cases registered

an increase for the fifth consecutive day. The Covid-19 active caseload increased to 1,84,523 which now comprises 1.65 per cent of the total infections while the recovery rate has dropped further to 96.95 per cent. On January 29, 18,855 new infections were recorded in a span of 24 hours. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,08,68,520 which translates to a national Covid-19 recovery

Nepal PM Oli takes India-made corona vaccine

Kathmandu: Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli took the India-made Covishield coronavirus vaccine on Sunday, as the Himalayan nation gears up to start the second phase of its immunisation drive. The 69-year-old Nepalese leader received the Covishield jab at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital here on Sunday morning. His wife Radhika Shakyas was also vaccinated.

PTI

rate of 96.95 per cent, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.41 per cent.

According to the Ministry, India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. It went

Indian vaccines rescued world from Covid-19: Top US scientist

PTI ■ HOUSTON

The rollout of the Covid-19 vaccines by India in collaboration with leading global institutions has "rescued the world" from the deadly coronavirus and the contributions by the country must not be underestimated, a top American scientist has said.

Dr Peter Hotez, Dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) in Houston, during a recent webinar said the two mRNA vaccines may not impact the world's low and middle income countries, but India's vaccines, made in collaboration with universities across the world such as BCM and the Oxford University, have "rescued the world" and its contributions must not be underestimated.

past 60 lakh on September 28, over 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and

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Wrestler Phogat wins gold, retains world number 1 ranking in 53 kg

PTI ■ ROME

Living up to the expectations, star Indian wrestler Vinesh Phogat grabbed the 53kg gold medal along with world number one rank while Bajrang Punia booked his spot in the final of the men's 65kg event at the Matteo Pellicone Ranking Series event, here on Sunday.

The 26-year-old World bronze medalist and the only Indian woman wrestler to have qualified for the Tokyo Games, Vinesh blanked Canada's Diana Mary Helen Weicker 4-0 in the 53kg title clash.

Vinesh scored all her points in the first period and held on to her lead in the second to ensure a top-of-the-podium finish. Vinesh had won a gold medal in Kiev last week.

India to get eyes in sky for real-time border info

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India plans to launch on March 28 an earth observation satellite that will provide it near real-time images of its borders and also enable quick monitoring of natural disasters.

GISAT-1 is slated to be lofted into space by GSLV-F10 rocket from Sriharikota spaceport in Andhra Pradesh's Nellore district, about 100 kms north of Chennai.

"We are looking to launch this Geo imaging satellite on March 28, subject to weather conditions", an official of the Bengaluru-headquartered Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) told PTI on Sunday. The rocket will place the spacecraft in a geosynchronous orbit. It will be subsequently positioned in geostationary orbit, about 36,000 kms above earth's equator, using its onboard propulsion system. The launch of GISAT-1 onboard GSLV-F10 rocket was originally planned for

March 5 last year but postponed a day before the blast-off due to technical reasons. Experts said positioning the state-of-the-art agile earth observation satellite in geostationary orbit has key advantages. "It's going to be a game-changer in some sense for India", a Department of Space official said.

"With onboard high resolution cameras, the satellite will allow the country to monitor the Indian land mass and the oceans, particularly its borders continuously". Listing the objectives of the mission, ISRO has earlier said the satellite would provide near real-time imaging of the large area region of interest at frequent intervals.

It would help in quick monitoring of natural disasters, episodic and any short-term events. The third objective is to obtain spectral signatures of agriculture, forestry, mineralogy, disaster warning, cloud properties, snow and glacier

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CM directive to issue KCC to all PM Kisan Yojana beneficiaries

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the aim to ensure welfare of farmers, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed officials to give Kisan Credit Card (KCC) to all the beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Kisan Yojana in the state till April 15.

He also issued a directive to give credit cards to the farmers with small holdings under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Yojana.

“For the first time in the state, 27 departments have been asked to coordinate towards the common goal of welfare of farmers. In order to connect all the beneficiaries of PM Kisan Yojana with the Kisan Credit Card, the Agriculture Department has given the application of farmers to the financial institutions but all KCCs could not be made due to the coronavirus crisis,” he said. Taking cognisance of this a campaign has been launched in every village to make and provide credit cards to the farmers.

Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture) Devesh Chaturvedi has issued letters to all district magistrates, chief development officers and deputy directors of agriculture, instructing them to ensure 100 per cent verification of the



beneficiaries of PM Kisan Yojana to provide them KCCs as part of the campaign to be continued till April 15.

“The state government is also going to start an integrated development scheme to make farmers self-reliant. For this, a provision of Rs 100 crore has been made in the budget for the financial year 2021-2022,” the official said.

The plan includes identification of more crops in every agro climatic zone of the state, promotion of new technology and investment in agriculture, value addition of selected products, creating market for agri-produce, preparation for

marketing and setting up of Farmers Production Organisations (FPOs) at every block level. In view of the problem of stubble, biomass plants are being set up in many districts of the state.

At present, these plants have been set up in three districts - Bahraich, Bagpat and Faizabad - and the pallets produced by them are also being supplied to National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC), Unchahar.

“This is solving the problem of stubble on the one hand, and on the other, augmenting the income of farmers,” the official said.

Yogi to launch Safe City project's 2nd phase today

Lucknow (PNS): To further strengthen the safety mechanism for girls and women, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will inaugurate the second phase of the ongoing Safe City project on Monday on the occasion of International Women's Day. The event will be held at the Indira Gandhi Foundation in Gomti Nagar.

For the Lucknow Safe City project, Rs 194 crore has been approved with 60 per cent and 40 per cent shares of the Centre and the state government, respectively. For the safety and dignity of women, Safe City project was launched in eight metros of the country, including Lucknow. Under the Safe City project in Lucknow, 100 pink booths are to be constructed for women safety in various areas of the city in the first phase. Out of this, 70 pink booths have been completed.

At the same time, 100 two-wheeler pink petrol and 10 four-wheeler pink petrol vehicles have been given to women policemen for the safety of women and girls. These pink patrols are constantly patrolling around the girls schools, colleges and markets. Besides, pink toilets with special facilities are being constructed at 74 places in the city for women. Out of these, 18 pink toilets are ready.

Under the Safe City project, lights are being installed at the identified dark spots in the city. So far, 3,625 dark spots have been identified and out of these, lights have been installed at 660 places while 2,965 other spots will be taken up by the end of March. This will curb crimes against women at night.

Sixteen new ITIs to be opened on PPP model

Lucknow (PNS): With the aim to make the youth self-reliant and provide them jobs, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has issued directives to open 16 new Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) on public-private partnership (PPP) model across the state.

According to officials, the admission process in the 16 new ITIs will begin from August 2021.

“With the aim to provide technical manpower to the fast emerging industrial sector, the new ITIs will help in increasing the number of seats in electronic technician, computer operator and programming assistant, machinist engineer, electronic mechanic and

more courses,” the official said.

At present, over 1.72 lakh students are undergoing skill training in 305 ITIs in Uttar Pradesh. “The government has laid special emphasis on setting up ITIs in remote regions of the state to cater to the needs of the underprivileged sections of society,” he said.

According to the officials, once the student completes training from the ITI, he/she will be provided a certificate that will be recognised at the national level.

Apart from setting up IT labs, smart classes, and solar energy plants in state ITIs, the work of providing training to students by connecting them with industrial units is also being done.

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‘People’s will supreme in a democratic polity’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday said that the people's will was supreme in a democratic polity. Hitting out at the government over the three agricultural laws being opposed by the farmers, Yadav said the farmers' agitation on the borders of Delhi had completed over 100 days and so far 250 farmers had died yet they were determined and their agitation was continuing.

He said if the farmers had raised a demand, the BJP government was duty bound to find a solution and address their demand. He said instead of taking farmers into confidence, the BJP government had imposed three new laws on the farmers and the Union government had failed to instill a sense of confidence among the farmers who had deep suspicion about the future impact of the new laws.

Targeting the Uttar Pradesh government, Yadav said that UP could never become an 'Uttam Pradesh' due to the poor law and order. He said Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was more concerned about election campaign in other poll-bound states rather than focusing his attention on managing the affairs of the state he was ruling.

“The state will not be able to recover from the infamy and misery in the current regime. There is a jungle raj everywhere. The administration has become completely dysfunctional due to political interference,” he said.

The SP chief said, “Not a single city of the state is in the top ten of the Ease of Living Index 2020. Health and other basic civic amenities have not been found good in the cities of UP?”

He said even the state capital, Lucknow, was ranked at 26th place in the Ease of Living Index 2020.

“The law and order situation in the state is such that a policeman shot himself in front of Vidhan Bhawan and there is no let up in the number of people attempting to immolate themselves in front of Lok Bhawan,” he charged.

UPPCL likely to surrender costly power

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL) is likely to surrender costly power supplied by various public and private sector energy companies. The power is presently purchased by the UPPCL under PPA (power purchase agreement). The move, if implemented, would be a big relief for the debt-ridden UPPCL and power consumers as it will bring down the average cost of power.

According to a study by UP

Rajya Vidyut Upphokta Parishad, this could result in savings of nearly Rs 2,000 crore annually to the state, thus providing an elbow room to the power utility to keep power tariffs low or even cut tariffs during the crucial election year. While UP's power tariffs are among the highest in the country, the state will witness assembly polls in the early months of 2022.

Most of the 'costly' PPAs for 1,600 megawatt pertain to the memorandum of understanding (MoU) route signed during the previous Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party regimes with the state power utility, UPPCL.

The companies whose projects would be hit if the proposal to surrender costly power gets implemented include public sector energy major NTPC, and private power producers viz. Bajaj Group, MB Power, KSK Mahanadi Power and RKM Powergen.

UP Rajya Vidyut Upphokta Parishad President Avadhesh Verma on Saturday submitted a report to UP Energy Minister Shrikant Sharma demanding surrender of power that cost more than Rs 5 per unit since cheaper power was readily available from other sources, including energy exchanges. He claimed that the cost of power being purchased from these companies ranged from Rs 5.35 per unit to as high as Rs 6.05 per unit.



सूचना

मेरे पुत्र का नाम सैन्य अभिलेखों में लिपिकीय त्रुटिदश Shasendra Singh दर्ज हो गया है। जबकि उसका सही नाम Shivendra Singh S/o Ajay Pal Singh है। अजयपाल सिंह पुत्र द्वारिका सिंह शीतलपुर राहा घाटमपुर, कानपुर

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WE-WIN

Covid vaccine jabs to be given at 96 hosps today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Covid-19 vaccine jabs will be given to senior citizens and others aged between 45-49 with co-morbidities at 96 hospitals across the state capital on Monday. A women exclusive vaccination exercise will be carried out at three city hospitals on account of International Women's Day. District immunisation officer Dr MK Singh said that for women, vaccine shots will be given at a Bakshi-Ka-Talab hospital apart from Avanti Bai and Civil hospitals. Women aged above 60 and or those above 45 years with co-morbidities can avail of the facility. There will be spot registrations for women. Vaccine jabs will be administered at 51 government hospitals and 45 private hospitals. "Directions have also been given to serve tea and water to the elderly as they will have to wait for their turn," he said. He added that they also held an online meeting with all the private hospitals where vaccine jabs will be given for

the first time from March 8. "The district hospitals and medical institutes such as KGMU, RMLIMS and SGPGI will have the vaccination drive from Monday to Saturday. All the community health centres and primary health centres in Lucknow will carry out the drive on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays. The private hospitals can do so for seven days in a week," he said. The vaccination drive was conducted at 14 private hospitals on Sunday. Dr Arun Tewari, the nodal officer for vaccination at Lok Bandhu Hospital, said they streamlined the movement of people by introducing the token system for vaccination. "Walk-in registrations were for those who were creating a ruckus. We will keep the walk-in registration system at the waiting rooms and call the beneficiaries only through the staff to keep the drive a smooth affair," he added. Meanwhile, People's Health Organisation secretary Dr Ishwar Gilada said that the 'made in India' Covid-19 vac-



cines have done the country proud globally. "Though the global community was aware of India's capabilities on mass production and affordable vaccines, no one could believe that India could develop its own Covid vaccine and that too in such a record time. Covishield is developed by the Oxford University and AstraZeneca but it is being mass manufactured in India. Covaxin is researched, developed and manufactured in India," he noted. "There are several factors which have played a role in making the vaccinations a success in India; primarily roping in private set-ups for the vaccination drive and

keeping it open for longer hours since not everyone is looking at free vaccination. Most people want to save their precious time visiting vaccination centres. No one wants to risk getting infected with coronavirus in an effort to get a vaccine. Opening it for senior citizens and those with co-morbidities in 45-60 age bracket was important because over two-thirds Covid deaths were of people with co-morbidities and hence the listed 20 co-morbidities comes handy for those with co-morbidities. Looking into the glitches of Co-WIN app is also important so that tech-savvy people can go online and register. However, others find the drop-in strategy better. Making it available at a modest cost of Rs 250 was also a good move," he said. Gilada pointed out that overall success of both vaccines have pushed up the immunisation drive. "It seems we will achieve the goal of immunisation of the vulnerable population in a record time of 4-5 months," he added.

Hookah bar raided, nine held

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Nine people were arrested on Sunday following a raid at a hookah bar which was being run illegally in Thakurganj. However, the owners managed to give the police the slip. Those arrested were identified as Mohammed Naseer & Ali Khan of Saadatganj, Mohammed Nadeem of Wazirganj, Vishwas Sagar of Chowk, Sudhanshu Asthana of Hardoi, Taufiq Siddiqui of Kakori; and Siddharth Singh, Shailesh Singh & Deepak Jaiswal (all of Thakurganj). The hookah bar owners, identified as Danish and Salman, managed to escape. The police said the accused were running a café in Danish Building where they were having illegal activities. The police also

booked the accused under the Epidemic Diseases Act. However, locals flayed the police for giving a long rope to the accused. "It was being run for a long time. There were instances when some youths kicked up a shindy and the police settled the issue," they said. Meanwhile, a joint team of crime branch and Kakori police nabbed six accused, said to be hardcore criminals, on Sunday. Those arrested were identified as Gaus Miyan & Mohammed Farukh (both of Para), Quddus & Mukesh (both of Krishna Nagar), Firoz of Kakori, and Asdul of Sarojinagar. Gaus Miyan, Quddus, Firoz and Asdul are natives of West Bengal and they had been staying in Lucknow for the last few years. The police recovered over Rs 1.6 lakh in cash, several mobile phones, 30 SIM

cards, a country-made pistol and live cartridges. **GOLD RINGS STOLEN** A doctor of Vivekanand Hospital in Mahanagar was deprive of her two gold rings, one of which was diamond-studded, on Saturday. The victim lodged a case on Sunday and a police team started a probe into the incident. Dr Suramya Pandey, who is a resident doctor at the hospital, said she had kept the ornaments in her purse in the 'ladies room' inside the OT before she left for performing a surgery. "I put my bag there around 9 am on Saturday and I came back around 4 pm. When I checked my purse, I found both the rings missing," she told the police.

Aquil Ansari's ghost comes back to haunt police

Lucknow (PNS): The ghost of the dreaded don Aquil Ansari came back to haunt police on Sunday after an audio clip of his call to a businessman, Shazil Rehman, during the hearing of a case in Lucknow went viral. The Prison department issued a clarification that Aquil, who is doing time in Hardoi jail, was brought to Lucknow court under security of Hardoi police and made a call while he was still in police custody on March 5, and not from the jail. Sources said he used the phone of a constable in the security ring to make the call to Shazil.

As the controversy blew up, SP, Hardoi, Anurag Vats, suspended constable Ravindra Kumar, whose phone was allegedly used by don Aquil to make a call to the Lucknow-based businessman. Vats also ordered a probe under Additional Superintendent of Police, East, in the incident. He had asked for a probe. "Nobody found guilty will be spared. We are finding the call detail records," he added. In the 2-minute audio, Aquil first greets Shazil and then asks him to visit the court on 10th (month not mentioned). In reply, Shazil says that if time permits,

he would come for a meeting. Aquil then replies and says he had no spare time and so he (victim) should ensure the meeting as he had some urgent work. But Aquil did not explain the work despite the victim asking about the work repeatedly. As per jail officials, around 8:50 am on March 5, Aquil Ansari was taken out of the prison for a hearing in two cases pertaining to Gangster's Act and also in a case relating to Ayurveda scam in Lucknow. The team of Hardoi police, that ferried Aquil in their custody included head constable-Vinod Kumar Tripathi, constables Ramdhari, Ravindra Kumar and Raj Kumar. Later, Aquil was taken inside the premises at 6 pm. However, the call made to Shazil was around 5 pm. Aquil had shot to infamy following the murder of Shrawan Sahu, whose son Akash was also killed allegedly by him in Lucknow a few years back. In the incident, the then SSP, Lucknow, Manzil Saini had taken a stern action and suspended several cops at Para police station and also three were declared absconded and a cash reward was issued in their names.

Cold storage owner, manager booked for culpable homicide

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A day after the death of two labourers in ammonia gas leak, which was caused by an explosion at a cold storage in Itaunja, police registered an FIR for culpable homicide against the owner and manager. Two labourers died while two others grievously injured following ammonia gas leak which was caused by an explosion in a pipeline at the cold storage in Itaunja police station area late Saturday night. The two injured were admitted to KGMU Trauma Centre's ICU where their condition was said to be improving, albeit gradually. Around half a kilometer area around the factory was cordoned off as a precautionary measure while the firefighters stopped the leakage. As per sources, the control valve of the ammonia pipeline inside the Vindeshwari cold storage exploded all of a sudden, triggering panic when the workers were storing potatoes. Four labourers were working inside the cold storage at that time. Two of them died. They were identified as Mishrilal (28) and Dharmendra (27) of Sitapur. Others who were injured were identified as Paramanda and Vinod. "A case was registered against cold storage owner Santosh Pandey and the manager, who is yet to be identified, under sections 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 308

(attempt to commit culpable homicide) and 269 (negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) of the IPC. There was an explosion in the oxygen supply and it caused ammonia leak," police said. Interestingly, the police were yet to find out the reason which caused the explosion in the chamber and triggered ammonia leak inside the cold storage. Sources said that safety issues at the storage had come to the fore earlier too, but were never probed. Villagers said they had voiced their concern in the past, but it was not addressed. Senior officials could not be contacted for their version. Ammonia, which is used in agriculture as a high-nitrogen fertiliser and in cold storages, is stored for industrial use in liquid form under high pressure and low temperature. It adversely affects people who come in contact with it and even at moderate concentration, it can cause irritation in eyes, skin, nose and throat. Ammonia reacts immediately upon contact with available moisture in the skin, eyes, oral cavity, respiratory tract to form the very caustic ammonium hydroxide which disrupts the cell membrane lipids, ultimately leading to cellular destruction. The gas is toxic and affects the lungs with a possibility of causing chemical pneumonitis — inflammation of the lungs caused by aspirating or inhaling irritants.

Massive fire breaks out in flour mill

Lucknow (PNS): A massive fire engulfed a flour mill on Bani road in Mohanlalganj police station area, triggering panic among workers but the goods were saved after hectic efforts on Sunday morning. Seven fire tenders were sent to the scene to douse the flames. Huge quantity of goods were gutted by the time fire tenders reached the scene. It took four hours to tame the fire. On Sunday morning, some of the sacks in the flour mill caught fire which later spread. The workers tried to douse the fire and also sought police help but in the meantime, the fire turned massive. The police were probing the cause which resulted in the fire incident. The team was also examining if the fire safety arrangements were in place in the mill. Meanwhile, an elderly man was killed in a road mishap while his son who was driving the bike suffered injuries in Mohanlalganj on Sunday. Reports said Veerpal of Natkur village, along with father Kishori Lal, was going towards Sinedi on a bike. When they reached Dhanuwasand village in the area, a speeding car knocked the bike from behind causing injuries to the father-son duo. Both were rushed to Mohanlalganj CHC where Kishori Lal was declared brought dead.



मिशन शक्ति

नारी सुरक्षा
नारी सम्मान
नारी स्वावलंबन





अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय महिला दिवस

के अवसर पर

मिशन शक्ति अभियान के अन्तर्गत

विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में उत्कृष्ट कार्य करने वाली महिलाओं का सम्मान एवं संवाद

तथा

विभिन्न योजनाओं का शुभारंभ / शिलान्यास

एवं

प्रदेश के सभी जनपदों में विभिन्न आयोजनों की शृंखला की शुरुआत

मुख्य अतिथि

योगी आदित्यनाथ
मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश

श्रीमती ज्ञान सुधा मिश्रा
न्यायमूर्ति (से.नि.) उच्चतम न्यायालय

विशिष्ट अतिथि

डॉ. दिनेश शर्मा
उप मुख्यमंत्री, उत्तर प्रदेश

श्रीमती पद्मजा चुन्दरु
एम.डी. एण्ड सी.ई.ओ. इण्डियन बैंक




दिनांक: 8 मार्च, 2021 | समय: पूर्वाह्न 10:30 बजे | स्थान: इंदिरा गांधी प्रतिष्ठान, लखनऊ

सूचना एवं जनसम्पर्क विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश

 सूचना एवं जनसम्पर्क विभाग, उत्तर प्रदेश

Chaupals to be held on Women’s Day

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath-led government is all set to celebrate this year’s International Women’s Day on Monday in the most special way under its ambitious Mission Shakti campaign across the state. Under its successful initiative, ‘Chaupals’ will be conducted at various primary schools as well as Kasturba Gandhi schools across the villages to spread awareness about the safety, dignity and empowerment of women.

Apart from this, the government will also allow free-of-cost visits of women to ancient and historical places in the state. The government has also issued directives to organise an oath-taking ceremony of the guardians for the safety of the daughters for which Rs 1,000

has been released to each school.

“With the aim to make the new generation the carrier of culture that guarantees respect and protection to women, many campaigns and awareness programmes are being run by the Yogi-led government,” an official said.

In this sequence, mass public meetings will be held to ensure women’s security and empowerment on the occasion of Women’s Day in all schools of the state.

Apart from this, the school’s headmasters, wardens and facilitators will promote these awareness activities in their respective villages and gram panchayats, etc.

The various programmes will educate daughters about ‘Good Touch and Bad Touch’. Information about the gov-

ernment’s women helplines will also be given to parents and children. All the winners of the various competitions organised at schools will also be honoured. Poster exhibitions will also be organised to make children aware of social issues like domestic violence, child marriage, gender discrimination and child rights.

Besides, films Khushi, Swashakti, Paheli will be screened.

As a gift from Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on International Women’s Day, women can visit historical buildings, including Bara Imambara, Bhool Bhulaiyaa, Picture Gallery, Darwaza, and Ghantaghar for free.

On the district magistrate’s directive, an order has been issued in this regard by the Hussainabad Trust.

Stalker attacks woman on being confronted

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Blowing to the smithereens the police claim on having ensured safety to women by setting up cells and deploying huge number of cops, a woman was attacked by a stalker when she confronted him over eve-teasing near a bank in Gontinagar on Sunday evening.

However, the woman did not let nervousness get better of her and she, with the help of the commuters, nabbed the accused. He was later handed over to police. She suffered bruises on her hand. Her bravery helped cops in arresting the accused later.

He was identified as Vikas Kumar Verma of Badi Jugauli in Gontinagar.

Giving details, an official of the media cell of Lucknow police commissioner said the incident took place around 7 pm and claimed that the

woman provided the registration number of the accused’s bike to them after which the cops nabbed the accused.

He said the accused was arrested and the woman was giving the complaint to the police. He said the sections of the IPC will be invoked only after a case is registered.

The incident exposed chinks in police preparedness in ensuring safety of women on International Women Day, to be celebrated on March 8. The government is tough on its stand to prevent crime against women and has provided adequate force and gadgets besides other facilities, asking the police to ensure safety of women. Accordingly, the police set up pink booths across the city and women help desk at police stations. “There were no policemen when the accused started talking lewd to the woman and assaulted her,” locals said.

Women corporators seek basic facilities for females

PNS ■ LUCKNOW



In a first, Mayor Sanyukta Bhatia called for an all-woman LMC House on Sunday. There were discussions on the provision of basic facilities for women and also with various problems which the corporators face in wards.

The corporators expressed happiness on being invited for this historic occasion. Rupali Gupta put in a proposal of a ‘Mahila Bazar’, which will be dedicated to women with the products being sold by women vendors that would help in providing employment to women. She suggested that the map of any shopping complex should be passed only if provision has been made for a ‘she’ toilet.

Khushbu Rakhi said guards should be deployed in parks to keep away unsocial elements and make them safe for women. A demand was also

made to give half-an-hour relief to safai workers, 50 per cent concession in parking, naming of roads after female freedom fighters, setting up of female help desks at zonal offices of LMC, concession of five per cent in house tax for those applications where the houses are in the names of women, baby feeding centres at parks to facilitate women walkers and free education for girls living on streets. The women

corporators got the chance to sit in the first row and while Sunita Singhal led the BJP corporators, SP corporators were led by Charanjit Gandhi and Congress corporators by Mamta Chowdhary. Bhatia said women corporators often tell her that they never got the opportunity to be heard in any Nagar Nigam Sadan and taking inspiration from Chief Minister Adityanath Yogi, she called for a ‘Mahila Sadan’.

‘Women have achieved a lot but they still have miles to go’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Women have come a long way but still they have miles to go. This is what prominent women from various fields feel about the existing condition of women in UP.

Chairperson, State Commission for Women, Vimla Batham said women have become empowered but at times one feels that they do not recognise their inner power. “That is the main reason why they lag behind. The need of the hour is that women should understand their own potential, so that they can become confident and enhance their personality. It is true that women in urban areas are far better than their rural counterparts and we need to work for them,” she said. She added that they have put their focus on rural women for this reason and programmes are being carried out at block and tehsil level.

“We carry out awareness programmes which are very successful. We talk about government schemes to these women and encourage them to ensure their participation in the society. The urban women are making a mark in all the areas and rural women also need to be encouraged in this direction,” she added.

However, she pointed out that complaints which they received are from both urban and the rural areas, but urban women, being more aware, could put forth their point of view more effectively. “For all the changes that have taken place, the destination is still far and women have to work towards it,” she added.

ADG Neera Rawat, while commenting on the situation prevalent today, said that women are still a victim of the patriarchal mindset.

“Things have changed a lot from the earlier generations but there is still a long way to go. The seed has been sown and the evolution of women empowerment has started, but there is still a long way to go,” she said. Regarding what is holding the women back, she said that somewhere it is related to the parenting of child in homes.

“Even women try to hold back the next generation and as mothers, they also surrender before the patriarchal mindset and rear their daughters in the same way, maybe because of social pressure. Somewhere, we are also discriminating in our families between girls and boys. Problems emerge from the household because it is the microcosm of the society. It’s up to the parents how they

teach their sons to respect women,” she said.

Chairperson of All-India Muslim Women’s Personal Law Board Shaista Amber said that regarding muslim women, it can be said that the problems remain the same and struggle to get their dues continues, but they have also developed the will to fight. “They want to be independent, stand on their own feet, and not suffer the fate of a Nirbhaya or an Ayesha. However, they still have to fight the mindsets and people who trouble them find ways to evade the law even after they win cases in court,” she pointed out.

Head of Lucknow University’s Physics department Prof Poonam Tandon said a lot has changed but more work needs to be done to improve the condition of women. “Generally, we should talk about gender equality rather than women empowerment. People should not look at the gender but at the merit. People are slowly changing in this direction and there is a visible change in society,” she said. She added that mindsets remain the same in rural set-ups. “To allow a woman to work is a different thing but accepting a woman as an equal is still not there in rural areas,” she said.

Lucknow (PNS): The landscape of Indian agriculture is changing after the outbreak of Covid pandemic. Self-reliance in agriculture and community-led agriculture has emerged as a major game-changers. In order to transfer new sustainable technologies for fruit and vegetable growers of Uttar Pradesh, CISH is organising a one-day Kisan Mela on its Rehmankhera campus on March 10.

Director Dr Shailendra Rajan said that the Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture has developed

and demonstrated several technologies to farmers in the past, leading to the establishment of several agripreneurs and start-ups in horticulture.

“Scores of community-based organisations and self-help groups have come up in areas like fruit processing, integrated mango farming, honey bee production & processing, nursery and organic farming, Rajan said. CISH has developed varieties of mango, guava and jamun which have reached far-flung areas in the country and they have a huge demand.

“CISH is producing core planting material of these varieties for the establishment of mother blocks for decades. There is a need to create awareness among the farming community about these improved varieties,” he said. These varieties will be available at the fair.

Rajan said that more than 500 farmers are expected to participate in this event which will be inaugurated by Agriculture Minister Surya Pratap Shahi and Minister for Horticulture and Processing Shri Ram.

CITYBRIEFS



CMS students lending support to women empowerment through a nukkad natak on the eve of International Women's Day

MD & CEO OF INDIAN BANK IN CITY TODAY

Padmaja Chundurur, managing director and chief executive officer of Indian Bank, will be visiting Lucknow on Monday. It will be her maiden visit following the successful amalgamation and integration of erstwhile Allahabad Bank with Indian Bank. She will be visiting some senior state-level bureaucrats for further strengthening the banks; participation in economy of the state, inter alia, through financing various govt projects / sponsored schemes.

LOTUS BLOOMING IN MIRE CREATED BY TMC: MODI

In an apparent bid to appeal to the Bengali sentiments, Modi who filled his speeches with snatches of Bengali promised introduction of vernacular medium in technical education even as he said, “The poor students who educate in Bengali language will no longer have to suffer as Bengali will be introduced as a medium of instruction in medical, engineering and other courses.”

Saying that “today’s roar from the crowd leaves no doubt that post-May 2 Bengal will witness the real poriborton,” the PM said.

He added, “Democracy that had been a casualty in Bengal during Didi’s rule will be restored in every walk of life ... so that the people’s faith in administration and police restored.”

Taking potshots on Mamata for riding a scooter to State Secretariat Nabanna as a mark of protest against rising fuel prices, Modi said, “I was worried that you might not get a fall ... or else you would start attacking the State of origin of the scooter (where it was manufactured).”

He also mocked at the Chief Minister for leaving her home constituency Bhawanipore and moving to Nandigram. “One wonders why you diverted your scooter to Nandigram ... okay if you want your scooter to fall at Nandigram then what can anyone do,” he said.

Returning Mamata’s “outsider” salvo Modi said the BJP has been repeatedly attacked for bringing in “outsiders” “but I must say that humanists like Tagore and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose would never have liked this narrative ... consider for once who founded the Congress (AO Hume) from which the TMC was born and who were the founders of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist philosophy ... If they are not outsiders then how can the BJP be a party of outsiders when its DNA is inspired by Bengali stalwarts like Syama Prasad Mukherjee ... I must say the BJP is the party of Bengal and Bengalis.”

The TMC supremo has often attacked the national BJP leaders for camping in Bengal as “outsiders who

have no sense of Bengali culture and heritage.”

Referring to remarks that he was always backing his “friends” the Prime Minister said, “I am brought up in poverty and so poor people are my friends and so all my schemes are directed towards them ... I will continue to support my friends come what may.”

Attacking the Chief Minister for raising Khela Hobey (a game is in the offing) slogan (that many a critic call a message threatening electoral violence) the Prime Minister said, “I have known Didi for ages. She is not the same person who raised her voice against the Left. She speaks someone else’s language now and is being remote-controlled.” The PM added “There will be no khela ahead, the khela (game) for the TMC is over ... *TMC’s Khel Khatom.*”

DIDI HITS BACK, SAYS MODI, SHAH INDIA’S BIGGEST EXTORTIONISTS

Saying that the Prime Minister was the biggest extortionist she said, “they are always accusing us of taking cut money ... but how much did they get in the deals out of selling Rail, BSNL, Coal India, Air India and defence sector ... who will answer that?”

Attacking the Prime Minister for unleashing “Jumla politics” she said, “He is making tall promises but first of all ask him to deposit Rs 15 lakh in every bank account that he had promised before the 2014 Lok Sabha elections ... ask him to turn UP, Bihar and MP into golden States before promising Sonar Bangla (golden Bengal).”

Attacking the Prime Minister for alleging that women were not safe in Bengal, the Chief Minister said that “he should first look into what is happening in UP’s Hathras where girls are raped and murdered every day... Bengal is the safest State and Kolkata has been rated as the safest city even during the night time.”

Slamming the Prime Minister for squeezing the people of India she said, “When the price of crude is low in the international market the Government is increasing petro price in India ... they are giving free gas connection but selling the cooking gas for Rs 900 ... I provide rice to people for Rs 2 and the same rice is

cooked for Rs 900 ... is it not a joke.”

The Chief Minister is scheduled to return to Kolkata on Monday and take out a march on Tuesday. She is likely to file her nomination for Nandigram seat on May 10, sources said.

CBI SUMMONS 2 IPS OFFICERS IN CROSS-BORDER CATTLE SMUGGLING CASE

The CBI had carried out searches at 34 locations across the country and arrested then BSF Commandant Satish Kumar and cattle smuggler Mohammad Enamul Haque last year. Haque is currently undergoing judicial custody.

The cattle were taken from India to Bangladesh after paying illegal gratification to BSF personnel manning the frontier there.

The accused BSF Commandant was posted in West Bengal between December 2015 and April 2017 and allegedly seized over 20,000 cows before they could be transported to Bangladesh, but the vehicles involved were not impounded, according to the FIR.

The CBI filed a chargesheet in the case in February this year against seven persons.

The agency has also 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.

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

Binay Mishra has also evaded summons so far in the case.

CONG ACCEPTS 25 SEATS AS DMK FAILS TO YIELD

leaders who cited the low striking rate of the Congress as the reason for the reduction in the number of seats.

The only consolation for the Congress is that it has been allocated the Kanyakumari Lok Sabha seat where a bypoll is being held on April 6.

The bypoll will elect a successor to H Vasanth Kumar, the sitting Congress MP who succumbed to Covid-19. It is expected that the Congress may field one

of the sons of late Vasanth Kumar as a candidate for the seat, a sure seat for the Congress.

The deal between the DMK and the Congress was struck amidst reports about the possibility of Congress casting its lots with the Makkal Neethi Meyyam led by actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan.

“We have reached an agreement with the DMK with an intention to leave no room for the BJP to win. We are in this alliance not for the Government, but to keep our ideology alive,” Gundu Rao told reporters when asked about the reduction in the number of seats allocated for his party. Rao and Alagiri directed their ire at the BJP, terming it as a big disease than coronavirus that has struck the country.

The DMK-led alliance is featuring the MDMK led by Vaiko for the first time in an Assembly election. The MDMK was formed in 1984 after Vaiko was expelled from the DMK for posing a challenge to MK Stalin’s rise in the party.

The VCK’s presence in the DMK-led front is being seen as an inauspicious development. The front featuring the VCK had lost all the Assembly elections in the past.

With the signing of the seat allocation agreement with the Congress, the DMK is ready to take the field to fight the 2021 Tamil Nadu battle. Other parties like the Vaiko-led MDMK and Thirumavalavan-led VCK have been allocated six seats each. The DMK would field its candidates in 180 constituencies.

Now that the AIADMK and the DMK has completed the seat allocation talks, Tamil Nadu electorate is ready for the month-long campaign exercise.

INDIA TO GET EYES IN SKY FOR REAL-TIME BORDER INFO

and oceanography. GISAT-1 will facilitate near real-time observation of the Indian sub-continent, under cloud-free condition, at frequent intervals, ISRO said.

The planned launch of GISAT-1, weighing about 2,268 kg, comes close on the heels of the successful February 28 PSLV-C51 mission that orbited Brazil’s earth observation satellite Amazonia-1 and 18 co-passengers, including five built by students.

Secretary in the Department of Space and ISRO Chairman K Sivan told PTI last week that the technical issues that led to postponement of GISAT-1 mission have been resolved and the further delay in the launch was due to Covid-19-induced lockdown which affected normal work.

According to sources, GISAT-1 will be followed by the maiden flight of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle, ISRO’s compact launcher, likely in April.

SSLV has been designed to meet “launch on demand” requirements in a cost-effective manner for small satellites in a dedicated and ride-share mode.

It is a three-stage all solid vehicle with a capability to launch up to 500 kg satellite mass into 500 km low earth orbit (LEO) and 300 kg into Sun Synchronous Orbit (SSO).

By comparison, PSLV — the work-horse launch vehicle of ISRO — can take up to 1,750 kg payload into SSO of 600 km altitude.

With lower per kg launch cost, the mini launcher will have multiple satellite mounting options for nano, micro and small satellites.

Sivan had earlier termed the SSLV an innovative vehicle which can be assembled in just 72 hours.

“Instead of 60 days (for building a PSLV), it (SSLV) will be assembled in three days; instead of 600 people (needed to build a PSLV), it (SSLV) will be done by six people,” he had said.

INDIA’S COVID CASES CROSS 18K IN 24 HRS

surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19.

According to the ICMR, 22,14,30,507 samples have been tested up to March 6 with 7,37,830 samples being tested on Saturday.

The 100 new fatalities include 47 from Maharashtra, 16 from Kerala and 12 from Punjab.

A total of 1,57,756 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 52,440 from Maharashtra followed by 12,517 from Tamil Nadu, 12,359 from Karnataka, 10,919 from Delhi, 10,277 from West Bengal, 8,729 from Uttar Pradesh and 7,173 from Andhra Pradesh.

The Ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

Maha infection spurt continues, fresh cases cross 1,000 mark

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The second wave spurt of Covid-19 cases continued in Maharashtra on Sunday, as the number of daily infections crossed 11,000 mark, while the daily coronavirus toll came down to 38.

After infections breached the 10000-mark for two consecutive days, Maharashtra on Sunday touched a new high of 11,141 in the second round of intense spread of the Covid-19 ever since it first broke out in March last year.

A cursory look at the increase in the number of cases being witnessed in the state since March 1 this year (March -1: 6397, March 2: 7863, March 3: 9855, March 4: 8998, March 5: 10,216, March 6: 10,187 and March 7: 11,141) reveals that there has been a steady increase in the number of cases during the past one week.

There has been a mixed trend as far as deaths are concerned during the last one week. While there were 30 deaths on March 1, the death tally ever since then has been: March 2-54, March 3—42, March 4—60, March 5- 53, March 6—47 and March 7—38. With the 11,141 new cases reported on Sunday, the total number of infections climbed from 22,08,586 to 22,19,727. Similarly with 38 fresh deaths, the total number deaths rose from 52,440 to 52,478.

As 6013 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March last year went up to 20,78,044. The recovery rate in the state dropped marginally from 93.36 per cent to 93.17 per cent.

With four fresh deaths, the Covid-19 toll in Mumbai rose from 11,500 to 11,504, while the infected cases went up by 1361 to trigger a jump in the infections from 3,32,208 to 3,33,569.

Meanwhile, the number of “active cases” total cases in the state went up from 92,897 to 97,983. The fatality rate in the state dropped from 2.37 per cent to 2.36 per cent.

There are a maximum of 20,347 “active” cases in Pune, followed by Nagpur (11,635), Thane (10,294), Mumbai (9319), Amravati (5037), Akola (4811), Jalgaon (4538), Aurangabad (4264) and Nashik (3741).

Pune district, which continued to be the worst-affected city-district in Maharashtra, saw the total number of cases increase from 4,19,162 to 4,21,162, while the total number of deaths in Pune went up from 8087 to 8092.



DC, DM and others participating in cleanliness drive at Ganga ghats in Varanasi on Sunday

Pioneer

Massive cleanliness drive conducted at Ganga ghats

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A massive cleanliness drive was conducted at 84-odd Ganga ghats right from Sant Ravidas Ghat to Rajghat here on Sunday in which apart from hundreds of volunteers, senior administrative officers also offered their 'shramdaan'. In 2016, the Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi had himself launched the Clean India Mission by offering shramdaan at Assi Ghat in his parliamentary constituency and prior to that in 2014 a cleanliness campaign was also organised under the auspices of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In this campaign, hundreds of volunteers were engaged apart from the Divisional Commissioner (DC) Deepak Agrawal, District Magistrate (DM) Kaushal Raj

Sharma and senior officers of Nagar Nigam and Forest department. Nagar Nigam entrusted 10 safai employees to every sanitation supervisor. About 700 volunteers from different organisations including 700 municipal employees and 600 sweepers of rural areas participated in it. On the ghats, five to five metres blocks were looked after by every supervisor. Along with cleaning the ghats, wastes of flowers and others were taken out of the river water. The collected garbage from all the ghats was carried out to Khirkhia Ghat on the boats and from there the same was shifted to Karsara Solid Waste Management Plant for its disposal under the guidance of health officer of Nagar Nigam Dr NP Singh.

Photography and videography were conducted from the drone to evaluate the situation before and after cleaning. On the occasion, the social workers took out an awareness rally under the leadership of president of Srijan Samajik Sanstha Anil Singh and the members of many other organisations including Namami Gange, Malviya Mission, Brahmveda Vidyalaya, Kashi Foundation etc also participated in the cleanliness programme, apart from the members of Kinnar Samaj. The DM said that the campaign has been initiated to create awareness among the people and the same would be conducted on one Sunday of every month. He added that the cleanliness drive will also be carried out in rivers Varuna and Assi. The

DC said that to make the PM's cleanliness campaign a success, we will continue to organise programmes by connecting people so that the dream of cleanliness can be made a reality. Under the leadership of convenor of Swagatam Kashi Foundation, a drive was launched at Darbhanga Ghat and they also pledged to keep the ghats clean. Similarly, members of the Arpan Social Foundation offered shramdaan at Ravidas Ghat. According to Neeraj Mishra, controller of Civil Defense, about 1600 volunteers including 300 Civil Defence members took oath of cleanliness and offered shramdaan. The Civil Defence volunteers were divided into 24 teams.

Havan for BJP's win in Bengal held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

To ensure BJP's victory in the upcoming assembly elections in West Bengal, a religious programme including Rudrabhishek and Havan-Pujan was performed in the city here on Sunday. Dev Kumar Chatterjee, senior BJP leader of West Bengal and national general secretary of the Prime Minister's Public Welfare Planning Promotion

Committee, duly offered prayers at the famous Siddheshwar Mahadev temple at Assi and sought Mahadev's blessings for the party's victory in Bengal. Siddheshwar Mahadev's Rudrabhishek was performed by the Shodashopchar method by five Vedic Brahmins under the guidance of Acharya Pandit Chandan Tiwari. After that, the Havan was performed. Speaking on the occasion,

Dev Kumar Chatterjee said that the people of Bengal have become frustrated over the policies of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and her 10 years of misrule. 'On May 2, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP will form a strong majority government in West Bengal,' he expressed his confidence. The BJP leader, who was on a one-day personal visit here, also attended a meeting of BJP.

In addition to the Ganga Aarti in the evening, he also worshiped at Kal Bhairav, Kashi Vishwanath, Batuk Bhairav and Bharat Mata and other temples. He was mainly accompanied by Sandeep Chaurasia, Vidyasagar, Sumit and Siddharth Upadhyay, while Havan-Pujan was performed by Acharya Chandan Tiwari, Bhrigunath Tiwari, Sunil Pathak, Gautam Tiwari and Shailendra Tiwari.

Ticket checking drive held at Varanasi City station

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On the eve of International Women's Day, the members of Varanasi Divisional unit (North Eastern Railway) of Women's Welfare Organisation and women ticket checking staff launched an extensive ticket checking drive at Varanasi City railway station here on Sunday under the leadership of Senior Divisional Finance Manager (SDFM) Preeti Verma. During the drive, various trains including Dadar Express, Sarnath Express and Krishak Express were checked. A total of 23 passengers were caught travelling without valid tickets and a fine of ₹ 8,040 was

realised. Along with this, they organised the passengers' assistance centre and their counseling regarding precautions under the corona guidelines. The passengers who finished their journey at the station were also apprised of following the social distance, wearing the masks correctly, using soap and sanitiser and adopting the corona guidelines avoiding any negligence. Also, some passengers were provided with masks who did not have the same. On the occasion, the station security was looked after by the women Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel apart from making the station premises clean by

women safai employees. The programme was also attended by Parveen Alam (member, All India Women's Federation), Rinku Srivastava (senior section officer, Finance), Shail Pandey (reservation supervisor), Reena Srivastava (chief ticket inspector), Jameela Bano (chief ticket inspector), Priyanka Patel (senior ticket examiner) and many others. Besides, Scouts and Guides of NER District Association took out a Prabhat Pheri from Scout Den to railway colonies in view to create awareness towards women's rights. Besides, a felicitation function was organised on this occasion at Vikas Intermediate

College, Parmanandpur in which social worker Vipin Singh was the chief guest while the function was also attended by school's director RN Singh and Regional Sports Officer RP Singh. Famous magician RR Singh presented his magic tricks to mesmerise all the audience. The college students including Nivedita Yadav who got fifth rank in Class X in the district, Khushi Singh (ninth place) and Garima Gupta who topped school's rank in Class XII apart from some handball and wrestling players among 200 were also honoured. Principal AK Singh proposed the vote of thanks.

Tea seller shot at, injured

VARANASI (PNS): In a daring incident, some unidentified criminals shot at a tea seller at Nadesar area, under the Cantt police station on Sunday. The injured was admitted to a private nursing home in Maldahia where his condition was said to be critical. According to information, the injured Ashok Gupta was at his tea stall in the above mentioned area on Sunday afternoon and in the meantime, some miscreants reached there and opened fire targeting him. He sustained bullet injury at his shoulder. Hearing the gunshot, the locals reached the spot and rushed the injured to Shiv Prasad

Gupta Divisional Government Hospital in Kabirchaura where the doctors referred him to a private nursing home in Maldahia. On getting information, the SSP Amit Pathak reached the hospital and took a stock of information about the incident. The police collected the footage of CCTV cameras to identify the criminals. The police teams were constituted to nab the criminals and the raids were also conducted some place in search for the attackers but to no avail. **2 WOMEN REPORTING OUTPOST:** In a gift to women, the Police department has decided to establish two

women reporting outpost in the district on the occasion of International Women Day on Monday. The International Women Day which falls on March 8 each year. Meanwhile, the district administration will hold various programmes to mark the day. There is only one Mahila Thana in the district which is situated on the campus of Kotwali police station near Maidagin crossing and so, the women particularly of rural areas face inconvenience to lodge their complaints. In order to facilitate the women of both urban and rural areas, the Police department decided to open two women reporting

outposts, one in the premises of Lanka police station and another in the premises of Badagaon police station. **FIVE MORE TEST POSITIVE:** Five more have tested COVID-19 positive, increasing the tally of confirmed cases to 22,028 by Sunday evening. With no COVID-19 death being reported in the last 24 hours, the death toll remains at 377. With 8 COVID-19 patient having been cured in home isolation, the number of COVID-19 patients recovered in the district so far is 21,601 including 18,620 in home isolation and 2,982 in Covid hospitals.

High alert in Naini Central Jail

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Tension prevailed in the Naini Central Jail after former MP of Jaunpur Dhananjay Singh having a reward of ₹25,000 on his arrest was brought to jail in case of Ajit murder case of capital Lucknow. Within a short while, the entire jail premises have been taken on high alert. Apart from the jail police, PAC has also been deployed and the barracks of Dhananjay Singh are being monitored every moment with the help of CCTV cameras. Those coming to meet him are being closely monitored. Apart from many musclemen and hardcore criminals, many opponents of former

MP Dhananjay Singh are also lodged in Naini Jail. Shootings have taken place outside the Naini jail in the past. In view of the possibility of any untoward incident, the jail administration has made elaborate arrangements for the security system. A deputy jailer has been specially put under the protection of Dhananjay Singh. CCTV cameras are being monitored around the prison and activities are being monitored. Former MP Dhananjay Singh has been kept in the jail like normal prisoners. It may be pointed out here that in an earlier case, Dhananjay Singh, having broken his bail, surrendered in MP-MLA Special Court of Prayagraj on Friday. The police had announced a reward of Rs

25,000 with the issuance of non-bailable warrants against him. After the surrender, the court sent him to Naini jail. Colonelganj police shifted him to jail amidst tight security. Senior Jail Superintendent of Naini Jail, PN Pandey said that according to the jail manual, adequate security arrangements have been made for Dhananjay Singh. A deputy jailer is put in charge of his security. The PAC is guarded with captive defenders. The jail administration is on alert in view of security. **FPOS SHOLUD BE FORMED AT ALL PLACES:** The first step to development is the village. Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) should be formed at all places. Each village should also have its

own development plan. BJP workers should try for this. This view was expressed by Cabinet Minister Siddharth Nath Singh in a meeting held with BJP workers in Paramufti and Ganja villages on Friday. He said that BJP workers should get organised and go among the people in the panchayat elections and strive for all-round development. There should be cleanliness in the village, there should be no illiterate, there should also be proper treatment. Solar lights should also be arranged. Adequate resources will have to be created for drinking water and irrigation. Some work is also necessary in the hands of every man. Not everyone can get a job. Small industries will have to be set up for this.

PDA frees encroached nazul land

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Prayagraj Development Authority on Sunday freed 300 sq yard Nazul land from the illegal possession of mafia don Atique Ahmed. This land is situated behind the office of Atique in Kareli area. Besides this many others who had encroached land in that area were ousted and their constructions were razed to earth by the bulldozers. The PDA took the above land in its possession. Heavy police deployment makes things easy for the PDA officials who work quite smoothly without any obstruction. Atique Ahmed had developed a stable on that illegally occupied land for his horses. The PDA demolished this construction. **MURDER IN HANDIA:** A youth was done to death in

Rahimpatti village in the trans-Ganga area of Handia on Sunday morning. He had been attached by sharp edge weapons by some unidentified persons. Reports say that Rahul Patel, son of Suresh Patel woke up in early hours and went out to have a cup of tea. Before Rahul could reach the tea stall, some unidentified miscreants attacked him with sharp edged weapons. Villagers found him lying in a pool of blood and rushed him hospital, but the doctors could not save him. The police have registered a case and are trying to reach the real culprits. **GOVT IN STATES MUST FOR BENEFITS OF CENTRAL SCHEMES:** There is BJP government in the country and the state. It is necessary to have a government in the state for the benefits of the

Central schemes to be available to the public. In states where there is no BJP government, people are not getting the benefit of the schemes of the Centre. This was said by Laxman Acharya, member of the Legislative Council. MLC Laxman Acharya held a meeting with BJP workers in Prayagraj. He said that if there was a BJP government in West Bengal, the people would get the benefit of all the schemes properly. The same situation is with other states including Maharashtra. Local state governments are not allowing the central schemes to reach the general public for their benefit. In this context, if the benefit of the scheme is to reach the last person really, then the BJP government is necessary in the village too. It is because if the BJP has

a majority in the panchayats, they will do better according to the government. Due to the tendency of pulling legs to one another right now, the general public is not getting as much profit as it should. This should be understood by the common people along with the BJP workers. BJP city uinit president Ganesh Kesarwani, who attended the meeting, said that every party worker would have to stay organised. The situation of mutual tussle will have to be avoided. If there is any problem, it should be intimated to the higher officials. Each problem will be resolved. All of us have succeeded in forming a government in the Centre and the state by getting organised. This sequence will have to be continued even further, he added.

DC meets students of Abhyudaya Yojana

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Newly appointed Divisional Commissioner Sanjay Goyal met the students of Abhyudaya Yojana running at Government Inter College on Saturday. Along with knowing the methods of their studies, he also gave them a mantra of success. The commissioner said that the government has given a better platform to prepare competitive students of economically weaker sections. 'There is no alternative to hard work. Honest effort will lead you to the goal. We are all trying to give you better directions. You should study your subject seriously. Till yesterday we were also preparing like you. With our hard work, we achieved the place. You can also



do this', Goyal added. Chief Development Officer Shipu Giri, Additional

Divisional Lord Sharan, DIOS RN Vishwakarma, District Probation Officer Pankaj

Mishra, Social Welfare Officer, etc. were present on the occasion. The Jwala Devi Saraswati Vidya Mandir Inter College Gangapuri held a Matri Shakti Jagran programme. Chief guest Prof Archana Chahal graced the occasion. The programme was chaired by Kiran Bala Pandey, member of the School Management Committee. Distinguished guests SI Amrita Singh, Sona Nishad, Rani Devi as patrons were also present. The programme started with lighting of lamps by Principal Vikram Bahadur Singh Parihar and guests. Presently, there is a need to focus on the safety of daughters along with their health. Anamika Kushwaha, Archana Kushwaha, Akanksha Mishra, Babika Rai etc were present on this occasion.

Significance of Bhagwad Gita highlighted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

With an objective to uplift the students' consciousness to a greater spiritual and moral height as well as to strengthen teacher-taught relationship, Patanjali Rishikul conducted an online event here on Saturday highlighting the significance of Bhagwad Gita as the most powerful instrument to attain this height and to nurture a relationship of understanding, and love between the teacher and the taught. Dignified members of the Management Committee, Dr Krishna Gupta, Ravindra Gupta, Rekha Baid Gupta, Shri Yashovardhan along with the Principals of Patanjali Group of Schools, Sushmita Kanungo, Principal, MPVM, Alpona Dey, Principal, MPVM Ganga Gurukulam, Vibha Srivastava, Head Mistress, Patanjali Nursery School and Ganga Gurukulam Play School, graced the occasion with their benign presence. The online presentation began with the blowing of the conch-shell which emitted divine energy into the atmosphere making it more serene and bringing positivity. This was followed by a musical rendition invoking Lord Krishna. Teachers threw light on the educational significance of Gita as well as portraying universal human values

enshrined in the holy-scriptures through a PPT, dialoguing and oration. Rishikul teachers participated in a panel discussion, wherein they sought answers to their queries related to day to day teaching-learning issues, from the Bhagwad Gita. The essence of Swadharma and Swabhava was also discussed during the event. When both teachers and students follow their respective swadharma and swabhava, a positive, creative and joyful learning environment automatically comes into existence. The teachings of Gita on teacher-taught relationship, as followed by the contemporary teachers and mentors like Ramkrishna Paramhansa and Swami Vivekananda, Swami Tapovan and Swami Chinmayananda, Vikram Sarabhai and APJ Abdul Kalam etc. was brought to light by different orators. Next there was a melodious bhajan that enchanted the audience. This was followed by an interactive session wherein the teachers of Patanjali Group of Schools interacted and discussed various aspects of teaching-learning, teacher-taught relationships and human values as explained in the Bhagwad Gita. Vice-President, Patanjali Rishikul, Dr. Krishna Gupta appreciated the efforts of the teachers of Patanjali Rishikul

for a wonderful presentation. She also emphasised that each teacher is a value educator and thus, the teachers must live up to those values for students to emulate. She also threw light on the significance of detachment from one's ego, anger, negativity and demonic traits. Nityanand Singh, Principal, Patanjali Rishikul, drew the attention of the audience towards the need of self-exploration and self-observation. He laid emphasis on creating a conducive learning environment with relationship, positivity and understanding between the teacher and the taught, for the holistic development of the students. He proposed the vote of thanks. **SELF-DEFENCE TRAINING MODULE STARTED:** Officials of the Education department have started self-defence training modules at 1001 upper primary schools and 20 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Awasiya Vidyalaya across the Prayagraj district in UP. The self-defence training module that started from the first week of this month will continue till March 30. Sports teachers/sports instructors — assigned to impart self-defence training to girl students — have also been instructed to follow the COVID-19 protocol strictly. Taj Mohammad, district coordinator (girls education), said that apart from

studies, girl students of class VIth to VIIIth are being given self-defence training by the sports teachers/sports instructor at their respective schools. He further added that the self-defence training module was taken up at all upper primary schools and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Awasiya Vidyalaya. Over 10,000 sports teachers or sports instructors were imparted training to train girl students for self-defence mechanisms last year. He added that sports instructors have been roped in at all upper primary schools and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Awasiya Vidyalaya to train girls. Mohammad, meanwhile, said that limited strength of girls was being trained schedule wise during the training programme due to COVID-19 protocol. He, however, said it was a three-month programme to impart self-defence training to girls studying between VIth and VIIIth classes but due to Covid pandemic, it could not be formalised. The Education department, however, has now taken up the exercise in March. It is estimated over 22,000 girl students would be imparted training during the programme. A senior Education department official said that teachers of school respectively will be compiling the entire data of girls being trained for self-defence mechanisms.



Samajwadi Party members sitting on semi-nude dharna to protest inflation and fuel price hike on Sunday.

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SP protests rising inflation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Hundreds of workers of Samajwadi Party staged a semi-nude dharna-cum-demonstration at Bakarganj crossing on Sunday in protest against the uncontrolled inflation and the insensitivity of the Bharatiya Janata Party government in controlling it.

The SP workers sat on dharna with banners and posters along with LPG cylinders and empty food containers, and threatened to intensify their agitation if the government did not check the rise in prices of essential commodities and the zooming

inflation.

Addressing the gathering at the dharna venue, SP city president Dr Imran said today petrol and diesel price hike had dangerously hit the common man below the belt as the price rise of fuel had impacted each and every commodity.

He said the fare of transport and public transport had been increased and the middle and lower income group people were suffering the most. He said due to the hike in freight charges, the price of every commodity had shot up and was in the process of going further up but the BJP government was sitting with eyes and

ears closed.

Imran said from the time Prime Minister Narendra Modi had appealed to the masses to vote the BJP to power and had assured the people that the prices would be brought down and employment will be increased, the government was doing the opposite by paving the way for all-round increase in prices and ending employment opportunities.

He said the promises made to the people had proved to be a hoax and the people were feeling cheated. He said distribution of free cooking gas connection to the poor under the Ujjwala scheme was baffling as

the poor were given free connections but had to purchase LPG refills at a very high rate.

He said with nearly no employment opportunities and all-round inflation, it had become a major problem of the poor to pull on. He said today the majority of the families were on the verge of starvation as there were hardly any employment opportunities and survival was very difficult.

Abhishek Gupta, Amit Malhotra, Bunty Yadav, Deepak Khote, Arpit Trivedi, Amit Chaurasia and Anil Chaubey also addressed the dharna.

Govt promoting sports at all levels: Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Upendra Tiwari while addressing sportspersons at Green Park Stadium here on Saturday said the Uttar Pradesh government had released funds to promote sports at every level and a sum of Rs 15 lakh had been released for the division.

He said apart from this Rs 60,000 for the tehsil level had also been released and this was being done with an objective to

motivate youth towards sports.

The minister had come here to dedicate the renovation and construction of Green Park Stadium, done at a cost of Rs 36 crore.

He said the stadium now housed a world class dressing room and a gymnasium. He said the COVID-19 pandemic had brought a major setback to sports. He said 39 mini stadia were in the process of completion and they were being constructed by the government.

He said the process was

already on to increase Green Park capacity and expert coaches. He said the process to prepare sportspersons at the state and national level would be given further momentum.

He said it had also been decided to expose sportsperson to the sportsperson of advanced nations for firsthand experience. He said the Green Park would have all 5 star facilities. He said every effort would be made to ensure that products of Kanpur excelled

not only at national level but also at the global level.

He said incentives would be given to sportspersons to bring them on the field and to ensure that boys and girls took part in sports in large numbers.

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner Raj Shekhar, Satish Mahana, Surendra Maithani, Abhijeet Sanga, Arun Pathak, Sports Dy Director Mudrika Pathak and hundreds of others along with sports enthusiasts were present

Merchants Chamber to promote tourism

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Merchants Chamber of Commerce President Mukul Tandon while addressing a meeting on tourism promotion at Merchants Chamber Hall on Sunday said as per literature, myths and legends could play an important role as a tourism resource and therefore institutional communication should pay more attention to them.

He said Kanpur had a rich mythological background and it had been proved beyond doubt that legends could add value to a region's core product.

Tandon said the Chamber had decided to promote tourism in Kanpur because it had several ancient temples which were the centre of attraction and had religious sentiments attached to them.

He said apart from having the river Ganga which was considered the most sacred by Hindus, the temples in Kanpur and around the district were of heritage value and they could



The Merchants Chamber Executives hold meeting to promote tourism in Kanpur

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certainly be a great cause of interest of tourists visiting Kanpur and its surrounding districts. He said on March 14, a car rally would be organised with a route covering these heritage buildings to promote tourism in Kanpur.

He said cultural tourism was a sub-sector of general tourism that focused on the culture and cultural environ-

ments of a region, including landscapes, values and lifestyles of the community, heritage, visual and performing arts, industries, traditions and leisure pursuits of the local population and above all the centuries-old temples.

He said places and collections of heritage significance should be promoted and managed in ways which protect

their authenticity and enhance the visitor experience.

Tandon said the significance of religious tourism was tourism, when the individuals visit different places for religious purposes. He said Uttar Pradesh was famous for mythological places and Kanpur happened to be one.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Atul Kanodia.

Women should 'choose to challenge' inequalities

KANPUR (PNS): District Legal Service Authority Secretary Aishwarya Pratap Singh said women had to take up challenges relating to inequalities so as to bring in positive changes in society and attitudes. Addressing a virtual literacy programme for women in CSC, Sachendi, he was speaking on the topic 'I choose to challenge', a campaign which was launched on World Women's Day. Singh said women had to stand up to their rights. He said the law had several sections to protect women from injustice, violence and domestic violence and thus they need to be aware of them to avail themselves of the facility to be treated at par in

home, society and workplace. He said it was unfortunate that women, especially women in rural areas, were the worst affected and the main reason was illiteracy and the ignorance of their rights. He said this year the theme was 'I choose to challenge' and thus more awareness was needed about the Domestic Violence Act, 2005. He said more women should join the mainstream so as to protect the interests of their counterparts. Speaking on domestic violence, Singh said actions which harmed or injured the women, including mental torture, were considered to be domestic violence. He said unfortunately women were facing coercion and were

even threatened for vested reasons. He said it was unfortunate that there was no letup in violence against women though the government had provided full protection to them under the Domestic Violence Act. He said women in rural and remote areas reported the highest prevalence of domestic violence mostly by spouse and in-laws.

He said this engendered the need for empowering rural women economically so they could successfully reduce their abuse and strengthen their independence. He said traditional and political leaders and local governments could play a vital role in community life and prevent domestic violence to

quite an extent.

YAJNA: The five-day Samved Parayan Yajna was started at the Arya Samaj Satsang Hall in Govind Nagar on Sunday. Acharya Somdev, Brahmchari Vikasji and Brahmchari Akshayji Swami Atmanandji described the importance of Vedas and their study. They also delivered religious discourse. Musicologist and bhajan singer Bhanu Prakash Arya presented devotional bhajans. Prominent among others who gave 'aahuti' in the yajna were Shubha Vohra, Ajay Kapoor, Virendra Malhotra, Prakash Vir Arya, Shammii Kapoor, Vira Chopra, Surendra Gera and Satyaketu Shashtri.

Rape accused succumbs to injuries in jail

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A rape accused lodged in the temporary Chaubepur jail succumbed to his injuries on Sunday morning.

According to reports, the accused, Subodh Bajpai (35), had allegedly raped a 25-year-old girl in a field in Sachendi police area on Friday night. After an FIR was lodged in this connection, the police had launched a hunt to nab Subodh. However, he was caught by villagers the same night in a field and they brutally beat him up and handed him over to the police.

The accused was produced in the court on Saturday morning which sent him to jail.

Subodh's father Ramesh Bajpai alleged that seven persons of the village brutally thrashed his son, leading to his death. He also alleged that the local police and the doctors did not provide proper treatment to his son before sending him to jail.

Ramesh said Subodh was married about 10 years ago and due to his addiction to drugs, he had enmity with some local villagers. He said on Saturday morning, after forcing him to consume liquor, the villagers having enmity with Subodh brutally beat up and framed him in the alleged rape case. He accused the doctors at the community health centre of ignoring serious injuries on Subodh's body.

Jail Superintendent RK Jaiswal said as the medical certificate did not mention any critical injury, the accused was lodged in the jail. He said when Subodh complained of acute pain late Saturday night, arrangements were made for his treatment but before the treatment could start, he succumbed to his injuries.

Superintendent of Police (Rural) Brijesh Kumar Singh said the accused was caught by villagers in the field late Friday night and brutally beaten up by them. He said as doctors had refused to admit him due to minor injury marks, the accused was produced in the court on Saturday morning which sent him to jail where he may have died due to some hidden injury.

The SP (Rural) said on the basis of autopsy report and complaint of the kin, if filed, further investigations would be made.

Home Guards officer found murdered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

An assistant company commander of Home Guards, who was missing for the past three days, was killed and his body was dumped in the jungle in Moosanagar police station area of Kanpur Dehat.

The body was recovered late Saturday night and the son of the deceased identified it. He alleged the involvement of three of his father's friends in the murder. After recovery of the deceased's bike from the house of one of the alleged accused, police also suspect the role of his friends in the killing.

Home Guards Assistant Company Commander Ram Chandra Verma (54) of Girdaun, Bhognipur (Kanpur Dehat) was posted in Malasa. On March 3 evening, he returned home and soon left on a bike to meet a relative. Thereafter, he did not return home and his mobile phone was also found switched off.

On failing to trace him, the Home Guards officer's son Ratan Verma filed a complaint with Bhognipur police about his disappearance.

Late Saturday night, the police recovered his body from the jungle of Vijaypur (Moosanagar). There were marks of injury on the face and other parts of the body. His bike was recovered from the house of Chetram in Dingh village.

Ratan Verma alleged his father's three friends had called him on the pretext of attending a programme on the night of March 3.

Station House Officer of Moosanagar, Deepak Singh, said the exact cause of death would be ascertained by autopsy.

Panchayat poll: DM's directive to cops

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

A crime meeting and Sainik Sammelan was jointly held by DM Praveen Kumar Laxkar and SP Ajay Kumar Singh at Police Lines on Saturday. The meeting started with the hearing the grievances of police personnel of all branches and officials concerned were directed by the SP to redress them without inordinate delay. In the meeting the cops were directed by DM to keep more vigilance in the area regarding panchayat election and take instant action even in disputes on petty issues. He said police should not be involved in groupism of villages. He directed the cops to identify nuisance values, deposit arms, bound down the potential trouble makers under 107/16 and identify the polling stations where any problem had been reported in the past. The officers were provided masks and sanitisers for distributing four masks and one sanitiser to each police personnel. The SP directed the SOs to intensify action against mafias and continue confiscation of properties accumulated through illegal means. But such actions should be taken following legal norms, he added. The SP directed the SOs to continue the drive against illegal manufacture and trade of liquor and cooperate with the excise department as per the requirement. Regarding other actions, the SP directed the cops to submit chargesheets timely with proper preparation so that criminals could be punished by court. The meeting was attended by the ADM(F&R), ASPs, COs, SDMs, DGC criminal, DFO, Commandant Homeguard, SOs, SO GRP, superintendent jail, RI Police Lines and others.

PROGRAMME: With the purpose of making women aware about their rights and instilling self-confidence among them an awareness programme was held under Mission Shakti cam-



paign at Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, Newadha, Vindhychal, on Saturday. The programme started with the welcoming of SHO Mahila Thana Seema Singh by Nandini Mishra of Prabodhini

Foundation and her team. Addressing the girl students the speakers said it was the right of every girl to live with dignity without any discrimination. The speakers elaborated on the use of helpline numbers 1076, 1098, 1090, 108, 112, 102 and 108 through which help was available at any time. An appeal was made to girls to use helpline numbers as per the need without any hesitation not only for themselves but for other needy persons too.

REVIEWED: MP and incharge of Kashi region of BJP Subrat Pathak in a meeting on Saturday reviewed party's preparation for panchayat election. He said it was the need of the hour that we fight the election unitedly. He appealed to workers to work hard to win all seats of Jila Panchayat as well as of block pramukh. The meeting was conducted by Hari Shankar Singh Patel and presided over by Brijbhushan Singh president of district unit and attended by all party MLAs, chairman NPP Mirzapur Manoj Jaiswal and other senior leaders. On his first visit to the district Pathak was accorded a warm welcome at Vindhychal. He performed rituals at the temple of Goddess Vindhayavasi.

SIX HURT: Six persons, including the driver and shopkeeper, were injured when a pick-up rammed into Ramavtar Maurya's shop in Judiya village under Madhihan police station recently. The police brought the injured to Rajgarh PHC from where they were referred to district hospital, last reports received here said.

Gkp-Panvel spl to run as per changed timing

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

The railway administration will for the convenience of passengers run the 05065/05066 Gorakhpur-Panvel-Gorakhpur special train as per changed timings. All coaches in them will be of reserved category and passengers travelling in them will have to follow the Covid-19 prevention guidelines, Senior Public Relations Officer (SPRO) CP Chauhan said.

The 05065 Gorakhpur-Panvel special will from March 9 as per the changed timing depart from Gorakhpur at 05.30 hrs, from Anandnagar at 06.20 hrs, from Siddharthnagar 06.47 hrs, from Shohratgarh at 07.08 hrs, from Barhni at 07.55 hrs, from Tulsipur at 08.35 hrs, from Jharkhandi at 08.59 hrs, from Balrampur at 09.20 hrs, from Gonda at 10.35 hrs, from Barabanki to 12.50 hrs, from Lucknow (Northern Railway) at 14.05 hrs, Kanpur Central at 16.05 hrs, Orai at 17.32 hrs, from Jhansi at 19.58 hrs, Vidisha at 23.50 hrs, from Habibganj at 00.50 hrs on the second day, from Itarsi at 02.40 hrs, from Harda at 03.34 hrs, from Khandwa at 05.40 hrs, Bhusaval at 07.30 hrs,

Nashik Road at 10.55 hrs and Kalyan at 13.45 hrs Panvel at 14.50 hrs. Whereas 05066 Panvel-Gorakhpur special will from March 10 as per changed timing leave Panvel at 15.50 hrs, Kalyan at 16.20 hrs, Nashik Road at 19.25 hrs, Bhusaval at 22.55 hrs, Khandwa on the second day at 01.10 hrs, Harda at 02.26 hrs, Itarsi at 03.40 hrs, Habibganj at 05.10 hrs, Vidisha at 06.00 hrs, Jhansi at 09.23 hrs, Orai at 11.10 hrs, Kanpur Central at 13.50 hrs, Lucknow (Northern Railway) at 15.45 hrs, Barabanki at 16.55 hrs, Gonda at 19.25 hrs, Balrampur at 20.08 hrs, Jharkhandi at 20.17 hrs, Tulsipur at 20.58 hrs, Barhni at 21.55 hrs, Shohratgarh at 22.14 hrs, Siddharthnagar at 22.37 hrs, Anandnagar at 23.11 hrs and reach Gorakhpur the third day at 00.20 hrs.

CANCELLED: Due to unavoidable reasons the run of 05074 Tanakpur-Singrauli special train from March 8 to 31, the 05076 Tanakpur-Shaktinagar special train from March 9 to 30, the 05073 Singrauli-Tanakpur special train from March 9 to April 1 and 05075 Shaktinagar-Tanakpur special train from March 10 to 31 will remain cancelled, Senior PRO CP Chauhan said.

LHS construction: Trains to be diverted

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Due to the construction work of Limited Height Subway (LHS) between Dominagarh-Jagatbela and Chureb-Munderwa rail sections under Lucknow Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) the following trains will be run by being diverted and controlled, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) PK Singh said. The 09037 Bandra Terminus-Barauni special train to depart from Bandra Terminus on March 9 will be diverted via Gonda-Barhni-Gorakhpur. The 03020 Kathgodam-Howrah special train to depart from Kathgodam on March 10 and 17 will be diverted via Gonda-Barhni-Gorakhpur. The 05118 Mathura Jn-Chhapra special train to depart from Mathura Jn on March 10 and 17 will be diverted via Gonda-Barhni-Gorakhpur. The 02569 Darbhanga-New Delhi special train to departing from Darbhanga on March 11 and 18 will be diverted via Gorakhpur-Barhni-Gonda.

Likewise the following trains will run by

Under construction overbridge work inspected

CORRESPONDENT ■ JAUNPUR

District Magistrate Manish Kumar Verma along with Chief Development Officer (CDO) Anupam Shukla inspected the work of under construction overbridge near the city station recently. During the inspection, the DM directed



Project Director JP Gupta to complete the bridge within the stipulated time period. He asked the project director to ensure progress in work with quality. He added that the work should be completed as soon as possible and no negligence would be tolerated in it.

National Safety Day observed

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

In NTPC's Rihand station the National Safety Day was observed at Safety Park with a pledge recently. The function was inaugurated Executive Director (Rihand) Balaji Iyengar, who was the chief guest, by hoisting the safety flag. Subsequently, the the NTPC song was presented. On the occasion, Iyengar administered the safety pledge, expressed his views related to safety, concerns and expecta-



about adopting safe working style. Earlier, Manager (Security) Mukesh Kumar, who conducted the programme, welcomed the guests and others. The annual progress of Safety department was put before people. The programme was mainly attended by GMs, heads of departments, representatives of various unions and associations, officers of CISF besides other officers and employees of Safety department. Mukesh Kumar proposed the vote of thanks.

Hindi essay competition organised

PNS ■ VARANASI

A Hindi essay competition was organised under the aegis of Rajbhasha Department of Varanasi Division, North Eastern Railway (NER) at Bharatendu auditorium under the direction of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vijay Kumar Panjjar and under the

leadership of Additional Divisional Railway Manager (Operations) and Additional Chief Rajbhasha Officer Shiv Pratap Singh Yadav. Its topics were 'Role of Indian Railways during Covid-19 pandemic' and 'Human compassion during Corona period'. A total of 25 employees working at the division and various stations

participated in it enthusiastically. The competition was conducted by senior translator Rahul Radheshyam Dongre. On the occasion Assistant Divisional Safety Officer and Rajbhasha Officer DS Meena, senior translator Manoj Kumar Dubey, junior translators Poonam Tripathi and Mamta Yadav were present.

PM ADDRESSES JANAUSHADHI WEEK

‘Poor saved ₹50k crore due to health schemes’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the poor and needy have been able to save ₹50,000 crore annually due to various health-related measures taken up by his Government like providing affordable medicines, healthcare and reducing the prices of medical devices. He was addressing the virtual conference on ‘Janaushadhi Week’ and dedicating 7,500th Janaushadhi Kendra at North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health & Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS) in Shillong.

Jan Aushadhi Kendras were launched by the Modi Government in 2015 to provide affordable medicines. In a virtual address at the ‘Janaushadhi Week’ celebrated across the nation from March 1 to March 7 to create awareness about the ‘Jan Aushadhi’ scheme, the Prime Minister said it is helping countrymen living in tribal areas in the North East and the mountainous areas.

The Prime Minister, who also interacted with people from different parts of the country, further said, “It is clear from my discussion with people who run the Janaushadhi centres at every corner of the country and some of its beneficiaries, that this scheme is becoming a very big companion of poor and mid-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the Janaushadhi Diwas celebrations via video-conferencing in New Delhi on Sunday

dle-class families. This scheme is becoming the medium of both service and employment”. Underlining the various steps taken up by his Government to make healthcare affordable to the poor and needy, he said prices of essential drugs as well as medical devices such as stents and knee implants have been reduced manifold.

“It has led to the saving of ₹12,500 crore per year for the needy people. The Ayushman Bharat scheme is helping 50 crore people get ₹5 lakh worth of treatment. Over 1.5 crore people have already taken this benefit. It is estimated that it has led to savings of around ₹30,000 crore for people. “It means that if we collate the savings being affected by Janaushadhi, Ayushman Bharat and decline in prices of drugs and stents (medical devices) if

we only take Government schemes in the health sector, then poor and middle-income groups are saving around ₹50,000 crore per year,” the Prime Minister said.

To enhance medical education, he said before 2014, where there were about 55,000 MBBS seats in the country. In 6 years, it has been increased by more than 30,000. Similarly, in the PG seats — which used to be at 30,000 — more than 24,000 new seats have been added. The Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana aims to provide quality medicines at an affordable price. Sales in the financial year 2020-21 (up to March 4, 2021) have led to a total saving of around ₹3,600 crore for citizens, as these medicines are cheaper by 50-90 per cent than market rates.



Indian Army officers during a media interaction, a day before International Women's Day, at South Block lawn in New Delhi, Sunday

PM Modi to inaugurate ‘Maitri Setu’ between India and B’desh tomorrow

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Tuesday inaugurate the ‘Maitri Setu’ between India and Bangladesh — a bridge built over the Feni river, the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) said.

He will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stone of multiple infrastructure projects in Tripura during the event, it said.

Prime Minister Modi will inaugurate the ‘Maitri Setu’ between India and Bangladesh on March 9 at 12 noon via video conferencing, the PMO said in a statement.

The bridge ‘Maitri Setu’ has been built over the Feni river which flows between the Indian boundary in Tripura and Bangladesh.

The name ‘Maitri Setu’

symbolises growing bilateral relations and friendly ties between India and Bangladesh, the PMO said. The construction was taken up by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd at a project cost of ₹133 crore, it said. The 1.9 km long bridge joins Sabroom in India with Ramgarh in Bangladesh.

It is poised to herald a new chapter for trade and people to people movement between India and Bangladesh, the PMO said.

With this inauguration, Tripura is set to become the ‘Gateway of North East’ with access to Chittagong Port of Bangladesh, which is just 80 Kms from Sabroom, it said.

Prime Minister Modi will also lay the foundation stone for

setting up an Integrated Check Post at Sabroom.

It will help ease the movement of goods and passengers between the two countries, provide new market opportunities for products of North East states and assist seamless movement of passengers to and from India and Bangladesh, the PMO said.

The project is being taken up by the Land Ports Authority of India at an estimated cost of about ₹232 crore, the statement said.

The Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone of National Highway (NH)-208 connecting the Unakoti district headquarters at Kailashahar with the Khowai district headquarters. It will provide an alternative route to the NH-44. **PTI**

Second part of Budget Session from today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With high-voltage Assembly election campaigns going on, the month-long second part of the Budget session of Parliament begins on Monday to focus on debates on demands of grants to many departments. The main focus of the Government in the second part of the session is to get the various demands for grants for the year 2021-22 passed along with the Finance Bill which carries various tax proposals. Besides these mandatory agendas, the Government has listed



Some of the bills listed by

the government include the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (Amendment) Bill, National

Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development Bill, Electricity (Amendment) Bill, Crypto currency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill. The part two of the session is taking place at a time when political parties have their focus on elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry. Senior leaders of various parties, especially the regional ones, are likely to skip most of the House sittings to focus on campaigning.

The first part of the Budget session started on January 29

with the President’s address to joint sitting of both houses of Parliament. The address was boycotted by over 20 opposition parties, including the Congress, in support of the demand of the protesting farmers for the repeal of the three farm laws.

The Union Budget was tabled on February 1. Thereafter, House proceedings were washed out for four consecutive days over the opposition’s demand for separate discussion on farm issues. To compensate the session’s lost time, the House sat till midnight for several days.

Cong Parl committe plans to corner Govt in House

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI

With the Parliament all set to reconvene on Monday after a brief interval during the Budget Session, the Congress Parliamentary committee met on Sunday to discuss the issues to be raised in the House to corner the Government.

Chaired by Congress parliamentary party chairman Sonia Gandhi, the virtual meeting of the party leaders also had the participation of G-23 members like Anand Sharma and Manish Tewari besides newly appointed Leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge and leader of the party in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chaudhary.

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, AK Antony and Jairam Ramesh also attended the meeting in which the Congress discussed the strategy to counter the Government on issues like farmers’ agitation, fuel price hike and unemployment.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi targeted the government on farm laws and tweeted: “Livelihood is right not favour, PM Modi, please give MSP”

Recently, Sonia had targeted the Government over the

disinvestment of PSU by the Government. In an article, she wrote: “The Modi government is using the economy’s collapse since the pandemic to rush headlong into its mission of handing over large portions of India’s wealth to its favourite crony capitalists. It has announced its intent to become cash rich by selling the family silver, through hasty privatisation of India’s public sector undertakings (PSUs).”

She said the Modi government has explicitly embraced “privatisation”, instead of “disinvestment”.

On the issue of newly floated social media rules, the Congress has demanded answers from the government.

Congress Spokesperson Supriya Shrinate said: “It is absolutely certain that at the time of corona, when the entire world including all of us were standing rock solid with the Government and hoping that the Prime Minister is thinking about our lives, our livelihood, he was thinking about how to sort out this crisis, he was actually preparing to stab us in the back by first compromising with the freedom of speech and expression in the country by first controlling free press.”

Mallikarjun Kharge, the newly appointed Leader of

Opposition, said: “They are choking agriculture and most importantly, they have no plan to address the growing concern of unemployment in the country.”

According to a Rajya Sabha bulletin, the reports of Standing committees of Health, Energy, Science and Technology, Forests and climate change will be presented in the Upper House.

On the first day of the Parliament, the newly appointed members will take oath and reports of parliamentary committees will be presented. Besides, Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad will move the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, which has been passed by the Lok Sabha.

The Congress and Left MPs are planning to move a Resolution that this House disapproves the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2020 (No. 14 of 2020) promulgated by the President of India on November 4, 2020.

While the Law Minister will move the Bills for consideration and passing, to amend the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996, as passed by the Lok Sabha, be taken into consideration.

How much liability would pension for divorced daughters of freedom fighters incur: SC to Centre

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has asked the Centre as to how much financial liability will a divorced daughter of a freedom fighter incur if given family pension like an unmarried or a widowed daughter.

A bench of justices UU Lalit and KM Joseph posed the question after the Centre told it that if at all the court allows family pension to divorced daughters of freedom fighters besides the unmarried and widowed daughters, then it will incur a financial liability and open a Pandora’s box.

“How much will be the financial liability? Divorced daughters’ cases would be very minimal and thus minimum liability would be incurring. Divorce daughter cases are hardly of any number in the country”, the bench observed.

The top court was dealing with a question whether a divorced woman is entitled to her freedom fighter father’s family pension like an unmarried or widowed daughter as two different high courts have

given contradictory opinions on the issue.

The matter was brought before the top court by Himachal Pradesh resident Tulsi Devi (57), who has challenged a high court verdict of last year dismissing her plea for grant of freedom fighter family pension on grounds that there was no provision made in the rules.

During the hearing, advocate Dushyant Parashar, appearing for Devi, said the divorced daughter of freedom fighter should be put on a par with the widowed or unmarried daughter.

He said that his client’s father has sacrificed his life for the country and she cannot be allowed to lead a life of penury in view of no source of income to sustain herself and survive.

Parashar said that a circular of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) dated December 14, 2012 records the intent for extending the benefit to divorced daughters on a par with widowed or unmarried daughters. **PTI**

Prez stresses on women’s safety, independence on Women’s Day

New Delhi: President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday appealed to all countrymen to work relentlessly towards women’s safety, education and independence, on the eve of International Women’s Day.

Kovind said “we will be



able to pave the way for women, especially our daughters, to become more active, capable and empowered only by doing so. Let us dedicate this occasion of International Women’s Day to the honour, safety and empowerment of women and resolve that we will support them in changing every tradition and policy that hinders their progress,” the President said in a statement.

He extended congratulations and best wishes to all women on the occasion, saying “women are an inspiration to our family, society and the nation.” **IANS**

Jaishankar, US’ special envoy for Afghanistan discuss peace talks

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and US special envoy for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad spoke over phone on Sunday and discussed the latest developments pertaining to the Afghan peace talks.

Last November also, Jaishankar and Khalilzad had held talks during the latter’s India visit on the historic peace negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan Government and related issues.

“Received a call from US Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad @US4AfghanPeace. Discussed latest developments pertaining to peace talks. We will remain in touch,” Jaishankar tweeted on Sunday.

India has been keenly following the evolving political situation after the US signed a peace deal with the Taliban in February last year.

The deal provided for the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, effectively drawing curtains on



Washington’s 18-year war with Taliban in the country.

India has also been maintaining that care should be taken to ensure that any such process does not lead to any “ungoverned spaces” where terrorists and their proxies can relocate.

India has been a major stakeholder in Afghanistan and it has extended developmental assistance to tune of around \$3 billion in the last few years to the country. **PTI**

CHEATING PERSON WITH DISABILITY

CCPD slams Delhi Police for inaction

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Coming to the rescue of a 55-year-old man suffering with Cerebral Palsy and whose premises has been illegally occupied by a Delhi lady cop for the past one year, the Court of Commissioner of Persons with Disabilities (CCPD), under the Social Welfare Ministry, has expressed displeasure at the Delhi Police’ failure to act against its personnel for cheating the person with disability (PwD).

“...this is not merely a matter of civil nature but a matter of abuse of a person with disability by a representative of the Government and provisions of Section 7 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016,” said the court in a

recent hearing in a petition filed by PwD Brijesh Kumar Jhamb.

Jhamb had alleged that except initiating departmental enquiry (DE) the police had not taken any action against the erring cop Manisha posted at Security Line, Vinay Marg who was neither paying her rent nor vacating the premises.

On the basis of the Jhamb complaint, the CCPD issued notice to Delhi police which was represented by ACP Satveer Singh (Security) during the case hearing on February 2, 2021.

Commissioner for Persons with Disability Upma Srivastava expressed shock that in “cases where a property is occupied illegally, it is normally police approached

for eviction. However, contrary to this in the present complaint, a lady constable of police is herself harassing the complainant”, this despite that the complainant’s condition was pathetic who was trying hard to make the two ends meet in the absence of rental income, his only source of income.

The Court has now directed the Delhi police to expedite the DE against the erring cop as well as deduct rental amount from her salary to ensure that Jhamb can live a dignified life.

Given the seriousness of the situation and the assurance given by the respondent that necessary action will be taken towards redressal of the complainant’s grievance, Commissioner Srivastava has

also suggested imposition of considerable penalty on the lady police constable including suspension from the service and recovery of the entire due amount of rent for cheating a person with disability.

Initially Jhamb had approached the district DCP (South East) and SHO of the area who dismissed the matter calling it ‘tenancy dispute between landlord and tenant, which is civil in nature and no police action is required’.

According to Jhamb, he had rented out his premises at Govind Puri, Kalkaji to Manisha in October 2019 on a monthly rent of ₹8,500. He alleged that she stopped giving rent from February, 2020. Jhamb also alleged that Manisha behaved rudely with him and threatened him of dire

consequences if he reported this matter to any one further.

Unhappy at the police response, the court noticed that “miscarriage of justice is being carried out by a representative of Delhi Police which should not be taken lightly by her superiors.

“As evident from the hearing held, the condition of the complainant is pathetic who has been reduced to a hand to mouth existence on account of loss of the basic source of his livelihood, i.e. the rental from his flat,” said the court in a five page order.

“Till such time the inquiry is over, the rental amount be deducted from the salary of the lady constable and deposited in the account of the complainant to ensure that he can live a dignified life,” it further said.

AYUSH files patent for bio-production of secondary metabolites from Bel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB), under the Ministry of AYUSH, has filed patent for bio-production of secondary metabolites from Bel (Aegle marmelos), in-vitro production of secondary metabolites from tree species of Dashamoola (10 roots used in ayurveda) through hairy root cultures and development of anti-cancer and anti-inflammatory agents from Dioscoria floribunda.

“While the first two projects belong to the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), Coimbatore, the third project is being carried out by Central Institute of Medicinal and



Aromatic Plants (CIMAP), Lucknow. The CIMAP filed patent is titled as “A synergistic polyherbal formulation exhibiting potential cancer activity,” said JLN Sastry, CEO, National Medicinal Plants Board in a statement here.

Filing of the patent is the NMPB part of a special drive to identify the patentable projects which are sponsored under the ‘Research and Development Component’ of Central Sector Scheme (CSS)

on “Conservation, Development and Sustainable Management of Medicinal Plants”.

NMPB generally sponsors various R&D programs under CSS to both Governments as well as private organizations across the country, said the official.

Sastry said “this is just the humble beginning for NMPB’s team and will file more patents in the coming times.”

The NMPB has also developed e-CHARAK, an e-channel for herbs, aromatic raw material, and knowledge as a virtual market place for trade of medicinal plants produce and also enable information exchange between various stakeholders involved in the sector.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Risky resolve

Will Mamata's decision to contest Nandigram backfire or bring her back to power?

Electoral politics is a tricky game and, for political parties that are practically a one-person show, it's especially important for the supremo to choose to contest from such an Assembly seat that it sends a strong message among the masses that the leader is attached to the grassroots and doesn't hesitate to take the rivals head on. This has a psychological impact on the voters, not only in the particular constituency the leader contests from but across the State, which helps consolidate the vote bank in that party's favour. TMC chief Mamata Banerjee seems to have hit the right note by deciding to contest from Nandigram, the seat held by her one-time confidant Suwendu Adhikari who dumped the TMC to join the BJP in December. By doing so, Mamata — who is beleaguered by a spate of defections from the TMC in the five months preceding the Assembly elections — has taken the fight to the BJP's camp and tried to project a pro-poor image by returning to her political roots. The Trinamool's sweep of Nandigram in 2007 is one of the key factors that paved the way for her political resurrection and catapulted her to power in 2011. Adhikari, who wields considerable influence in the constituency, had thrown down the gauntlet to Mamata to contest from the seat. Now, Mamata seems to have accepted the challenge and asserted that "this is a smiley election". It might appear to be a case of simple political enmity but



there is no denying that it has deeper political connotations.

With almost 40 per cent Muslim voters and a sizeable number of Dalits in the constituency, Mamata might be confident of her win and Adhikari, after all, may not have very bright prospects of defeating her but the contest here will certainly be demanding on her in terms of time, energy and attention to other seats; in other words, a victory in Nandigram might cost Mamata a few other constituencies. At a time when Didi is already licking the wounds inflicted by scores of defectors, her special focus on Nandigram might cost the Trinamool dear in West Bengal. Undoubtedly, Adhikari — who was the architect of the ouster of the Left from Nandigram in 2007 — is the BJP's biggest acquisition but the saffron party's real objective is to oust the TMC from power and not just win the battle of prestige. So, from this viewpoint, Mamata's decision to contest from the constituency might actually serve the BJP which has already launched its "Mission 200+ ". Moreover, Mamata's dropping out of Kolkata's Bhowanipore seat, which she represented for two terms and where her party trailed in the 2019 general elections by a few thousand votes, has given the saffron party ammunition to mock her by saying that it shows her nervousness. Whether it is Didi's apprehensiveness or a bold, calculated move, or the BJP's ploy to make Mamata channelise all her energy and focus on to Nandigram, thus making her a spent force elsewhere, is the moot question which only voters will answer. For now, with the recent turn of events, West Bengal has become a hot spot of politics with the parties doing all that they can to win the elections.

PICTALK



A Japanese macaque soaks in a hot spring in Jigokudani valley in Nagano Prefecture, northwest of Tokyo

AP

Diabolical dowry

A young woman's recent suicide in Ahmedabad must jolt our conscience and nudge us to correct course

We are living in the 21st century but it seems, for a majority of women in India, we are still living in ancient times when a woman's worth was quantified by the amount of dowry she brought along at the time of marriage. What else can explain the shameful fact that when women are going into space, working as scientists and leading countries and global bodies, young women in our country are forced to end their lives because they are unable to bear the harassment meted out by their husbands and in-laws over "inadequate" dowry? The latest in the long line of victims of a despicable and archaic system, which was abolished and criminalised in India in 1961, is a 23-year-old woman from Gujarat who ended her life by jumping into Ahmedabad's Sabarmati river. Before dying, she shot a video and made an impassioned plea to all Muslims for ending the dowry system as "it is illegitimate and forbidden". Though the woman's husband was arrested for abetting her suicide, and many prominent leaders from the community have condemned those who take dowry and asked people to end this social evil, it will not bring the woman back.

Dowry is a blot on our society and country where we worship goddesses and women are considered the incarnation of Lakshmi and Durga. It is a shame that in a nation whose Prime Minister has given a clarion call for "Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao", our daughters are either killed or forced to commit suicide over dowry. The National Crime Records Bureau's 2017 report is an indication of the gravity of the situation as India recorded nearly 7,000 dowry-linked deaths. Also, dowry deaths rose from 19 per day in 2001 to 21 per day in 2016. As usual, the fingers will point towards weak law enforcement and non-implementation of laws, but the fact remains that the laws are adequate to end this malaise. The Supreme Court recently made it abundantly clear that it will not tolerate harassment of women for dowry. It is we, the people, who have to change. Parents must educate their daughters and stop seeing them as a burden. If you have a self-reliant daughter with good education and a job, you don't have to pay someone for her upkeep. Women, too, should refuse to marry men who seek dowry. It is only when the parents and women grow a spine that this evil practice will end. Don't expect anyone else to come and help you. This Women's Day, do take a pledge to help yourself.



Exorcising the OROP conundrum

The 'One Rank One Pension' imbroglio is tormenting our Defence personnel and veterans, who continue to lose hope each passing day



DEEPAK SINHA

One issue that distinguishes the Narendra Modi Government from its earlier iterations is the manner in which it has used the military, quite successfully at that, to portray an apparently muscular foreign policy, not least for the domestic audience. This has allowed it to reap rich dividends at the hustings. Yet ironically, apart from praising the military in public, Modi has done little for them on the ground, displaying little concern for the morale or well-being of its personnel.

Take the issue of welfare of our servicemen. The Government has reduced Canteen facilities, is intent on opening up and monetising Cantonment lands, adding to the insecurity of families of servicemen separated over long periods due to their spouses being deployed either operationally or on training. In addition, he has refused to authorise the Non-Functional Financial Upgrade (NFFU), which is authorised to other Central Government services, including the Central Armed Police Forces, thereby lowering their status and emoluments in comparison to the other services. The plain fact is that the grant of NFFU to bureaucrats allows them to get OROP, through the back door as it were, because nearly all of them now retire in the Apex Grade.

All these little pinpricks rattle and more so this Government's unwillingness to implement OROP in letter and spirit as envisaged by the Parliamentary Committee headed by veteran BJP MP Bhagat Singh Koshyari: A definition that had been accepted by both Houses of Parliament and the then UPA Government in power. What is particularly galling is that Modi used this very issue to galvanise the serving and veteran community during the 2014 general elections.

His sanctioning of a distorted version of what had been promised earlier forced the veterans to launch peaceful protests on June 14, 2015, which contin-



ue to this day. The fact that the Government has done nothing to resolve matters, and instead resorted to issuing misleading statements and even violence against them, is undoubtedly a precursor as to how this Government will handle the farmers' protest in the long run.

At the end of the day, the issue is very simple. All that the veterans demand is a chance to live out their retirement with dignity, feasible only if their pensions are protected from rising inflation as the majority retires relatively young; that this Government is unwilling to do so reeks of hypocrisy.

For example, even while this Government opposes OROP for its military veterans, it lost little time in ensuring that all Members of Parliament receive pensions calculated in much the same manner that military veterans have been demanding. In 2018, it amended Clause 8A of 'The Salary Allowances and Pension of Members Act, 1954', to provide for an increase in the authorised pension every five years on the basis of the Cost Inflation Index, which clearly links pensions for all former members to what is received by the incumbent.

This unfair treatment, espe-



AT THE END OF THE DAY, THE ISSUE IS VERY SIMPLE. ALL THAT THE VETERANS DEMAND IS A CHANCE TO LIVE OUT THEIR RETIREMENT WITH DIGNITY, FEASIBLE ONLY IF THEIR PENSIONS ARE PROTECTED FROM RISING INFLATION AS THE MAJORITY RETIRES RELATIVELY YOUNG

cially the Government's refusal to put in public domain the Justice Reddy Committee (to look into anomalies in OROP) Report, submitted in October 2016, forced the military veterans to approach the Supreme Court. Over four years later, the case has made tardy progress mainly due to the Government's efforts to delay.

By not taking cognisance of this issue, the Bench has not been kind to the veterans, who continue to suffer and lose hope as each day passes. What is worse, the Justices hearing the case, now in the final arguments stage, have repeatedly postponed the hearing on the grounds they have not had the requisite time to study and understand the case in detail. The next hearing is in a few days and one hopes the Bench will actually hear the case and not kick it down the road.

Oddly enough for the vast majority of us, not particularly conversant with the intricacies of the judicial process, this hearing in itself appears to be completely superfluous. This is because the Supreme Court had on September 9, 2008, in its judgment in the case of Union of India and Maj Gen SPS Vains and Others, ruled: "No Defence personnel senior in rank can get lesser pension

than his junior irrespective of the date of retirement and similarly placed officers of the same rank are to be given the same pension irrespective of the date of retirement." These are directions that the Defence Ministry has yet to fully implement and which in no uncertain terms accede to what the veterans have been demanding.

Interestingly enough in 2014, when the Supreme Court was passing directions to the Government to correct the anomalies in the pensions of High Court Justices, then Chief Justice of India P Sathasivam directed that "one rank one pension must be the norm in respect of a constitutional office", a benefit which Justices of the Supreme Court already enjoyed.

Finally, can it really be the case that in a democracy like ours, the constitutional authorities do not see themselves as mere public servants and believe themselves to be superior to other Government servants and ordinary citizens?

(The writer is a military veteran, who is a consultant with the Observer Research Foundation and Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PUNISH THE PROTOCOL VIOLATORS

Sir — The Government must step up its awareness drive with respect to COVID-19 vaccination as many people are still not aware of the importance of getting vaccinated. Most of these people are from villages who don't follow the safety protocols. They neither sanitise their hands regularly nor wear a face mask.

The Government must advertise the list of the centres where jabs are being provided in vernacular newspapers across the nation. It must also announce it on radio and telecast the list on national television. The information will help ensure that senior citizens choose their nearest hospital for immunisation in a hassle-free manner.

Further, just imposing a fine on those who err is not enough. There should be strict punishment for not wearing the mask. It is also seen that police officials often misuse their powers and threaten the poor in the name of not adhering to the guidelines. They extort money from poor vendors who fail to wear mask or who do not wear it properly. The Government needs to disseminate information with respect to Coronavirus vaccination through all mediums of communication. It is also the responsibility of the citizens to maintain social distancing and get themselves vaccinated when their turn comes. Even for those who have taken the jab, precaution is first and foremost. We have no idea how the virus mutates or changes its form and becomes lethal. We must remember that prevention is always better than cure.

Varun Dambal | Bengaluru

GOVT MUST ACT TO END THE PLIGHT OF FARMERS

Sir — The ongoing farmers' protest is the result of the Government's arrogance as it is not ready to agree to the demand of the growers. The farmers are demanding complete repeal of the three contentious farm laws and are not ready to settle for anything less. The Government, on the other hand, is hell-bent to impose these laws as it is in consonance with its agenda of rampant privatisation. It will be a setback to the prevailing Minimum Support Price (MSP) system

Food wastage is a curse



It refers to the editorial 'Blasphemous' (March 6). It is a sin to waste food but the reality is that when people go to restaurants and eateries, they waste food as they order more than they can eat. The rest of the food in their plate is thrown into dustbins. Despite the Government's attempts to provide food security to all, it is still a distant dream.

Thousands die of hunger every year in India and abroad and yet people don't realise the importance of not wasting food. The United

Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) report 2021 showing 50 kg per year per person food wastage is both worrying and disheartening in view of the fact that the wastage accounting for millions of metric tonnes, if saved, can save thousands of lives of the hungry and the malnourished.

We must not forget about the plight of those who go to bed hungry. Thousands of labourers, who were recently forced to leave the big cities and migrate back to their villages during the COVID-19 lockdown, are struggling hard to sustain themselves. We have responsibility towards our poor brethren. It is also seen that people who order food at home too waste much in their plate. While placing an online order, we must take care that we order only the quantity which we can easily consume. There is a lot of wastage of vegetables, fruits and other items like fish, meat and eggs during transportation and due to lack of proper storage facilities.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

for the crops and will finish off the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) mandis in India.

The 100-day period of protest is a blot on India's democracy and the treatment meted out to the protesters is simply inhumane. However, the Opposition is with the farmers. Congress leader 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.

Farmers, mostly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at several border points of Delhi, including Tikri, Singhu and Ghazipur, since November 28 last year but farmers across the India are now coming out in their support.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

WHY NEED CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENT?

Sir — Companies signing celebrities as the brand ambassadors for their products seems

to be the trend. While the intended purpose of such a move is to push up the sales, when a product has a fair market share, what is the need for brand ambassadors?

Further, when a company can achieve a sizeable market share for a product on its own strength, why should it spend unnecessarily? And naturally, such expenditure will have a bearing on the buyers as product price will go up, for where else will the company find money to meet such heavy expenditures?

To sum up, a product does not need any endorsement if it has a fair share of acceptance in the market. Even if celebrities are roped in, seldom does it help boost the sales, for the people know better about the products than the celebrities. The product must be of such quality that consumers purchase it even if a celebrity doesn't endorse it.

V S Jayaraman | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

The State Government will ensure piped water in every household in Gujarat, including those in the slums and shanties, by 2022.

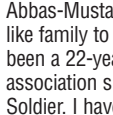


Gujarat Chief Minister — Vijay Rupani



By the end of June, we will already be in economic normality. We are going to have greater growth and recovery in industrial activity.

Mexico President — Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador



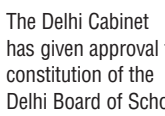
Abbas-Mustan are like family to me. It's been a 22-year association since Soldier. I have always loved their vision of making movies.

Actor — Bobby Deol



The health of the elite athletes training in the national camp for Olympics is our priority, but we have to follow protocol of the health department.

Union Sports Minister — Kiren Rijiju



The Delhi Cabinet has given approval for constitution of the Delhi Board of School Education.

Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal

FIRST COLUMN

EMPOWERMENT BEGINS AT HOME

Parents have to walk the talk and drive home the point that the girl child is no different from her male sibling



RAVI CHANDER KOCHHAR

Women’s empowerment has often been a buzzword and the central theme of numerous seminars, webinars and panel discussions in the recent past. This is more so as International Women’s Day, which is celebrated on March 8, approaches. At every such forum, it has been emphasised that a woman must have the courage to stand up and make her presence felt to ensure that she gets her due in every walk of life, be it her family, educational institutions or the workplace. All stakeholders, including the Government and society must play their respective role in ensuring women empowerment, for nurturing and effectively taking women on board for nation building.

Here, rather than mere formulation and enactment of various policies and provisions, society has a much more important role to play in achieving the desired outcome. If you study life histories of those who have made a mark in society, they follow a certain pattern with commonalities including their upbringing, education and career profile, further signifying the impactful role societies play in women’s empowerment.



As it is said, “charity begins at home”, the starting point for women’s empowerment is within the family where each sibling must be given equal opportunity all through their formative years. In this regard, parents can play a very important role and both mother and father have to walk the talk and consciously drive home the point among the children that the girl child is no different and doesn’t have to be treated differently.

The second stage which equally influences the mindset of the young generation towards the principles of gender equality and women empowerment is at the educational institutions. It is here that they come out of their homes and join peers of both genders. These children are under the mentorship of their teachers and the onus lies with the schools and colleges to ensure that the girl child is given a fair chance at every level, not only in academics and research but in all other extracurricular activities as well. It is up to the management to ensure an equal opportunity to all. There should be no discrimination in the selection process and every male and female candidate should be given a fair chance. Thereafter, all through their career, it must be ensured that women are given opportunities at par with their male counterparts and assessed on the same parameters for professional appraisal and promotions. It is also the responsibility of the management to create a conducive work environment devoid of any form of discrimination.

Further, considering the special needs of women and the biological differences with men, maternity and other leaves should be granted at the appropriate time. On the other hand, women must not take any undue favour or advantage and must climb the ladder of success on their merit. Be it professional, administrative, or interpersonal relationship, women must move with confidence. They must prove themselves as competent, committed and self-motivated. Moreover, there is a need to change the male mindset and men must understand that in today’s competitive world with the ethos of gender equality at the helm, if any woman is better, they must accept the fact, learn to respect her authority and take orders from a female boss. Remember there are no free lunches and every opportunity comes with a price tag. The question is whether you are ready to pay the price!

(The writer is Group Pro Vice Chancellor, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)

Defying norms for better lives

Sadly, in spite of women’s foray into many non-traditional fields, only one-quarter of Indian women, compared to 82 per cent of men, are in the labour market



ARCHANA DATTA

This year, two women created history by joining the Telangana Southern Power Distribution Corporation Limited (TSSPD-CL) as junior powerline workers and becoming a part of a workforce that has solely comprised men in the State. The women did so after qualifying tests, including climbing up an electric pole. Still the job didn’t come on a platter. The duo had to knock on the High Court’s door, challenging the corporation’s stand that “such posts are reserved for men.”

Nevertheless, despite such occupational segregations and archaic rules, many women dared to storm male bastions. Surely, Delhi’s Mehrunnisha Shokat Ali is one of them. She has been working as a bouncer for the last 15 years, demolishing the notion that women belong to the weaker sex and need men’s protection. “I was always fascinated by people in the Army and the police. But I couldn’t nurture any such ambitions as my highly orthodox father was totally against giving any of his daughters an education. Thankfully, my mother sent us to school”, reminiscences Mehrunnisha. “When I joined the NCC in school, my father got furious and burnt my uniform. Luckily, by that time, I had learnt some basics of judo and boxing. Later, after seeing a posse of well-built men in black suits in the show Indian Idol, I wanted to become one of them”, she recounts.

However, after her father suffered a loss in business, the responsibility of becoming the family’s breadwinner was thrust on her. Luckily she met Arun Rana, who owns a security agency and a restaurant in Hauz Khas, South Delhi. Rana engaged her in his restaurant as he was “looking for women bouncers to put female customers at ease and found her very capable of easing any tension.” Now, in her mid-30s, Mehrunnisha, who maintains a strict workout regime, has earned the experience of working with many high-profile women and men in the world of film, entertainment and business. She looks forward to launching her own security agency with her sister Tarannum, who is also a bouncer.

Unlike the Ali sisters, for 24-year-old Sabina working for a top global brand in Gurugram, the path was less bumpy. Sabina confidently says: “I learnt martial arts in order to become a bouncer. I am not in the profession for money alone, I get a lot of respect in my workplace. I shall marry, only if I am allowed to work.” Now, the vice-president of a security agency with a pan-India clientele, Sabina admits that “there is a growing demand for women security personnel and many clients consider them safe, more disciplined and efficient.”

The security business is not the only glass ceiling that women are breaking. While, in the Indian psyche, alcohol, cocktails, booze are still taboo words and going to a bar is a strict “no, no” for girls, there are many women like Delhi’s Suchana Bera Sharma, who are breaking the barriers here too. A management degree-holder, Suchana is a mixologist and currently the India brand head of a major player in the global spirits industry. A prolific travel, cuisine and lifestyle writer with a huge Instagram following, Suchana explains that “mixology is not only about creating a unique blend, but delving deep into the history and culture of each drink by continuously educating one-



THIS MAJOR GENDER GAP IN EMPLOYMENT CAN ONLY BE REVERSED BY TURNING THE FOCUS ON WOMEN IN ECONOMIC REVIVAL STRATEGIES AND ADOPTING A GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACH IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD. ONLY THEN WILL WE BE ABLE TO CREATE A ‘NEW INDIA’

The writer is former Director-General, Doordarshan, and All India Radio. She was also Press Secretary, President of India. The views expressed are personal.



self, along with hands-on experience.” A young mother, she gives the credit for her success to her parents, husband and two siblings and says “more women are now shaking off inhibitions, coming forward and supporting each other.”

Though women at the steering wheel may not be a uncommon sight, but, choosing it as a vocation is. Notwithstanding age-old biases about women drivers, Delhi’s Anjana, Kolkata’s Manasi and Jaipur’s Ganga are professional drivers. Leaving behind their traumatic past, all of them got their training under the ‘Women at the Wheels’ programme of the Azad Foundation, a multi-city-based NGO. Anjana, who has been driving commercial cabs for the last eight years, now confidently says that, “I enjoy my work. I got my heavy vehicle driving licence in 2020 and am ready for any challenging job.” Trapped in an unhappy marriage with a drunkard husband who had no fixed income, Anjana was desperately looking for a job to feed her two children when Azad Foundation came to her aid. Anjana, now, in her late-30s, says that “my life’s only mission is to fulfil the dreams of my two children. My husband no longer interferes in my life, though the separation suit is still pending in the court.” Manasi, a victim of child marriage, proudly says, “I use my Alto 300 car for commercial rides, which I got under the

West Bengal Government’s Gatidhara scheme in 2019. This way I can feed my family.” She lost her husband even before her first child was born. Manasi was soon thrown out of her in-laws’ house, while, her impoverished father was equally unwilling to bear her burden. In search of a living, she left her father’s home for Kolkata, got a job at a loan financing company for a paltry sum, which enabled her to put her son at a care agency. In her lone struggle, she was duped by an unscrupulous man with false promises of marriage, who deserted her once she became pregnant. The local church came to her rescue and her life got irrevocably changed once she came in touch with the Azad Foundation. Now, her elder son is in a boarding school, the younger one studies in a reputed school in Kolkata and Manasi is saving money for a house of her own.

While, Ganga’s poor father married her off at an early age, and at her in-laws’ place, she faced continuous harassment, initially, for dowry, and later, for giving birth to two girl children. When she came to live with her husband in his workplace at Jaipur, she attempted to commit suicide along with her daughters when she couldn’t bear the mental and physical torture any more. She was rescued from the railway station and given shelter at a welfare home, where she worked for some time,

and put her daughters in an orphanage. Today, her daughters stay with her, study in good schools, and she is the owner of two cars. She drives one herself while the other one is driven by her sister. Ganga says that “I don’t want to look back, and I would like to help more women who suffered like me.”

Amrita Gupta, director, research and advocacy, Azad Foundation says that in order to encourage resource-poor women, who are mostly first generation learners, a flexible training mode is followed, covering technical skills for the licence test, and also transformative aspects like spoken English, self-defence, basic etiquette. On an average, about 300-400 women get training every year and about 50 per cent of them get placements.

Sadly, in spite of women’s foray into many non-traditional fields, only one-quarter of Indian women, compared to 82 per cent of men, are in the labour market, says a World Economic Forum, 2020 report. Worryingly, this is likely to shrink further by 23.5 percentage points in the post-pandemic phase, says Oxfam.

This major gender gap in employment can only be reversed by turning the focus on women in economic revival strategies and adopting a gender-sensitive approach in a post-pandemic world. Only then will we be able to create a ‘New India.’

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

I WILL CONTEST FROM NANDIGRAM AS I STICK TO MY WORDS. THIS IS A SMILEY ELECTION. —WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER MAMATA BANERJEE



WE WANT THE SON OF MIDNAPORE, NOT OUTSIDERS. WE WILL SEE YOU ON THE BATTLEFIELD. ON MAY 2, YOU WILL LOSE AND LEAVE. —BJP LEADER SUVENDU ADHIKARI

When the unsung dare to dream and sing despite all odds

If we look around us, in the communities closest to us, we may find many such women shining beneath the rubble of class, caste and poverty

It is quite customary to see the world applauding women achievers around the time of the International Women’s Day, which is today. Scores of felicitation ceremonies where women trailblazers are recognised for their contribution are organised across the length and breadth of the country and around the world. It is encouraging to see the accolades and to learn about the women who are finally being given their space under the Sun.

But this article is a story about a young woman whom few know and as of now, her public face is limited, to say the least. She is not part of a large organisation. She is the daughter of the woman who helps to keep the wheels of my domestic set-up move smoothly. Her name is Shilpa and she is all of 23.



SWATI PAL

The writer is Principal, Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi. The views expressed are personal.

I first heard about Shilpa when her mother started helping me out at home around six-and-a-half-years ago. She is the eldest of four siblings, all girls. Her mother would often tell me sorrowfully about how she would be taunted by others for not having borne a son and I would pacify her and tell her that I, too, was one of four daughters. It was always wonderful to hear about her daughters and slowly as the anecdotes were narrated, I learnt about Shilpa.

I learnt that she could sing Hindi, English and even Punjabi songs. Soon I was delighted to actually hear her sing and she sang with her father, a man who makes his living by setting up a food stall where he sells the most delicious biryani among other delicacies. The father sang melodiously but Shilpa’s voice

simply held me spell-bound. It was powerful, it was musical and it was like liquid gold. Not a note out of place. And the felicity with which she sang English songs quite took my breath away.

Shilpa was never interested in studies but completed her school education till the 12th standard. Hearing her talk in English and listening to her sing, in three different languages with equal fluency, I understood as never before that the university of life is as educative as actual institutions of repute and concrete.

Shilpa tells me, and I quote her own words, in English, “I did not learn to sing. I used to sing on my own and listen to the songs on radio and TV. I heard a



brother (boy) singing, his name is Vijay. He took me to his NGO named Ideal Youth Health and Welfare Society and when we went there, he told me that we could sing there. That platform became my identity for me.”

As time went by, Shilpa met like-minded people at the NGO, people who nurtured a passion for singing like herself. And with them, she

formed a band, the Savitribai Phule Band. I marveled at the appropriateness of the name: Who better than the great Indian social reformer and educationist, Savitribai Phule often credited as being the mother of Indian feminism, to name one’s band after. The band members are Shivraj, Raja, Aman, Varsha, Neha, Sunil, Rohit and Shilpa herself. Shivraj is the Coordinator. Sunil plays the cohone, Aman and Varsha, the guitar and Neha and Raja form the chorus. Shilpa is the lead singer of the band and is accompanied by Rohit. They have performed professionally at various places in Delhi including the Viswa Yuva Kendra where their performance was hugely appreciated and also at Lucknow and

Chandigarh.

Shilpa is a representative of women who dare to dream, who are powerhouses of talent and creativity, who do not allow their social standing to come between them and the world. If we look around us, in the communities closest to us, we may find many such women, who are precious gemstones, shining beneath the rubble of class, caste and poverty.

The college which I have been a part of for close to three decades has many such students. Students who come from the most underprivileged situations but that did not prevent Aisha from becoming a writer, Smridhi from becoming a police officer and Shweta from becoming a professional photographer (names have been changed). One may have been a Delhi Road Transport bus

driver’s daughter, another may have had a sex worker as her mother and yet another may have a parent who sweeps the road. But they become who they are today, after beating all odds. On the sheer dint of their talent and hard work.

When I asked Shilpa what her dreams and plans for the future are, she answered fearlessly and confidently, “I want to be a very big singer in the future. I want to take my band forward and perform abroad.”

She trains daily. Sings wherever called. Her passion burns bright. She is undaunted by circumstances. Failures never dim her ebullient spirit. So she may have no definitive plan of action but somehow, I know she’s going to make it big, as big as the dreams she has. If she is only allowed to sing, the way she wants.

Business confidence in India touches decadal high: FICCI

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

As the demand scenario improves and economic activities gather momentum, a FICCI survey shows that confidence among Indian businesses and entrepreneurs is significantly high and the business confidence index is at a decadal high.

The Overall Business Confidence Index stood at 74.2 in the current round, against the index value of 70.9 reported in the previous survey and 59 reported a year back.

“The recently announced Union Budget 2021-22 has been forward looking.

This together with measures announced as a part of the ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’ package has infused optimism among the industry members and the same is corroborated in the improved outlook for various operational parameters,” said a statement by the industry body.

In the current survey, though the proportion of respondents anticipating better sale prospects in the near term

remained unchanged at 66 per cent from the previous survey round.

However, the companies were buoyed to regain some control over pricing power.

Nearly 27 per cent respondents expect an increase in the selling price of their products over the next six months as compared to 21 per cent stating the same in the previous round and 14 per cent a year back.

The statement said improved economic conditions and greater pricing power is likely to drive profits of corporate India over the next two quarters.

The percentage of participants citing higher profits over next six months increased to 36 per cent in the latest survey from 33 per cent respondents stating likewise in the previous round.

Further, the outlook on employment and exports also reported a discernible improvement.

Nearly 35 per cent respondents were optimistic about better hiring prospects over the

next two quarters (up from 22 per cent stating the same in the previous round).

Export prospects were also reported to be better in the current round with 41 per cent respondents indicating higher outbound shipments.

The corresponding number in the previous round was 27 per cent.

Furthermore, the proportion of respondents citing ‘higher to much higher’ investments over coming six months as compared to 19 per cent participants stating likewise in the previous round.

Nearly 31 per cent participants said they foresee ‘higher to much higher’ investments over coming six months as compared to 19 per cent participants stating likewise in the previous round.

The present survey drew responses from a wide array of sectors and was conducted during the months of January and February 2021. The survey gauges expectations of the respondents for the January to June 2021 period.

Centre proposes to raise LIC’s authorised capital to ₹25K cr

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

With a view of listing the state-run insurance major Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), the government has proposed to raise the authorised capital of LIC to Rs 25,000 crore.

As per the amendments proposed under the Finance Bill 2021, the authorised share capital of LIC shall be Rs 25,000 crore divided into 2,500 crore shares of Rs 10 each.

The share capital of the corporation shall consist of equity shares and preference shares, which may be fully paid-up or partly paid-up, said the Finance Bill.

“The corporation may from time to time increase its issued share capital, with the previous approval of the Centre, whether by public issue or rights issue or preferential allotment or private placement or issue of bonus shares to existing members holding equity shares, or by issue of shares to employees pursuant to share based employee ben-



efits schemes, or by issue of shares to life insurance policyholders of the Corporation, or otherwise,” it said.

However, the central government shall at all times, not less than 51 per cent of the issued equity share capital of the corporation and for five years after the IPO, the Centre will hold not less than seventy-five per cent.

The mega IPO is likely to take place around Diwali this year. Presenting the Union Budget for FY21-22, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that all the announced disinvestment processes, including the LIC IPO will be completed in the upcoming fiscal.

Petrol prices unchanged across metros for 8th day

In the national Capital, petrol was sold for ₹91.17 per litre on Sunday

FIANS ■ NEW DELHI

Oil marketing companies (OMC) kept fuel prices unchanged for the eighth consecutive day across the four metros on Sunday.

In the national capital, petrol was sold for ₹91.17 per litre on Sunday.

Similarly, in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, the fuel was priced at ₹97.57, ₹93.11 and ₹91.35 per litre, respectively, all unchanged from the previous levels.

The surge in the retail prices comes despite a surge in crude oil prices. Brent crude futures are currently over \$69 per barrel.

After a spike in global oil prices seen over the last two weeks with crude price jumping close to \$67 a barrel, prices had fallen to around \$63 a bar-



rel but it rose again to cross \$69 a barrel mark now after the OPEC+ decision to continue with crude production cut in April.

In tandem with petrol prices, diesel prices too were unchanged in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata at Rs 81.47, Rs 88.60, Rs 86.45 and Rs 84.35 per litre, respectively.

Petrol and diesel prices have been rising continuously since February 9.

In the 14 increases since then, prices have gone up by Rs 4.22 per litre for petrol while diesel rate has risen by Rs 4.34 a litre in Delhi.

The increase in the previous weeks has taken petrol to cross historic high levels of Rs 100 a litre in several cities across the country.

The petrol and diesel prices have increased 26 times in 2021 with the two auto fuels increasing by Rs 7.46 and Rs 7.60 per litre, respectively so far this year.

Oil companies’ executives said that petrol and diesel prices may increase further in coming days as retail prices may have to be balanced in line with global developments to prevent OMCs from making loss on sale.

Shiprocket records multifold jump in D2C women sellers on its platform

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

E-commerce logistics firm Shiprocket on Sunday said it has recorded several fold jump in women entrepreneurs that directly ship products to consumers which range from healthcare to personal care, electronics, etc.

The logistics firm registered a 273 per cent growth in the volume of shipments year-on-year done by women sellers when compared to February 2020.

“Shiprocket observed that there was a nearly 700 per cent increase in the women seller count on its platform between February 2020 and February 2021 with the count going from a little over 2,000 to more than 20,000 women sellers in a year, taking the total to almost 23,000,” Shiprocket said in a report.

The new report compiles various trends observed by Shiprocket

from February 2020 to February 2021 with a sample size of over 23,000 women sellers across India highlighting growth of Women in D2C (direct to consumers) sector and opportunities for ‘womenpreneurs’, the company said.

The D2C sellers may get orders from famous e-commerce portals, their own website or over phone and ship their products directly to con-

sumers.

“D2C has become a segment with immense traction in recent times among women. More and more women are now venturing into entrepreneurship through online selling. On our platform, there has been a major uptick in the number of women D2C sellers since early last year,” Shiprocket co-founder and CEO Saahil Goel said.

Shiprocket observed that a large chunk of the traction from women sellers, over 24 per cent, came from social media while online stores accounted for more than 12 per cent, offline channels comprising nearly 10 per cent.

The least traction was observed from marketplaces which accounted for a little over 3 per cent. The logistics platform also identified that Tier-I cities, with nearly 55 per cent, had the maximum women sellers while Tier-II cities followed closely with over 45 per cent.

Shiprocket identified the top 5 categories in which women sellers operate to be Healthcare, comprising over 39 per cent, Personal Care, consisting of more than 25 per cent, apparel, comprising of nearly 19 per cent, over 10 per cent women in electronics, and kitchen products accounted for almost 7 per cent of women sellers, the report said.

Health schemes, lower drug prices led to annual saving of ₹50k cr for needy families: PM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the poor and needy have been able to save Rs 50,000 crore annually due to various health-related measures taken up by his government like providing affordable medicines, healthcare and reducing the prices of medical devices.

Modi, who dedicated to the nation the 7,500th Janashadhi Kendra at North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health & Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS) in Shillong, also said the move to provide affordable medicines through the Janashadhi scheme is spreading across the length and breadth of the country.

In a virtual address at the ‘Janashadhi Week’ celebrated across the nation from March 1 to March 7 to create awareness about the ‘Janashadhi’ scheme, the Prime Minister said it is helping countrymen living in tribal areas in the North East and the mountainous areas.

“Today when the 7,500th centre has been inaugurated, it has been held in Shillong. It is clear from this how much public health centres are expanding in the North East,” Modi said.

The Prime Minister, who also interacted with people from different parts of the

country, further said, “It is clear from my discussion with people who run the Janashadhi centres at every corner of the country and some of its beneficiaries, that this scheme is becoming a very big companion of poor and middle-class families. This scheme is becoming the medium of both service and employment.”

Underlining the various steps taken up by his government to make healthcare affordable to the poor and needy, he said prices of essential drugs as well as medical devices such as stents and knee implants have been reduced manifold.

“It has led to the saving of Rs 12,500 crore per year for the needy people. The Ayushman Bharat scheme is helping 50 crore people get Rs 5 lakh worth of treatment. Over 1.5 crore people have already taken this benefit. It is estimated that it has led to savings of around Rs 30,000 crore for people.” It means that if we collate the savings being affected by Janashadhi,

Ayushman Bharat and decline in prices of drugs and stents (medical devices) if we only take government schemes in the health sector, then poor and middle-income groups are saving around Rs 50,000 crore per year,” the Prime Minister said.

GST evasion: CBIC asks field offices to exercise max caution, prudence in property attachment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The CBIC has directed its field offices to exercise utmost prudence and maximum caution in attachment of property of a taxpayer and said that such a remedy can be considered in cases involving GST evasion, fake invoicing and delay of more than three months in depositing tax collected.

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has come out with guidelines for provisional attachment of property under GST Act which tasks the Commissioner to exercise due diligence and carefully examine all the facts of the case, including the nature of offence and amount of revenue involved, and also record on file the basis on which he/she has formed such an opinion to attach property of the taxpayer.

“It is reiterated that the power of provisional attachment must not be exercised in a routine/mechanical manner ... The remedy of attachment being, by its very nature, extraordinary, has to be resorted to with utmost circumspection and with maximum care and caution,” the CBIC said.

In the guidelines the CBIC listed out types of cases where provisional attachment can be

considered to be resorted to subject to specific facts of the case.

These include where a taxable person has supplied any goods or services or both without issue of any invoice with an intention to evade tax; or issued invoice or bill without supply of goods or services or both; or fraudulently availed input tax credit.

Also cases where a taxpayer has collected any amount as tax but has failed to pay the same to the government beyond a period of three months from the date on which such payment becomes due; or fraudulently obtained refund; or passed on input tax credit fraudulently to the recipients but has not paid the commensurate tax would qualify for provisional attachment of property.

The provisional attachment of property would be valid for a period of one year.

“It should be ensured that the value of property attached provisionally is not excessive. The provisional attachment of property shall be to the extent it is required to protect the interest of revenue, that is to say, the value of attached property should be as near as possible to the estimated amount of pending revenue against such person,” the CBIC said.

DoT to issue demand notes to telcos on upfront payment for spectrum bought in auctions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) will issue demand notes to telcos next week on an upfront payment for spectrum acquired in the just-concluded auctions, sources said.

The demand note follows auctions raking in winning bids of over ₹77,800 crore, for 855.6 MHz of spectrum. Billionaire Mukesh Ambani’s Reliance Jio spent the most in the auction, picking up 488.35 MHz spectrum in bands such as 800 MHz, 1800 MHz and 2300 MHz for ₹57,122.65 crore.

Bharti Airtel bid about ₹ 18,699 crore to acquire 355.45 megahertz (MHz) out of the total 855.60 MHz of radiofre-

quency acquired by all telcos, while Vodafone Idea, bought 11.80 MHz of spectrum worth Rs 1,993.40 crore.

DoT sources told PTI that the demand notes will be sent out to the three companies this week, and entails largely the upfront payment for spectrum that is ready to be allocated.

Spectrum will be offered for assignment for a validity period of 20 years. As per the auction terms, successful bidders can pay entire bid amount in one go, or exercise an option to pay a certain amount (25 per cent for spectrum won in 700 MHz, 800 MHz, 900 MHz bands or 50 per cent for spectrum won in 1800 MHz, 2100 MHz, 2300 MHz, 2500 MHz bands) upfront with remaining

amount in a maximum up to 16 equated annual instalments, after a moratorium of two years.

A DoT official said the demand notes together total about Rs 20,000 crore, but did not provide operator-wise break-up.

About 2308.80 MHz of spectrum, that carry telecom signals in seven bands worth nearly Rs 4 lakh crore at start price, was up for bidding in the auction held recently. Although the spectrum finally acquired by telcos fell woefully short of this overall kitty and bids hovered at reserve price, DoT said, and analysts concurred, that auction outcome and response had surpassed initial expectations.

FPIs pull out investments amid rising bond yields

FIANS ■ MUMBAI

As the US cause panic in the global markets, foreign portfolio investors (FPI) have turned to sell their holdings. FPIs have pulled out a net Rs 881 crore from the Indian equity market in the first week of March. They have pulled out a net investment of Rs 5,595 crore from the debt segment, showed NSDL data. However, the net investment in the debt-VRR segment was at Rs 1,320 crore during March 1-5. The rising bond yields have nearly brought a halt to the bull run both in the global and the domestic equity markets.

meted by 440.76 points or 0.87 per cent to close at 50,405.32, continuing its falling trend for the second day on Friday due to concerns over bond yields. The NSE barometer Nifty ended lower by 142.65 points or 0.95 per cent at 14,938.10.

“In the coming week, the market will be mainly focusing on the expectations on whether the Fed, in its upcoming meeting, will maintain its accommodative stance in a rising bond yield market.

Junk your old car, get about 5 pc rebate from automakers on new one: Gadkari

New Delhi (PTI): There is good news for consumers who are going to junk their old vehicles and buy a new one under the Vehicle Scrapping Policy as automakers will give about 5 per cent rebate on the new purchase, Union minister Nitin Gadkari has said.

The voluntary vehicle scrapping policy announced in the Union Budget for 2021-22 provides for fitness test after 20 years for personal vehicles while commercial vehicles would require it after the completion of 15 years.

“Automobile manufacturers will provide about 5 per cent rebate on new car purchases” to the consumers in lieu of scrapping of the old, Road Transport, Highways and MSMEs Minister Gadkari told PTI.

“There are four major components of the policy... Apart from rebate, there are provisions of green taxes and other levies on old polluting vehicles. These will be required to undergo mandatory fitness and pollution tests in automated facilities. For this automated fitness centres would be required through out in the country and we are working in that direction,” Gadkari said.

Automated fitness tests will be set up under public private partnership (PPP) mode while the government will assist private partners and state governments for scrapping centres, he said.

Driving such vehicles that fail to pass automated tests will

attract huge penalties and also be impounded, the minister said.

This policy is going to be a boon for the automobile sector, making it one of the most profitable sectors which in turn would generate huge employment, the minister said.

The policy is touted as a major step to boost the Indian automobile sector, reeling under the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The minister said it would lead to a 30 per cent boost to the Indian automobile industry turnover to Rs 10 lakh crore in the years to come from the present about Rs 4.5 lakh crore.

Gadkari said: “Automobile industry turnover which is Rs 4.5 lakh crore at present is likely to swell to Rs 10 lakh crore in years to come with India becoming an automobile hub.” The export component of this which at present is Rs 1.45 lakh crore will go up to Rs 3 lakh crore, he said and added that once the policy comes to practice availability of scrapped material like steel, plastic, rubber, aluminium etc will be used in manufacturing of automobile parts which in turn will reduce their cost by 30-40 per cent.

He said the policy will give a boost to new technologies with better mileage of vehicles besides promoting green fuel and electricity and cut on India’s huge Rs 8 lakh crore crude import bill which is likely to increase to about Rs 18 lakh

crore. “This policy will result in increase in vehicle demand which in turn would boost revenue. Also, ancillary industries would come up in large numbers thriving on junk vehicles,” the minister said.

The minister said initially about one crore polluting vehicles would go for scrapping.

Of this an estimated 51 lakh will be light motor vehicles (LMVs) that are above 20 years of age and another 34 lakh LMVs that are above 15 years.

It would also cover 17 lakh medium and heavy motor vehicles, which are above 15 years, and currently without valid fitness certificates, he said. It will give a boost to ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’ campaign, he added.

Listing the advantages of scrapping, the Road Transport and Highways Ministry had earlier said that an old four-seater sedan will result in a loss of Rs 1.8 lakh in five years while for a heavy vehicle it comes to Rs 8 lakh for a period of three years.

“Structure and framework of scrapping policy is under work and green tax has already been notified. Many states have notified in ineffective way We want to advise the state governments through notification under Motor Vehicles Act to consider imposing green tax on older vehicles which cause more pollution,” Road Transport and Highways Secretary Giridhar Aramane had said last month.

Presenting the Budget for 2021-22 in Parliament, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1 had said that details of the scheme will be separately shared by the ministry.

Gadkari had said the policy will lead to new investments of around Rs 10,000 crore and create as many as 50,000 jobs.

These vehicles are estimated to cause 10-12 times more pollution than the latest vehicles.

The government had earlier said it plans to impose green tax on old polluting vehicles soon in a bid to protect the environment and curb pollution while vehicles like strong hybrids, electric vehicles and those running on alternate fuels like CNG, ethanol and LPG will be exempted. The revenue collected through the green tax will be utilised for tackling pollution.

Under the scheme, transport vehicles older than eight years could be charged green tax at the time of renewal of fitness certificate at the rate of 10-25 per cent of road tax, as per green tax proposal sent to states for consultations after cleared by the ministry.

Industry experts said the policy will provide a fillip to the Indian government’s efforts to position India as a global automobile manufacturing hub, as well as benefit global automakers with manufacturing industries in India, including Japanese giants Suzuki, Toyota, Nissan, amongst others.

Biden marking ‘Bloody Sunday’ by signing voting rights order

AP ■ WASHINGTON

A new executive order from President Joe Biden directs federal agencies to take a series of steps to promote voting access, a move that comes as congressional Democrats press for a sweeping voting and elections Bill to counter efforts to restrict voting access.

His plan was being announced during a recorded address on the 56th commemoration of “Bloody Sunday,” the 1965 incident in which some 600 civil rights activists were viciously beaten by state troopers as they tried to march for voting rights in Selma, Alabama.

“Every eligible voter should be able to vote and have it counted,” Biden says in his prepared remarks to Sunday’s Martin and Coretta King Unity Breakfast. “If you have the best ideas, you have nothing to

hide. Let the people vote.”

Biden’s order includes several modest provisions. It directs federal agencies to expand access to voter registration and election information, calls on the heads of federal agencies to come up with plans to give federal employees time off to vote or volunteer as nonpartisan poll workers, and proscribes an overhaul of the government’s Vote.gov website.

Democrats are attempting to solidify support for House Resolution 1, which touches on virtually every aspect of the electoral process. It was approved Wednesday on a near party-line vote, 220-210.

The voting rights Bill includes provisions to restrict partisan gerrymandering of congressional districts, strike down hurdles to voting and bring transparency to a murky campaign finance system that



In this March 7, 1965, file photo, a state trooper swings a billy club at John Lewis, right foreground, chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, to break up a civil rights voting march in Selma, Ala. The March 7, 2021, Selma Bridge Crossing Jubilee will be the first without the towering presence of Lewis, as well as the Rev. Joseph Lowery, the Rev. CT Vivian and attorney Bruce Boynton, who all died in 2020

allows wealthy donors to anonymously bankroll political causes.

Democrats say the Bill will help stifle voter suppression attempts, while Republicans

have cast the bill as unwanted federal interference in states’ authority to conduct their own



President Joe Biden departs after attending Mass at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington on Saturday

elections. The Bill’s fate is far from certain in the closely divided Senate. Conservative groups have undertaken \$5 million campaign to try persuade moderate Senate Democrats to oppose rule changes needed to pass the measure.

With his executive order, Biden is looking to turn the spotlight on the issue and is

using the somber commemoration of Bloody Sunday to make the case that much is at stake.

Bloody Sunday proved to be a conscious-shocking turning point in the civil rights movement that led to passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Similarly, Biden is hoping the Jan. 6 sacking of the U.S.

Capitol by a pro-Donald Trump mob will prove to be a clarion call for Congress to take action to improve voter protections.

“In 2020 — with our very democracy on the line — even in the midst of a pandemic — more Americans voted than ever before,” Biden says in his prepared remarks. “Yet instead of celebrating this powerful demonstration of voting — we saw an unprecedented insurrection on our Capitol and a brutal attack on our democracy on January 6th. A never-before-seen effort to ignore, undermine and undo the will of the people.”

Biden’s remarks also pay tribute to the late civil rights giants Rev. CT Vivian, Rev. Joseph Lowery and Rep. John Lewis. All played critical roles in the 1965 organising efforts in Selma and all died in with-in the past year.

Where ISIS ruled, Pope calls on Christians to forgive, rebuild

Christian, Muslim leaders in Mosul welcome Pope

AP ■ QARAQOSH (IRAQ)

Pope Francis urged Iraq’s Christians on Sunday to forgive the injustices committed against them by Muslim extremists and to rebuild as he visited the wrecked shells of churches and met ecstatic crowds in the community’s historic heartland, which was nearly eared by the Islamic State group’s horrific reign.

Christian and Muslim leaders in Mosul have welcomed Pope Francis’ visit to the Iraqi city devastated by war and are calling on Christians who fled the Islamic State group’s onslaught to return.

At each stop in northern Iraq, the remnants of its Christian population turned out, jubilant, ululating, decked out in colourful dress, though heavy security prevented Francis from plunging into the crowd as he would normally do. Nonetheless, they simply seemed overjoyed that he had come and that they had not been forgotten.

It was a sign of the desperation for support among an ancient community uncertain whether it can hold on. The traditionally Christian towns dotting the Nineveh Plains of the north emptied out in 2014 as Christians — as well as many Muslims — fled the Islamic State group’s onslaught.

Only a few have returned to their homes since the defeat of ISIS in Iraq was declared four years ago, and the rest



Pope Francis, surrounded by shells of destroyed churches, leads a prayer for the victims of war at Hosh al-Bieaa Church Square, in Mosul, Iraq, once the de-facto capital of ISIS on Sunday

remain scattered elsewhere in Iraq or abroad. Bells rang out in the town of Qaraqosh as the pope arrived.

Speaking to a packed Church of the Immaculate Conception, Francis said “forgiveness” is a key word for Christians.

“The road to a full recovery may still be long, but I ask you, please, not to grow discouraged. What is needed is the ability to forgive, but also the courage not to give up.” The Qaraqosh church has been extensively renovated after being vandalized by IS mili-

tants during their takeover of the town, making it a symbol of recovery efforts.

Iraq’s Christian population, which have exited here since the time of Christ, has dwindled from around 1.5 million before the 2003 US-led invasion that plunged the country into chaos to just a few hundred thousand today.

Francis’s visit to Iraq, which was on its last day Sunday, aimed to encourage them to stay and help rebuild the country and restore what he called its “intricately designed carpet” of faith and ethnic groups.

Earlier Sunday, Francis, dressed in white, took to a red carpeted stage in the north’s main city, Mosul, surrounded by the grey hollowed-out shells of four churches nearly destroyed in the war to oust ISIS fighters from the city.

It was a scene that would have been unimaginable years earlier. Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, was at the heart of the IS so-called “caliphate” and witnessed the worst of the group’s rule inflicted on Muslims, Christians and others, including beheadings and mass killings.

Swiss vote on proposal to ban face coverings in public

AP ■ BERLIN

Swiss voters delivered their Sverdict Sunday on a proposal to ban face coverings, both the niqabs and burqas worn by a few Muslim women in the country and the ski masks and bandannas used by protesters. A projection after polls closed pointed to a very close result.

The measure would outlaw covering one’s face in public places like restaurants, sports stadiums, public transport or simply walking in the street.

There would be exceptions at religious sites and for security or health reasons, such as the face masks people are wear-



ing now to protect against Covid-19, as well as for traditional Carnival celebrations. Authorities would have two years to draw up detailed legislation.

The Swiss government opposes the measure and says that people covering their faces

is a “marginal” issue. It argues the measure could harm tourism — most Muslim women who wear such veils in Switzerland are visitors from well-heeled Persian Gulf states, who are often drawn to Swiss lakeside cities. And it says that it wouldn’t help the women affected.

It backs instead requiring people to show their faces if requested to do so by authorities. Supporters of the proposal, which is coming to a vote five years after it was launched and has come to be known colloquially as the “burqa ban,” argue that the full-face coverings symbolise the repression of women.

Harry, Meghan to delve into tough royal split with Oprah

AP ■ LOS ANGELES

The time has finally come for audiences to hear Meghan and Harry describe the back-story and effects of their tumultuous split from royal life.

Sunday night’s airing of a two-hour special hosted by Oprah Winfrey will provide the first, and unprecedented, peek into the couple’s departure from royal duties and the strains it has placed on them.

How it’s received is likely to depend on which side of the Atlantic Ocean viewers are on.

The show, which includes Winfrey’s interviews with Meghan and Harry, will air first in the United States — Meghan’s home country — at 8 p.m. Eastern. Hours earlier, Harry’s grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, will deliver a royal address



This image provided by Harpo Productions shows Prince Harry, left, and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, in conversation with Oprah Winfrey

before Commonwealth Day. British audiences will wake up Monday to headlines and social media posts about

Winfrey’s special, but won’t be able to see the full interview until Monday night when it airs on ITV. Royal interviews that

aren’t tied to a specific topic are rare, and prior televised sessions have often proved problematic. Prince Andrew’s 2019 BBC interview about his links with convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein led to his own departure from royal duties after he failed to show empathy for Epstein’s victims.

Harry and Meghan’s departure from royal duties began in March 2020 over what they described as the intrusions and racist attitudes of the British media toward the duchess, who is biracial.

Clips released ahead of the airings suggest that at least Meghan will have some pointed criticisms of royal life. In one she describes the royal family as “the firm,” a nickname that is sometimes used affectionately and sometimes critically.

Rouhani: Iran ready to take steps when US lifts sanctions

Tehran: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said Sunday his country was prepared to take steps to live up to measures in the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers as soon as the United States lifts economic sanctions on Iran.

In a meeting with Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney, Rouhani said: “Iran is ready to immediately take compensatory measures based on the nuclear deal and fulfill its commitments just after the U.S. Illegal sanctions are lifted and it abandons its policy of threats and pressure.”

Rouhani criticised the

European signatories of the historic nuclear deal for what he said was their inaction on their commitments to the agreement. He said Iran is the only country that kept its side of the bargain.

B-52s again fly over Mideast in US military warning to Iran

Dubai: A pair of B-52 bombers flew over the Mideast on Sunday, the latest such mission in the region aimed at warning Iran amid tensions between Washington and Tehran.

Etna keeps up its spectacular explosions, ash rains on towns

AP ■ ROME

A particularly spectacular blast from Italy’s Mount Etna volcano belched out a towering cloud of ash and lava stone Sunday onto Sicilian villages, the latest in a series of explosions since mid-February.

Italy’s national geophysics and volcanology institute INGV said the powerful explosion at 2 a.m. was the 10th such big blast since Feb. 16, when Europe’s most active volcano started giving off an impressive demonstration of nature’s fire power, coloring the night sky in shocking hues of orange and red.

GLOBE TROTTING

SRI LANKA CATHOLICS MARK ‘BLACK SUNDAY’

Colombo: Sri Lankan Roman Catholics attended Mass dressed in black on Sunday, with prayers and protests calling for justice for those killed in coordinated suicide bomb attacks on Easter Sunday two years ago. Church bells tolled and prayers were chanted at 8:45 am, the time when bombs were detonated almost simultaneously at two Roman Catholic churches and a Protestant church during Easter services on April 21, 2019. Bombs were also set off at three top hotels targeting locals and foreigners who were eating breakfast.

3 GAZA FISHERMEN DIES, HAMAS ROCKET SUSPECTED

Gaza City: Three Palestinian fishermen were killed on Sunday after a blast ripped through their boat off the Gaza shore, officials said, in what appeared to be an explosion caused by a misfired rocket launched by the ruling Hamas terrorist group.

AF POLICEWOMAN HURT, HUSBAND DIES IN ATTACK

Kabul: The former head of women police in a southern Afghanistan province was seriously wounded and her husband — also a police officer — was killed Sunday in an attack by unidentified gunmen, provincial officials said.

SAUDI-LED COALITION STRIKES YEMEN’S CAPITAL

Cairo: The Saudi-led coalition fighting Iran-backed rebels in Yemen said on Sunday that it had launched a new air campaign on the country’s rebel-held capital and other provinces, in retaliation for missile and drone attacks on Saudi Arabia.



WOMEN'S DAY SPECIAL

KEEPING QUIET IS GUILTY

A recent study aims to understand and provide insights into bystanders' thoughts and experiences when they witness violence and how it makes them decide whether to intervene or not

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality," once asserted Desmond Tutu.

A recent study on bystander behaviour aimed at understanding and providing insights on bystanders' thoughts and experiences when they witness violence in public and private spaces and how these inform their decisions about whether or not to intervene. It was conducted by Breakthrough India and happened in two phases from July-August and September-October 2020 with support from Uber India and IKEA Foundation.

As part of the collaboration, Breakthrough launched the #IgnoreNoMore campaign to encourage bystander interventions and support collective action to end gender-based violence in public spaces. The campaign underscored how bystanders can become agents of change rather than just mere spectators. The partnership facilitated an idea to create an in depth research to understand behaviour of active bystander and also deterrents.

The study was conducted in states such as Jharkhand (Hazaribagh district), Bihar (Gaya district), Haryana (Jhajjar district), Delhi, Maharashtra (Mumbai), Telangana (Hyderabad) and Kolkata, covering over 721 respondents (digital survey) and 91 in depth interviews. Most participants, particularly women, identified violence as a broad term, consisting of



physical, mental, verbal and sexual abuse. The study also highlighted how patriarchal practices were culturally embedded in society and its correlation between deteriorating mental health, everyday misogyny and patriarchy.

Commenting on the findings, Sohini Bhattacharya, President & CEO, Breakthrough said, "For us, promoting positive bystander action to address Violence Against Women (VAW) has been a consistent focus area. Our intent in undertaking such campaigns is to move the general public from identifying violence against women and girls as a personal issue. It requires community action."

The report revealed that building safer public spaces for

women requires work at several structural and systemic levels. An important aspect among them is bystander support. The lack of positive action from bystanders is not just because they do not care. The fear of being blamed for the violence, of getting stuck in police and legal processes are some challenges that stop people. Not knowing what to do in such situations is another hurdle that bystanders often face.

Here are the key finding:
♦ Around 54.6 per cent of respondents said that they have intervened in an incident of violence against women in a public space.
♦ Approximately 55.3 per cent respondents observed the discomfort of the woman/girl

facing violence.

♦ Around 67.7 per cent respondents said that their intervention resulted in the violence stopping.

Why do people intervene?

The study found that the urge to do the 'right' thing often drives bystanders to intervene. A handful of respondents revealed that they were victims of child sexual abuse and domestic violence. But they could not resist their perpetrators at that time. It was this unresolved rage at their own helplessness that pushed them to intervene later in their lives. The respondents also said that better knowledge and awareness about gender issues also helped them intervene.

How can people intervene?

From an 'active bystander' perspective, intervention strategies and methods are influenced by multiple factors such as gender, age, socio-economic standing, and gender rights awareness. The survey respondents who have had intervened at some point in their lives shared interesting methods of interventions:

- ♦ Swapping seats with the survivors/victims: The importance of quietly dealing with a situation of gender violence is important, particularly from the perspective of the survivor.
- ♦ Giving one's mobile number to connect later (particularly involving cases of intimate partner violence wherein the woman might need time to reflect on her next step).
- ♦ Taking the survivor for medical help.
- ♦ Physically escorting someone home when she is being harassed.
- ♦ Resorting to violence or employing patriarchal scripts like 'don't you have a mother and sister?'

Social norms at play

♦ Around 78.4 per cent respondents (female or others) said that they have experienced violence in public spaces (does not include public transport).
♦ Another 68 per cent people said that they have experienced violence while taking a public transport.
♦ Approximately 70 per cent of the respondents said that they would ideally like to help in scenarios of gender-based violence by intervening/speaking out.

The respondents who have had the experiences of bystander intervention

expressed their exasperation at the 'silence' of most victims of abuse and sexual violence. A few of them acknowledged the critical role played by structural and social conditioning in influencing female behaviour and choices. They pointed out how girls were taught from childhood to be submissive and not challenge their surroundings, at least not overtly. The silence of the victims often discourages bystander intervention in public spaces.

Why do people hesitate to intervene?

- ♦ Approximately 45.4 per cent people said that they have not intervened in an incident of violence against women.
- ♦ Around 38.5 per cent said that they did not intervene because they did not know what to do.
- ♦ Almost 31 per cent of them said that they were worried about their own safety.
- ♦ Around 11.5 per cent of them feel that they would be dragged into police/legal matters.

Bystander intervention is a critical tool for preventing violence against women in public and private spaces. The government should create and promote initiatives to encourage individual action and behaviour to stop violence against women. Building accessible reporting systems, dissemination of reporting information, gender sensitisation for police personnel and ensuring safety of the survivor and the bystander will promote bystander intervention. In addition, we need to bring in systemic and policy level shifts for prevention of violence against women and girls and ensure swift action against the perpetrators.

WEBBED



BOMBAY BEGUMS

From boardrooms to society's margins, five ambitious women from various walks of life navigate dreams, desires and disappointments in modern Mumbai. Starring Pooja Bhatt, Shahana Goswami and Amruta Subhash, Season 1 releases on March 8 on Netflix.



PAGGLAIT

Widowed soon after marriage, a young woman grapples with an inability to grieve, quirky relatives and a startling discovery about her late husband. Starring Sanya Malhotra, Sayani Gupta and Ashutosh Rana, the film releases on March 26.



THE IRREGULARS

A crew of misfits investigates a series of supernatural crimes in Victorian London for Dr Watson and his shadowy associate, Sherlock Holmes. Starring Mckell David, Thaddea Graham and Jojo Macari, Season 1 releases on March 26 on Netflix.



Kal aur aayenge nagmon ki
Khilti kaliyan chun-ne wale
Mujhse behtar kehne wale
Tumse behtar sun-ne wale
(Tomorrow there will be more poets who write better verses than I do. There will be listeners who are more attentive than you).

When Abdul Hayee, better known by his pen name Sahir Ludhianvi, wrote these lines for the film, *Kabhi Kabhi* in 1976, he was drawing attention to the ephemeral quality of fame and public recognition. But even in the centenary year of his birth (and 40 years after his death), we cannot seem to have enough of the impactful words and verses written by the poet.

And so, Team Raabta and one of its members, Shamil, decided to stage *Wo Afsaana* based on the life of the poet.



A feminist poet

Theatre director and actor SHAMIL tells SAIMI SATTAR that it is appropriate that Sahir Ludhianvi's birth centenary falls on Women's Day

"His *nazms* and songs are everlasting because of the words that he has used to convey the message. These remain with you long after you hear them as they are relevant," says Shamil who has directed the play and also portrays the lead. He quotes the example of the song *Tu Hindu Banega, Na Musalman Banega*, which he wrote for the film,

Dhool ka Phool, and the song's relevance in contemporary divisive times. Shamil points out that Sahir used words forcefully and those moved the listeners. "In films like *Pyasa* and *Kaagaz Ke Phool*, the poetry took precedence over the music because the director (Guru Dutt) wanted it to be the moving force. The lyrics were inspired by his own person-

al life and intriguing personality," he says.

Wo Afsaana is being staged today, on Sahir's birth anniversary, which also happens to be Women's Day. Shamil points out, "It is appropriate given how close he was to his mother, the kind of importance he gave to women and his empathy towards them which is evident in songs like *Aurat Ne Janam Diya Mardon Ko*."

The play, which starts at his birth, delves into Sahir's relationship with Amrita Pritam, the Hindi and Punjabi novelist, essayist and poet. It looks at how the association moved forward and how they expressed their feelings towards each other by way of poetry.

To portray the role and direct the play Shamil has relied a lot on *Main Sahir Hun*, a book by Dr Salman Abid

and Chander Verma as the poet did not dwell upon himself or his feelings often. Jaishree, a senior theatre artiste who also works with Doordarshan is playing Amrita. "The character of Amritaji did not need any interpretation. She was an open book and expressed herself in her autobiography, *Rasidi Ticket*, and other books. Her personality was way ahead of its time," says Shamil.

The relationship has been the subject of books. A biopic too has been announced though it is yet to get off the floor. Then there is the iconic play, *Ek Mulaqat*, where Shekhar Suman and Deepti Naval played the protagonists. "That is a legend but I haven't seen it. In the past, when we staged it there were some in the audience who had watched both so comparisons were inevitable. But we have attempted to use very simple elements of theatre to present the events from our viewpoint. We have tried to be authentic and remain true to what has been documented. We have read and gone into depths of whatever is there in public domain," says Shamil who staged the play at Satish Chander Dhawan Government College, Ludhiana — where Sahir studied — in its centennial year.

However, that was then. In times when a pandemic has changed our life including entertainment, how did the team go about with rehearsals? "Since it is a play that we have already staged, we did it over the phones. Physical rehearsals took place only on two days," says Shamil, who has been active in the theatre since college.

He points out that during lockdown, people did attempt to do projects online but "the ambience and impact of live theatre is completely different which doesn't come through in a recording." Even though theatres can now function with capacity Team Raabta, which usually stages literary performance, has decided to maintain social distancing among the audience. It had performed *Dara Shikoh* at the Rekhta festival in 2019.

(The play has two shows — 5.00 pm and 7.30 pm — at Akshara Theatre, Delhi.)

Arshad remembers the last normal week

Actor Arshad Warsi recalled memories from March last year, which witnessed the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in India. Arshad took to social media to remind netizens of the 'last normal week' of their lives before the pandemic hit and the subsequent lockdown across the nation from end of March.

Arshad Warsi tweeted, "A year ago this was our last normal week and nobody knew it." "Some day it'll all be behind us..." added the actor.

Reacting to the actor's tweet, netizens recounted their ordeal how they've suffered due to the pandemic and lockdown.

"I would like to remain optimistic, but the pandemic has grossly impacted my business which had already hit a low post demonetisation. Wish we too had a generous and compassionate leader like Joe Biden to bail us out," commented a user.

"Circuit *bhai* why are you reminding us of the lockdown, I lost my job during the lockdown period and I remain extremely worried these days," commented another user addressing the actor by the name of Circuit, his character in the popular *Munna Bhai* franchise.

On the work front, Arshad recently wrapped up shooting for his forthcoming film *Bachchan Pandey* where he stars alongside Akshay Kumar.

The actor shared the news on Twitter just a few days ago. He wrote, "Wrapped up #BachchanPandey. This film is going to be very close to my heart because I met some of the most talented and really wonderful people."



TRENDBLAZER



YAMI GIVES A TUTORIAL

Actor **YAMI GAUTAM** has shared steps on how to get the perfect picture on her social media platform. She posted a throwback picture from her recent film release *Ginny Weds Sunny*. She is seen dressed in a stunning embellished *lehenga* and smiling at the camera.

"Smile check and click #ginnywedssunny #happymemories," she wrote as the picture's caption.

The film which released digitally also features Vikrant Massey.

fairtalk

DELNAAZ IRANI



"When I joined the industry, it was very small. There were a few directors and a handful of producers who used to make good serials. I started doing theatre and then serials, I took the most normal route and I never said I want to be an A-list actress or a Yash Raj heroine. I took up acting as a hobby and it became my profession."

dailytalk

SOORAJ PANCHOLI



"*Time To Dance* is going to be my first dance film, which is totally different from my past action movies. We trained for four months twice a day with a professional Indian-Latin dancer, followed by one month of training in the UK with a few teachers, all of who are world champion Latin dancers."

KIM TO START GREETING CARDS LINE

Socialite and entrepreneur **KIM KARDASHIAN** and her family — sisters Kourtney and Khloe, and mother Kris Jenner — are reportedly planning to foray the greeting cards business.

The Kardashians have already filed documents to trademark the name of their greeting cards line as *Kardashian Kards*.

The family plans on using their surname into producing greeting cards, calendars, photo albums and postcards.





THE FUTURE IS SOUND

Whether you are preparing for government jobs or upskilling to reach greater heights in career, the audio format will continue to influence learning, shares DUSHYANTT KOHLI

Audio has never gone out of vogue as citizens today are able to learn on the move. With the utility of audio going beyond radio services and entering into the digital realm, people are provided new learning opportunities. Be it news, entertainment or educational information, audio is converting anytime into learning time, considering that accessibility has become ubiquitous and affordable. Since radio, the subsequent advancements in technology moved the audience towards television and personal computers for their everyday needs. More importantly, education and learning through the internet began to take shape in the early 2000s, laying the foundations for an EdTech industry. Due to the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic, students, schools, training institutions, and colleges now view learning outcomes through a different lens. Within a span of a year, e-learning platforms have disrupted the ecosystem.

However, as a developing nation, there are several challenges that we need to cope with. For instance, all the major e-learning platforms require high quality video streaming and internet connectivity so that users are able to avail the resources they have to offer. Unfortunately, several corners of India are yet to see the infrastructure that can present high-bandwidth content for all. Beyond this, people across generations are suffering from various health effects

on account of excessive screen times as school lectures and live interactions are primarily in the video format.

In fact, recent reports suggest that the current average screen time every week is around 6.9 hours, on account of the ample time available during the pandemic. Indians access their internet mostly through their smartphones, and within a year, it has increased by 25 per cent, from 4.9 hours to 6.9 hours from April 2020 onwards. Such trends do not indicate a healthy precedent, and audio could prove to be a suitable hands-free alternative. Even for education, video creation and development are arduous processes that require time and effort to achieve quality. We often forget that a majority of competitive exam aspirants hail from tier III, IV cities, and rural areas that lack the resources to afford video-based services. With price constraints and limited access to the latest technologies, the chances of aspirants who wish to crack examinations is hindered. On the bright side, the gap is now being addressed by audio services, through podcasts, audio lectures, and bite-sized audio clips on course concepts due to easy production processes and low costs.

■ Diversity in course offerings and exam prep

In the last couple of years, we have seen the proliferation of several EdTech apps, delivering different levels of edu-

cation across all age groups. Similarly, several audio-based learning apps are offering multiple courses on their platforms, making it ideal for candidates preparing for government exams to be on top in the highly competitive space. Be it courses like current affairs, static GK, History or English. They are delivered by subject matter experts in the audio format, which helps in sequencing audio content for exam preparation, and cracking government jobs.

Moreover, some of these apps also have versions that cater to feature phone users, which function on low bandwidths and affordable data packs. It makes it easier for users to download or stream content while consuming far lesser data as compared to video services. In fact, exclusive exam preparation content is available in vernacular languages like Hindi, Bengali, and others as well, reaching a wider audience beyond the big cities. In addition to this, career coaches and teachers realise the quality, reach and potential of audio-based learning. The students are increasingly expressing a desire to learn from the best, and short audio content and clips from experts is the preferred format, and it is redefining their approach towards job seeking.

■ Effectiveness of audio-based learning

The quality learning programmes

are often unaffordable even in the realm of digital. Here is where audio is playing a transformative role as it is bringing inexpensive services into the deep corners of the country by merely utilising existing infrastructure. In fact, several players in the podcasting and audio-based educational space are serving millions of students every day, making it an effective medium for consuming good quality exam preparation content.

The critics often question the efficacy of audio as a medium of learning. They argue that providing both text and audio material for preparation could overwhelm aspirants. However, there is enough evidence from the scientific world that points towards audio's role in improving the cognitive abilities of listeners. The argument is that repetitive listening can lead to better retention of concepts. Analytical reasoning too can be understood through audio, which is contrary to popular notions that audio's role in imparting education is inadequate for attaining reasoning abilities.

Going by examples from the real world, we can understand how customer care services, doctors and medics, and musicians develop an ear for sound, structure, and form. Similarly, even in audio-based learning, it becomes easier by replaying audio files and practicing concepts by visualisation.

This trend is identifiable in India as more and more users are consuming audio content in their native languages, ensuring better retention.

■ Reasons for audio's resurgence and how the future looks

One of the most impressive aspects of audio that has only been rediscovered during the pandemic is the positive effect of passive listening. Since the lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions were imposed, a majority of citizens remained indoors, relying on all the tools at their disposal to bring their lives back to normal. Audio-streaming services and apps underwent astounding growth, thanks to the increase in content consumption by users while staying home.

It further justifies the fact that people feel comfortable carrying out their daily chores and listen passively to educational content, thereby, saving precious time. Further to this, it is enabling the conversion of non-study time into learning time, due to hands free devices that play audio files through voice commands. Therefore, whether a person is preparing for government jobs or upskilling to reach greater heights in their career, audio will continue to influence learning, and impact even the future generations.

(The writer is the COO of Khabri.)

Attain wisdom

People should strive to achieve values and ethics as these shape character, says

RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI



Off lately, governments across the globe have come to accept the fact that the absence of right values is the cause of various ailments, including the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. Millions and billions have been spent and are still being spent by countries on re-establishment of values in our present-day degenerated society, but, as is evident from the result, success evades them all. The elderly people grumble and complain that the millennials have thrown values to the winds. Some allege that the whole society has become corrupt; others say that because of corruption, the government has become almost bankrupt. Newspapers are full of news about ghastly crime. Religious leaders say that religion is being defamed.

In fact, every individual is an eye-witness to the degeneration of morals and all are crying for values. But why are all efforts not showing any tangible transformation in even a few thousand people? That's a million dollar question. If we ponder deeply over the matter, we will find that there is no human being who does not adopt any values whatsoever. Everyone does imbibe some values. However, the values differ from man to man, depending upon his world-view or his belief system because every man has some belief about his own identity, about the society, about man's nature, about time and space, etc... Similarly everyone has some views about religion, education, business, media, government, politics, etc. This network of beliefs gives him/her a world-view, different from the world-view of others. It is this world-view that determines a person's outlook, attitudes and pattern of behaviour.

People across the world practice values taught by religious preceptors or some public figure. For example, some people put into practice vedantic, buddhist, jewish, christian, muslim values, while some others try to imbibe Gandhian values or values taught by some leader. Now, all the above mentioned set of values were advocated by different souls, according to their world-view. However, there is no universal code of conduct available for all people to follow. No one has, uptill now, given a comprehensive, all-inclusive, totally rational and absolutely correct world-view because such a view can be given only by one, for he (god) alone is perfectly moral, truly knowledgeable, all-virtuous and the parent of all souls, whichever religion, philosophy or world-view they may profess. He is of impeccable character, without any weakness, incomparably just and fair, totally free from prejudice of any sort, above any sectarian, regional, racial or narrow view and without any consideration of benefit to himself. He has not even the least degree of selfishness but is overwhelmed with love for all and the will to be generous, kind, compassionate, cooperative, friendly and ever-helpful.

But what is essentially relevant in the present context is that he has the knowledge of the present, the past and the future in its entirety and without any gaps. The knowledge which he has is not divided into any departments or compartments but is wholesome. It does not have any inner contradictions. It is final and does not require any research or future confirmation. It takes into account all religions, culture, geophysical circumstances, human nature, etc. It is theoretical, practical and also experiential. It has distilled wisdom, without any impurities, fallacies and pseudo elements. It does not have even a grain of fake or artificial ingredients. So, the world-view formed on the basis of that revealed knowledge or divine wisdom is the only one that is capable of removing a person's flaws of character. It is that knowledge which brings right type of values and transformation in one's life.

It is, therefore, essential that those who earnestly and sincerely feel that our society should be value-based should also make all efforts that they themselves and all others should have the right world-view, for without it, cultivation and development of right values will remain mere a wishful thinking or an unrealised dream.

Chalhan is a nondescript hamlet located one and a half kilometers from the main road in Shalla Gram Panchayat of Gohar block of Mandi district in the hilly state of Himachal Pradesh. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood for the residents of this village who own five to seven bighas of land on an average. Till two years ago, the village did not have a link road and was considered a major development challenge by its inhabitants.

Anybody who fell sick had to be taken on a chair or charpoy (cot) by at least four men to the main road from where they could be taken to the nearest hospital. The farmers had to hire ponies for carrying their produce to nearby markets. It became a tedious task, especially during the monsoon. The tough, hilly twisted trails become muddy, slippery and risky to commute. The government's commitment to work towards connecting rural India, the long-standing demand of the villagers for the link road finally materialised two years ago.

"The link road has transformed our lives," says Purnanand, a resident of the village. Now the pickup vans and ambulances can easily come on this road which is connected to the state highway. "We are now able to save money that we used to pay for hiring ponies. Sometimes our vegetables would perish or we had to sell them at throw away prices. Now we can

Connecting dots

Villagers witnessed the transformation brought about by link roads in Shalla Gram Panchayat and hoped that a similar development would touch their lives, says SARITA BRARA



sell them at a much higher price because of which our income has gone up," shares Purnanand.

This is the story of every household in 35 small and big villages in Shalla Gram Panchayat. All these villages have been connected by link roads to their main road heads for transportation. A single household hamlet of Jeyog too was connected via a link road one year ago.

Hetram recalls the day his mother fell sick. He had to wait for a day to get help from men

from nearby villages to carry his mother to the main road from where she was taken to the hospital. They carried her on a chair on the steep path on hilly terrain. It took them almost an hour to cover the small distance. Overwhelmed by the Panchayat's concern,

"It took almost five years to connect every single village and hamlet in all the seven wards of this Gram Panchayat with road heads," informs Raj Kumar, the Panchayat Pradhan. The last vil-



lage that was connected by a link road was a few months ago in November 2020. Shalla Gram Panchayat is indeed a remote area of Mandi district tucked away in a difficult mountainous terrain. The process to get these link roads was equally difficult.

"It wasn't easy at all - making rounds of the concerned departments for sanctions and clearances, pleading villagers to part with their land for the sake of the convenience of all others. One has to apply every method from

cajoling to counselling to get consent for using their land for the benefit of the villages otherwise everyone in the village has to struggle," says Raj.

The roads have undoubtedly changed the lives of the villagers. Many farmers in these villages are today earning a decent income by growing cash crops like peas and other vegetables. This wasn't doable earlier because of the fear that their produce will perish before it could be transported to the market. Another constraint was the money required to be paid for the ponies which cost them a lot.

The construction of a 16-kilometer-long road has solved connectivity issues of a population of over 1,000 people in five villages. It has given a boost to tourism as it connects them to a famous temple. This road has also been metalled. With lakhs of people travelling here, opportunities for employment have opened up. The Gram Panchayat has also been able to increase its revenue from parking fees for the vehicles.

For Udham Singh, a resident of Village Chatti, it is a matter of envy as his village is located on the boundary of Shalla and Tulna Gram Panchayat. A home guard with agricultural land, Udham has been running from pillar to post to get a link road sanctioned for his small village but has not been successful in his endeavors so far.

"My village, with nearly half

a dozen families, is approximately five kilometers from the nearest road head. Since my village does not fall under Shalla Gram Panchayat, they can't construct the road from their allotted funds," shares Udham Singh.

The challenges of this village are also the same. The health and transportation of agriculture produce are the main concern of the villagers here as well.

Connecting villages to road heads in this state, especially in extremely remote and hilly terrains is a tedious task. Getting clearances, especially for the villages that come under forest areas is not that easy, carving out roads through mountains is time consuming, costly and difficult.

According to the information available on the official website of The Public Works Department (PWD) of Himachal Pradesh government, 6,948 out of its 17,449 villages were not connected by road till the end of October 2020, which means that nearly 40 per cent of the villages in the state were not connected. Their challenges are endless. Monsoon and winter become even more difficult due to the lack of connectivity. Seeing how the lives of inhabitants of Shalla Gram Panchayat has been transformed through these link roads, villagers of other remote regions are full of hope that soon their prayers will see the light of day.

—Charkha Features

“ Leaders can let you fail and yet not let you be a failure. —Stanley McChrystal ”

CONCERNED ABOUT DRUG USE? THIS APP HELPS

Researchers at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign are developing a new smartphone app that may help teach young adults how to talk to a peer if they are concerned about their person's drinking or drug use.

The app named "Harbor" prompts the user to answer several questions about their friend's substance use behaviour and provides feedback on the potential seriousness — a feature that may be especially helpful to people who feel conflicted about intervening.

Designed for people aged between 18-29, Harbor teaches young adults how they can "act as first responders for their close friends who demonstrate risky substance use behaviours," according to the app's lead developer Douglas C Smith from the varsity.



TRUSTED SUPPORT MAY HELP BATTLE DEPRESSION

Learning about their health through a trusted source may help teens take better care of themselves, leading to less depressive symptoms, says a new study.

The study indicated that trust played a factor in whether receiving health information improved depression. The more that adolescents trusted their parents or teacher as a credible source of health information, the more likely they were to experience less depression.

Additionally, even though adolescents reported that they trusted traditional media — like TV, radio and newspapers — more than online content, only content from social media or websites resulted in actual changes in behaviour.

"This study was actually inspired by my students, after several of them came to me really stressed out," said researcher Bu Zhong from the Pennsylvania State University.



OBESITY — BIGGEST KILLER OF HUMANKIND

For over two decades, obesity has emerged into a bigger health crisis globally and in India, than hunger.

Obesity is now the leading cause of disabilities and deaths around the world. More so, during the COVID-19 pandemic when lakhs of people died across countries, one key reason was the ailments associated with overweight.

On the eve of World Obesity Day, healthcare professionals underlined the need to enhance awareness on this ever-growing lifestyle disease, which is fast emerging as the biggest killer of humankind in the modern era.

"Over the past century, the world has progressed on many health parameters. Today there are very less deaths among kids due to immunisation against ailments; and availability of food is shifting focus away from malnutrition. However, changing lifestyles and easy access to high-calories food is pushing children and adults towards obesity, which unfortunately has some devastating outcomes at times," said Dr Riyaz Khan, CEO, Continental Hospitals.



KIDNEY STONES LINKED TO BONE PROBLEMS

People with kidney stones may be at risk of osteoporosis or bone fracture, says a new study.

The study, published in the Journal of Bone and Mineral Research, found that approximately one-quarter of individuals with kidney stones had a diagnosis of osteoporosis or bone fracture around the time of their kidney stone diagnosis.

"We hope this work raises awareness regarding the possibility of reduced bone strength in patients with kidney stones," said lead author Calyani Ganesan from Stanford University in the US.

"In our future work, we hope to identify which patients with kidney stones are at higher risk for osteoporosis or fracture to help guide bone density screening efforts by clinicians in this population," Ganesan added.



YOUNGSTERS TOO DRUNK TO USE PROTECTION

One-fifth of young adults forget to use contraception at the height of passion because they are too drunk to remember when having sex, says a study.

The study, commissioned by OnePoll with 1,200 participants aged between 16-25 years, indicates that many youngsters are taking unforeseen risks due to a lack of knowledge, education and intoxication.

The study showed that four in 10 have had sex during a night of drinking alcohol, while 13 per cent have had intercourse and not remembered the following day whether they had used protection or not, reports The Sun.

"We need to arm our young people with as much information as possible before they get to the point where they are experimenting with sex and drink," said Joanna Buckard, a spokeswoman for The National Organisation for FASD (Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) in the UK.



SA outwit India in first ODI

SHALABH SAXENA ■ LUCKNOW

The Indian eves marked their international return on a losing note as the hosts were crushed by the South African team by eight wickets in the first One-Day International at the Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ekana International Stadium in Lucknow on Sunday.

Chasing a modest target of 178 runs, the opening pair of visitors — Lizelle Lee (83*) and Laura Wolvaardt (80) — put up a partnership of 169 runs but it was player-of-the-match Shabnim Ismail, who set it up for South Africa claiming with a 3-wicket haul to push India on the back foot.

Asked to bat, India got off to a disastrous start when they lost both the openers for 18 runs in 5.4 overs. Smriti Mandhana's thick bottom edge was brilliantly taken by wicket-keeper Trisha Chetty. In the very next over, Jemimah Rodrigues' leading edge off Ayabonga Khaka while trying to play on the leg side went into the hands of Lizelle Lee at gully.

Punam Raut and skipper Mithali Raj tried to stay on the wicket and played sensibly before Shabnim Ismail, who is 4th ranked in current ICC bowlers' rankings, banged in one shot towards Raut (10), who mistimed the pull and was caught comfortably at fine-leg by Khaka.

Then arrived Harmanpreet Kaur at the crease, who was playing her 100th match and straightaway edged the first ball by Ismail, but dropped short of the diving slip fielder.

South African captain Suné Luus, a leg spinner, introduced herself in to the attack in the 17th over, but both experienced Indian players decided to counter-attack and scored magnificent boundaries each to Klopp on the off side. Harman then scored back-to-back boundaries on de Klerk, followed by a delicate cut shot for a boundary off Mlaba. The duo added 50 runs off just 58 balls with the run-rate touching just



Need more time to rediscover rhythm: Harman

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Indian women's ODI vice-captain Harmanpreet Kaur on Saturday said the team was lacking match practice and will need time to get back into rhythm after being away from International cricket for a year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We didn't get any International cricket for a year. Apart from three IPL games we didn't get much time to work as a unit. As a team you need to spend time and get ready for any series," Kaur said at the post-match press conference.

"Nowadays everybody is looking for a big total, every game we want to score more

than 250 but for that you need some time and matches.

"In the past few years we had built a rhythm but we will need time to create that rhythm and next game we will try to do that as a unit," added Kaur, who was playing her 100th ODI.

The Indian team last played on March 8 last year when they lost to Australia in the T20 World Cup final.

Additionally, they got only two days of nets before the series, making it tougher for the players to be at their best from the word go which was visible as India struggled with the bat, managing 177 for nine in the designated 50 overs.

The 31-year-old conceded

that her side was guilty of throwing away their wickets and lacked partnerships with both bat and ball.

"When you are playing after a long time there are chances were you can collapse but they bowled well and we threw our wickets. As a bowling unit, there were no partnership, you need partnership whether it is bowling or batting," she said.

"Today I felt our bowling was also not upto the mark, our spinners are good but it can happen if you are playing after a long time, sometimes things cannot be in your favour. We had a bad day today, whatever we were doing, we couldn't execute it."

Goswami. In reply, the visitors achieved the target for the loss of two wickets in 40.1 overs.

BRIEF SCORES:
India: 177/9 in 50 overs (Mithali Raj 50, Harmanpreet Kaur 40, Deepti 27; Shabnim Ismail 3/28, Mlaba 2/41) SA: 178/2 in 40.1 overs (Lizelle Lee 83*, Wolvaardt 80; Jhulan Goswami 2/38).

IPL 2021 STARTS APRIL 9

No home games, no crowds at 6 venues including Mumbai

2021 SEASON SCHEDULE

M NO	DAY	DATE	TIME	VENUE	TEAM1	TEAM 2
1	FRI	9-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Mumbai Indians	Royal Challengers Bangalore
2	SAT	10-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Chennai Super Kings	Delhi Capitals
3	SUN	11-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Kolkata Knight Riders
4	MON	12-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Rajasthan Royals	Punjab Kings
5	TUE	13-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Kolkata Knight Riders	Mumbai Indians
6	WED	14-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Royal Challengers Bangalore
7	THU	15-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Rajasthan Royals	Delhi Capitals
8	FRI	16-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Punjab Kings	Chennai Super Kings
9	SAT	17-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Mumbai Indians	Sunrisers Hyderabad
10	SUN	18-April	3:30 PM	Chennai	Royal Challengers Bangalore	Kolkata Knight Riders
11	SUN	18-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Delhi Capitals	Punjab Kings
12	MON	19-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Chennai Super Kings	Rajasthan Royals
13	TUE	20-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Delhi Capitals	Mumbai Indians
14	WED	21-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Punjab Kings	Sunrisers Hyderabad
15	WED	21-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Kolkata Knight Riders	Chennai Super Kings
16	THU	22-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Royal Challengers Bangalore	Rajasthan Royals
17	FRI	23-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Punjab Kings	Mumbai Indians
18	SAT	24-April	7:30 PM	Mumbai	Rajasthan Royals	Kolkata Knight Riders
19	SUN	25-April	3:30 PM	Mumbai	Chennai Super Kings	Royal Challengers Bangalore
20	SUN	25-April	7:30 PM	Chennai	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Delhi Capitals
21	MON	26-April	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Punjab Kings	Kolkata Knight Riders
22	TUE	27-April	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Delhi Capitals	Royal Challengers Bangalore
23	WED	28-April	7:30 PM	Delhi	Chennai Super Kings	Sunrisers Hyderabad
24	THU	29-April	3:30 PM	Delhi	Mumbai Indians	Rajasthan Royals
25	THU	29-April	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Delhi Capitals	Kolkata Knight Riders
26	FRI	30-April	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Punjab Kings	Royal Challengers Bangalore
27	SAT	1-May	7:30 PM	Delhi	Mumbai Indians	Chennai Super Kings
28	SUN	2-May	3:30 PM	Delhi	Rajasthan Royals	Sunrisers Hyderabad
29	SUN	2-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Punjab Kings	Delhi Capitals
30	MON	3-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Kolkata Knight Riders	Royal Challengers Bangalore
31	TUE	4-May	7:30 PM	Delhi	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Mumbai Indians
32	WED	5-May	7:30 PM	Delhi	Rajasthan Royals	Chennai Super Kings
33	THU	6-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Royal Challengers Bangalore	Punjab Kings
34	FRI	7-May	7:30 PM	Delhi	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Chennai Super Kings
35	SAT	8-May	3:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Kolkata Knight Riders	Delhi Capitals
36	SAT	8-May	7:30 PM	Delhi	Rajasthan Royals	Mumbai Indians
37	SUN	9-May	3:30 PM	Bangalore	Chennai Super Kings	Punjab Kings
38	SUN	9-May	7:30 PM	Kolkata	Royal Challengers Bangalore	Sunrisers Hyderabad
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49	TUE	18-May	7:30 PM	Bangalore	Kolkata Knight Riders	Rajasthan Royals
50	WED	19-May	7:30 PM	Bangalore	Sunrisers Hyderabad	Punjab Kings
51	THU	20-May	7:30 PM	Kolkata	Royal Challengers Bangalore	Mumbai Indians
52	FRI	21-May	3:30 PM	Bangalore	Kolkata Knight Riders	Sunrisers Hyderabad
53	FRI	21-May	7:30 PM	Kolkata	Delhi Capitals	Chennai Super Kings
54	SAT	22-May	3:30 PM	Bangalore	Punjab Kings	Rajasthan Royals
55	SUN	23-May	3:30 PM	Kolkata	Mumbai Indians	Delhi Capitals
56	SUN	23-May	7:30 PM	Kolkata	Royal Challengers Bangalore	Chennai Super Kings
				PLAYOFFS		
57	TUE	25-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Qualifier 1	Defending champions Mumbai Indians will face Royal Challengers Bangalore in the tournament opener in Chennai on April 9. The Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad will host the final on May 30 as well as the play-offs.
58	WED	26-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Eliminator	
59	FRI	28-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Qualifier 1	
60	SUN	30-May	7:30 PM	Ahmedabad	Final	

SINGLES



Lionel Messi casts his vote during Barca presidential elections

MILAN WIN TO BOOST TITLE HOPES

VERONA: AC Milan boosted title hopes by winning 2-0 at Hellas Verona in Serie A on Sunday despite being without a number of key players missing through injury. Rade Krunić and Diego Dalot scored for Milan, which moved to within three points of league leader Inter Milan. The Nerazzurri host Atalanta on Monday.

ANKITA STUNS ERRANI IN QUALIFIERS

MEXICO CITY: India No 1 Ankita Raina notched up one of the biggest wins of her career as she stunned Sara Errani in the first round of qualifying at the WTA 250 tournament in Guadalajara in Mexico. The world No 168 fought from a set down to beat the Italian second seed and world No 106 2-6, 6-4, 6-3 in two hours and 6 minutes. She will next play Leonie Kung in an attempt to qualify for the main draw.

LEWA HAT-TRICK TOPS HAALAND DOUBLE

MUNICH: Robert Lewandowski scored a hat-trick to leave him on 31 Bundesliga goals this season and seal Bayern Munich's 4-2 comeback home win over Borussia Dortmund. Dortmund raced into a 2-0 lead as Erling Haaland netted twice in the first nine minutes behind closed doors at the Allianz Arena. However, Lewandowski then struck twice — the second from the penalty spot — to haul Bayern level before the break. Leon Goretzka put Bayern ahead for the first time with two minutes left before the Poland striker completed his hat-trick on 90 minutes.

PSG, LYON CRUISE INTO NEXT ROUND

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe grabbed a pair of goals as holders Paris Saint-Germain eased into the French Cup last 16 on Saturday with a 3-0 victory at Brest, while Ligue 1 title rivals Lyon defeated second-division Sochaux 5-2. Mbappe returned from a one-match ban and fired PSG ahead on nine minutes. Julian Draxler set up Pablo Sarabia for a second goal before half-time. And then Verratti created third, somewhat inadvertently, as he prodded across goal and straight into the chest of Mbappe, wrong-footing Brest goalkeeper Sebastien Cibois.

DELHI IN VIJAY HAZARE QUARTER-FINAL

NEW DELHI: Wicketkeeper-batsman Anuj Rawat smashed a dozen of sixes in his unbeaten 95 off 85 balls as an under-pressure Delhi made a remarkable recovery to beat Uttarakhand by four wickets in the pre-quarter final of the Vijay Hazare Trophy on Sunday. Delhi will meet Uttar Pradesh in their quarter-final match on Monday. Batting first, Uttarakhand posted 287 for 8 in 50 overs. In reply, Delhi surpassed the target in 48.3 overs after being reduced to 146 for 6 in the 33rd over.

LIVERPOOL CRASH AGAIN AT ANFIELD

LIVERPOOL: Mario Lemina condemned troubled Liverpool to a sixth successive home defeat as Fulham earned a shock 1-0 win that left the champions' top four bid in turmoil on Sunday. Jurgen Klopp's side are four points adrift of fourth-placed Chelsea, who can extend that lead to seven if they beat Everton on Monday. That would leave Liverpool with a tough task to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish.

Agencies

Marin beats Sindhu in Swiss final

PTI ■ BASEL

World Champion P V Sindhu finished a distant second best in the Swiss Open final after being completely routed by Olympic Gold medalist Carolina Marin of Spain in a lop-sided women's singles title clash here on Sunday.

The 25-year-old Indian, who had won the coveted World Championship Gold medal here in 2019, couldn't match the speed and accuracy of Marin during her 12-21, 5-21 defeat in the final that lasted only 35 minutes.

It was Sindhu's third successive loss to Marin, who had won both the Super 1000 events



in Thailand in January before finishing runners-up at the HSBC BWF World Tour Finals.

Playing her first final in 18 months, Sindhu, ranked 7th in

the world, entered the match with a 5-8 head-to-head record against Marin, having lost her last two matches against the former world No 1.

The world No 7 Indian, who didn't drop a game in the last four matches this week, however, failed to summon her 'A' game under pressure as Marin came up trumps to claim her third title of the year. She seemed completely clueless against a rampaging Marin, who outclassed the Indian with her pace, power and precision during the summit clash.

Sindhu will next compete at the \$850,000 All England Championships to be held from March 17 to 21.

Sundar can perform role I used to play for India: Shastri

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Ravi Shastri was both Sunil Gavaskar and Kapil Dev's 'go to man' with his all-round abilities during the '80s and India head coach firmly believes that young Washington Sundar could play a similar role in the current Test team.

The left-handed specialist batsman, who also bowls mean off-breaks, scored three half centuries in his four Tests along with six wickets which includes prized scalps of Steve Smith and Joe Root.

Do you see glimpses of you in him?



"I think Washy has far more natural ability than I had," said the veteran of 80 Tests who had close to 4000 runs and 150 plus wickets.

"He has the ability and he belongs at this level and he can go a long way. If he could focus on his bowling (in Tests), India could have a very good number six for overseas conditions.

"Someone who can get you those 50s, 60s and 70s and then bowl for you 20 overs and can pick up 2-3 wickets. That was my role overseas (during whole of 1980s) and I think he can do that role easily," the head coach said during a virtual press meet on Sunday.

Washington should start batting in the top four for Tamil Nadu across formats, suggested Shastri.

"Definitely, he should be batting in the top four for his state. There is no question about that. I would like to have a word with Tamil Nadu selectors or DK (captain Dinesh Karthik) for that matter. I think he should be batting in the top four," Shastri said.

For Shastri, Sundar's innings of 96, coming in at 153 for 6 was a better effort than his 85 not out in Chennai.

"Washington Sundar, this is unreal. Facing some of the toughest bowlers in the world. I would say this innings was far better as the WTC was on line," he said.

LOCAL EVENTS

ZANE LIFTS UP OPEN \$15000 ITF TROPHY



Unseeded American teenager Zane Khan shattered the double crown dream of top seeded Saketh Myneni to win the singles title at the UP Open World Tennis Tour ITF Men's \$15000 event at the Vijayantkhand Mini Stadium tennis here on Sunday.

In the final, the 19-year-old American came back from 3-5 deficit in the first set to register a 7-6(3), 6-3 win over former Davis Cupper 33-year-old Saketh Myneni in 1 hour and 56 minutes final.

In a match, which saw good baseline rallies and 10 aces the Indian top seed raced to a 5-3 lead breaking the young American in the 8th game. But Saketh who was serving well till then was broken almost immediately by Zane Khan in the 9th game. Khan held on to the 10th game to level scores 5-5.

In the tie-breaker, Khan took the tiebreak at 7-3 and won the set. In the second set, Saketh looked little tired and was broken in the 8th game of the set by Khan to go up 5-3. Khan held on to the 9th game to win the set and the match and also his first career professional singles title Khan 10 points and \$2160. Principal Secretary (Transport) RK Singh gave away thr prizes.

ABHISHEK, RAJIV SHINE IN MEDIA XI WIN

Abhishek Mishra slammed a ton while Rajiv Anand played an 88-run knock as Media XI defeated Indian Dental Association by 61 runs in a league match of PP Tikku Memorial Tournament at KGMU ground on Sunday. Batting first, Media XI scored 221 for the loss of four wickets in 20 overs. In reply, IDA were bowled out for 160 runs. Anish Oberoi took three wickets.

Gerrard leads Rangers to league title

AFP ■ GLASGOW

Rangers' first Scottish Premiership title for 10 years was confirmed Sunday after Celtic's drew 0-0 at Dundee United to stand 20 points behind their Glasgow rivals with six games left to play.

Steven Gerrard's men have stormed to the title without losing a game to end Celtic's record-equaling nine consecutive Scottish league titles.

Rangers were not even in the top-flight for four of those seasons after the club was demoted to the fourth tier following liquidation in 2012 due to financial troubles.

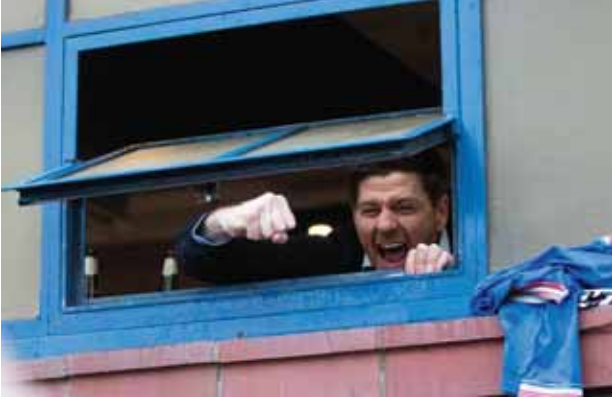
"This club has been to hell and back over the past 10 years," said Gerrard after Saturday's 3-0 win over St Mirren put Rangers on the brink of a first major trophy since 2011.

"I've only been part of it for three, but I can certainly relate and I've got that feeling and that affection with the fans and I know what they have been through."

The former England and Liverpool captain never won a league title during his legendary 17-year career at Anfield.

However, Gerrard has transformed Rangers' fortunes, both domestically and in Europe, since taking his first senior managerial role in 2018.

The newly crowned Scottish champions have reached the last 16 of the Europa League for the second



Rangers manager Steven Gerrard hangs out the window of the dressing room to cheer with fans gathered outside the stadium

consecutive season and face Slavia Prague on Thursday.

Rangers were denied the chance to rub salt into Celtic wounds by winning the title at Celtic Park in two weeks' time in their next league fixture.

Celtic dropped points for the 12th time in the league this season with caretaker manager John Kennedy taking charge for just the second time since Neil Lennon resigned last month.

The issues that have dogged Celtic all season cost them at Tannadice as they dominated but failed to find the net with 27 attempts on goal.

"Our objective was to get to 10, but Rangers have been better than us this season," Kennedy told *Sky Sports*. "We've been champions for so long, but we've not been good enough this season."

Thousands of Rangers fans

ignored coronavirus restrictions to descend upon Ibrox on Saturday to get the title celebrations going early.

"Once we got close or achieved our first big part of success together, which was always going to be the hardest, I had a good idea what the reaction would be like," said Gerrard.

"I think what you've seen today is 10 years of what these supporters have been through. I'm delighted for them and really proud of the players efforts because they've been outstanding this season."

"From a league point of view, they've been close to perfect."

The Scottish Government condemned the scenes outside the stadium on Saturday and pleaded with supporters not to congregate again on Sunday.



Kiwis win final T20, series

AFP ■ WELLINGTON

A century opening stand by Martin Guptill and Devon Conway saw New Zealand clinch their T20 series against Australia in Wellington on Sunday after the tourists faltered in the face of an experimental spin attack.

Set a target of 143 for victory, Glenn Phillips hit the winning runs with a six to seal New Zealand's victory by seven wickets and to take the series 3-2.

Guptill, who had been out of form going into the series, led with a masterful 71, including seven fours and four sixes, while Conway contributed 36 with the pair putting on 106 for the first wicket.

New Zealand stumbled slightly when Kane Williamson went first ball but a Guptill single ended Riley Meredith hit the hat-trick.

Phillips, unbeaten on 34, guided New Zealand home with 27 balls to spare.

With the first four games in the series won by the team batting first, New Zealand captain Kane Williamson needed to be innovative when he lost the toss and was told to bowl.

He put his faith in spin with his slow bowlers sending down 12 overs, the most for New Zealand in a T20 match, and they took four of the eight wickets.