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YOGI: BJP HAS FULFILLED ALL PROMISES IT MADE

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EC extends poll rallies ban till Jan 31

Public meetings with 500 people for Ph 1 allowed from January 28

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the third wave of Covid-19 in the country, the Election Commission (EC) on Saturday extended the ban on physical political rallies, roadshows, pad-yatras, cycle and bike rallies and processions till January 31 in five poll-bound States — Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Manipur, Punjab and Uttarakhand.

This is the second time the Commission has extended the ban after the first one was announced on January 15 and the second on January 22. The poll panel also increased the five-person limit for door-to-door campaigning to 10 and allowed video vans for publicity at designated open spaces with coronavirus restrictions.

"No roadshow, padyatra, cycle/bike/vehicle rally and procession shall be allowed till January 31, 2022," the EC said. The decision was taken following a virtual meeting to take stock of the Covid-19 situation with all stakeholders, including the Union Health Secretary, Chief Electoral Officers, Chief Secretaries, and State Health Secretaries of the five poll-bound States.

"Since contesting candi-



dates for Phase 1 elections will be finalised on January 28, 2022, the commission has decided to allow physical public meetings of political parties or contesting candidates in designated open spaces with a maximum of 500 people or 50 per cent of the capacity of the ground or the prescribed limit set by State Disaster Management Authorities, whichever number is lesser, from January 28, 2022, till February 8, 2022 (excluding the silence period)," it added.

The EC said that limit of five persons for door to door campaign has been enhanced to 10 people, excluding security personnel and video vans for publicity permitted at designated open spaces with Covid restrictions.

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EC shifts three DMs, two SPs

Lucknow (PNS): The Election Commission of India on Saturday directed the transfer of district magistrates/district election officers of three districts and superintendents of police of two districts.

Chief Electoral Officer of UP, Ajay Kumar Shukla, said Suryapal Gangwar would be the new DM of Firozabad, Shivakant Dwivedi would be the new DM of Bareilly and Neha Sharma would take over as DM of Kanpur Nagar. Ashish Tewari will be the new district police chief of Firozabad and Hemraj Meena will be the new SP of Kaushambi.

UP Schools shut till January 30

Lucknow (PTI): The Uttar Pradesh government on Saturday extended the closure of educational institutions, including schools, till January 30 in view of rising coronavirus cases in the state.

The closure of all educational institutions has been extended till January 30 and online classes will continue, according to an order issued by Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Awanshi Kumar Awasthi. The government had earlier ordered closure of the educational institutions till January 23 in view of a rise in Covid cases.

Shah goes door-to-door in Kairana, meets exodus-affected families

PTI ■ KAIRANA

Putting into the spotlight the issue of alleged exodus of Hindus from Kairana before 2017, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday visited the affected families who have since returned here as he began his door-to-door election campaign in western Uttar Pradesh.

Asserting that the people of Kairana were no longer living in fear, Shah said a satisfactory law and order situation is the primary condition for development and the Yogi Adityanath government has ensured this in Uttar Pradesh.

Accompanied by party workers and leaders, wearing saffron caps and stoles, Shah walked in the rain-drenched lanes in the winter chill and distributed pamphlets on the achievements of the BJP government, amid slogans of 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Bharat Mata ki Jai'.

The choice of Kairana for Shah's first political programme in Uttar Pradesh after the assembly poll dates were announced is significant as BJP leaders had alleged that a large number of Hindus were

forced to migrate from the area due to threats during the Samajwadi Party rule, making it a big poll issue in 2017.

In the recent election rallies, top BJP leaders have been reminding the voters of the situation during the SP reign while claiming an improved law and order under the Yogi Adityanath government.

The issue, however, has had communal overtones and was seen as a polarising factor in the last polls.

"For the development of any state, the primary condition is that its law and order should be proper. This is Kairana from where people used to flee earlier, and today when I went on around, the people told me that 'Modijee kee kripa ho gayee'."

"Yogiji has improved the law and order. Those who forced the exodus have had to flee. This is the kind of confidence we are seeing in the people of UP. I think that in the coming days, Uttar Pradesh will become the most developed state of India," Shah told reporters here.

The Union Home Minister met the 'victim' families who

Continued on Page 6

Omicron not last variant: WHO

3,37,704 Covid-19 cases, 488 deaths in 24 hrs in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

From one case on December 2 last year, the Omicron tally in the country has crossed the 10,000-mark! India recorded a total of 3,37,704 Covid-19 new cases of the novel coronavirus, along with 488 deaths due to the infection in the past 24 hours. India's daily Covid cases have remained over 3 lakh for the 3rd day in a row.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned that "to suggest that Omicron will be the last variant is unwise...this virus is circulating at a very intense level around the Earth globe and it's still evolving... Absolutely critical we continue to track, monitor & assess variants".

"We're hearing a lot of people suggest that #Omicron is the last variant & that it's over after this and that is not the case... This virus is circulating at a very intense level around the world," said Maria Van Kerkhove, infectious disease epidemiologist; Covid-19 Technical Lead of the WHO.

"We must keep working to reduce Covid-19 transmission," she added.

According to the data



Workers pack Covid-19 home isolation kits at Victory playground in Hyderabad on Saturday. Nearly 1 crore kits will be packed and sent across Telangana PTI

shared by the Union Health Ministry, the country saw a total of 2,42,676 discharges in the last 24 hours, taking the total recovery rate at around 93.50 per cent, and total recoveries data reached to 3,63,01,482.

The total active cases of Covid-19 in India have risen to 21,13,365, the Ministry data showed today. The total death toll in the country is now at 4,88,884. In India, the first death due to the Covid pandemic was reported in March 2020.

Additionally, the tally of Omicron cases reached 10,050 on Saturday with an increase of 3.69 per cent since yesterday. The daily positivity rate is at 17.22 per cent today.

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60% Goa MLAs disloyal: ADR

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Goa's MLAs who were elected in the 2017 Assembly polls do not seem to have any allegiances to the party which fielded them in the elections. As many as 24 MLAs in Goa, which is 60 per cent of the 40-member Assembly, shifted their loyalties in the last five years, the Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) said in a report.

Goa has set a unique record, which is "unparalleled" in the history of Indian democracy. Assembly polls in Goa will be held on February 14.

"In the five-year tenure of the current Assembly (2017-2022), as many as 24 MLAs have changed their parties, which is 60 per cent of the total strength of the House. It has never happened anywhere else in India. A clear reflection of utter disrespect to the mandate of voters. A callous approach to ethics and discipline overborne by uncontrolled greed at its worst," the report stated.

It said the list of 24 MLAs did not include the names of Vishwajit Rane, Subhash Shirodkar, and Dayanand Sopte, who had resigned as Congress MLAs in 2017, and

Goa ex-CM Laxmikant Parsekar to quit BJP

New Delhi: Former Goa CM Laxmikant Parsekar to quit the BJP. He said, "I was a member of BJP for years but the party took me for granted. I have prepared to dissociate myself from the BJP and have decided to contest independently. I will come out with this declaration in a couple of days."

joined the ruling BJP, before contesting polls on its tickets.

At least 10 Congress legislators had crossed over to the BJP in 2019. They included the then leader of opposition Chandrakant Kavlekar (Quepem constituency). Other Congress MLAs who had switched over to the BJP are - Jennifer Monserrate (Taleigao), Francisco Silveria (St Andre), Filipe Nery Rodrigues (Velim), Wilfred Nazareth MeninoD'sa (Nuvem), Clafasio Dias (Cuncolim), Antonio Carano Fernandes (St Cruz), Neelkanth Halarankar (Tivim), Isidore Fernandes (Canconca), Atanasio Monserrate (who won the Panaji by election in 2019 after death of Manohar Parrikar).

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Gandhi's favourite 'Abide with Me' left off Beating Retreat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mahatma Gandhi's favourite tune "Abide With Me" will not figure in this year's Beating the Retreat Ceremony on Rajpath on January 29.

This hymn played at the annual ceremony since 1950 was omitted in 2020 but was included later following criticism from various quarters.

Incidentally, this development on Saturday came a day after a political slugfest over the shifting of the Amar Jawan Jyoti from the India Gate to the newly constructed National War Memorial (NWM).

Veterans and Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi said the extinguishing of the Amar Jawan Jyoti was an insult to the fallen soldiers. However, the Government refuted the charge and said the flame was not extinguished and instead merged into the eternal flame at the NWM.

"Abide With Me" is a hymn that was written by Scottish Anglican Henry Francis Lyte in 1847 while battling tuberculosis. It is a prayer urging God



to remain with the speaker through life and in death.

A favourite of Gandhiji, this tune is played at the end of the Beating the Retreat ceremony at Vijay Chowk every year. The Retreat, an ancient military tradition, signals the end of fighting for the day, with soldiers sheathing arms and withdrawing from the battlefield. The hymn is set to the tune of Eventide by William Henry Monk.

This year's ceremony will begin with "Fanfare" by Buglers, followed by "Veer Sainik" by the Massed Bands and six tunes by the Pipes and Drums band. Bands of the Central Armed Police Forces will play three tunes, followed by four tunes by the Air Force Band, which will include a special "Ladakoo" tune, by Flight Lt L S Rupachandra.

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CAPSULE

60% DEATHS IN 3RD WAVE AMONG UNVACCINATED

New Delhi: A study by a private hospital has said that 60 per cent of the patients who died during the current wave of Covid-19 pandemic were either partially or fully unvaccinated. The study by Max Healthcare said the deaths reported were largely among those aged over 70 and those suffering from multiple co-morbidities such as kidney diseases, heart diseases, diabetes, cancers, etc.

RAPE ACCUSED SHOT DEAD OUTSIDE COURT

Gorakhpur: A rape accused was shot dead in front of the district courts here on Friday. The deceased has been identified as Dilshad Hussain, a resident of Muzaffarpur (Bihar). Two security guards and the vehicle stand manager nabbed attacker.

7 killed, several injured in Mumbai skyscraper blaze

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

At least seven persons were killed and 23 others injured when a massive fire broke out in a 20-storey Kamala building located in front of Bhatia Hospital at the bustling Nana Chowk-Gowalia Tank area of Grant Road in south Mumbai on Saturday morning.

The fire erupted on the 18th floor of the high-rise building around 7.15 am. Of the 30 persons injured in the fire, seven succumbed to burn injuries, while the condition of six persons was reported to be "critical".

While six persons, including two women, died in the



early part of the day, one person succumbed to burn injuries in the evening. The injured have been admitted to Kasturba, Nair, Masina, Bhatia and Reliance hospital. Of the injured, seven were treated and allowed to go home.

The Mumbai Fire Brigade designated it as a Level-3 (major) fire. In all, 13 fire tenders, seven water tankers, and snorkel ladders were involved

in the fire fighting operations. The fire brigade extinguished the fire at 12.20 pm.

Though the cause of fire has not been established, the massive plume of smoke emanating from the fire-hit building enveloped south Mumbai skies, causing considerable anxiety among the residents in the neighbourhood.

While Prime minister Narendra Modi announced an ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh each from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF), the Maharashtra Government has announced an ex-gratia of ₹5 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased.

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Yogi: BJP has fulfilled all promises it made

Flags off party's poll campaign van

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Flagging off the party's election campaign van from the BJP state headquarters, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the double-engine government of the Bharatiya Janata Party had fulfilled all the promises it made.

"The BJP government has ensured development of the people of the state while following the mantra of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas with everyone's efforts," the chief minister said.

He said the 25 crore people of the state witnessed that before 2017, the businessmen and the citizens had to migrate due to which the progress of the state was blocked. "Now the trend has reversed and criminals are migrating after 2017. Today, the state is moving towards becoming the leading economy of the country by setting new paradigms of progress," he asserted.

Earlier, in a programme organised on the state BJP office premises, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath along with party's state president Swatantra Dev Singh, Union minister and co-election in-charge of



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath flagging off the party's election campaign van from the BJP state headquarters in Lucknow on Saturday

the state Anurag Thakur and Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya flagged off the election campaign by showing the BJP flag.

On this occasion, the chief minister said that the party was launching election vans in all 403 Vidhan Sabha constituencies of the state. He said that today the benefits of the double-engine government were visible to all.

"We are working with commitment towards development of villages, uplift of poor, prosperity of farmers, employment of youth and protection of mothers and daughters while adopting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's motto of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas and Sabka Prayas," Yogi pointed out.

Making it clear that there was no place for appeasement, he said BJP's double-engine government had brought about development for all without any discrimination. "Once again we are going out to disseminate the message of development with the blessings of the people," he said while stating that Indradev (rain god) also showered his blessings in the form of rain.

'BJP govt has shown the courage to arrest those who play with law'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that a government should have the courage to arrest those who played with the law and only the Bharatiya Janata Party government had shown the courage to do so.

Chief Minister Yogi said this in an effective voter dialogue programme in Bulandshahr on Saturday. Making a scathing attack on the opposition, he said that this was the same Uttar Pradesh where riots used to happen in the previous governments and curfew was imposed for months but after 2017 the situation in Uttar Pradesh had changed.

Yogi said that today Kanwar yatra was taken out in the same Uttar Pradesh, an airport was being built in Jewar, universities were being built in the name of Shakumbhari Devi in Saharanpur and in the name of Mahendra Singh in Aligarh.

He said a medical college named after Kalyan Singh was being established in Bulandshahr and a sports university was being built in Meerut in the name of Major Dhyan Chand.

The chief minister said that Uttar Pradesh was progressing rapidly with a new model of development.

He expressed confidence that

once again the Bharatiya Janata Party government would be formed in Uttar Pradesh with a thumping majority.

In a blistering attack on the SP, he said that their list of candidates told what their thinking was. "The candidates of Kairana, Loni, Bulandshahr and Saharanpur who have been given tickets by the SP are named in one or the other case. It is clear from the list of SP candidates that their intention is to do politics of disintegration, anarchy and destruction in the country and give protection to mafia and professional criminals," he said.

He said that earlier in the previous government, bungalows were built for one family, but the Bharatiya Janata Party government built 45 lakh houses for the poor. "This is the difference between the SP and the BJP government," he said.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the people had taught a lesson to the family, and the casteist and dynastic party in the last elections. He said the BJP party would get the blessings of the people in the 2022 elections as well.

Assuring the future, Yogi said that after the BJP victory in 2022, the party would make Uttar Pradesh towards the number one economy in the country.

Akhilesh has sensed his defeat in polls: Keshav

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya on Saturday launched a scathing attack on Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, saying that the Samajwadi Party leader had already sensed his defeat in the first phase of elections.

"This is why Akhilesh Yadav was nervous about contesting elections earlier and now he is also nervous about releasing the list (of candidates)," Maurya remarked.

He said that even after March 10, the exodus of rioters, mafia, goons and the corrupt would continue from the state. Uttar Pradesh always loved development and progress, which only a

Bharatiya Janata Party government could provide.

The UP deputy chief minister said that it was for everyone to see how the Bharatiya Janata Party government of Uttar Pradesh ensured progress of farmers, youth, women, poor and underprivileged in the state since 2017. "Those who forced the people of Uttar Pradesh to migrate are themselves on the run today. The exodus of such people will continue in Uttar Pradesh because UP is again demanding the BJP government," he said.

Referring to the achievements of the BJP government, the deputy chief minister said that SP chief Akhilesh Yadav should understand that his



party stood no chance and it was time for them to return home.

"Jan jan ki yahi pukar, UP maange phir bhajpa sarkaar," he said while responding to the

questions of journalists in Lucknow.

Taking a jibe at the opposition Samajwadi Party, Maurya said that the BJP's wind was blowing in Uttar Pradesh, mitigating the SP politics of deceit and false promises.

To a query, the deputy chief minister said that the Samajwadi Party was full of goons, criminals, mafia, corrupt and rioters. "This is why Akhilesh Yadav is now panicking on the release of the list of candidates," he pointed out, and added, "He is bound to panic because he kept sleeping for five years and has come to contest the elections in UP."

Maurya said the previous SP government had scams in

the pension and PF of government employees. "The public has not forgotten the tenure of such a Samajwadi Party government," he said.

Maurya said there was a time before 2017 when farmers used to commit suicide in UP. "Today, UP is number one in wheat, potato, vegetable, fruits and oilseeds production. After independence, for the first time, in the BJP government, the farmers got the gift of Kisan Samman Nidhi. Farmers doing advanced farming were given respect. Tractors were distributed to them as gifts. The government bought paddy and wheat directly from the farmers and made the payment directly into their accounts," he said.

Akhilesh trying to secure SP fortress of the Yadav belt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Even as Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav was forced to take a plunge into the battle of hustling due to the ban on election campaign imposed by the Election Commission of India, the party has taken the event as a blessing in disguise and secured its fortress of Yadav belt where the Bharatiya Janata Party has made inroads.

Akhilesh Yadav, buoyed by the success of huge turnout in Vijay Rath Yatra, had decided not to contest the assembly election and concentrate on campaigning. In November last year, he had also announced that he would not contest the assembly election.

Two events however forced him to change the strategy -- ban of campaigning by the ECI (now extended till January 30) due to third wave of pandemic, and Bharatiya Janata Party deciding to field Yogi Adityanath from Gorakhpur. In a loud and clear message to the electorate that the BJP is leading the battle from the front, the saffron party announced Yogi Adityanath's name in the very first list of its candidates even when the polling in Gorakhpur will be held in the sixth phase of election on March 3.

Samajwadi Party on Saturday formally confirmed that Akhilesh Yadav will contest assembly election, his first, from Karhal constituency in Mainpuri district, which is in his family's home turf. Karhal has voted for Samajwadi Party candidates in every election since 1993, except in 2002, when the BJP flipped it. It returned to SP in 2007 and is currently held by Sobaran Yadav.

By contesting from Karhal assembly constituency in Mainpuri, the cur-



Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav with Pravin Singh Aron and Supriya Aron, who joined SP on Saturday

rent and long-time Lok Sabha seat of his father Mulayam Singh Yadav, former chief minister Akhilesh Yadav is trying to secure his party's fortress of the Yadav belt where the BJP has made inroads.

Karhal constituency has a high population of Yadavs. The SP won it in 2017 with a margin of more than 38,000 votes despite the BJP wave in the state. Karhal town is just a 15-minute drive from Yadav family's native village, Saifai, in Etawah district. With Akhilesh Yadav taking the plunge into assembly elections, the Samajwadi Party is trying to send a larger message in the entire Yadav belt from Firozabad to Kannauj to rally behind the party in these elections.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, despite an alliance with the Bahujan

Samaj Party, the Samajwadi Party lost in Yadav-belt stronghold seats of Firozabad, Budaun, Etawah and Kannauj. The first two parliamentary seats were won by it in the 2014 general elections. In the 2017 assembly elections, SP won just one out of five seats in Firozabad district, one out of six seats in Budaun, one out of three in Etawah district and one out of three in Kannauj district. The BJP managed to win one out of four seats in Mainpuri district too.

The Samajwadi Party feels that with Akhilesh Yadav's candidature from Karhal and his patch-up with uncle Shivalp Singh Yadav, the party can reclaim its stronghold area from the BJP. However, the BJP is in no mood to let that happen.

Akhilesh's uncle Hari Om Yadav,

the sitting MLA from Siraganj in Firozabad district which is the only seat the SP won in that district in 2017, has joined the BJP and will contest the seat on a BJP ticket. The ruling party has also put up former IPS officer and Dalit face Asim Arun from Kannauj, currently a SP seat.

BJP spokesperson Rakesh Tripathi points out that even in the Mainpuri Lok Sabha constituency held by Mulayam Singh Yadav, the victory margin had come down to 94,000 votes in 2019 from more than 3.21 lakh votes in 2014 despite Mayawati being in alliance with the SP in 2019 and making a personal appeal to voters for Mulayam's victory.

The BJP has not announced a candidate from Karhal against Akhilesh Yadav.

Another front launched for UP elections

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Yet another political front, the Bhagedari Parivartan Morcha comprising of Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi-led All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) and former Bahujan Samaj Party leader Babu Singh Kushwaha has been announced to take on the Bharatiya Janata Party in the 2022 UP assembly elections.

The front will also chal-

lenge the Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party and Congress in the Uttar Pradesh assembly polls.

AIMIM, which had announced to field 100 candidates alone in the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, has found a new partner. Asaduddin Owaisi, along with Babu Singh Kushwaha, who floated Jan Adhikar Party after leaving the Bahujan Samaj Party, has formed the Bhagedari Parivartan

Morcha to contest the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections. All the three parties together will decide the candidates. Even after the completion of nominations for 58 seats for the first phase of assembly elections, all three together will now decide their candidates on the remaining 348 seats.

In Lucknow, Asaduddin Owaisi along with Babu Singh Kushwaha and Vaman Meshram, on Saturday, announced the formation of

the Bhagedari Parivartan Morcha. Owaisi said that if the alliance came to power, there would be two chief ministers, one from the Other Backward Classes community and the other from the Dalit community and there would be three deputy chief ministers from the Muslim community.

Earlier, AIMIM had announced the names of 27 candidates for the UP assembly elections.

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No challenge to Yogi in Gorakhpur Sadar

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Gorakhpur Sadar assembly constituency has become a 'hot seat' for the country in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections. This seat has been a center of attraction ever since Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was declared as the Bharatiya Janata Party candidate from there. The dominance of Yogi Adityanath on the Gorakhpur Sadar seat looks unchallenged even as the polling in this constituency is still a few weeks away.

Gorakhpur is the hometown of Yogi Adityanath. Besides having won the Gorakhpur Lok Sabha seat five times, Yogi is also the head priest (Peethadheeshwar) of the Gorakhnath temple in Gorakhpur. This seat has been influenced by the temple itself for many decades. The votes in favour of Yogi Adityanath during the previous Lok Sabha elections show that he remains invincible in the upcoming elections.

In the past 17 elections, the Jana Sangh, the Hindu Mahasabha and the BJP have been victorious 10 times from the Gorakhpur Lok Sabha seat, formerly known as Gorakhpur Sadar. The Jana Sangh won this seat once under the banner of Janata Party. The Congress has had six wins under their former leader, late Indira Gandhi. For the past three decades, the Indian National Congress has been struggling to match the invincible dominance of the 'Yogi' however, to no avail. The Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party wagon is still far from sight.

Yogi Adityanath won the Gorakhpur Lok Sabha seat for five consecutive terms in 1998, 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014. He had been leading by a margin nearly three times of his nearest rival in Gorakhpur Sadar, one of the assembly segments of Gorakhpur Lok Sabha constituency, in terms of votes. This is the reason that not only the BJP but also the general public is considering the fight on this seat as completely a one-sided affair.

In the assembly elections of 1967, 1974, and 1977, the Jana Sangh dominated the Gorakhpur Sadar seat. In the 1977 elections, Jana Sangh was in the fray by becoming a part of the Janata Party. After this, except for the elections of 1980 and 1985, from 1989 till now this constituency has remained in the favour of the BJP.

Having a look at the votes secured by Yogi Adityanath as MP in Gorakhpur, there was no competition between him and the candidates of other parties who fought against him. Yogi has been an MP five times. Every time he contested, he got bumper votes from the area.

Going by the figures of his last two elections, in the 2009 parliamentary elections, he got 77,438 votes out of a total of 1,22,983 votes polled from Gorakhpur Shahr assembly constituency while Vinay Shankar Tiwari of BSP, the runner-up, got only 25,352 votes. The SP polled only 11,521 votes.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, the graph of votes that Yogi got increased further. He got 1,33,892 votes out of the total 2,06,155 votes polled. The runner-up, Rajmati Nishad of SP, received 51,055 votes and Rambhual Nishad of BSP got only 20,479 votes.

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E-Tendering Tender Notice
Dy. Chief Engineer/Bridge/Line/North Central Railway/Prayagraj acting for and on behalf of the President of India, invites E-TENDERS on prescribed form for the following work up to 14:30 hrs. on 22.02.2022. The details of the Tender are as under:-

Tender No. 2021-10

Name of Work Replacement of deck plate with its member Br. No. 30 (Yamuna) UP & DN line between Naini Pyragraj stations of Prayagraj Division.

Approx. Cost of Work (Rs.) ₹ 17,34,41,548.70

Earnest Money (Rs.) ₹ 10,17,200/-

Cost of Tender Form (Rs.) Nil

Completion Period 12 Months

Date of Opening of Tender 22.02.2022

Eligibility Criteria for Similar work Repair to steel girder involving field riveting or any bridge work involving erection/launching or regrading of open web girder.

Note:- (1) The complete information along with tender document of above E-Tenders are available on Website www.ireps.gov.in up to 14:30 hrs. on the due date of tender opening i.e. 22.02.2022. (2) Bids other than in the form of E-Bids shall not be accepted against above tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with Digital Signature Certificate issued by CCA under IT Act-2008. (3) Rates entered into Financial Rate page and duly signed digitally shall be considered. Rates and any other financial entry in any other form/letter head if attached by vendors shall be straightway ignored and shall not be considered. (4) Document being attached should be signed by the tenderer on its body. (5) Payment of Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) & Tender Document cost (TDC) in respect of e-tendering shall be accepted through net banking or payment gateway only. (6) In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached. (7) Tender on line can be submitted up to 14:30 hrs. on 22.02.2022. (8) Supplier of Goods and/or services would be the subject to GST Act. And Rules as applicable from time to time. (9) The Tenderer has to submit necessary documents in compliance of clause 10 to 18 (Part-I) of GCC July/2020 mandatorily, otherwise offer will be considered as incomplete offer and accordingly shall not be considered. 76/22 (A)

North central railways www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in @CPRO NCR

2,660 test positive, 2,638 recover

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As many as 2,660 people tested positive for coronavirus infection while 2,638 COVID-19 patients in the city during the last 24 hours.

The city had 17,536 active cases on Saturday evening.

Yogesh Raghuvanshi from the CMO office said that those who tested positive included 1,480 males and 1,063 females.

He said 377 people tested positive in Chinhat, 341 in Aliganj, 328 in Alambagh, 202 in Indiranagar, 218 in Sarojininar, 110 in Tudiaganj, 111 at NK Road. They included 107 travellers, 882 contact cases, 75 pre-surgicals, 511 with influenza-like illness, 74 healthcare workers and 69 admitted at the Command Hospital.

Doctors warn that if even one person in the family has tests positive then nearly all the members should consider themselves as positive since Omicron is highly infectious.

"It is better that the other members of the family also isolate themselves and see that they do not intermingle with one another as soon as they come to know that one amongst them has tested positive. They should wait and watch for the next few days to see if the symptoms manifest or not. It is always better to get oneself tested when there are symptoms and if positive one should also get tested after 4-5 days to see whether one has turned negative," said a senior doctor.

Meanwhile, at the Lok Bandhu Hospital, Medical Superintendent Dr Ajay Kumar Tripathi said that an NABL assessment at the pathology department was carried out by Dr Ravi Kumar from the RML Hospital Delhi and Dr Aditi from Bengaluru. Dr Tripathi said that all the quality parameters were checked by the team.

"The Lok Bandhu Hospital is a 300-bed hospital which serves a very big area. The team conducted an all day online inspection. The lab is likely to get NABL soon as efforts are being made by all and results will show soon," he said.

53.23 per cent teens vaccinated in Lko

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Over half of the teen population in the age group of 15-18 has already been vaccinated in Lucknow district in the ongoing Covid vaccination exercise.

A senior official from the Health department said that the vaccination of the teens was going on at a good pace and that the vaccination of the 15-18 years population was taking place at over 200 schools in the Lucknow district with some of the schools having already achieved a 100 per cent vaccination.

In Lucknow district, the estimated population of teens is 3.2 lakh out of which almost 1.7 lakh have been vaccinated. Giving details of the Covid vaccination of teens in the other districts, the official said that till now Ghazipur had performed the best with over 95.2 per cent vaccination, followed by Pilibhit (86.26 per cent), Varanasi (73.11 per cent), Kaushambi (72.32 per cent), Basti (71.31 per cent) and Muzaffarnagar (71.17 per cent) coverage.

Amongst the districts where there has been a low coverage of vaccination are Agra (38.03 per cent), Sitapur (38.37 per cent), Prayagraj (38.58 per cent), Meerut (38.85 per cent), Moradabad (38.89 per cent), Lakhimpur Kheri (39.17 per cent), and Saharanpur (39.51 per cent).

The official further informed that with the rising Omicron cases, the vaccination drive was getting impacted in the precautionary doses



"Over 50 per cent of the staff amongst those who were due for the booster dose at the KGMU has already taken the dose. Many health workers are already infected and are having symptoms of fever and cough and this could be the reason that they are waiting to get better to take the dose"

especially in case of the health workers. "Health workers testing positive or being symptomatic they are avoiding taking the vaccination at this time," he said.

Meanwhile, Covid vaccination nodal officer at KGMU, Dr Nishant Verma, said that there was huge enthusiasm for the precautionary dose in the first week but now there was slackness.

"Over 50 per cent of the staff amongst those who were due for the booster dose at the KGMU has already taken the dose. Many health workers are already infected and are having symptoms of fever and cough and this could be the reason that they are waiting to get better to take the dose," he said.

He said that getting vaccinated while infected would not serve any purpose because it would make the vaccine ineffective.

"As per the guidelines if one is infected then the person should take the vaccine after three months" he said. When asked whether it was likely that many persons may have taken the vaccination even when they were infected, he said that it was possible but it would not lead to any clinical manifestation.

He said that the numbers had dropped to a large extent with only 200-250 coming for the Covid vaccination when in the previous week the numbers were 600-700. "It could be due to both cold and Omicron," he said.

BSP announces 51 candidates for 2nd phase polls

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on Saturday released a list of 51 candidates for the second phase of the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections.

Out of these 51 candidates, 23 are Muslims.

Addressing a press conference, BSP chief Mayawati also gave the slogan of the party for the elections - 'Har polling booth ko jeetna hai, BSP ko satta mein lana hai'.

"Today, I am announcing a list of 51 candidates out of 55 seats for the second phase of the Uttar Pradesh elections. This time we have given the slogan 'Har polling booth ko jeetna hai, BSP ko satta mein lana hai'. I hope the party workers will work hard and will form the BSP government like in 2007," Mayawati said. She further said that the names of the remaining four candidates would also be announced soon.

"We have asked the party workers to campaign while following the Covid protocols. I sincerely hope that even in the critical times of coronavirus, the workers will work for the victory of their candidates," Mayawati added.

Earlier on January 15, Mayawati had announced the names of the candidates for the first phase polls. Elections for the 403 assembly constituencies



in Uttar Pradesh will be held in seven phases starting February 10. A total of 58 assembly seats spread over 11 districts will go to the polls in the first phase on February 10.

Polling in Uttar Pradesh will be held on February 10, 14, 20, 23, 27 and March 3 and 7 in seven phases. The counting of votes will be taken up on March 10.

RLD alleges Covid protocol violation in BJP campaign

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Rashtriya Lok Dal leader Anupam Mishra, in a statement, alleged that Covid protocol was violated during Union Home Minister Amit Shah's door to door campaign in Kairana.

Mishra said the Union minister and his supporters did not follow the Covid protocol during the door to door campaign on Saturday.

"All parties barring the Bharatiya Janata Party are being constantly advised by the Election Commission of India to follow Covid protocol during the election campaign. Why is the BJP not being reprimanded?" he asked.

He alleged that the district administration and the Election Commission of India looked hapless before the mighty minister and his supporters during violation of Covid protocol.

UPSRTC files complaint against pvt company

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation Regional Manager PK Bose lodged a report against a private firm for trying to dupe innocent jobseekers by offering contractual employment in the UPSRTC.

In his complaint to the Hazratganj police, Bose said the Delhi based private firm invited applications from job seekers for contractual employment in UPSRTC though it was not authorised for it.

"In the advertisement, the company displayed a letter reading 3-year renewable contractual agreement and application for employment letter and bearing signature of UPSRTC Chairman Itikharuddin, Managing Director Dheeraj Sahu and UPSRTC official Sarneet Kaur," he said.

Bose said the signatures were fake and no such order was issued to the company by the UPSRTC.

"The UPSRTC never signs any agreement with any private company to this effect. It also never asks any private company to provide contractual employees for the corporation," he said.

Police registered a case of forgery and tampering with government documents on the complaint and have started investigation of the case.

DUPED: A man was duped of Rs 20,000 in an online fraud case in Sushant Golf City police station area on Saturday. The victim, identified as Shambhu Nath Singh of Madharmau village, said his son had to consult a paediatrician for his child and so he searched on the internet the contact number of a doctor in Gomti Nagar (at Patrakarpuram crossing) on January 13.

He said he got a contact number and dialled it to book a slot for consultation.

"The call ended abruptly and I got another call which my son attended. The man on the other end asked us to get online registration due to COVID-19 for consultation with the doctor and gave us two mobile phone numbers. He further asked us to forward the message on those mobile numbers," he said.

Singh said money was withdrawn from his son's account when his son forwarded the message sent by the fraudster.

"My elder son got messages of online purchase of goods and later Rs 20,000 was deducted from his bank account," Singh said.

Police are investigating the case.

Youth shot dead in Para

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 32-year-old property dealer was shot dead and his body was dumped behind a plywood factory in Para police station area.

The incident came to light on Saturday morning. The victim, identified as Sandeep Pal of Naraua village in Kakori, had come here to attend a birthday party thrown by his friend. Police suspect that Sandeep was killed during revelry while partying or over some old enmity.

The deceased's family members identified the body. The police sent the body for autopsy. As per reports, some residents of Salempur Pataura village spotted a body lying in a vacant plot behind a plywood factory and informed the police about it. Meanwhile, Vikaram Pal, who was searching for his brother Sandeep, also reached there and identified the body.

The police also reached the spot and sent the body for autopsy. It transpired during preliminary investigation that Sandeep along with his friend Manish Gautam of Naraua village had left the house to attend a birthday party at some place in the city on Friday evening.

It further surfaced that Sandeep left the house around 6 pm on Friday after his family got a call from one Akash Gautam of Rasoolpur village

who invited him to meet him at the party.

Sandeep did not return home and his family members tried to contact him on his cell phone but could not connect. They also contacted Manish and Akash but did not get any clue about Sandeep's whereabouts. Around 9 am on Saturday, the deceased's brother came to know about the recovery of a body and reached the spot only to find his brother lying dead.

He said Sandeep was shot in the stomach. His bike was found parked near Sardar Bhagat Singh Inter College in Para. The police were told by the family members that Sandeep had left the house on a bike.

ADCP (South Circle) RK Srivastava said the youths whose names figured in the case were absconding. "Police teams searched the youths (Manish and Akash) to extract details of the case but they were not found at their homes. This had deepened suspicion of their complicity in the case. However, we have no evidence as yet to corroborate their crime," he said.

The police said Sandeep was killed after some incident took place during the party. "We are trying to find out what transpired between Sandeep and other persons in the that led to his murder," the ADCP said.

First randomisation of EVMs, VVPATs

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

District Election Officer Abhishek Prakash carried out the first randomisation of the EVMs and VVPATs machines at the Collectorate on Saturday in front of the representatives of all political parties.

ADM (Administration) and Deputy District Election Officer Amar Pal Singh, Assistant District Election Officer Abhay Kishore, SDM Bakshi-ka-Talab, officials from the NIC and representatives of political parties were present on the occasion.

Meanwhile systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) for free, fair, accessible, inclusive, transparent and ethical elections to build a truly participative democracy by encouraging all eligible citizens to vote and make an informed decision during elections are also being carried out in the district.

An official from the district election office said that they held a webinar with brand ambassador SVEEP Toolika Rani

and would hold a poster competition, mega quiz for schools and colleges. He said that these activities were being carried out online.

Officials said that working on the premise of 'No Voter to be Left Behind', the Election Commission of India strived relentlessly to ensure participative, inclusive, inducement free and accessible elections in the world's largest democracy through the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme.

Over 80,000 candidates to appear in TET in city today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As many as 80,604 candidates are scheduled to appear for the TET to be held in Lucknow district on Sunday with 47,349 candidates appearing in the first shift examination and 33,255 in the second shift.

Giving this information, DIOS at Lucknow, Amarkant Singh, said that there were 99 centres in the district for the first shift and 72 for the second shift exams and all arrangements had been made for security and for following Covid protocols.

"All arrangements have been made in such a manner that there is no loophole and all the staff on duty have been updated about the government orders so that there is no confusion regarding anything," he said.

Singh said that the gates of the exam centres would be opened one and a half hours prior to the start of the examination for entry of the candidates and closed half an hour before the start of the examination. He said that apart from the CCTV surveillance, video recording would also be done.

"All the centres will have static magistrates with a total of 35 static magistrates on duty in the district. The arrangements by the police force are already there as earlier. There will also be 35 mobile teams," he said.

The DIOS said that for maintaining the Covid guidelines, they had set up Covid help desks at all the centers with provisions for masks, sanitisers as well as oximeters. "Those who

"All arrangements have been made in such a manner that there is no loophole and all the staff on duty have been updated about the government orders so that there is no confusion regarding anything"

exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough and fever will be made to sit separately in another room at the centre," he said.

He said the first shift was from 10 am and the second from 2:30 pm with each being of a duration of two and a half hours.

It may be noted that 81,000 candidates slated to appear for the UP TET (Teachers Eligibility Test) in the Lucknow district on November 28 last year were impacted when the examinations were cancelled after reports of paper leak. At that time, the examinations were cancelled, the papers had already been distributed at 9:45 am and the candidates had started writing the answers at their respective centers. When the exams were cancelled many students had expressed their disappointment for the preparations and time wasted by them.

There are over 2500 basic schools in the district. The exams are held twice every year but because of COVID-19 pandemic it is being held after a gap.

Police keeping an eye on movement of people

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow city and rural police are keeping a close watch on the movement of commuters in the wake of elections and as per the directive for ensuring compliance with the model code of conduct.

The aim behind the vigil is to prevent any violation of the model code of conduct.

The police teams are checking

four-wheelers and transport vehicles.

The rural police are keeping a watch on those entering Lucknow. The police said the drive aimed at ensuring free and fair polls and ensuring law and order in the district.

The police teams are also keeping an eye on social media posts with a large number of cops, who have expertise in cyber crime and modern gadgets, working overnight. The

police are also conducting flag marches in different parts of rural and urban Lucknow to instil a sense of confidence among the people who will vote in the time to come.

On the other hand, police teams are working in sync with the Excise officials to prevent manufacturing of illicit liquor and smuggling of liquor.

"The consumption of illicit liquor increases during elections. It affects

the business of the authorised and licence holder shop owners. This is a good move of the police and it will avert any untoward happening during the election campaign," media incharge of Liquor Welfare Association, Devesh Jaiswal, said.

Sources say smuggling of liquor witnesses a spurt during the election or festivals. "The teams are deployed and are keeping a close watch at Lucknow's borders with Hardoi,

Sitapur, Barabanki," they said.

They said some of the police stations of rural Lucknow were at the borders of Hardoi and Unnao.

"Also people in these localities were arrested for manufacturing/selling illicit liquor in the past. There are some areas in these districts, including Lucknow, where illicit liquor is manufactured. Police have identified these areas and vigil in these areas has also been intensified," they said.

Husband held for killing his wife

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Para resident woman Sofia aka Zara was killed by her husband in a dispute over money.

The police made this claim after arresting the deceased's husband, Yasin Khan, who was absconding since his name figured in the crime on Thursday.

The police also arrested Yasin's first wife Saharbano for abetting the crime.

Yasin confessed to his crime and said Zara had spent Rs 40,000 which he had saved to meet some emergency in future.

He said Zara gave the money to his brother but concealed this from him and when he learnt about it he became infuriated and killed her.

He said Zara was his second wife.

The 37-year-old Yasin supplies Ayurvedic medicines.

He further confessed that his first wife Saharbano helped him in killing Zara.

Zara was found dead on Thursday. Her body was found wrapped in a bed sheet under a table of a room which was locked.

Interrogation of both the accused revealed that Yasin and Zara had a fierce verbal spat on Thursday morning. Saharbano also reached the scene and she helped Yasin in getting Zara killed during the brawl. She also helped Yasin in wrapping the body in a bed sheet and hiding it under the table.

They planned to dump the body at some deserted place to hide the crime. But the sudden arrival of Zara's brother to her house after she did not attend his call spoiled the plot. Zara's brother found her daughter weeping outside the doors of the room which was locked and when Zara did not respond from inside he called the police.

It further surfaced that Zara's brother sought help from Saharbano in getting the room opened but she did not help him.

CITY BRIEFS

CELEBRATED

SKD Academy celebrated Subhash Chandra Bose Jayanti in all of its branches on Saturday. Students paid tributes to the Indian legend through poems and articles. On this occasion, director Manish Singh talked about Bose's life and his contribution and sacrifice for the freedom of the country. A quiz show was also organised and prizes were given away to the winners.

INTERNATIONAL TRAINING

An international training in fishery research for the Asia-Pacific region concluded at ICAR-NBFGR at Telibagh campus on Saturday. The training, which was held virtually, aimed at regional capacity building in biotechnological tools useful in aquatic genetic resource management and ex-situ conservation of fish species in the region. The training was conducted in collaboration with Asia-Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institutions (APAARI) and Asia-Pacific Consortium on Agricultural bio-technology and Bio-resources (APCoAB),

and rehabilitation work would be done with commitment. Also, the university is planning to work for rural innovation, agro-innovation and entrepreneurship development in rural or backward areas.

DONATION

National Service Scheme unit of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Central University has collected Rs 9,105 as donation from the teachers and students of the university for Communal Harmony, an autonomous body of the Government of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The donation will be used to help the poor helpless people suffering during the COVID-19 pandemic. Vice-chancellor Acharya Sanjay Singh and Dean (Student Welfare) BS

Bhadauria encouraged students to donate.

ADMISSION



The University of Melbourne and RMIT University have offered admission for higher education to Arjun Tandon, a student of City Montessori School, Aliganj Campus-1. CMS founder Jagdish Gandhi congratulated Arjun on his achievement and wished him success in his future. Last year, over 90 CMS students secured admissions with handsome scholarships in some of the best universities of the world.

Zonal Office
128/24 Om Laxmi Tower, H-Block, Kidwai Nagar,
Kanpur-208011, Tel: 0512-2985004

Bank of India
Relationship Beyond Banking

POSSESSION NOTICE See Rule 8 (1)

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer Bank of India under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002, and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand notices to below mentioned Borrower/Guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the Notice plus interest at other charges with in 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower/guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower/Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the below mentioned properties in exercise of power conferred on him under Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 of Act read with rule 8 of the security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002. The borrower/guarantor in particular and public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charge of Bank of India. The borrowers/guarantors attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Name of the Borrower/ Guarantor	Amount as per Demand Notice/Demand Notice Date/ Possession Notice Date	Description of Properties Mortgaged/Owner of the Properties
Branch: Jhansi Main, Kamla Market, Opposite Jhulelal Park, Elite Crossing, Jhansi, Ph: 0510-2441635		
Borrower: M/s Atisha Traders Priporitor: Mr. Rajendra Kumar Gupta S/o Mr. Ram Narayan Gupta Guarantor: 1- Mrs. Rekha Gupta W/o Rajendra Kumar Gupta 2- Mr. Mahendra Kumar Gupta S/o Ram Narayan Gupta	Rs. 20,38,540.87 +Intt. W.E.F. NPA Date +Other Charges 22.09.2021 18.01.2022	Property situated at part of House No. 742 (Old) 1404 (New) Mohalla Nayi Basti Opposite Rajni Vivah Ghar Jhansi Uttar Pradesh, Owned by: Mr. Mahendra Kumar Gupta S/o Ram Narayan Gupta, Area: 355.63 Sq.ft. Boundaries: East: Part of House No. 742 (Seller), West: Way (Gali), North: Part of House No. 742 (Seller), South: Main Road (Outside Khanderao Gate to BKD Crossing Road)
Date: 22.01.2022	Place: Jhansi	Authorised Officer: Bank of India

BJP launches poll campaign in Kashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) launched its poll campaigning in all the three assembly constituencies of the city areas here on Saturday. In this direction, small groups of party workers following the COVID-19 guidelines launched the campaigning in Varanasi Cantonment, City South and City North assembly constituencies from 4 to 6 pm.

State vice-president and MLC Laxman Acharya launched electioneering from Ramnagar crossing while sitting MLA Saurav Srivastava from Lanka crossing, MLC Ashok Dhawan from Rathyatra crossing and city president Vidya Sagar Rai from Sunderpur crossing in Varanasi Cantonment area. Besides, UP Minister and sitting MLA Neelkanth Tiwari launched the campaign from Maidagin crossing (City South), while another minister and sitting MLA Ravindra Jaiswal from



BJP launches poll campaigning from Bhelupur area in Varanasi on Saturday evening.

Sant Atulanand crossing (City North).

Similarly, under the leadership state spokesman Ashok Pandey the campaigning was launched at Bhelupur crossing while the party workers led by

city general secretary Navin Kapoor from Maldahiya crossing and city vice-president Atma Visheshwar from Godowlia crossing.

Through similar small groups, the party has also

launched its poll campaigning from various other crossings in different parts of the city, carrying party's flags, following election model code of conduct as instructed by the Election Commission.

Lotus will bloom from all three seats of the district: Maurya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, who reached home town Kaushambi for the first time on Saturday afternoon after being declared the BJP candidate in the assembly elections from Sirathu, said that lotus will bloom from all the three seats of the district. The BJP government will be formed with a majority in UP and then the campaign against mafia and goons will continue.

After leaving Prayagraj residence, Keshav Prasad reached the Shaktipeeth Kada Dham at around 1.30 pm on Saturday afternoon and took blessings by worshipping Mother Sheela and performing aarti. Then while talking to the media, the Deputy CM said that after being made a candidate, on his first arrival at his birthplace and work land, he has received blessings by bowing at the feet of Mother Sheela. My prayer to mother is to keep calling me for her darshan and keep giving her blessings.

The Deputy CM said that with the trust of the public, lotus will bloom in all three seats including Sirathu in Kaushambi in this assembly election as well as BJP will win more than 300 seats in entire Uttar Pradesh. "I have come to my mother's court with the resolve and intention of good governance, development, welfare of farmers and the poor. I have full faith that with the



Dy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya reached Shaktipeeth Kada Dham to seek blessings of Goddess Sheela.

blessings of mother, BJP government will be formed again in UP", added Maurya.

Keshav Prasad Maurya had won the 2012 assembly election from Sirathu, his native place, after losing twice from the Allahabad City West seat. The residents of Sirathu assembly helped him reach the

assembly. After this, Keshav Prasad Maurya became an MP from Phulpur Lok Sabha constituency in 2014 by winning the election on a BJP ticket.

Then he was given the responsibility of the state president of the BJP and the result of his hard work was that in the 2017 elections, the BJP gov-

ernment was formed with a tremendous majority in UP. When Yogi Adityanath was made the Chief Minister, Keshav Prasad was elected as a member of the Legislative Council and given the post of Deputy CM and Public Works Department Cabinet Minister.

Cong gives promise of 20 lakh jobs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Senior local Congress leaders including former UP Minister Ajay Rai, ex-MP Dr Rajesh Mishra and district and city presidents distributed copies of the party's youth manifesto titled 'Bharti Vidhan' here on Saturday. The manifesto was released by party's leader Rahul Gandhi and general secretary Priyanka Gandhi early in the day. Talking to the reporters at the party's Maidagin office, the party leaders gave the details of its manifesto in which pre-poll promises were also given by the party that if it comes to power in UP, it would provide 20 lakh jobs apart from restoration of student unions.

Former MLA Ajay Rai, who is also the party's candidate from Pindra assembly seat, said that the 'Bharti Vidhan' promises a golden future for the youth and apart from 20 lakh jobs and restoration of student unions in the universities and colleges. 'Along with this, a job calendar will be made in which recruitment advertisement, examination,



Local Congress leaders releasing party's youth manifesto in Varanasi on Saturday.

dates of appointment etc will be recorded and strict action will be taken if it is violated,' he said, adding that for the better future of the youth, the party does not have only hollow words, but a complete plan that how we will provide employment to the youth.

Making attacks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had misled the youth by giving false promises of providing two crore jobs every year whereas the reality

is that lakhs of youth have lost their jobs due to faulty policies of the government. 'We'll revive the small business units which are not only the strength of the state but they generate large scale employment also,' he said.

According to former MP Dr Rajesh Mishra, the party promises that there would be a social justice supervisor for each recruitment to stop the reservation scam and the fees of all competitive examinations would be waived apart from providing free bus and

rail travel for examinations. Targeting the Yogi government, he said that the state government has reduced the budget for education. 'When our government comes, this budget will be increased and all colleges and universities will be upgraded. Along with this, a single window system will be made for pre and post matric scholarships in UP and the scope and amount of scholarship will also increase,' he added.

On the occasion, city chief Raghavendra Choubey greeted the newly-appointed district president Rajiv Gautam by the state leadership. The erstwhile district chief Rajeshwar Singh Patel will be party's candidate from Rohaniya assembly seat. On the occasion, several other senior leaders including state secretary Imran Khan, state spokesperson Sanjeev Singh, district spokesperson Dr Nripendra Narayan Singh, Shaileendra Singh, Ashok Pandey, Manish Morolia, state general secretary of Kisan Congress Pankaj Singh, Youth Congress district president Vishwanath Kunwar and many others were also present.

Cold wave keeps denizens confined to their homes in Sangam city

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Cold winds coupled with drizzle forced the denizens to remain indoors throughout the day here on Saturday. This also increased the 'galan'. People shivered with this bone-chilling cold. The situation was such that even people wrapped in warm clothes kept shivering wherever bonfires were seen burning at only some intersections. There was also a crowd of people there. Everyone was trying to warm themselves by standing around the bonfires.

Cold winds started blowing in Prayagraj and adjoining districts of Kaushambi and Pratapgarh since morning on Saturday. Fog also engulfed the roads while the clouds also camped in the sky. This also increased the 'galan'. After a while it started raining lightly.

The cold was such that people shivered all day long. The speed of vehicles on the roads also stopped. After some time when the rain stopped, people came out again.

According to the Meteorological Department, the minimum temperature on Saturday was recorded at 9.4



degrees Celsius, one degree below normal. Apart from this, the maximum temperature was recorded at 23.1 degrees. Humidity was recorded in the atmosphere from 71 to 95 percent.

According to the Meteorological Department, the weather will remain like this in the days to come. It will

rain intermittently. Due to this, the 'galan' will also increase.

Meteorologist Dr Shaileendra Rai said that due to the western disturbance, there has been a sudden change in the weather. Some days winter will torment people more. After this people will get relief from cold.

The weather of Prayagraj

was very pleasant on Friday a day ago. People got a lot of relief from the light sunshine since morning. It was sunny all day. This weather was seen after many days. It was predicted from the sun that the weather would be relatively clear on Saturday as well. However, the weather suddenly took a turn and shook the entire city.

GM flags off 1000th electric loco in BLW

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

General Manager (GM) Anjali Goyal flagged off the 1000th electric locomotive WAG9HC 'Sahasra' manufactured by Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) in a simple function organised at New Loco Test Shop here on Saturday, following COVID-19 guidelines. She, along with senior officers and employees engaged in the production of locomotives, performed traditional rituals prior to dedicating the loco to the service of the nation.

Speaking on the occasion, the GM appreciated all the officers and employees of BLW for their excellent performance. Prior to this, she did a thorough inspection of the said loco and gave directions to the concerned officers for further improvement in quality, workmanship, safety, security, housekeeping etc. As a result of hard work and dedication of



GM Anjali Goyal flagging off 1000th electric loco at BLW in Varanasi on Saturday.

the officers and employees, in the financial year 2021-22, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, a new record has been set by the BLW manufacturing 281 electric locomotives,' said the GM. 'This production in BLW is the highest in terms of working days in any financial year,' she said, adding that the story of producing electric locomotives in the BLW started

with just two electric locomotives in 2016-17, which was increased to 25 in 2017-18, 145 in 2018-19, 272 in 2019-20, 275 in 2020-21 and 281 by January 22 this year by breaking all the previous records.

This 6000 HP WAG9HC electric loco number 41379 is being sent to Khanalampura Marshalling Yard of Northern Railway (NR). Women employ-

ees Manju Yadav, Gitanjali Mishra, Anita Devi, Basanti Devi, Priyanka Swaroop, Priti Wahi apart from their male counterparts including Amarnath Yadav, Suresh Sharma and others also expressed their gratitude to the GM on the occasion.

Principal Chief Electrical Engineer (PCEE) Rajesh Kumar Rai, Principal Chief Mechanical Engineer (PCME) Amitabh, Principal Financial Adviser (PFA) Yogesh Kumar Srivastava, Principal Chief Personnel Officer (PCPO) Pradeep Kumar Singh, Principal Chief Security Commissioner (PCSC) Ranveer Singh Chouhan, Principal Chief Engineer (PCE) Santosh Shukla, Principal Chief Medical Officer (PCMO) Dr Devesh Kumar, Chief Vigilance Officer (CVO) Pramod Kumar Choudhary and Senior Deputy General Manager (SDGM) Vijay were also present.

DM reviews preparations for Voters' Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

District Magistrate/District Election Officer (DM/DEO) Kaushal Raj Sharma said on the occasion of 'National Voters' Day' to be held on January 25, programmes would be organised at district and tehsil levels apart from colleges and other places in which the people, wearing masks, would be present at half the capacity of the auditoriums following the COVID-19 protocol, so that social distancing can be maintained. Addressing a meeting to review the preparations here on Friday, he said that on the day, the heads of offices would administer the voter's oath to their employees.

According to him, after the oath in the tehsils, the BLOs who have done good work in the revision campaign will be honoured. Similarly, their



DM KR Sharma reviewing preparations for Voters' Day in Varanasi on Friday.

departmental officers will administer the oath to fair price shop owners, panchayat assistants, anganwadi workers, assistants and others. By adopting social distancing at each booth, BLOs will administer the oath to the people. 'Form-6 will be specially filled by BLOs at each booth on that day 25th. EPIC cards and voter slips will also be distributed by the BLOs. Every new voter left out will be searched and filled in Form-6. The 18 plus new voters will also be administered

the oath along with their new EPIC cards. Demonstration of EVMS should be done at every important place. EVM demonstrations should be done at government libraries, railway stations, bus stands, auto stands, ration shops and other important places where voters have to come and go,' he said.

Nehru Yuva Kendra, Yuvak Mangal Dal, Civil Defense, players, respected citizens, young voters and women voters will all participate in the programmes of the day. He said

that all the ROs should prepare an action plan to increase the polling in the low-vote booths in their assembly area and organise awareness programmes to increase the voting percentage there. All the concerned officers will make every effort to increase the voting percentage in their respective Vidhan Sabha. He also directed that all the promotional materials should be printed at the earliest and their distribution should also be started. He also directed that efforts should be made to create awareness among people by pasting stickers related to voting in buses and boats as well. Stickers should be affixed with the slogan 'Must Vote'. He said that the sole purpose of conducting these programmes is to make more and more voters aware about the exercise of their franchise. He directed all the ROs to inspect the low polling booths and critical booths.

Delhi-Mathura route traffic disrupts after goods train derails

ALLAHABAD (PNS):

Following the derailment of a goods train on Mathura-Palwal route under Agra division, some trains have been cancelled while originating stations of some have been changed.

The incident took place between Vrindavan and Bhuseshwar station on Mathura-Palwal route at 23.32 hours on Friday when 15 wagons of a goods train jumped the rail and this derailment blocked up, down, and the additional third line.

North Central Railway officials informed that the goods train was loaded at Wonder

Cement siding in Rajasthan and was to be unloaded at Ghaziabad. Engin and front two wagons were safe, while 15 wagons following them derailed causing blockade of all the three lines. The derailed wagons are being removed and repair work is in progress, but till normalcy takes place some trains have been cancelled while routes of some have been diverted.

The cancelled trains include-12415 Indore- New Delhi Express scheduled to depart on Saturday, 12416 New Delhi- Indore Express scheduled to depart on Sunday,

12401 Kota- Dehradun Express of January 22 departed from Hazrat Nizamuddin, 12439 Nanded- Sriganagar of January 23 departed from New Delhi.

Routes of 12625 Thiruvananthapuram- New Dekdi Express, 12617 Ernakulam- Hazrat Nizamuddin Express, 12803 Vishakhapatnam- Hazrat Nizamuddin Express, 12707 Tirupati- Hazrat Nizamuddin Express, 18237 Korba- Amritsar Exoress, and 20807 Vishakhapatnam- Amritsar Express have been diverted. SIX TEST POSITIVE

FOR COVID-19: As many as six persons, including four kalpwasis and two devotees have tested positive for Covid-19 at Magh Mela campus here. Moreover, the Sangam city recorded the highest — 505 — new Covid-19 cases, raising concerns for the officials of the health department. Nodal officer (Covid-19) and additional chief medical officer Dr. Rishi Sahai told newsmen that the Sangam city reported the highest single day tally of new cases this year, when a total of 505 people tested positive in the district on Friday.

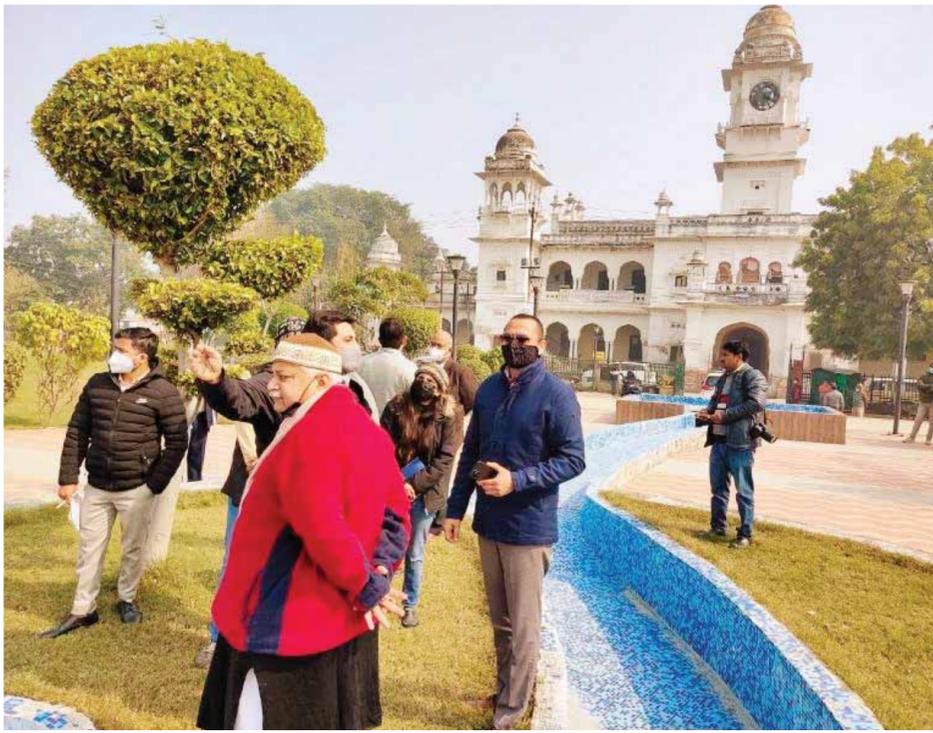
Projection Mapping Shows planned in Kanpur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar, while reviewing the progress of the work at (KEM Hall) now called Gandhi Bhawan on Saturday said exactly on the pattern of the Projection Mapping Shows at iconic locations such as Burj Khalifa Dubai, Gateway of India Mumbai, India Gate, Delhi a similar projection mapping show had been planned in Kanpur. He said this shall be part of the Smart City Project aimed to reflect the rich Kanpur culture and history through the show. He said the show had a motivational tone and will instill a sense of pride for the city and its people. He said this will be opened for public in the next three months.

He said the concept of the show will celebrate the richness of culture in the city of Kanpur in four different aspects - mythological history, general history, the present and the bright future. He said the project was being executed by Design Factory India at the budget of Rs 6.5 crore. He said it will also be operated and maintained by DFI for the next five years.

He said Projection Mapping Show will mark special occasions and festivals and thus a specially prepared programme will be organised. He said different shows on different timings will be arranged which will cater to the needs of the larger audience and thus will be arranged expertly. He added that this will have an exclusive seating space for the people who will visit the park. He further added that apart from this night tourism will be



Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar, reviews the Projection Mapping Show groundwork at Phool Bagh along with Smart City officials.

Pioneer

increased with this latest addition.

Dr Shekhar said various departments such as Kanpur Development Authority, Smart City Kanpur, DFI were given instruction for the proper management and functioning of this prestigious project. He said the show will incorporate the mythological stories of Dhruva, Bhramavart Ghat and the story of Goddess Sita.

He said Kanpur's rich history of being one of the first cities where the Revolt of 1857 started with Taty Tope, Rani Lakshmi Bai and Nana Rao Peshwa.

He said apart from this it also emphasised upon the development carried out through various British establishments that came up after the period like the Lal Iml mills - largest woolen mills in Asia and

Elgin - the finest cotton mills and a few more.

He said apart from the past the present identity in the form of the present day Kanpur which is now popular for the variety of foods and sweet joints like Mithaas, Bararas, Baijnath, Buddhsen and products like Thaggu ke laddo and Badnam kulfi, and above all the exclusive Ganga Mela celebrations and many more. He said

Kanpur today, was on a journey towards immense progress and prosperity with the Smart City Projects that were coming up like the Kanpur metro and the Digital India Initiatives in IIT Kanpur are a few to list among the many.

He added that the project will come up with the collaborative efforts of Kanpur Nagar Nigam, KDA & District Administration.

Master Training Workshop held



District Magistrate, City, Vishak G Iyer chairs the Master Trainer workshop at Collectorate.

Pioneer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur District Magistrate, City, Vishak G Iyer while addressing the Master Training Workshop at Vikas Bhawan said if there was any doubt it should be cleared right now and today itself but later there shall be no room for raising doubts on certain issue. He said the training which was being imparted was being done on a specially prepared module and explained very clearly thus it was expected that all the Master Trainers should be able to clarify doubts of others when apprising information to others. He cautioned the Master Trainers that there should be no confusion on any issue after this meeting.

He said the special training which was being imparted to

the Master Trainers was meant to ensure they successfully and in simple terms should be able to train and explain the personnel deployed for election duty. He said a professional and fool-proof training was thus being imparted to the Master Trainers so there was no room for errors or confusions for the personnel. He directed the officials to ensure they hand over the link of videos received from the Election Commission and said this will further facilitate understanding in a better manner so that there were no blunders done in the times to come.

The DM said all the Master Trainers who impart training to the personnel concerned will ensure that they make separate Whatsapp groups training-wise. He said everything had

been clearly and categorically explained in the videos and thus it was being provided to the Master Trainers to ensure they become perfect and the whole concept was clear on their minds. He then took demonstrations of the Master Trainers to take a feedback as to what they had understood and were there in a position to clear all doubts as raised by the personnel later. He said the response of the entire 75 personnel who were present was quite satisfactory. He said the next meeting of Master Trainers will be informed soon. Prominent who took part in the meeting were Chief Development Officer, Dr Mahendra Kumar, District Development Officer and several other staff from various departments.

Tributes paid to Janeshwar Mishra

KANPUR (PNS): Rich tributes were paid to Janeshwar Mishra popularly known as 'Chote Lohia' on his 12th death anniversary. The party members under the leadership of the city vice president, Pinto Thakur paid floral tributes to the portrait of the leader and said till his end he remained a staunch Lohiaite and always remained dedicated to the uplift of the poor and the marginalised. He said his ideology was heavily influenced by a close association with Dr Ram Manohar Lohia, the socialist icon and prominent voice in the Indian independence movement.

He said he was the national vice-president of the party. He was a four-time Lok Sabha MP, who served as a Union Minister in the Chandrashekhar government. He was first elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1994, and was re-elected to the Upper House in 2000 and 2006. He was indispensable to the Samajwadi



Party both at the political level, as well as in an administrative capacity.

He said he was born on August 5, 1933, in Ballia, eastern Uttar Pradesh. He began his political journey as the president of the students' union of Doaba Inter College, later going on to pursue higher studies at Allahabad University. He added that throughout his academic pursuits, and later as a seasoned career politician, Janeshwar was hailed for his effective oratory skills and his ability to articulate thoughts clearly and without confusion.

Addressing the gathering Rahul Shukla said he hailed from humble origins, the doctrines of socialism were more than just political theory. He said Janeshwarji's mentorship was more than just rhetoric and public perception and it would not be any exaggeration to state that he led in Parliament by example. Prominent others to speak were Haji Yunus, Dipika Mishra, Raju Pandit, Nizam Qureshi, Sher Singh Yadav, Mohd Shanu, Manish Singh, Sharad Pandey, Aqil Ahmed, Anil Chaubey, Babu Qureshi and several others.

Metabolic syndrome associated with severity of COVID-19

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Noted diabetologist Dr(Capt) Nandini Rastogi, delivering a talk on Metabolic Syndrome on Friday said recent studies showed that comorbidities such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity contributed majorly towards severe and worse outcomes of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and cautioned that metabolic syndrome and its components were associated with severity of COVID-19. She said it was in fact a collection of heart disease risk factors that increased ones chance of developing heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

She said India had the highest number of diabetics and the reason for this was the poor and careless lifestyle and eating habits of Indians. She said as per World Health Organisation all those with central obesity that meant increased fat in the around abdomen and waist were at great threat. She said apart from this people with a strong family history of diabetes and people with other clinical features like 'insulin resistance' and age were a few other factors.

She said the exact cause of metabolic syndrome was not known and there were no immediate physical symptoms and medical problems associated with metabolic syndrome developed over time. She said if one were unsure if one had metabolic syndrome, one need to see ones healthcare provider. She said this one will be able to make the diagnosis by obtaining the necessary tests, including blood pressure, lipid profile (triglycerides and HDL

and blood glucose. Dr Rastogi advised people with a waistline of 40 inches or more for men and 35 inches or more for women that measured across the belly were issue of concern and an indication. She added that a blood pressure of 130/85 mm Hg or higher or those who were taking blood pressure medications were also at risk.

She said apart from this the triglyceride level above 150 mg/dl and a fasting blood glucose level greater than 100 mg/dl were all warning signs.

She said as physical inactivity and excess weight were the main underlying contributors to the development of metabolic syndrome, exercising, eating healthy and, if one were currently overweight or obese, attempting to lose weight can help reduce or prevent the complications associated with this condition. She said healthy eating and attempting to lose weight if currently overweight or obese and this can be done through diet, exercise, or even with help from weight-loss medications if recommended by the doctor. She said increased activity alone can improve insulin sensitivity and aerobic exercise such as a brisk 30-minute daily walk can promote weight loss.

She advised people to maintain a diet that kept carbohydrates to no more than 50 per cent of total calories and the source of carbohydrates should be from whole grains (complex carbohydrates), such as whole grain bread, legumes, fruits and vegetables allow one to have a higher dietary fibre. She advised one to eat less red meats and poultry instead, eat more fish but not fried.

Webinar on 'Industry 4.0' held

KANPUR (PNS):

The Chairman of Confederation of Indian Industries, Aakash Goenka, while addressing a webinar at its Kanpur Zone on the topic 'Industry 4.0' said the Fourth Revolution about to enter was Industrial Revolution. He said every effort was being made to bring the stake holders on a common platform. He said the role of Artificial Intelligence and Block Chain will increase and then every effort will be made to improve technology and ensure smart systems for Smart Cities. He said special focus was being laid on Smart City projects to bring prominent cities and metros at par with the developed metros and cities. He said the investments which were being made in different proje-

ject was quite encouraging and clearly reflects the future of Kanpur and the whole Uttar Pradesh as well. He said the credit for this goes to the government which had taken the initiative by roping in prominent segments of the society for the all round growth. The meeting was informed that soon Kanpur will have its own airport terminal which will cater to the needs of 15 prominent cities.

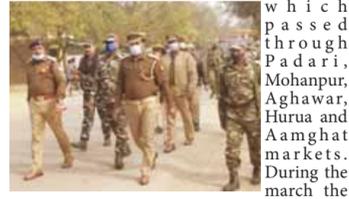
He said the Ring Road will also be soon set up given further momentum to the whole operation. Kanpur has now started its electric bus operation and Metro has also become functional. He said KDA has also prepared its master plan which will also be industry oriented.

DDEO inspects counting site

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Deputy District Election Officer/ ADM(F&R) Shiv Pratap Shukla inspected Government Polytechnic School at Bathua the place fixed for strong room and counting for assembly election. On the occasion the principal of polytechnic school was directed to vacate sufficient rooms for making them as strong room. Direction was also given to prepare rooms as per the directions of Election Commission of India. Directing all the officials concerned, the ADM made it clear that all directions should be read thoroughly and no mistake will be tolerated at all. The EE PWD was directed to make all arrangements for strong room as per the guidelines and get the pandal ready for counting too. The ARTO was directed to make arrangements for transportation of vehicles with the help of traffic personnel. The EO Nagar Palika Parishad was directed to make all arrangements which were necessary during the departure and arrival of polling parties as well as at the time of counting.

FLAG MARCHES: In view of assembly elections the flag marches/area domination exercise were taken out under Padari and Jigna police stations on Friday. CO (Sadar) Shailendra Prakash Tripathi led the march under Padari PS



which passed through the Narroiya, Gaura, Bihasada, Parmanpur markets and adjacent villages. The CO gave the message to the common people to feel fearless and warned the nuisance values to remain under control to avoid the action. Heavy police force, paramilitary force and state forces accompanied the march. The police officers interacted with the common people and became aware with the ground realities.

ARRESTED: City Kotwali police arrested

six members of an interstate gang of vehicle thieves and recovered 10 motorcycles and two fourwheelers from their possession on Friday. ASP (City) Sanjay Kumar said due to collective efforts of SOG, SWAT and surveillance team City Kotwali police nabbed the six accused while the mastermind was still at large. Police chased a suspicious pickup near Girdhar ka Chauraha on Thursday and during interrogation driver said during night hours gang members used to roam on roads and lift the vehicles. On identification of the driver, police recovered two fourwheelers and 10 motorcycles which had been stolen from Mirzapur, Varanasi, Bhadohi, Prayagraj and from MP. The accused were identified as Vineet Dubey of Semariha under Korawa police station in Prayagraj, Sahil and Mahendra Pal of Hanumana in Rewa district MP, Pradyumn Keshari of Dramondganj under Halia police station, Mirzapur, Neelesh Pal and Lavkush Jaiswal of Bhainsod Balay Pahad under Halia police station in Mirzapur. The ASP said SP had awarded cash reward of ₹15,000 to the police team led by SHO City Kotwali Arvind Mishra. Meanwhile Ahraura police arrested two persons and recovered 62,600 kg ganja worth around ₹7 lakh on Thursday. During routine vehicle checking on Varanasi-Shakingar road Ahraura police was informed about transportation of ganja. During the checking a Bolero tried to dodge the police near Baiju Baba petrol pump but was given a chase. The person sitting in the driver's seat said ganja was hidden in the body of the vehicle which was recovered by the police. After registering a case the police seized the ganja as well as the vehicle and sent the accused Madhav Bhoi and Babloo Mahanand to jail.

MEETING: A meeting of task force was presided over by ADM(F&R) Shiv Pratap Shukla under Covid sensitisation and control was held at Collectorate on Friday. In it strategy was chalked out to identify those who had symptoms of Covid, persons above 60 years who could not be administered first dose of vaccine and eligible children who had been left during routine vaccination. Addressing the representatives of Rural Development department, Panchayati Raj, WHO, UNICEF and others the ADM said a door-to-door survey was going to be conducted from January 24 to 29 by teams equipped with medicine kits, masks and other papers who had to identify and prepare the list of those who were eligible but could not be administered the first dose and those too who had primary symptoms of Covid-19. The meeting was attended by CMO Dr Rajeev Singhal, DPRO Arvind Kumar and others.

Adhikary takes over as NER PCSO

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Chandan Adhikary took over as Principal Chief Safety Officer (PCSO) of North Eastern Railway (NER) recently. Prior to it he was working on the post of Chief Signal and Telecommunication Engineer (CSTE)/Planning in Eastern Railway (ER). After obtaining his bachelor's degree in Electronics and Telecommunication from Jadavpur University, Kolkata, and master's degree in Microwave Technology, Adhikary joined the railway



service through Indian Railway Service of Signal Engineers (IR SSE). His first appointment was on the post of Assistant Signal and Telecommunication Engineer in Eastern Railway.

After this, he worked in various posts of Metro Railway, Kolkata. He worked on the posts of Chief Signal and Telecommunication Engineer/Planning and Chief Signal and Telecommunication Engineer/Construction in North East Frontier Railway. In South Eastern Railway (SER) he has efficiently discharged the responsibilities of various posts from the year 2014 to 2020. Adhikary has experience in railway administration and management and is popular among officers and employees alike.

Trains to be cancelled

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

Due to the block being given on January 24 by the railway administration for the construction of limited height subway (LHS) on level crossing No 214 between Daryaoganj-Patali stations of Kanpur Anwarganj-Kasganj section of Izzatnagar division of North Eastern Railway (NER) the cancellation and control of trains will be done as follows, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said.

CANCELLATION KASGANJ - FARRUKHABAD SPECIAL: The

05389 Kasganj-Farrukhabad unreserved special train to run from Kasganj on January 23 will remain cancelled. Besides, the 05390 Farrukhabad-Kasganj unreserved passenger special train to run from Farrukhabad on January 24 will remain cancelled.

CONTROL The 05379 Lucknow Jn.-Kasganj unreserved special train will be run by being controlled at Rudain station for 15 minutes.

FREQUENCY OF TEJAS EXP REDUCED TO THREE DAYS The railway administration is making changes in the

run of the 82501/82502 Lucknow Junction-New Delhi-Lucknow Junction Tejas Express from January 25 to February 15. During this period this train will run three days a week. The 82501/82502 Lucknow Jn-New Delhi-Lucknow Jn Tejas Express between January 25 and February 15 will run on January 28, 29 and 30 and on February 4, 5, 6, 11, 12 and 13 on every Friday, Saturday and Sunday three days a week. After this from February 16 this train will be run on every Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Friday four days a week as before, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) PK Singh said.

Rajbhasha Committee meet held

PNS ■ VARANASI

Under the chairmanship of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Ramashray Pandey a virtual meeting of the Divisional Rajbhasha Implementation Committee was organised by the Department of Rajbhasha at DRM's office on Friday. In this meeting organised online through Microsoft Teams Additional Divisional Railway Manager (ADRM/Infra) Gyanesh Tripathi, Senior Divisional Personnel Officer (SDPO) Sameer Paul, Rajbhasha Adhikari and Assistant Divisional Personnel Officer (ADPO) Ramesh Upadhyaya and all branch officers and members of Rajbhasha Implementation Committee were connected. Welcoming everyone to this meeting DRM said that Hindi is the official language of the Union of India. Since ancient times, Hindi has been working as a link language across the country. It has done a great job of uniting the entire nation in one thread. It is a matter of joy that the Department of Rajbhasha, Ministry of Home Affairs organised the first All India Rajbhasha Sammelan on November 13-14, 2021, on the occasion of 75th anniversary of Independence Day (Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav), at Deendayal Upadhyaya Hastkala Shankul (Trade Promotion Centre) here. In fact, Varanasi division is doing commendable work in the field of official language with their cooperation, he



Chief Official Language Officer (ADRM/Infra) Gyanesh Tripathi while welcoming everyone said that the Division meets all the dimensions of official language. Language is the medium through which any society transmits its knowledge, culture and values to the future generations. He said that as their division comes in the area of Hindi therefore, it is their responsibility to make the best and most use of Hindi in official work in this area. He expressed the hope of always getting their cooperation in this direction and the division in the field of Rajbhasha will continue to play a leading role in the field. He gave detailed information about competitions and award schemes related to Rajbhasha. Earlier, welcoming everyone, Rajbhasha Adhikari and ADPO Ramesh Upadhyaya discussed suggestions on official language in detail and told about the improvement. During this meeting progress of official language was reviewed, the minutes of previous implementation committee meeting were confirmed and suggestions were taken for the next meeting. Ramesh Upadhyaya proposed the vote of thanks.

Akhilesh to fight from home turf Mainpuri

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party on Saturday confirmed that party chief Akhilesh Yadav will contest the Assembly poll, his first, from Karhal constituency in Mainpuri district, which is in his family's home turf.

Karhal has voted for Samajwadi Party candidates in every election since 1993, except in 2002, when the BJP wrested it. It returned to the SP in 2007 and is currently held by Sobaran Yadav.

By contesting from Karhal, the current and long-time Lok Sabha seat of his father Mulayam Singh Yadav, Akhilesh is trying to secure his party's fortress of the Yadav belt where the BJP has made inroads.

Buoyed by the success of the huge turnout in Vijay Rath

Shivpal to contest polls on SP ticket

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Akhilesh Yadav's uncle Shivpal Yadav on Saturday announced that he will be contesting the upcoming assembly elections from his old seat Jaswantnagar. Shivpal said he will be contesting on SP's ticket instead of his own party Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party.

Yatra, Akhilesh had decided not to contest the Assembly election and concentrate on campaigning. Two events, however, forced him to change the strategy — ban of campaigning by the EC (now extended till January 30) due to the third wave of Covid-19 pandemics,

and BJP deciding to field Yogi Adityanath from Gorakhpur.

In a loud and clear message to the electorate that the BJP is leading the battle from the front, the saffron party announced Yogi's name in the very first list of its candidates even when the polling in Gorakhpur will be held in the sixth phase of election on March 3.

Karhal constituency has a high population of Yadavs. The SP won it in 2017 with a margin of more than 38,000 votes despite the BJP wave in the State. Karhal town is just a 15-minute drive from the Yadav family's native village, Saifai, in the Etawah district. With Akhilesh taking the plunge into Assembly elections, the SP is trying to send a larger message in the entire Yadav belt from Firozabad to Kannauj to rally behind the

party in these elections.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, despite an alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Samajwadi Party lost in Yadav-belt stronghold seats of Firozabad, Budaun, Etawah and Kannauj.

The first two parliamentary seats were won by it in the 2014 general elections. In the 2017 Assembly elections, the SP won just one out of five seats in Firozabad district, one out of six seats in Budaun, one out of three in Etawah district and one out of three in Kannauj district. The BJP managed to win one out of four seats in Mainpuri district too.

The Samajwadi Party feels that with Akhilesh's candidature from Karhal and his patch-up with uncle Shivpal Singh Yadav, the party can reclaim its strong-

hold area from the BJP. However, the BJP is in no mood to let that happen.

Akhilesh's uncle Hari Om Yadav, the sitting MLA from Sirasganj in Firozabad district which is the only seat the SP won in that district in 2017, has joined the BJP and will contest the seat on a BJP ticket. The ruling party has also put up former IPS officer and Dalit face Asim Arun from Kannauj, currently an SP seat.

BJP spokesperson Rakesh Tripathi points out that even in the Mainpuri Lok Sabha constituency held by Mulayam, the victory margin had come down to 94,000 votes in 2019 from more than 3.21 lakh votes in 2014 despite Mayawati being in alliance with the SP in 2019 and making a personal appeal to voters for Mulayam's victory.

Cong 'new avatar'! 70% fresh faces in UP polls

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Making a conscious effort to shed the old baggage and present her party in a "new avatar" in Uttar Pradesh, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has hand-picked over 70 per cent new faces among the total 166 candidates for the high-stakes State Assembly election.

Besides sticking to her promise of 40 per cent women candidates, Priyanka has overwhelmingly given a chance to debutants with an aim to build a new leadership in the Hindi heartland, which had slipped from the party hands in recent years.

Of the total 166 names declared so far by the Congress, 119 candidates will be making their electoral debut, party spokesman Anshu Awasthi told

PTI. With the candidature of Sangeeta Tyagi, wife of party leader late Rajiv Tyagi, from Sahibabad seat, Priyanka has made an earnest effort to break the mould and create new leadership in the century-old party which has faded into political oblivion. "Priyanka Gandhi has made an attempt to bring all those fighting on people's issues, be it regarding women, youth, farmers, backwards or dalits, to the forefront," Awasthi said.

He said the list of candidates gives a clear vision of the party's effort to give a new direction to the state politics which has been suffering from caste and religion-based politics for years.

"Party tickets have been given to youth and those who are working strongly in their respective fields," the Congress spokesman said, adding that in

the first list of 125 names, 26 candidates are those who are up to 35 years of age.

He said 55-year-old Asha Singh, mother of the Unnao rape victim; anti-CAA activist and party spokesperson Sadaf Jafar; ASHA worker and activist Poonam Pandey who fought for the rights of ASHA workers and was attacked at Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's programme at Shahjahanpur; Ram Raj Gond who fought for the rights of Adivasis in Sonbhadra; are all making their debut this election.

Similarly, Bhawana Valmiki, social activist from Hapur; Yasmin Rana from Charthawal; Salma Agha Ansari from Thakurdwara; Kalpana Singh from Bilari; Nafees Saifi from Meerut South; Sukhvinder Kaur from Saharanpur are among those who will be contesting for the first time.

TAAI seeks 'One India One Tourism' approach in Budget

Mumbai: The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) has sought 'One India One Tourism' approach, which is inclusive of 'One Tax Structure', in the forthcoming Union Budget to revive the pandemic-hit domestic travel, tourism and hospitality industry.

Besides, the Association has sought bringing Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) under the ambit of GST to make air travel "more viable" for all stakeholders as well as extension of the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS).

There are several aspects which can be expected in the upcoming Budget to support the entire sector of 'travel tourism and hospitality', which will help in making this sector revive and survive, TAAI, which is headed by Jyoti Mayal, said in a statement on Saturday. "For this, it is extremely important for both the central and state governments to work in tandem to facilitate this sector and support it to be included in the concurrent list to get industry status to make it more structured," the Association said.

TAAI said the Government should strive to increase the disposable income of the middle classes to spur that discretionary spending.

According to the travel agents body, concrete steps should be taken to improve cash flows and reduce the working capital burden on startups, existing



MSMEs and SMEs along with access to easy credit, reducing income tax rate and GST rate, abolishment of tax collected at source (TCS) and wage support with ease of business.

Besides, strengthening MSMEs, creating a fund of funds scheme for technology adoption for use in industry 4.0, reviving the Credit Linked Capital Subsidy Scheme (CLCSS) for technology upgradation are the other steps TAAI is expecting in the forthcoming Union Budget, it said.

To revive this struggling sector, "we need 'One India One Tourism' approach inclusive of 'One Tax Structure,'" TAAI said in the statement, adding that, important points to be considered are e-visa fees waiver for all tourist visas for 2022-2023, to support inbound revival export status for tourism export earnings.

It has also sought double expenditure allocation for the tourism ministry to enable intensive global reach-out to support the inbound revival as

well as domestic income tax travel credit for Indian citizens and Indian companies to support domestic retail and domestic MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) pick-up. The Association is also looking at a global bidding fund in the Union Budget 2022-23 to enable bidding support to Indian MICE companies to bring global MICE events to India, as per TAAI. Lastly

and most vital is a structured mechanism to secure travel agents' payments to ensure security for travel agents and operators' survival, it said.

TAAI added that travel agents' payments to principals are unsecured credit and there is need to ensure that some form of mechanisms, whether escrow or guarantee or underwriting based mechanisms, are in place for securing travel agents money. PTI

Industry Speaks: Make travel expenses deductible under IT returns in Budget FY23

New Delhi: India's hotel and restaurant industry has urged the Centre to make travel expenses deductible under IT returns in Budget FY23.

Notably, the sector has been heavily battered due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent restrictions imposed to check the infections' spread.

According to Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President, Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India, since foreign travel is at least 12-15 months away from returning to the pre-pandemic levels, Centre should give impetus on domestic travel.

"We have requested Finance Minister to allow

domestic travel for individuals and corporates to be a deductible expense in their IT returns. This tax incentive could be offered for a fixed number of years until hospitality comes back to pre-pandemic conditions," Kohli told IANS.

"The move will encourage the 28 million-plus people who otherwise travel out of the country, to holiday in India. We also ask for a review of the decision to introduce LTC cash vouchers in lieu of LTC fare to the Central Government employees."

Besides, the hospitality industry has asked the Centre to be granted the infrastructure status.

Public wifi hotspots have potential to generate 2-3 cr jobs this year: Telecom Secretary

New Delhi: Setting up of 1 crore public wifi hotspots across the country by this year as envisaged under the present telecom policy has the potential to create 2-3 crore job opportunities, a senior government official said on Saturday.

Telecom Secretary K Rajaraman while speaking at Broadband India Forum (BIF) event called upon wifi equipment makers to lower the cost of their products for the expansion of Prime Minister's Wi-Fi Access Network Interface (PM-WANI) scheme which aims to set up wifi hotspots across the country.

"Given by conservative estimate of each hotspot enabling 2-3 direct and indirect employment opportunities, the creation of 10 million hotspots as per the NDCP (National Digital Communications Policy) target by 2022 would potentially generate 20-30 million job opportunity in the small and medium scale sectors," Rajaraman said.

Public wifi hotspots have immense potential to act as catalysts for rural economy and as a means of rural livelihood besides propelling socio-economic growth by providing employment opportunities for millions of small local and village entrepreneurs. "Sprawling manufacturing units will be needed to produce millions of access points for PM WANI which is the core of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Mission and would lead to therefore more job creation," Rajaraman said.

According to the PM-WANI portal, over 56,000 wifi hotspots have been



deployed across the country till date. Rajaraman said that he wants more entrepreneurs to join PM-WANI programme facilitated by C-DoT.

"We also want local communities to join PM-WANI scheme wholeheartedly. We will be happy to facilitate existing entrepreneurs in local neighborhoods especially local cable operators, internet service providers, tourism operators etc to come forward and help proliferate WANI access points across the country," he said.

BIF announced the launch of BIF Connectivity Accelerator Programme in partnership with Meta (formerly Facebook) to enable entrepreneurs and startups build innovative connectivity solutions and support the public wifi ecosystem.

"This (BIF Connectivity Accelerator) virtual programme will give startups the opportunity to partner with BIF to help develop relevant use cases and help scale their businesses. We appeal to all stakeholders to come together and join hands with us to expeditiously and effectively implement this national mission," BIF president TV Ramachandran said. PTI

FabIndia plans ₹4,000 cr IPO; promoters to gift over 7 lakh shares to artisans, farmers

New Delhi: Lifestyle retail brand FabIndia plans to raise up to ₹4,000 crore through an initial public offer and in a novel approach, the company's promoters also plan to gift more than 7 lakh shares to artisans and farmers.

On Saturday, the company filed the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) with markets watchdog Sebi for the offer that will include fresh issue of shares worth up to ₹500 crore. Besides, there will be an Offer For Sale (OFS) of up to 2,50,50,543 shares. Market sources said the Initial Public Offer (IPO) is expected to be worth around Rs 4,000 crore.

In order to "reward and express gratitude to certain artisans and farmers engaged with the company or its subsidiaries", FabIndia's two promoters -- Bimla Nanda Bissell and Madhukar Kherra -- intend to transfer 4,00,000 shares and 3,75,080 shares, respectively, to them, subsequent to the filing of the DRHP.

"Our promoters, namely, Bimla Nanda Bissell and Madhukar Kherra have opened their respective demat accounts and have transferred 4,00,000 equity shares and 3,75,080 equity shares, respectively, that are proposed to be transferred by way of gift to the artisans and farmers," the DRHP said.

Proceeds from the fresh issue of shares will be utilised for voluntary redemption of the company's NCDs (Non Convertible Debentures), pre-payment or scheduled re-payment of a portion of certain outstanding borrowings and general corporate purposes.

In the DRHP, the company has mentioned about its ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) initiatives, saying it believes that "enabling and uplifting the people we work with, taking care of the environment, and being ethical in our conduct with have a long and lasting positive impact."

"We have aimed to create social impact and foster well being for our artisans, communities, employees and investors, using environmentally responsible and ethical means," it added. PTI

EC EXTENDS POLL RALLIES BAN TILL JANUARY 31

Other instructions on door-to-door campaigns will continue.

"Since contesting candidates for Phase 2 elections will be finalised on January 31, 2022, Commission has decided to allow physical public meetings of Political parties or contesting candidates in designated open spaces with a maximum of 500 people or 50 per cent of the capacity of the ground, whichever number is lesser, from February 1, 2022, till February 12, 2022 (excluding the silence period)," it said.

The EC Commission has already granted relaxation for the political parties to the extent that indoor meetings of a maximum of 300 people or 50% of the capacity of the hall. The poll panel has also allowed video vans for publicity with usual Covid restrictions at designated open spaces with a maximum of 500 viewers or 50 per cent of the capacity or the limit prescribed by SDMA, whichever is lesser, in the poll going States subject to public convenience and no hindrance to smooth flow of traffic.

In view of the rapidly spreading Covid-19 cases, the poll regulating body had earlier announced a complete moratorium on physical roadshows and rallies till January 15, which was later extended till January 22. With the ban in place, political parties had been urged to hold virtual and digital campaigning on various social media platforms. This comes a day after the filing of nomination papers for phase one of the elections for 58 Assembly segments in 11 districts of western UP started.

The EC has urged political parties and contesting candidates to ensure the compliance of Covid appropriate behavior & guidelines and Model Code of Conduct at all occasions during the activities connected with elections.

"It shall be the responsibility of the DEO concerned to identify and to notify the designated spaces in advance for the aforesaid purposes," it said.

The Commission also reviewed vaccination status and action plan for expeditiously completing vaccination for 1st, 2nd, and booster doses for eligible persons amongst polling personnel. Commission deliberated on relaxing restrictions for

physical rallies in the wake of the prevailing situation. After taking into consideration inputs and ground reports from these officers, Commission also deliberated on requirements of the campaign period in phases where the candidate list will be finalised on January 27, 2022, for Phase I and on January 31, 2022, for Phase 2.

As far as vaccination is concerned, Uttar Pradesh which currently has 98,238 active Covid cases has inoculated 96% of its population with the first dose in the 18 plus category. Uttarakhand has vaccinated 99% of its population with the first dose and 84% with the second dose. Goa has vaccinated 98% of its population above 18 years of age with a second dose of the vaccine.

SHAH GOES DOOR-TO-DOOR IN KAIRANA, MEETS EXODUS-AFFECTED FAMILIES

have returned to Kairana after the BJP came to power.

"They said that they do not have any fear now, and they are peacefully doing their business activities," Shah said.

Security personnel had a difficult time as crowds jostled to see the BJP leader.

"I would like to tell the people of UP that if you want to retain the law and order situation in UP, end appeasement and the culture of working for one caste, and develop UP under the leadership of ModiJee, then the government of Yogi Adityanath should be formed once again," Shah later told reporters.

He appealed to the people of western UP to come out and vote on February 10.

"If owing to COVID guidelines, our workers are not able to reach you, then you should cast your vote early in the morning keeping in mind the five years of hard work of the BJP and the achievements of seven-and-half years of ModiJee."

He exuded confidence that the BJP will win 300 seats in the 403-member UP Legislative Assembly.

The Union Home Minister noted that he is coming to Kairana after January 2014.

"Today after coming to Kairana, I am feeling at peace due to the atmosphere here."

"After 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the reins of development of UP

in his hand. After becoming the chief minister of UP in 2017, Yogi Adityanath accelerated the pace of development. In the entire state, a new wave of development and enthusiasm can be seen," Shah said.

He listed various achievements of the government including the building of roads, airports and medical colleges and provision of cooking gas for the poor, toilets, free vaccines during COVID and free ration. "All these schemes were sent by ModiJee, and YogiJee implemented at the ground level," he said.

The residents of the area spoke about security being the most important issue for them and some showered flower petals on the BJP leader and chanted 'Modi-Modi'. Security personnel, however, had a difficult time as crowds jostled to approach the BJP leader.

The BJP has fielded Mriganka Singh, eldest daughter of late Hukum Singh who had won the seat several times, from Kairana against the RLD-Samajwadi Party candidate Iqra Hasan.

Iqra Hasan was fielded after political adversaries attacked the SP for giving a ticket to tainted sitting party MLA Nahid Hassan who was arrested under Gangster Act on January 15 after filing his nomination. Kairana is a city and municipal board in Shamli district in western UP.

Shah has been again given the task of overseeing the BJP campaign for assembly elections as he is known to have a good understanding of caste dynamics in the state and effective coordination with workers across constituencies.

He was the chief architect of the BJP's stupendous wins in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections and 2017 assembly polls in the bellwether state.

OMICRON NOT LAST VARIANT: WHO

Meanwhile, Mumbai on Friday reported 5,008 fresh positive Covid 19 cases, according to data released by the city's health department. The total number of Covid Deaths in the city has been recorded at 12 whereas the total number of patients hospitalised were 420.

The recovery rate in the financial capital is 97 per cent.

With this, the city's Covid-19 tally rose to 10,28,715, while the death toll jumped to 16,512, a Brihanmumbai Municipal

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Corporation (BMC) bulletin said. This was the third day in a row when daily Covid-19 cases have dropped in the financial capital. Delhi logged 10,756 fresh Covid cases and 38 more fatalities due to the infection on Friday, while the positivity rate declined to 18.04 percent. As many as 434 people have succumbed to the disease in January so far.

The coronavirus has killed at least 5,572,224 people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to an AFP tally compiled from official sources on Friday. The United States has recorded the most Covid deaths with 860,248, followed by Brazil with 622,205, India on 488,396 and Russia 324,752.

60% GOA MLAS DISLOYAL: ADR

Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP) MLAs Deepak Pauskar (Sanvordem) and Manohar Ajaonkar (Pernem) had also switched over to BJP during the same period. Jayesh Salgoankar of the Goa Forward Party (GFP) from Saligao had also joined the BJP.

Recently, former Goa Chief Minister Ravi Naik, a Congress MLA from Ponda, joined the ruling BJP. Another former CM and Congress leader Luizinho Faleiro (Navelim) had joined the Trinamool Congress (TMC), which is trying its electoral luck in Goa for the time in the February 14 assembly polls. Churchill Alemao, a former CM who had won on the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) ticket in 2017 also switched to the TMC recently.

Aleixo Reginaldo Lourenco, a Congress MLA from Curtorim, also joined the Mamata Banerjee-led party. However, Lourenco resigned from the TMC as well and wanted to return to Congress, but wasn't taken. He has now decided to contest the upcoming polls as an independent. Another MLA, Wilfred Dsa, who had quit the Congress and joined the BJP in 2019, has resigned from the ruling party and is contesting as an independent. Deepak Pauskar has quit the BJP as well.

Independent MLAs Rohan Khaunte (Porvorim) and GovindGaudre (Priol) have joined the BJP, while another independent legislator, Prasad Gaonkar, has joined the Congress. The BJP MLAs, who quit the party are - PravinZantye (Maem),

who has now joined the MGP, Michael Lobo (Calangute), who has joined the Congress, Jose Luis Carlos Almeida (Vasco Da Gama) has joined the Congress, while Alina Saldanha (Cortalim) has joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). After the defections and resignation of MLAs, the current strength of the Congress in the House is two, while that of the BJP is 27.

The electoral battle for Goa has become multi-cornered with the entry of the TMC and aggressive campaigning by the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP. So far, poll tie-ups were forged between the regional MGP and the TMC, and between the Congress and the GFP.

GANDHI'S FAVOURITE 'ABIDE WITH ME' LEFT OFF BEATING RETREAT

The Navy Band will play four tunes, after which the Army Military Band will play three tunes — "Kerala", "Siki A Mole" and "Hind Ki Sena." The Massed Bands will play three more tunes near the end, including "Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja," "Drummers Call," and "Ae Mere WatanKe Logon." The ceremony will end with "Sare Jahan Se Accha" by the Buglers. The entire event will see the participation of 44 buglers, 16 trumpeters, and 75 drummers.

The Beating the Retreat ceremony this year will also see more than 1,000 drones performing a laser show for the first time at the Vijay Chowk after the function. With this India will join the niche group of countries having the capability to launch so many drones for an event of this magnitude. The other nations are the US, China and Russia.

The drones show is brainchild of a start-up venture of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi. Botlab, a startup from IIT-Delhi, will put up the drone show with nearly 1,000 drones. It will be themed on 75 years of Independence.

7 KILLED, SEVERAL INJURED IN MUMBAI SKYSCRAPER BLAZE

In a related development, Maharashtra's Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar announced that the cause of the fire mishap would be investigated.

Mumbai Suburban district guardian minister Aadiya Thackeray and Mumbai City District Guardian Minister Aslam Shaikh also announced that the incident would be looked into. "In touch with the authorities regarding the fire outbreak at the Kamala building in Tardeo. The fire brigade and the police are on site. Rescue and cooling operations are underway," Aadiya tweeted.

Mumbai mayor Kishori Pednekar visited the affected and hospitals to inquire about the injured. Locals claimed that some of the private hospitals refused patients. "We would look into it. This is a serious issue," she said.

Mumbai South MP Arvind Sawant said that he would inform Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray about the issue of private hospitals refusing patients.

"I am shocked to know nearby hospitals refused admissions to the injured persons, which resulted in more deaths. If it is true then, BMC and State administration should fix the responsibility for these deaths and take action against those who are responsible for the deaths," leader of opposition Devendra Fadnis of the BJP said. Aadiya, however, said: "There were reports about two hospitals refusing treatment. However, both the hospitals informed me that they have admitted and treated some of those injured in this fire."

The inquiry ordered by the Maharashtra government will among other things look into whether the internal fire-fighting systems were operational at the time of mishap.

Saturday's was the sixth major fire mishap in Maharashtra in less than a year. Earlier on November 5 last year, as many as 11 Covid-19 patients died and six others sustained burn wounds after a massive fire broke out at the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of a civil hospital in Ahmednagar district. On June 7, 2021 at least 15 workers were killed and 20 others rescued, when a massive fire swept through a chemical factory at an industrial area at Urwade in Mulshi tehsil of Pune district.

Earlier on April 29, four patients were killed when a major fire broke out at Prime Criticare Hospital at Mumbra's Kausa area in Thane district. On April 23, as many as 14 Covid-19 patients died in the early hours of Friday, when a fire swept through an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of a pandemic hospital at Virar in Maharashtra's Palghar district.

PM: Backward dists now catalyst for development

Govt backing such districts, Modi tells DMs via video address

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stating that the districts which were earlier 'tagged' as backward districts have now become a 'catalyst' for the nation's development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said that "hand holding" of these "aspirational districts" is in the sharp focus of his Government.

Modi, who was interacting with District Magistrates (DMs) of various districts via video conferencing, said the "success of aspirational districts which in the last 75 years were tagged as backward and left behind have now become a catalyst to nation's development and progress".

He said "even Chief Ministers would accept the remarkable role and achievements of the aspirational districts" which also "reflected increasing federal cooperation between states and the Centre".

He hailed "direct connect between people in aspirational districts and the government" as also use of "technology and innovation" in these areas.

Modi cited examples of Assam, Bihar and Telangana where, he said, "many success stories have emerged" ending "malnutrition".

The Prime Minister was



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with the DMs of various districts via video conferencing on Saturday

addressing top officials along with the state Chief Ministers regarding the implementation of the key Government schemes. He complimented Chief Ministers for appointing "young and sharp" officials in the aspirational districts and also "ensuring their full tenure" in the regions.

Modi said "handholding of these districts is in focus" of his government.

While admiring inspired leadership in aspirational districts, the Prime Minister also called for "recognizing strength of aspirational districts and combining people's desire to progress with that of government's efforts".

"District administrations have an important role in good governance. It helps govt to implement the schemes in a better way. Detail guidelines should be made for field visits and inspections," said the Prime Minister.

Modi further stated that every district needs to learn from the success of others and also evaluate their challenges.

The Prime Minister also called for a direct, emotional connection between administration and public to ensure 'top to bottom' as well as 'bottom to top' governance flow.

During the interaction, Prime Minister took direct feedback about the progress and present the status of the implementation of government schemes and programmes in the districts.

"The interaction will help review the performance and ascertain the challenges that are being faced," the PMO had earlier said in an official statement.

The meeting comes ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections in five states. The five states that are going to the polls are Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa, and Manipur.

Forces all set to enthral audience

16 marching contingents, 17 military bands to take part in R-Day parade

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Army will field 16 marching contingents while 17 military bands comprising the three Services will enthral the audience at this year's Republic Day parade. The annual event will also see 25 tableaux of various States, departments and armed forces.

The Army will be represented by a mounted column of cavalry, 14 mechanised columns, six marching contingents and a fly past by advanced light helicopters of its aviation wing. The mechanised columns of the Army will show one PT-76 tank, one

Centurion tank, two MBT Arjun MK-I tanks, one APC TOPAS armoured personnel carriers, one BMP-I infantry fighting vehicle and two BMP-II infantry fighting vehicles, officials said here on Saturday.

One 75/24 Pack howitzer, two Dhanush howitzers, one PMS bridge-laying system, two Sarvatra bridge-laying systems, one HT-16 electronic warfare system, two Taran Shakti electronic warfare systems, one Tiger Cat missile system and two Akash missile systems will also be part of the mechanised columns. The six marching contingents include Rajput Regiment, Assam Regiment, Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry, Sikh Light Infantry, Army Ordnance Corps Regiment and Parachute Regiment. One marching contingent each of the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy will also participate in the parade.

Five marching contingents of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Central Industrial Police

Full dress rehearsal parade to be held at Central Vista

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

People witnessing the Republic Day parade this year will get to see major changes along the stretch in terms of the new look of Rajpath and facilities created under the Government's ambitious Central Vista redevelopment project.

Red granite walkways spreading 1.10 lakh square metre with greenery all around, 133 light poles along the Rajpath, 4,087 trees, 114 modern signages and stepped gardens will be part of the redeveloped Central Vista in the national capital.

Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, who visited the Central Vista Avenue, said that a full dress rehearsal parade will be held here on Sunday.

According to the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, there will be a total of 915 light poles, including those

Force (CISF), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and Border Security Force (BSF) will also participate.

Overall, there will be 16 marching contingents from the armed forces, central paramilitary forces, Delhi Police, National Cadet Corps (NCC), National Service Scheme (NSS) along with 17 military bands, pipes and drum bands at the

in gardens and along the Rajpath between the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the India gate, a move aimed at making the Central Vista more pedestrian-friendly round the clock.

"In spite of (recent) rains, etc., all the work is complete," Puri told reporters, adding that only 25 trees have been relocated and of them, 22 trees have been shifted to another location and three are here. Although temporary bridges on water bodies along the Rajpath have been set up as part of the Republic Day parade arrangements, a total of 16 permanent ones will come up.

According to an official document, eight amenity blocks are being constructed while four pedestrian underpasses will come up in the entire stretch. It shows that on the developed stretch, "Tree Avenue" has 4,087 trees, but the earlier number was 3,890. The stretch also sports 422 red granite benches.

Two Param Vir Chakra and one Ashok Chakra awardees will also participate in this year's parade.

Before the commencement of the parade, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the nation in paying homage to the soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice by laying a wreath at the National War Memorial, the official statement by the

Along the Rajpath, the new red granite walkways spreading 1,10,457 sqm have been created, replacing bajri sand that lined the ground earlier. As many as 987 concrete bollards have been installed on the Rajpath. A total of 1,490 modern-looking man-holes have replaced the earlier ones.

On January 11, Puri had said the recent record rainfall had delayed the Central Vista Avenue redevelopment project by "a day or two, but not more". Shapoorji Pallonji and Company Limited is executing the redevelopment work of the Central Vista Avenue. The redevelopment project of the Central Vista -- the nation's power corridor -- envisages a new triangular Parliament building, a common central secretariat, revamping of the three-km Rajpath, a new prime minister's residence and prime minister's office, and a new vice president's enclave.

The Indian Navy's tableau will depict the 1946 naval uprising, which contributed in the country's independence movement, and its marching contingent will be led by a woman officer Lt Commander Aanchal Sharma. The tableau will also show the navy's theme of 'Combat Ready, Credible and Cohesive'.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation tableau is showcasing its "Udan" scheme (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) this year. In the aircraft shaped tableau, the front part showcases women pilots depicting women power in India's aviation, as India tops in women commercial pilots, globally.

The rear portion of the tableau shows symbol of Buddhism and motto of UDAN - Sab Uden, Sab Juden.

The middle portion showcases Buddha circuit, featuring, Buddhas Statue at Gaya where He attained enlightenment, Dhamekh Stupa, Sarnath where He delivered his first sermon (Dharmachakra Parivartan) and the Mahaparinirvana Stupa, Kushinagar where He attained Mahaparinirvana.

Both sides of the middle portion of the tableau depict heritage sites - Humayun tomb from North, Konark sun temple in East, Hampi temple chariot in South and Ajanta caves in West, connected with air services.

2K ultras who signed ceasefire pact to cast vote in Manipur polls

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Around 2,000 cadre of various militant groups living in designated camps after signing a tripartite Suspension of Operation (SoO), a ceasefire pact, with the State and Central Governments in 2008, will now cast their votes in the forthcoming Assembly polls in Manipur. Although they will not go to the polling stations to cast their vote, they have been allowed to vote through Postal Ballots.

The Election Commission (EC) has allowed members of Manipur militant groups that signed ceasefire agreements with the government, whose names are listed in the electoral rolls and who are currently residing at various designated camps to vote in the forthcoming assembly polls by postal ballot. The state polls are scheduled to be held in two phases on February 27 and March 3.

According to the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Manipur, the EC has allowed the cadres of the pro-talks militant outfits which are under ceasefire agreements with the government and those who are currently residing at various designated camps in the state to cast their votes.

The decision was made considering that a number of persons belonging to the SoO and MoU groups living in the 14 designated camps in Manipur have been

enrolled in the electoral rolls of various assembly constituencies of the state. The poll panel has taken the decision in exercise of powers conferred by clause (c) of Section 60 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and in consultation with the central government and state government.

According to officials, over 20 Kuki militant groups operating in the state under two conglomerate groups — United People's Front (UPF) and Kuki National Organisation (KNO) — had signed a tripartite Suspension of Operation (SoO), a ceasefire pact with the state and central governments in 2008.

The EC has directed that these electors shall be allowed to vote by postal ballot, taking into account the right of franchise of such electors as they cannot move out of the said designated camps, the statement said.

The notification further mentioned that a survey shall be made for appropriate location of Postal Ballot Facilitation Centers (PBFC) for distribution, recording, collection of PB in different camps of SoO and MoU groups.

Manipur has a total of 60 Assembly constituencies. In the first phase, elections will be held for as many as 38 constituencies and the remaining 22 constituencies will vote in the second phase.



Security personnel examine Rajpath on the eve of full dress rehearsal of the Republic Day parade in New Delhi on Saturday

Govt ropes in Ayush doctors for consultation on eSanjeevini portal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

To ease the burden and meet scarcity of allopathic medical professionals, the Government has roped in AYUSH doctors for providing consultation on the eSanjeevini OPD platform, a free health service portal launched by the Union Health Ministry with an aim to provide better healthcare services to patients in their homes.

It has been observed that there has been a resurgence in the demand of Ayush healthcare system, which has increased exponentially in the current period. Accordingly the Centre has decided to rope in AYUSH doctors from Ayush institutes of the country for free consultation on this portal, said Dr Anupam Srivastava, Director of Rashtriya Ayurveda Vidyaapeeth (RAV).

An autonomous organization under the Ministry of Ayush, has been assigned with the responsibility as a nodal agency to coordinate the programme which includes induction training of doctors too on the portal.

Dr Srivastava said, "We are witnessing an increase in the number of Covid-19 cases and this rise has also affected the doctors and other frontline health workers in a big way. AYUSH



doctors are helping in easing the burden and meeting the demands of scarcity in a big way.

We all know that Ayurveda and other AYUSH systems of medicines have played a very crucial role during the Covid-19 pandemic for the last two years and a larger section of the society got benefitted through it, he added.

In fact, the AYUSH Ministry has also operationalised a dedicated community support pan-India helpline to provide AYUSH-based approaches and solutions for the people grappling with Covid-19. Encouraged by the positive results of alternate traditional medicines in fight against Covid-19, the Centre has asked the Union Health Ministry to integrate the Ministry of AYUSH to multiply resources in the fight against the pandemic, Union

Minister Sarbananda Sonowal had also recently informed.

The AYUSH department has also launched an ayurvedic kit - "Ayuraksha Kit" - comprising Chyavanprash, Sanshmani Vati, Anu Tail and Ayush kadha - to improve the immunity of people and keep them healthy.

The Minister said that the time tested AYUSH systems have many evidence-based interventions for the management and treatment of Covid-19. India's AYUSH has reported tremendous growth in the last few years because of growing global and domestic demand, enabled by research and development in the sector. According to a report from the Ministry, with a turnover of \$18.1 billion, the market size of the Indian AYUSH industry, as a whole, has grown by 17 per cent during 2014-2020.

Rahul: Govt trying hard to snatch public rights

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Saturday hit out at the Modi Government accusing it of trying to destroy public rights.

Rahul said that the world's largest democracy is nothing without public rights and asked people whether they can imagine India without fundamental and public rights.

"What's the point of the world's largest democracy without public rights? The Modi government has been trying to destroy the rights of the public from the beginning. Can you even imagine India without these rights including the fundamental rights?" he said in a social media post.

Rahul further listed out the basic rights. "Right to food - so that no one has to face hunger. Right to Education- Today every child goes to school, makes a better tomorrow for



dialogue with all stakeholders so that time and opportunities lost during the two years of pandemic don't cost our youth their future," Rahul said on Twitter with a special mention Justice for Students.

Addressing the media while launching the party's youth manifesto for Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections a day earlier, Rahul had criticised the BJP government for depriving the youth of opportunities. "Youth is the biggest strength of India. They are called demographic dividend; Narendra Modi and the BJP has converted it into a demographic disaster....India needs a new vision and only the Congress party can give that vision to the country...The BJP's vision is not of the country's vision," he said.

He had also accused the BJP government of taking the unemployment rate to a record high in the last 40 years.

Long Covid affecting human nervous system, says expert

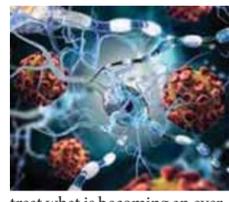
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Long Covid is affecting human brains and nervous systems at a deeper level and there is an urgent need for significant research into identifying the full extent of its complications and underlying causes, according to researchers.

The viewpoint of Avindra Nath, an Indian-American scientist who specialises in neuroimmunology, has been published in the prestigious Science journal.

Nath, who is clinical director of the National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), along with Serena Spudich from Yale School of Medicine, Connecticut, said that the medical community needs to carefully study individuals with Long Covid categorized by their specific symptoms.

"It is crucial to the development of diagnostic and therapeutic tools to identify and



and smell, impaired concentration, fatigue, pain, sleep disorders, autonomic disorders and/or headache to psychological effects such as depression or psychosis. Nath and Spudich have outlined the current scientific understanding of the potential body responses to acute Covid-19 infection and how those responses could lead to Long Covid symptoms.

They also drew parallels between the symptoms experienced by individuals with Long Covid to those living with myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) or post-Lyme Disease, which suggests there could be common risk factors involved.

"Owing to the significant variability in symptoms from person to person and the fact that many individuals with LongCovid were healthy prior to a relatively mild Covid-19 infection", the scientists have highlighted the urgent need for global research efforts.

Long Covid can include a wide variety of symptoms in the brain and nervous system that range from a loss of taste

NIA raids places in Punjab in Jalalabad IED blast case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has conducted searches at multiple locations in Punjab in the 2021 bike IED blast case of Jalalabad.

The agency conducted searches at five locations in Taran Tarn, Fazilka and Ferozepur districts of Punjab, the NIA said in a statement. During the searches that continued till late on Friday, electronic gadgets, ammunition, documents and other incriminating materials have been seized. Further investigation in the case is continuing, it said.

The case relates to an explosion in a Bajaj Platina bike near Punjab National Bank, Jalalabad City, police station Jalalabad, Fazilka in which one person namely Binder Singh died on the spot.



"Initial investigation revealed that accused were in touch with Pakistan-based terrorists/smugglers and were recruited for carrying out terrorist attacks in crowded areas by triggering explosive devices," it said.

The case was first registered as FIR No 205/2021 dated September 16, 2021 under various sections of the Explosive Act at the police station City Jalalabad, Fazilka, Punjab. The NIA had re-registered the case on October 1 last year. Till now five accused persons have been arrested in the case, it added.

Ukraine tensions: Russia toughens its posture

Moscow: With tens of thousands of Russian troops positioned near Ukraine, the Kremlin has kept the US and its allies guessing about its next moves in the worst security crisis to emerge between Moscow and the West since the Cold War.

Amid fears of an imminent attack on Ukraine, Russia has further upped the ante by announcing more military drills in the region. It also has refused to rule out the possibility of military deployments to the Caribbean, and President Vladimir Putin has reached out to leaders opposed to the West.

The military muscle-flexing reflects a bold attempt by the Kremlin to halt decades of NATO expansion after the end of the Cold War. In talks with the United States, Russia demands legally binding guarantees that the alliance will not embrace Ukraine and other former Soviet nations, or place weapons there.

It also wants NATO to pull back its forces from countries in Central and Eastern Europe that joined the alliance since the 1990s. Putin has described NATO membership for Ukraine and the others as



Members of Ukraine's Territorial Defense Forces, volunteer military units of the Armed Forces, train in a city park in Kyiv, Ukraine, Saturday. Dozens of civilians have been joining Ukraine's army reserves in recent weeks amid fears about Russian invasion

well as the alliance's weapons deployments there as a red line for Moscow, warning that he would order unspecified "military-technical measures" if the demands aren't met.

Putin pointed to NATO drills with the Ukrainian military, increasingly frequent visits of the alliance warships in the Black Sea and the flights of US bombers near Crimea to emphasize the urgency of Russia's security demands. He argued that by creating training centres in Ukraine, Western powers can establish a military foothold there even without its

joining NATO. "We have nowhere to retreat," Putin said. "They have taken it to the point where we simply must tell them: Stop!" Russia, which annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014, has denied it intends to attack its neighbour. Last year, however, Putin issued a stark warning that an attempt by Ukraine to reclaim control of the areas in the east controlled by Russia-backed separatists would have "grave consequences for Ukrainian statehood".

Baltic nations to ship Washington-endorsed arms to Ukraine

AP ■ HELSINKI

The Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania will send US-made anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles to Ukraine in a move that Washington says it is fully endorsing amid Kyiv's escalating tensions with Russia.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a tweet posted on Saturday that Washington saluted the three NATO nations and former Soviet republics "for their long-standing support to Ukraine".

"I expedited and authorized and we fully endorse transfers of defensive equipment @NATO Allies Estonia Latvia Lithuania are providing to Ukraine to strengthen its ability to defend itself against Russia's unprovoked and irresponsible aggression," Blinken said in another tweet.

Dmitry Peskov, spokesperson for Russian President Vladimir Putin, earlier this week described western arms supplies to Ukraine as extremely dangerous and said they "do nothing to reduce tensions".

Moscow has massed tens of thousands of troops at the border with Ukraine, leading to fears of an invasion.

The West has rejected Moscow's main demands - promises from NATO that Ukraine will never be added as a member, that no alliance weapons will be deployed near Russian borders, and that it will pull back its forces from Central and Eastern Europe.

A meeting Friday between Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov ended with no breakthrough.

In a joint statement published late Friday, the defense ministers of the three Baltic states said they "stand united in our commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity in face of continued Russian aggression."

They said Estonia would provide Ukraine with Javelin anti-tank weapons while Latvia and Lithuania were sending Stinger anti-aircraft missiles and other related equipment to bolster Kyiv's defensive military capabilities.

Biden, Kishida agree to 'push back' China's attempts to change status quo in East China Sea, SCS

Washington: US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida have agreed to "push back" against China's attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, and highlighted the importance of the Quad grouping as a critical forum for promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

During the 80-minute virtual meeting on Friday, their first formal summit meeting, Biden said the age-old alliance between the US and Japan is the cornerstone of peace and security in the strategic Indo-Pacific region and across the world.

"It was an honour to meet with Prime Minister Kishida to further strengthen the US-Japan alliance - the cornerstone of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific and around the world," Biden said in a tweet after the meeting.

"As Indo-Pacific powers, the United States and Japan are united in a shared purpose to sustain and enhance our commitment to the region," the White House said in a readout of the meeting.

"The two leaders resolved to push back against the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s attempts to change the status quo in the East China Sea and South China Sea," it said.

The US, India and several other world powers have been talking about the need to ensure a free, open and thriving Indo-Pacific in the backdrop of China's aggressive military manoeuvring in the region.

The Chinese military is actively eyeing the strategic Indian Ocean region to step up

Beijing's influence. China claims nearly all of the disputed South China Sea, though Taiwan, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam all claim parts of it.

Beijing has built artificial islands and military installations in the South China Sea. China also has territorial disputes with Japan in the East China Sea. The US maintains it will support its regional allies in the defence of a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

The Japanese government said in a statement that "the two leaders shared the intention to coordinate closely under the strong Japan-US alliance and to deepen cooperation with like-minded countries such as Australia, India, ASEAN, and Europe, toward realising a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific'".

Biden and Kishida said they remain committed to working closely with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

The two leaders highlighted the importance of the Quad - Australia, Japan, India, and the United States - as a critical forum for promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific region, according to the White House readout.

They also decided to ensure that the Quad delivers practical results in areas such as COVID-19 response, climate and clean energy, and infrastructure.

In 2017, India, Australia, Japan and the US gave shape to the long-pending proposal of setting up the "Quad" or the Quadrilateral coalition to counter China's aggressive behaviour in the strategically-vital Indo-Pacific region.

2 prominent activists sentences to death by Myanmar court

Bangkok: Two prominent political activists in military-ruled Myanmar have been sentenced to death for alleged involvement in terrorist activities, an army television station has reported.

Myawaddy TV said on its evening news broadcast on Friday that Kyaw Min Yu, better known as Ko Jimmy, and Phyo Zeyar Thaw, also known as Maung Kyaw, were convicted under the country's counter-terrorism law.

They were found guilty of offenses involving explosives, bombings and financing terrorism.

Both have been detained since their arrests, unable to comment on the allegations, and no lawyer ever emerged to comment on their behalf. Min Yu's wife, Nilar Thein, in October denied the allegations lodged against her husband.

Details of their trials were unavailable because the proceedings were carried out in a closed military court. It was unclear if their two cases were linked.

Modern-day Myanmar has a record of rarely carrying out death sentences.

The two are among the



most prominent activists to be given death sentences since the military in February last year seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Its takeover sparked wide-scale popular protests, which have since turned into a low-level insurgency after nonviolent demonstrations were met with deadly force by the security forces.

Almost 1,500 civilians are estimated to have been killed, and more than 11,000 arrested or fled for political offenses.

Some resistance factions have engaged in assassinations, drive-by shootings and bombings in urban areas. The mainstream opposition organizations generally disavow such activities, while supporting armed resistance in rural areas, which are more often subject to brutal military attacks.

IS-K bigger threat than TTP in Pak's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: province police chief

Peshawar: The Islamic State's Afghanistan affiliate, dubbed Islamic State Khorasan or IS-K, posed a bigger threat to peace and integrity of Pakistan's restive province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa than the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the provincial police said on Saturday.

The IS-K, which has stepped up attacks in several cities in Afghanistan after the Taliban seized power in Kabul in August last year, was also responsible for carrying out a spate of terror attacks against Pakistan's security officials in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

"I see IS-K as a bigger threat to peace and security in the province compared to the TTP in near future," Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police chief Moazzam Jah Ansari said.

In October last year, IS-K had also claimed responsibility for the killing of a well-known Sikh hakeem named Sardar Satnam Singh (Khalsa), who practised Unani medicine here in the provincial capital.

At least three police personnel were killed in different parts of the province in the months of October and November.

Ansari said following these sustained attacks, police had



busted a cell of the IS-K in Peshawar on December 20 last year.

While both TTP and IS-K were responsible for attacks on security forces in Pakistan, Ansari believed that the latter posed a great threat because when one of its cells became dysfunctional, another cell began operations.

"These [militant] outfits are operating in small groups and the neutralisation of one cell does not end the possibility of another cell resorting to similar acts," Ansari explained.

He said that there had been security issues in North and South Waziristan tribal districts, but the security officials had acted swiftly to enforce the writ of the state.

Ansari said the provincial and federal governments were focusing on development of

tribal areas and creating employment opportunities for the youth.

"These efforts will motivate the people to support government efforts for peace," he opined.

The police chief said his force had completed the training of 17,000 out of 27,000 Levies and Khasadar Force personnel in the tribal districts.

The police force was working in tandem with Pakistan's armed forces for bringing peace back in the region, Ansari added.

According to a US State Department's report, IS-K received funding from its parent organisation, the militant Islamic State group (IS), with additional funding coming from "illicit criminal commerce, taxes and extortion activities."

US-backed fighters chase IS gunmen near prison in Syria

Beirut: Kurdish-led fighters advanced slowly Saturday under the cover of US-led coalition air power in Syria's northeast. Intense clashes with Islamic State militants took place around a prison where thousands of extremists were held, officials said.

Fighting broke out Thursday night when IS unleashed its biggest attack in Syria since the fall of its "caliphate" three years ago. More than 100 militants assaulted the main prison holding suspected extremists in the northeastern city of Hassakeh, sparking a battle with US-backed Kurdish fighters that has so far left dozens dead.

Despite their defeat in Syria nearly three years ago, IS sleeper cells have carried out deadly attacks against US-backed fighters of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces as well as government forces on the west bank of the Tigris River in eastern Syria.

The group's territorial control in Syria and Iraq, where they once declared their "caliphate" was crushed by a years-long US-backed campaign. But its fighters continued with sleeper cells that have increasingly killed scores of

Iraqis and Syrians in past months.

The US-backed Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces brought more reinforcements into Hassakeh in an attempt to regain control of areas taken by IS, residents said. More civilians fled the areas of fighting as sounds of explosions echoed in the city and black smoke billowed from the Gweiran Prison area on the southern edge of Hassakeh.

Hassakeh Governor Ghassan Khalil told Syrian state media that some 4,000 civilians have fled to areas controlled by Syrian government forces in the city and its suburbs.

The IS attack targeted Gweiran Prison, the largest of around a dozen facilities run by US-backed Syrian Kurdish forces holding suspected IS fighters. Gweiran holds some 5,000, including IS commanders and figures considered among the most dangerous.

"The battles are taking place on the edge of the prison," SDF spokesman Siyaman Ali told The Associated Press, adding that most of the prison is under their control apart from a small part that is held by rioting prisoners. He added that fighting is also ongoing in

the nearby Zuhour neighbourhood, where IS fighters were holed up.

Ali said SDF fighters and US-led coalition aircraft targeted a technical academy building where dozens of "Daesh terrorists took positions". Ali, who used an Arabic acronym to refer to IS, said SDF fighters are advancing slowly in order to protect the lives of civilians as IS gunmen are holed up in alleys and in residential homes.

Ali said some 45 IS gunmen were killed in the fighting, adding that a statement will be issued later about the casualties among SDF fighters.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said that since Thursday night, 78 people have been killed, including 45 IS gunmen, 28 Kurdish fighters and five civilians. The Observatory added that SDF fighters were using loud speakers to call on IS fighters to surrender but the extremists refused.

On Friday, the SDF's top military commander, Mazloum Abadi, said IS mobilised "most of its sleeper cells" to organise the prison break.

Stray bullet kills English astrophysicist visiting Atlanta



Brookhaven (US): A stray bullet struck and killed an English astrophysicist while he was inside an Atlanta-area apartment, and police say the death was the result of "reckless" gunfire by random individuals.

Matthew Willson, 31, of Chertsey, Surrey, England, was shot once in the head while laying in bed, Brookhaven police announced Thursday. The shooting happened early Sunday morning.

Willson was in Brookhaven visiting his girlfriend, Katherine Shepard. She told WSB-TV that the bullet came through the wall of her apartment, from a neighbouring apartment complex. She called 911.

"I held him for another 20 minutes while we waited for the ambulance," she said. "And while we were waiting, there were more gunshots fired."

Willson was taken to a hospital and later pronounced dead.

NYC police officer killed, 2nd critical in Harlem shooting

New York: A New York City police officer lay in a hospital Saturday after being critically wounded in a shooting in a Harlem apartment that left a fellow officer dead, authorities said.

The man who shot them with a stolen gun was also in critical condition, wounded by a third officer who fired at him as he tried to flee, officials said.

The two officers were shot Friday night while answering a call about an argument between a woman and her adult son.

Officer Jason Rivera, 22, was killed, and Officer Wilbert Mora, 27, was critically wounded, authorities said.

Police had no update on Mora's condition Saturday morning but said he remained hospitalised.

The man police say shot them, 47-year-old Lashawn J. McNeil, also was critically wounded and hospitalized, authorities said.

Authorities said the three officers went to the apartment after a call came in from a woman needing help with McNeil, her son. Officers spoke with the woman and another son, but there was no mention of a weapon.

Rivera and Mora walked from the front of the apartment down a hallway, and McNeil swung open a bedroom door

and opened fire, Chief of Detectives James Essig said.

As McNeil tried to flee, a third officer who had stayed with McNeil's mother in the front of the apartment shot at McNeil and wounded him in the head and arm, Essig said.

They were among the four officers shot in the city in as many days, prompting an emotional response from Mayor Eric Adams.

"This was just not an attack on these brave officers," Adams said Friday night. "This was an attack on the city of New York."

Rivera joined the force in November 2020. Mora has been with the NYPD for four years.

Adams, three weeks into his job, called for federal authorities to do more to round up stolen guns like the one used in Friday's shooting.

Police said the gun used in Friday night's shooting, a .45-caliber Glock with a high-capacity magazine capable of holding up to 40 extra rounds, had been stolen in Baltimore in 2017.

Pak YouTuber gets just 1 year jail term for justifying lynching of Sri Lankan citizen

PTI ■ LAHORE

A Pakistani anti-terrorism court has sentenced a 27-year-old man to one year of imprisonment and imposed a fine for justifying the lynching of a Sri Lankan citizen in a video, which went viral on his YouTube channel.

On December 3 last year, a mob of over 800 men, including supporters of hardline Islamist party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), attacked a garment factory in Sialkot district, some 100 km from Lahore, and lynched its general manager Priyantha Kumara, 47, and burned his body over allegations of blasphemy.

Indian-origin scientist among UBC researchers unveil world's 1st molecular-level analysis of Omicron

Toronto: A team of researchers, including an Indian-origin scientist at the prestigious University of British Columbia, has become the first in the world to conduct a molecular-level structural analysis of the Omicron spike protein, which could help accelerate the development of more effective treatments against the variant.

Spike protein helps the virus enter and infect cells. Dr Sriram Subramaniam, professor in UBC faculty of medicine's department of biochemistry and molecular biology, said that Omicron has greater binding affinity than the original SARS-CoV-2 virus, with levels more comparable to what seen with the Delta variant.

Bitcoin pyramid schemes wreak havoc on Brazil's 'New Egypt'

Cabo Frio (Brazil): In April, Brazil's federal police stormed the helipad of a seaside hotel in Rio de Janeiro state, where they busted two men and a woman loading a chopper with 7 million reais (USD 1.3 million) in neatly packed bills.

The detainees told police they worked for G.A.S. Consulting & Technology, a cryptocurrency investment firm founded by a former waiter-turned-multimillionaire who is the central figure in what is alleged to be one of Brazil's biggest-ever pyramid schemes.

Police say the company owned by 38-year-old Gladson Ac cio dos Santos had total transactions worth at least USD 7 billion (USD 38 billion reais) from 2015 through mid-2021 as part of a Bitcoin-based Ponzi scheme that promised investors 10% monthly returns.

In hundreds of pages of documents obtained by The Associated Press, federal and state police and prosecutors accuse dos Santos of running a

sophisticated racket defrauding thousands of small-scale investors who believed they were getting rich off Bitcoin's steep appreciation.

He is now in a Rio jail awaiting trial on charges including racketeering, financial crimes and ordering the murder and attempted murder of two business competitors. He remains under investigation in the attempted murder of a third competitor.

Dos Santos has repeatedly asserted his innocence. His lawyers didn't reply to AP requests for comment.

Despite the charges, dos Santos represents an unlikely hero to supporters. Many view him as a modest Black man whose unorthodox Bitcoin business made them wealthy by gaming a financial system they believe is rigged by wealthy white elites.

The case also underscores the fast-growing appetite for cryptocurrencies in Brazil, where years of economic and political crises have made dig-

ital currencies an attractive shield against depreciation of the Brazilian real and double-digit inflation.

Bitcoin fervor was high in Cabo Frio, the resort town where G.A.S. was based. As G.A.S. revenues rose, enriching early adopters, copycat firms sprang up, seeking to cash in. A wave of cryptocurrency-related violence followed.

With so many alleged pyramid schemes, Cabo Frio came to be known as the New Egypt. And as the town's top dog, dos Santos was dubbed the Bitcoin Pharaoh.

Police say dos Santos began trading in Bitcoin in 2014 after leaving his job as a waiter. He enlisted clients from the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, where he had once trained as a preacher, promising referral fees to those who brought in fresh recruits, authorities say.

In a statement, the Universal Church accused dos Santos of harassing and recruiting pastors and their flocks to

join his company.

By 2017, dos Santos was making serious money and attracting authorities' attention. That year his company's transactions totaled 10 million reais (USD 1.8 million), 15 times more than the previous year. The country's financial intelligence unit also noticed the company registered as a restaurant was regularly trading cryptocurrency on online exchange platforms.

Prosecutors say the alleged scheme worked like this: Clients deposited their money into bank accounts run by managing partners.

The money was then transferred to dos Santos or his Venezuelan wife, Mirelis Yoseline Diaz Zerpa, who would either pocket it, buy bitcoins and other cryptocurrencies as well as traditional financial assets, or pay off other members of the scheme.

Clients were promised a 10 per cent monthly return on their investments over 12- to 48-month contracts, but did

not own the bitcoins they were told G.A.S. bought with their money. And, they were assured, it was risk-free: They would get their entire initial investment back at the end of the contract.

As Bitcoin fever grew, dos Santos was fast becoming a celebrity in Cabo Frio.

If he wanted to run for mayor, governor even, he'd win, said Gilson Silva do Carmo, 52, one of dos Santos' alleged victims.

The chubby young man in thick-rimmed glasses was also gaining a taste for the high life, buying expensive jewelry and a swanky apartment as contracts poured in from elsewhere in Latin America, the U.S., Europe and the Gulf. Brazil's lenient laws regulating cryptocurrency helped fuel dos Santos' rise, experts say. At the same time, Brazil's securities regulator was making cryptocurrency more attractive: It authorised the country's investment funds to invest in digital currencies in 2018, giving them greater credibility.

INDIA MAY TRY DIFFERENT OPTIONS TO AVOID HUMILIATION

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

Indian team's strategy is expected to undergo paradigm shift with some players getting a subtle yet stern message to lift their games as they face an embarrassing possibility of a clean sweep against South Africa in the third ODI, here on Sunday.

India's strategy looked completely out of sync with modern day white ball game as the batters failed to keep the momentum in the middle overs and more importantly the bowlers, save Jasprit Bumrah, looked club class and without ideas of getting breakthroughs.

In two matches, India have been only able to pick up seven wickets -- four in the first game when Proteas batted first and only three in the second. Ravichandran Ashwin and especially Bhuvneshwar Kumar, the two senior-most bowlers looked far from threatening and the young Proteas batters like Rassie van der Dussen, Janneman Malan along with seniors like Quinton de Kock have feasted on the pedestrian stuff dished out by them.

Worse, the first two games were played on a Boland Park strip that didn't have a lot of pace and bounce and



Rahul Dravid, the man who is currently calling all the shots as far as tactics is concerned, takes a dim view and at least try out Jayant Yadav and Deepak Chahar in the next game which would lend some freshness to the attack.

However at Newlands, there will be more pace and bounce on the track and the Indian team that has been perennially struggling would want to avoid the

ignominy of a 0-3 loss. For skipper Rahul, the whole tour, save his match-winning hundred in the first Test, has been a nightmare. Although he is being seen as a long-term future leader, there hasn't been any spark whatsoever in his leadership that would make anyone sit up and feel that he is the one cut out for the job. There hasn't been any tactical improvisations in the two games so far which would inspire confidence in his leadership abilities.

Add to that, his own style of batting at the top of the order is outdated in modern ODIs and his inability to rotate the strike for the better part is also creating pressure on the later batters, who aren't as adept at maneuvering the strike.

It is a foregone conclusion that once Rohit Sharma is back in action, Rahul will lose his spot at the top of the order with Shikhar Dhawan scoring runs and at a better clip compared to his younger partner.

Virat Kohli may have scored 51 in the first game but what is visible is his lack of energy on the field having been sacked from ODI captaincy.

Sindhu enters final of Syed Modi

SHALABH SAXENA ■ LUCKNOW

Top seed PV Sindhu entered the final of the Syed Modi India International Badminton Tournament as her opponent world number 28 Evgeniya Kosetskaya of Russia conceded the semifinal match following an injury on Saturday.

Looking to end the title drought, Sindhu comfortably won the first game 21-11 before Kosetskaya decided to pull out. Sindhu will now take on promising Malvika Bansod in the final of the women's singles on Sunday.

Malvika kept aside the challenge of compatriot Anupama Upadhyaya, 19-21 21-19 21-7 in a marathon match. Malvika, who crushed Saina Nehwal in the Indian Open, came from behind to stamp her supremacy over her opponent.

Meanwhile, the Indian challenge in the men's singles ended as Mithun Manjunath lost to Arnaud Merkle of France 21-19, 17-21, 21-9.

Merkel, who defeated favourite HS Prannoy in the quarterfinal, was fast and crisp



with his returns and eked out a win against fighting Manjunath.

Merkel will now face his countrymate Lucas Claerhout for the title. Lucas beat Nhat Nguyen of Ireland 15-21, 21-18, 21-15.

In the mixed doubles semifinal, 7th seeded Ishaan Bhatnagar and Tanisha Crasto beat MR Arjun and Treasa Jolly 18-21, 21-18, 21-11. They will now face their Indian counterpart T Hema Nagendra Babu and Srivedya Gurazada,

who defeated Akshan Shetty and Simran Singh 15-21, 22-20, 21-9.

OTHER RESULTS:
Women's doubles: Treasa Jolly/Gayatri Gopichand Pallela bt Low Yeen Yuan/Vaereere Siow 17-21, 21-8, 21-16; Anna Ching Yik Cheong/Teoh Mei Xing bt Haritha Mazazhiyil Harinarayanan/Ashna Roy
Men's doubles: Man Wei Chong/Kai Wun Tee bt MR Arjun/Dhruv Kapila 21-16, 21-12.

IPL will start in last week of March Sri Lanka and South Africa secure Super League quarterfinal spots

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI is set to conduct the 2022 IPL from last week of March to end of May and efforts would be made to host the lucrative event in India as per the wishes of team owners, Board secretary Jay Shah said on Saturday.

If sources are to be believed, the tentative start date is March 27.

"I am delighted to confirm that the 15th season of the IPL will start in the last week of March and will run until May end. A majority of the team owners expressed their wish that the tournament be held in India," Shah was quoted as saying in a press note issued by the BCCI.

He also made it clear that the board's first preference is to host the event in India.

"The BCCI was always keen on staging the 2022 edition that will see two new teams --



Ahmedabad and Lucknow -- in India. I can tell you that we will leave no stone unturned in ensuring that IPL stays in India," Shah said.

While the UAE and South Africa are back-up options as per sources who attended the meeting, Shah stressed that the health safety of all stakeholders including players, match officials is paramount for the board.

"The BCCI has not compromised on the health and safety of its stakeholders in the past and will concurrently work on Plan B since the COVID-19 sit-

uation with new variants remains fluid.

"The mega IPL Auction will take place on February 12-13th and we will lock in venues before that," Shah further added.

The BCCI was initially mulling two start dates for the next IPL with some preferring a March 27 kickoff and few other influential people wanting the mega event to begin on April 2, which conforms to the Lodha Committee ruling.

"Some of the owners prefer March 27 start but India play their last international game against Sri Lanka, a T20I at Lucknow on March 18, and then you need a 14-day gap as per Lodha rule which is why April 2 is also an option for start date," a senior BCCI official told PTI on the condition of anonymity.

It is understood that the India players will also be exhausted after staying in three back-to-back bubbles in South

Africa (away) and at home against West Indies and Sri Lanka.

"The BCCI must take bubble fatigue of players into account if they start IPL in less than 10 days of completion of Sri Lanka tour," a BCCI source said.

However, after Shah's statement, it looks like March 27 will be locked in.

It is also learnt that all the 10 IPL owners, including the two new teams from Lucknow and Ahmedabad, want India as the host country for the 2022 IPL, with Mumbai and Pune being the two preferred cities.

Their second choice is the United Arab Emirates where the IPL has been organised thrice while the final option is South Africa where the mega event was held back in 2009.

However, the UAE and South Africa will only come into the picture if the COVID-19 situation in India worsens.

PTI ■ BASSETTERRE (ST KITTS)

Sri Lanka sealed their qualification for the T20 World Cup with a dramatic three-wicket victory over West Indies while South Africa defeated Ireland by 153-runs to also book their place in the quarterfinals of the ICC U-19 World Cup.

Dunith Wellalage took three wickets as Sri Lanka restricted the hosts to 250 before Sadisha Rajapaksa (76) Anjala Bandara (40) and Ranuda Somarathna's unbeaten 28 guided the Group D winners to a three-wicket success on Friday.

WI openers Shaqkere Parris and Matthew Nandu ensured they made a steady start, reaching the end of the fifth over for 20 without loss before Treveen Mathew removed the latter for seven.

Parris was then bowled by Wellalage for 16 before Teddy Bishop and Kevin Wickham combined for a fruitful partnership, taking the West Indies to 102 for two after 26 overs.

Bishop was eventually removed on 45 but Jordan Johnson picked up where his team-



mate left off as he raced to 26.

Wickham reached his half-century before falling for 56.

Two wickets in three balls in the 45th over stunted the hosts' momentum, though, with Wellalage accounting for Johnson as he fell three runs short of his fifty before Giovante Depeiza was run out moments later by Anjala Bandara without scoring.

In response, Sri Lanka lost opener Chamindu Wickramasinghe in the first over. Sadisha Rajapaksa and Shevon Daniel got their side back on track before Daniel was removed for 34.

Rajapaksa powered on regardless as he reached his fifty. Anjala Bandara contributed 40 before his wicket fell with Rajapaksa (76) also falling the same bowler in the 40th over.

With 51 needed off 60 balls for victory, Shiva Sankar removed Wellalage (15) to set up a tense finale.

Mckenny Clarke bowled Raveen De Silva (13) but a nerveless 28 from 27 balls from Ranuda Somarathna saw Sri Lanka home. In the day's other game, a blockbuster century from captain George Van Heerden propelled his side towards the Super League quarterfinals as South Africa defeated Ireland by 153 runs in Tarouba.

Van Heerden made 111 from 93 balls while Dewald Brevis better known as 'Baby AB' contributed 96 to take South Africa's total of 315 for seven from their rain-reduced 47 overs before bowling out Ireland for 158.

There has been discussions on how I need to play shots: Pant



PTI ■ PAARL

Rishabh Pant understands the value of his wicket and the reason why the team management often asks him to use his discretion in shot selection during important phases of various matches.

Pant was out to an atrocious shot during the second Test in Wanderers, which led to lot of criticism from all quarters and former skipper Virat Kohli stating that they have had a word with the talented southpaw.

"There are always positive talks that as an individual what I can do. All the strokes are there but how can I play with patience and according to the situation. So a lot of discussions happen," Pant, who since then had scored a hundred in the third Test at Cape Town and followed it with career-best 85 in the second ODI, told reporters during a virtual interaction.

"And whatever we discuss, we practise and after that try to implement in the match," he added. According to Pant, who made a career-

best 85, the team management has entrusted him with responsibility of batting at four, to ensure right-left combination

"The reason to bat at number four was if a left-hander gets a chance to bat in the middle, then it becomes easy to rotate strike, with the left-right combination, especially in the middle overs when leg-spinners or left-arm spinners bowl.

".....So that is why the team management felt that a left-handed batter should bat and that is why that role was given to me," he said.

Pant also said that the team is learning from the mistakes in its endeavour to get better.

"I think as (from) a batting point of view, we are fine, we are going fine. We are learning from our mistakes and every day as the Indian cricket team we strive to improve our cricket and that is the only thing we are looking forward (to)." Pant believes that Shardul Thakur's batting in both games (50no and 40 no) has been one of the biggest positives in the series so far.

"One more positive was the way Shardul (Thakur) batted down the order, in both the matches, that was also a positive. The way Venky (Venkatesh Iyer) bowled, he conceded more runs in one or two overs, but still it felt that he could bowl (at this level). So, there are a lot of positives, which we can take as a team."

Pant admitted that Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram and Tabraiz Shamsi bowled better than Ravichandran Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal in the two games.

"I think they (SA spinners) were more consistent in their lines and lengths and they are used to playing in these conditions," he said.

RIP Subhas Bhowmick



PTI ■ KOLKATA

A fearless competitor who Aused brain and brawn in equal measure, Subhas Bhowmick was one of the most fascinating characters in Indian football through the 1970's with his muscular built and equally expressive carefree opinions.

On Saturday morning, Bhowmick, who was undergoing dialysis for a long time breathed his last at the age of 72, survived by his wife, son and daughter and the legions of fans, who loved and lived the moments left by him both on and off the field.

"He had to undergo dialysis regularly for about three and half months. He also underwent bypass surgery about 23 years ago. Recently, he was admitted to a private hospital in Ekbalpur

with a chest infection," a family member said.

While India had some of the finest international footballers in 1960's which include Pradeep Banerjee, Chuni Goswami, Tulsidas Balamar, Jarnail Singh, Arun Ghosh, Peter Thangaraj to name a few, the numbers quote dwindled in the 70's save two Bengalis, who were thought of international standard. They were pint-sized right back Sudhir Karmakar and 'bulldozer' winger Bhowmick, who were both part of the 1970 Asian Games bronze winning Indian football team. Bhowmick, in fact, scored in the tournament and in his 24 games for India had nine goals including a hattrick in the Merdeka Cup (Indian teams were regular feature in 60's and 70's) along with goals in the Asian Games in Bangkok.

Medvedev wins over Aussie crowd in win over Dutch opponent

AP ■ MELBOURNE

As Daniil Medvedev sat courtside trying to rehydrate during a changeover, an image of nine-time Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic flashed up in the stadium behind him.

It was in the third set Saturday, and it was like the absent No. 1 was looking over the shoulder of the player who is effectively the No. 1 seed at the year's first Grand Slam tournament. Medvedev, who lost last year's Australian Open final to Djokovic but avenged that with a victory over the Serb for the U.S. Open title, reached the fourth round for the fourth straight year at Melbourne Park with a 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 win over Botic van de Zandschulp.

The 25-year-old Russian was a conspicuous fan favorite on Margaret Court Arena, too, two days after being unsettled by the boos and jeers of a parochial crowd on Rod Laver Arena when he ended the run of mercurial Aussie Nick Kyrgios.

He was critical of a lack of respect in that match -- mostly about the noise between first and second serves -- and this time offered some relationship



advice to the crowd.

"Every good relationship must have its ups and downs," he said in his on-court TV interview, explaining that he planned to be back on court quite often in the future.

"I hope it's going to be more good times than bad times, otherwise it doesn't work."

Medvedev later clarified he didn't have a problem with the Australian crowds and had been fully expecting to have them against him when he played Kyrgios -- just not while he was

in his service motion.

"The other night I was playing against an Australian player, very electric Australian player," he said.

"After the match, I think it was, yeah, straightforward pretty actually fun for everybody.

"That's how I felt, and I didn't see actually a lot of let's say negative reactions." Medvedev avoided a showdown with Djokovic after the world's top-ranked player had his visa canceled and was deported on the eve of the tournament.

Villa rub salt into Toffees' wounds

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Everton's change of management did not result in a change of fortunes as Aston Villa manager Steven Gerrard enjoyed a winning return to Merseyside with a 1-0 victory at Goodison Park.

Emiliano Buendia's header in first half stoppage time separated the sides to leave the Toffees still just five points above the relegation zone in 16th.

Duncan Ferguson took temporary charge of Everton following the sacking of Rafael Benitez last weekend after a run of just one win in 13 league games.

Ferguson was unbeaten in three matches as caretaker boss against Chelsea, Manchester United and Arsenal before Carlo Ancelotti took charge just over two years ago.

But he could not replicate that success as former Liverpool captain Gerrard got one over on his old rivals. Ferguson bought a round of drinks



for fans in a pub next to the stadium before kick-off and got the raucous atmosphere he was looking for.

Both sides flew into tackles, but there were few clear-cut chances in the

first half. Ollie Watkins should have done better when he prodded wide with just Jordan Pickford to beat.

Another former Liverpool midfielder Philippe Coutinho was quiet on his

first Villa start since joining on loan from Barcelona, but had a part to play in the only goal.

The Brazilian's header was tipped over by Pickford.

From the resulting corner, Lucas Digne came back to haunt his former club just weeks after leaving Everton as his corner was flicked in by Buendia. Digne and Matty Cash were hit by a bottle thrown by the home fans as they celebrated the goal.

Everton should have salvaged at least a point after the break in their battle to beat the drop.

Dominic Calvert-Lewin and Richarlison started together up front for the first time since August and both the Toffees star men were guilty of missing big chances to equalise.

Richarlison headed over before Calvert-Lewin failed to make a good connection to Anthony Gordon's teasing low cross.

India eye goals in must-win game against Chinese Taipei



PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Hosts India will need to be more clinical with their finishing when they face a struggling Chinese Taipei in a must-win group match of the women's Asian Cup here on Sunday.

India were held to a goalless draw by lower-ranked Iran in their tournament opener, while Chinese Taipei were blanked 4-0 by eight-time champions China.

A FIFA World Cup play-offs spot within their grasp, India are seeking to meet their head coach Thomas Dennerby's "realistic target" of making the quarterfinals, for which they will need to win the next match at all costs, as the home team is scheduled to play Group A heavyweights China in its last league fixture.

A win for India, which is hosting the continental showcase for the second time after 1979, will virtually send the country into the quarterfinals of the 12-nation tournament.

Besides the two top teams, two third-placed sides across the three groups will also qualify for quarterfinals.

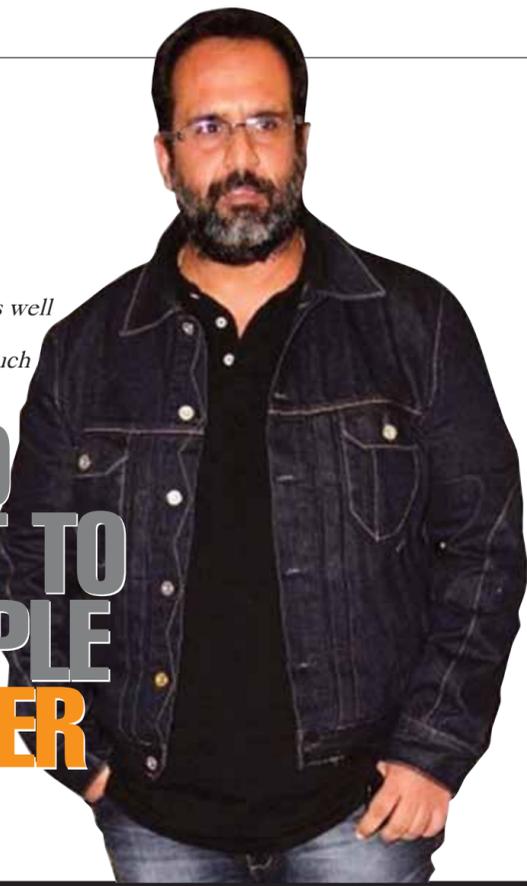
All the semi-finalists of the ongoing tournament will directly qualify for the 2023 FIFA World Cup in Australia and New Zealand.

Two more teams from the remaining four quarterfinalists will also get direct berths to the World Cup if Australia make it to the semi-finals of this tournament, which is highly probable.

talktime
ANAND L RAI

The director known for films like Nil Battey Sannata and Shubh Mangal Savdhan latest venture Atrangi Re was well received on the OTT. He speaks with Shalini Saksena about why he chose such an unconventional subject this time

'I WANT TO REACH OUT TO MORE PEOPLE WITH BETTER STORIES'



■ It's an unconventional film and a brave attempt. What made you choose such a subject?

Thank you so much first of all for liking the film. It's more to do with my audience — the strength comes from them. For me, it's to be able to come up with the story which is gutsy. After so many years, it becomes my responsibility to bring something new for the audience. It's not just about being successful. It's more to do with how you contribute to the newness of your cinema.

■ How important is it to be original with every subject you choose?

It is very important for a director to be original with the story and am very thankful to the audience for accepting it and loving it. When they have not liked something, it has been an unusual experience. It has given strength to be it films like *Tanu Weds Manu Returns* and *Zero*, they have helped me to bring something new *Atrangi Re*. May be I am a good student who is learning with every film. I want to reach out to more people with better stories everytime.

■ Were you sceptical if the story will connect with the audience?

I always knew I am walking on thin ice. But I wanted to tell this story. I wanted to bring out something which is as central to *Atrangi Re*. May be subconsciously a story like this was not happening around us. Nobody was working on a script like this. I wanted to tell a father-daughter story with a perspective in this film. I am happy

I WAS VERY SURE THAT THE MOVIE HAD TO HAVE AR REHMAN MUSIC. THE MINUTE THE STORY WAS FINALISED, THE FIRST NAME THAT CAME UP WAS HIS. THIS IS A SENSITIVE STORY. HE IS SO GOOD WITH EMOTIONS. WE WOULD NOT HAVE DONE THE PROJECT IF HE HAD NOT COME ON BOARD



that people accepted it.
■ How did AR Rehman get on board for the film?

The only credit I take for this is that I was very sure that the movie had to have AR Rehman music. The minute we (Himanshu Sharma and I) finalised the story, the first name that came up was Rehman sir. This is a sensitive story. He is so good with the emotions. We were sure that we needed him for this movie. There was never a doubt in my mind. We would not have done the project if he had not come on board.

■ What was the reason to choose a small town as your backdrop?

With characters like Rinku and Vishu it is always interesting to explore with characterisation. It has more to do with the flavour rather than the location. It's to do with the character they bring to life. It's not about the place it's about the character. A small town adds culture to the characters. It goes so well. Every film teaches me so much.
■ Can you tell us something about your future projects Good luck Jerry, Raksha Bandhan?

Now that this film is over, I will be taking a break for a few days. In fact, I am on my break at present. Once I am back, I will officially start working on the post-production for *Raksha Bandhan* since the shoot is complete. The same is for *Good Luck Jerry*. The shoot is complete. Final edit changes are being done. *Action Hero* will go on floor in the next few days. I am working on different stories. I am really looking forward to 2022. My production house Colour Yellow Productions has so much to offer.

CookSmart



While eating out is fun, sometimes you want to stay at home and yet make a dish that tastes like it came straight from the best restaurant kitchen. One such dish that most people balk at making is the risotto. Follow these tips to make a lip-smacking risotto.

Don't use cold stock. Keep the stock on simmer. Stirring the rice constantly will add air into the risotto. slowly adding

stock, you allow the rice to bump up against each other, creating that creamy starch. Like pasta, the rice should be al dente — just cooked, with a little bite to it.

If your pot is too wide, the rice will cook in a thin layer and won't be able to bump and grind enough to generate starch. The rice should be at a medium simmer throughout cooking. Save things like mascarpone and parmesan for the end.

Chopped onions and garlic add a classic flavour base to risotto. They add a hint of sweetness to the dish.

HomeSweetHome

When you begin to redo your home, people will tell you that you must have a theme and stick to a pattern. But experts tell you that doesn't have to be the case.

You don't need to stick to one pattern. You can mix two or three prints. A word of caution — pay attention to the patterns — smaller, busier prints look best on compact surfaces like cushions. Bold, large patterns usually work well with white space around them.

If you don't want to spend big bucks on a corner that is empty, just add a plant. They add depth and character to a room. They also add much-needed colour to the room and bring freshness. You can place plants in earthen pots, cups, mason jars or terrariums.

Several small objects are visually appealing than a single piece. You could arrange clusters of earthen pots in different sizes and even two pairs of cushions in different patterns.



Masterstroke



After the huge success in North America, OnetapHELLO recently launched their innovative tech product in the Indian market to change the way people connect, share information and network. This start-up lets people share their information like contact details, social media profiles, business profiles,

websites, option to make payments and much more, all with just a tap of a phone or scan of a QR code. They have introduced multiple NFC based physical products like digital business cards and trendy tags that allow short-distance wireless data transmission between two devices, or between one device and an unpowered tag, all by just one tap on the devices. Jayesh Narani, Entrepreneur and Data Governance expert is the Founder and CEO of OnetapHELLO. His vision is to make sustainable networking tools that have a lower environmental impact.

NatureTalk

With a border of green and pink centre, the Coleus (Pink) is a pretty plant.

While it doesn't thrive in very cold temperatures, this perennial plant can do well, if taken care of. It thrives in cool, even moist, well-drained soil. Consistent moisture is good, but soggy conditions cause root disease.

Keep them out of the wind to avoid breakage. Coleus will not survive a frost, so either treat your plant as an annual or move it inside when temperatures begin to drop.

Most coleus plants require about 6 hours of sunlight in the morning hours with shade being preferred all afternoon.



Grand musical journey

The present pandemic has once again thrown a curve ball. Music is the purest form of medium that resonates with everyone. Swarna Swar Bharat, a reality show on Zee TV, is a step in this direction, says SHALINI SAKSENA

The COVID-19 has once again thrown a curve ball making us pray for the good health and safety of our family and friends. We are looking for ways that can help us connect with him. Music, one is told is one of the purest forms of medium that connects our soul with God. Our scriptures talk about how *sadhus* and saints took to devotional songs to find a connection with divinity.

Keeping this in mind as the basic concept, Zee TV is all set to introduce the first-of-its-kind devotional singing reality show — *Swarna Swar Bharat*. One is told that the show will celebrate the country's values and take us back to our roots through a unique blend of insightful and relatable stories narrated in verse and soulful devotional music.

Aparna Bhosle, Zee TV's business head, tells you that music is the most organic and powerful medium for man to communicate with the powers above, irrespective of faith. "It is through devotional music; be it in the form of the flute, the *shankh naad* or chanting that most of us feel connected with divinity. Offering our audiences a few moments of solace while reconnecting them to their roots through devotional music and stories of Indian culture narrated in verse, we are happy to present *Swarna Swar Bharat*. This first-of-its-kind devotional singing reality show is a grand celebration of Indian culture," Bhosle says.

What is even more interesting is that through fictional narrative being portrayed through magical realism, this show will bring us the stories of some of our immortal Gods and Goddesses like Lord Vishnu, Goddess Laxmi, Narad Muni, Ganapathi and Hanuman from the vedic texts and



scriptures that are relevant even today.

Produced by Fathom Pictures and Kailasa Entertainment Pvt Ltd, this reality show is also humble contribution to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav* that celebrates India's rich cultural heritage on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of our Independence.

The show will have renowned poet Dr Kumar Vishwas, Padmashri Kailash Kher and Padmashri Suresh Wadkar as judges. Each of them have felt a strong connect with divinity through countless devotional songs that they have sung over the years. The show will present a talented bunch of singers from different parts of the country. Actor Ravi Kishan who was recently seen in MX Player's *Matsya Kaand*, playing a cop, has been roped in as the host.

Kher tells you that there a couple of reason how and why he came on

THIS SHOW IS VERY UNIQUE. THERE IS NO OTHER SHOW LIKE THIS ONE. THE CONCEPT IS NEW. I AM THRILLED THAT I WAS CHOSEN NOT ONLY AS JUDGE BUT I AM THE CO-PRODUCER TOO — PADMASHRI KAILASH KHER

board as a judge. First, this show is unique. "There is no other show like this one. The concept is new. I am thrilled that I was chosen not only as judge but am the co-producer too (Kailasa Entertainment Pvt Ltd)," Kher says.

He tells you that the concept of the show is such that it was not easy to execute. "The idea of the show was a brilliant one. But it was tough to put things in reality. It was necessary to give the team a boost that what they are doing is fantastic. Hence, we stepped in as co-producers," Kher tells you.

Second, this is the first time in the history of television, music and film industry that entertainment and enlightenment have come together. "We have avoided doing this in the past. But not now. The idea is to tell people that if your body, mind and soul aren't healthy however much you may have risen professionally, there is no point in running after things

blindly. People, through this show, besides being entertained will also be able to enrich their lives. The last two years have proved how helpless we have been in the face of COVID-19. It is time that we lived our lives that is aligned with nature," Kher opines.

The show will be judged on the basis of *sur, saar and bhaav*. "Sur will be judged by Suresh Wadkar ji, *saar* by Kumar Vishwas ji (how important are the words, the lyrical value) and I will judge the *bhaav* (with how much devotion it has been sung). This time, we are not calling ourselves judges; we are *gururars*," Kher tells us.

For Dr Kumar Vishwas, the reason for coming on board is simple. Though he used to get many offers, he was looking for a show where what he had learnt could be used for a wider good. "I wanted to be part of a show where I could share tales of people who were proud to be called Indians; that I could share anecdotes on what these kids were singing. When I was approached by Zee TV, I saw no reason to turn it down. I am grateful to the makers of this show who explained the concept so beautifully," Vishwas tells you.

He was very happy to learn that there are people who can come with such an interesting concept. "It is very nice that there are people who want to create humanity of the soul, thought and heart in the society. Big nations are not built of brick and mortar, it is the thoughts that count. Our culture is thousands of year old. If cracks appeared because we were slaves and there are people who are making a show to mend this tear, it is a beautiful gesture," Vishwas says.

Swarna Swar Bharat premiered on January 22, 2022; it will air every Sun at 8 pm

SAMIR SONI, who made his debut with the Hindi serial Samandar, speaks with SUPRIYA RAMESH about his book *My Experiments with Silence: The Diary Of An Introvert*

◆ Could you tell us more about your book?

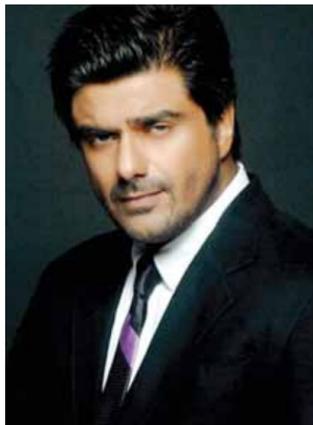
It has got prose and poetry. There is a part about self-discovery, finding out what's your place in society and in your mind. Because we live in an extroverted world and if you find yourself not being represented or relate to them, you feel like an outsider no matter where you go. Hopefully, anyone and everyone who has dealt with issues of not belonging, will relate to it because my book is dedicated to all the misfits in the world.

◆ How can this book help a reader?

I have shared my journey and how I dealt with it. Hopefully, some might relate and get inspired by dwelling into their own journey. Another issue that I raise is that, what exactly is success because our generation is plagued by being successful without knowing what that really means. In the 21st century, we need to redefine success and what does it mean to be successful.

◆ Why do you think introverts need constant validation?

I am not saying that introverts need constant validation. It's me who needs constant validation. It's not constant but driven by validation. Introverts have their own battles to fit in. Just like in an extroverted world, most introverts don't fit. For example, I remember going to go see an IPL match. And there



were like 30-40 thousand people shouting Sachin and going crazy over him. I loved it but after a while I just wanted to go home and watch the same match on TV without 30 thousand people screaming into my ears. Introverts find that overwhelming and if you

'We need to redefine success'

don't know better you will think that there is something wrong with you. I don't want to make a valid judgement like experts on how they lead their lives. What is happening is that inherently the world is dominated and driven by extroverted value systems. A lot of introverts feel undervalued and they might feel the need to do something or there is something missing in them.

◆ What is mental well-being according to you?

I think you need to figure out what is conditioning, what is true for you and what false value systems you might be carrying with you. You might have a belief system which won't have any basic reality. It is what you are told, it is what you are fed and it's what the society told you. So, mental well-being is a way of self extraction. It's like climbing Mount Everest just because others say that it's a great thing to climb Mount Everest.

◆ What is that one thing you would like to tell the readers?

If you are happy, God bless you. May you always be happy. But if you are not happy or you are struggling with something, get to the bottom of it and discover yourself. Maybe, you are a diamond and are embarrassed of the fact that you shine so much.

Sound of music

Music is the best medicine. Here are the top 10 songs of the week that will lift up your weekend mood

Bollywood vibes

- Fillhaal 2 (BPrak, Jaani)
- Galat (Asees Kaur)
- Jaane De (Atif Aslam)
- Aaj Bhi (Vishal Mishra)
- Kaise Hua (Vishal Mishra)

English Vinglish

- Goosebumps (HVME)
- Blinding Lights (The Weeknd)
- Dynamite (BTS)
- SugarCrash! (Elyotto)
- Hold On (Justin Bieber)

I like to be in the spotlight once in a while, and then I like to be in the shadows. It's really regenerating — Monica Bellucci



FROM THE INSIDE

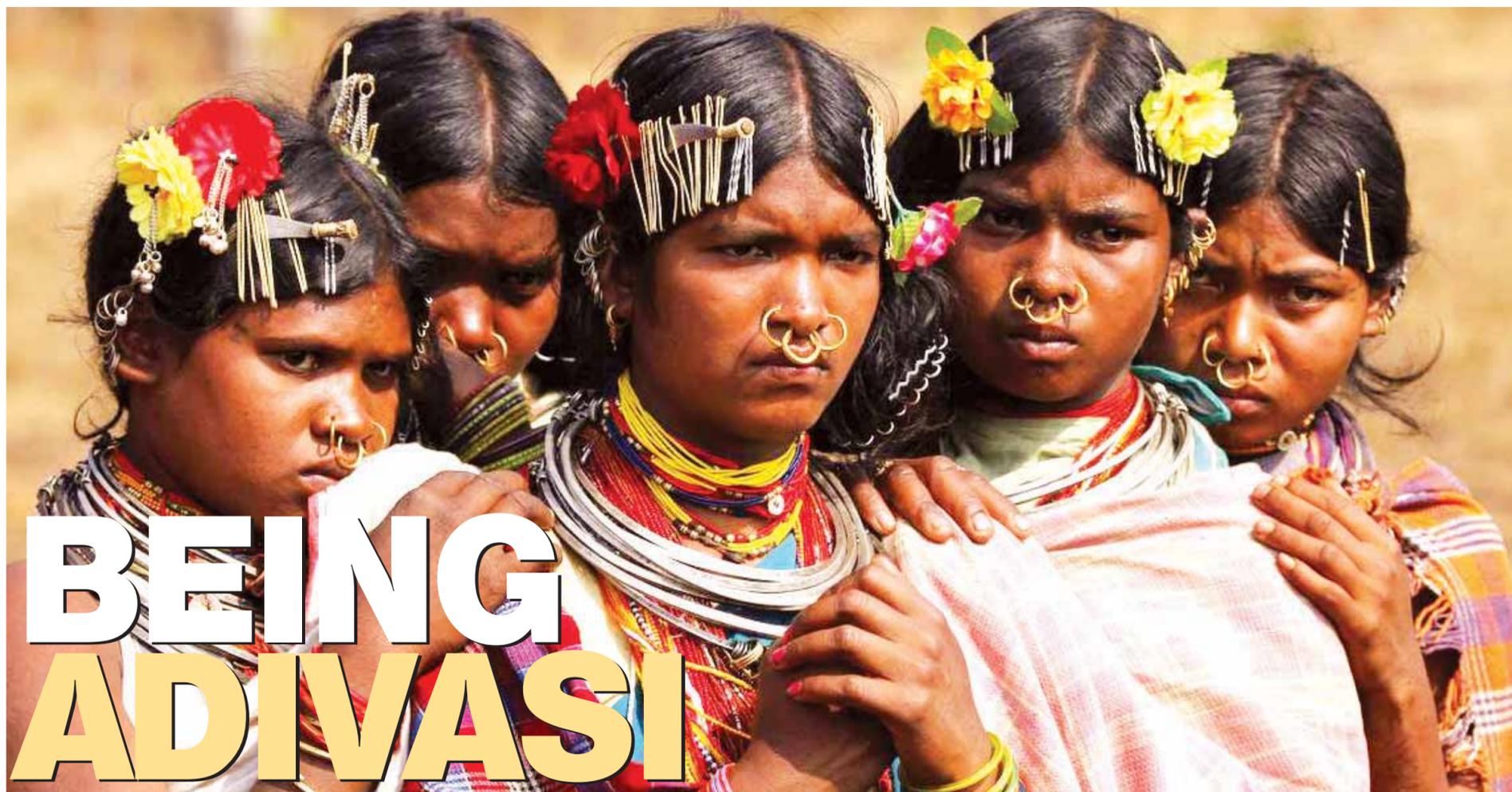
Dynamics of Karma & Destiny

As we create the world along with our cravings and attachments, these are apparently writing our destiny, through us



Life: Harmony of opposites

Creation is a result of convergence of the opposites. So, reconciling dualities of life is called for



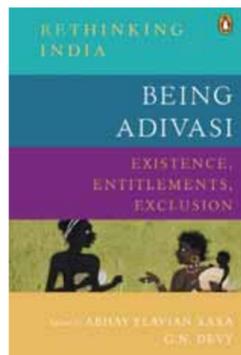
BEING ADIVASI

As G.N. DEVY, the editor of *Being Adivasi* with the late Abhay Xaxa, shares in his introduction: 'I would like to hope that it is received not just as a publication or academic exercise but as a prelude to change that is now overdue, a change that will bring to the Denotified & Nomadic communities at least some measure of justice and human rights that they expect to get as citizens of a democratic country & to Adivasis the understanding of their distinct identity. We, the people of India, owe it to them as the indigenous people of India'. An edited excerpt:

If the awareness of Adivasis and their concerns is scant among the non-Adivasi population of India, knowledge about communities described as 'Denotified Tribes' is almost absent. Lest the term be misunderstood as 'some kind of Adivasis' or 'officially non-recognised Adivasis' — which is not unusual among even those who know something about Adivasis — I would like to offer the following brief description of the Denotified Tribes. During the nineteenth century, after the British had more or less secured authority over all princely states in India, they found it necessary to disarm the disbanded soldiers of the vanquished armies of Indian princes. The British also wanted to ensure safe travels in Indian states for commercial purposes. In order to accomplish the two objectives, they appointed William Henry Sleeman to detect the use of arms by unauthorised individuals. Sleeman made copious notes and listed instances of armed clashes on highways in central India. In the process, he gave rise to the idea of 'thuggee'. The idea attracted readers of his books back in England. The list of persons and their communities came to be associated with the idea of thuggee or communities that make looting and crime their profession. The 1871 Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) was based on this notion. It listed communities as 'criminal communities', implying that being born in any of those communities made one automatically criminal tendency. The CTA provided for 'reformatory settlement', which were soft prisons. The listed communities were interned in these settlements, with severe restrictions placed on their free movement. Sleeman's list had many flaws in it. Most of the communities had been traditionally nomadic in habit, an age-old social phenomenon in India. Members of the interned communities were put to hard labour, in most instances unpaid labour.

It is difficult to estimate as to how many perished due to the stress of labour. The members of these communities continued to live in the settlements for several generations spread over eight decades. In 1952, two years after India adopted the Constitution, the 'notified' communities were 'denotified'. They continued to be described as Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (DNT), while very few of them found a place in the official lists of *jan-jatis*, the 'indigenous peoples' or Adivasis. The stigma of criminality continued to stick to them despite the slight change in the label. Not being included in the lists of STs and SCs, with a few exceptions, they continued to languish without land, livelihood or access to schools and healthcare. Not having fixed

addresses, their minimum rights as citizens too were not safeguarded. The stigma around their name often causes harassment from villagers and the urban population even to this day. There have been widespread incidences of mob lynching of members of the DNT communities. Governments have been generally indifferent to the plight of the DNTs as they do not form even a substantial minority, though their total population in the country is by no means insignificant. When Dr Manmohan Singh's United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government appointed me as chairman of the Technical Advisory Group for the Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Communities, I found that the population of the DNTs could be close to seven-eight crore. That was in 2008. At present, the number may have gone up and may be close to ten crore. The Census of India has never carried out any clear counting of the DNTs. And since the numbers are not officially ascertained, the locations of these communities are not properly documented and no systematic thought has been given to their livelihood requirements and their human rights; they continue to remain in India's imagination to the invisible nowhere people. The present volume includes an introductory essay on the DNTs. For several decades following Independence, 'Adivasi' was an anthropomorphic 'type' cast in sentiment and piety, or else dismissed as historical baggage worth leaving behind in India's march to modernity and nationhood. Though the complexities of Adivasi society received attention in scholarships related to the theme, the popular attitude to Adivasis was severely restricted by the acronym 'ST'. Excessive pity and excessive contempt are both equally potent instruments of 'othering' people. It is therefore that Archana Prasad's analysis of the class-currents within Adivasi communities becomes important as an antidote to the 'othering' processes. She concludes, after presenting a nuanced analysis of the tensions and textures in Adivasi contemporary identity discourse: "... the multifarious manifestations of neoliberal policies have also created diverse forms of Adivasi politics with different social basis. It is therefore important to distinguish between identity based struggles which have been led by those who are situated within the working class and those whose motive has been to get incorporated within the current power structure. Further, the culturally exclusive character of Adivasi politics is also hegemonic and camouflages the inequalities within the Adivasi society. On the other hand, non-culturally exclusive class politics has had to come to terms with the persistence of identity-



“FOR SEVERAL DECADES FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE, 'ADIVASI' WAS AN ANTHROPOMORPHIC 'TYPE' CAST IN SENTIMENT AND PIETY, OR ELSE DISMISSED AS HISTORICAL BAGGAGE WORTH LEAVING BEHIND IN INDIA'S MARCH TO MODERNITY AND NATIONHOOD



based politics by adopting a more nuanced approach towards it. This collaboration has been facilitated by the intensifying communal polarisation and economic crisis, leading to the transformation of Adivasi politics, both class and identity based. Such a development is not only positive, but also essential to take on an authoritarian and neo-liberal government and the challenges that it poses to all progressive forces within the country."

It needs to be mentioned that the facts of Adivasi political expression, cultural production and major social struggles over the last half century, all go to show that the general perception of Adivasis and their participation in modern India's process of becoming falls woefully short of reality. The new-generation Adivasis are keen to create a more realistic view, one that is from the perspective of Adivasis. Abhay Xaxa states in clear words: "Apart from development issues, there was also a demand for a stringent anti-conversion law which has been used as a tool to divide the Adivasi communities on the lines of religion. The communal agenda of these organisations has gradually created a fear among people who don't subscribe to the dominant discourse of assimilating the Adivasis in the Hindu fold. As a result, the harmonious relationship between various Adivasi and forest dependent communities have been broken and communal violence is also increasingly experienced in Adivasi areas."

In order to obtain this view, the UPA-II government appointed the Committee headed by Virginius Xaxa. Abhay Xaxa refers to the Xaxa Committee report and points out that: "The panel recommended radical changes to the laws, regulations and rules to protect Adivasi communities from land alienation and to ensure their rights over resources are handed back and protected. The report also laid out an overhauled, expansive and detailed framework for providing better education, health and opportunities to tribal communities across the country. If the recommendations of the Xaxa committee are implemented, it will surely have an empowering effect on Adivasi communities."

On the other hand, N.C. Saxena's essay presents a deeply sympathetic but somewhat predictably simplified view. Dr Saxena's historically important contribution to Adivasi development and the role he played inside government bureaucracy in favour of Adivasis are of a legendary proportion. Yet, seen from an Adivasi perspective, his overview is likely to be read as slightly less than a full view of what is happening today inside the minds of Adivasi communities

in India. Saxena states: "The oppressed tribals, unlike other disadvantaged groups, generally suffer and endure their exploitation silently. In some areas, however, they have taken to armed insurgency. The middle path of agitational politics by organising bundhs, taking out processions, and putting pressure on the politicians, so successfully adopted by other groups in India to articulate their grievances, is alien to the tribals and has historically been unknown to them. Civil society needs to play a big role here, and government too should not brand all tribal activists as Maoists."

These comments need to be read together with fictional works by Mahasweta Devi in order to understand that the silence of Adivasis is not the absence of voice but rather a powerful statement which we have not yet begun grasping. The 'silence' is extremely powerfully articulated by Vikrant B.: "... stunted reading of social, economic and political realities created a host of mythologies and prejudices with respect to Adivasis and tribes in India. They were perceived to be isolated, self-sufficient, animist, under-developed and backward. Seemingly harmless, these mythologies have had serious policy and political implications. For example, tribes are seen as inter-linked with castes in India, by policymakers, academics, and even in popular perception. At one level, it is perhaps necessary to denote common subalternity, so as to emphasise the State's obligation to their upliftment and empowerment. However, this manufactured equivalence glosses over the fact that while the Dalit question is relatively centre stage in the nation's consciousness, the Adivasi question is not."

The last clause of this paragraph sums up the purpose of this volume. It is, in the simplest words, to present 'the Adivasi question'. It includes the question of Adivasis in the context of modern India, the questioning of the nation's ideas of development by Adivasis and also the manner in which Adivasis pose their questions within the much-misunderstood framework of their understanding of what democracy means. Or, in other words, the Adivasi is the question handled by this volume, the Adivasi manner of questioning too is its concern and the questions raised by Adivasis before the Indian nation too are its paramount concern.

Extracted from *Being Adivasi: Existence, Entitlements, Exclusion* by Abhay Xaxa (Editor), Ganesh N. Devy (Editor) & run with due permissions from Samruddha Bharat Foundation and publishers Penguin Random House India



DESTINY HAS TWO WAYS OF CRUSHING US — BY REFUSING OUR WISHES AND BY FULFILLING THEM — HENRI FREDERIC AMIEL



HIDDENSOULS
PRAMOD PATHAK



Disease of the century

If we ask somebody what is the disease of the present century the answer we are likely to get would be Covid-19. How ironical and sad because the disease of the previous century also was something similar though it was called by a different name — Spanish flu. Two conclusions can be drawn. First, that we have hardly achieved anything significant to prove that humanity has grown in strength when it comes to being a match for nature's power and intrigues. True, we have spent billions on so called research and technology to make human beings less vulnerable. But neither the research nor the technology came to our rescue in the battle against this pandemic. Yes, the research and technology has made a few richer and many poorer. The second conclusion that we can draw is that our predicament will be no better hundred years from now when it comes to man versus nature. But this reality notwithstanding, let's come back to the initial question regarding the disease of the century. But is Covid-19 really the disease of the century? Not exactly. And the reasons are not far to seek. Of course, the recent coronavirus pandemic was in some way responsible for killing a large number of people around the world. But so are many other diseases. Then there are many other reasons why people die. Accidents, suicides and what not. Further, in many cases deaths cannot be attributed to one single reason because of the fact that multiple causation cannot be ruled out. Moreover, statistical data is hardly reliable, given the problems in their recording, accuracy, and, of course, ability and desirability of the enumerators. For the same reasons there are many who say that deaths due to Covid-19 were not correctly reported. Not just in India, even in more advanced countries like the US, deaths are usually recorded by the precipitating cause. Incidentally, even this is not very accurately diagnosed. Thus, in many cases it is difficult to pinpoint exact cause of death. These days, to further confound the confusion a new term co-morbidity has found its way into the popular discourse. So it is difficult to be sure whether corona aggravated co-morbid conditions or co-morbid conditions worsened corona. However, in reporting deaths, corona finds a place more often, given the excessive noise around the pathogen that leads to availability bias. This is a psychological phenomenon, a mental shortcut that people tend to resort to while evaluating, due to excessive information about the subject. These days we found that everything veered around corona increasing the possibility of availability bias. And there were other interests, too. In fact, those other interest played a major role in precipitating the crisis. No marks for guessing what were those interests. We may come to that a little later, but see what these interests led to. Hundreds of so called scientific research papers being published and circulated everyday worldwide, and without any clinching evidence or conclusion. It seemed as if confusion was helping the cause of some interested quarters. We are into strange times that is wrongly called knowledge era. It is a purely business era. Everything is business, business is everything. Health is business. Education is business. Religion is business. Even relationship is also business. It is the commerce age. Naturally, in this age greed is the biggest disease.

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DYNAMICS OF KARMA & DESTINY

As we create the world along with our cravings and attachments, these are apparently writing our destiny, through us, shares HINGORI

Karma and Destiny — these words are quite familiar and a part of our everyday conversation. However, when we dig deeper into the true meaning of these, we come to realise what appears simple isn't so if we view it from the lens of duality.

So, what are Karma and Destiny? It would not be very wrong, if we were to say that memory and latent tendencies (conditioning of the mind) is 'Destiny' and 'perceived action' as a result of the circumstances created by this combination of memory and latent tendencies, is Karma.

Let's examine what this memory is, and why the action is described as 'perceived'. When deeds get stored in the perceived subconscious, the tendencies and memory come together to create a situation where the action needs to come to fruition. The stored deeds awaiting fruition are destiny and the fruition itself is karma. When we view it from a lens of duality, we perceive all of this within the mind.

Our scriptures say, all that has been created is from and in the infinite consciousness or the consciousness supreme. Like when we dream, we create form, experiences, consequences and feelings, but when we wake up from the dream, we realise it was all unreal. Those who are in an enlightened or in an awakened state see themselves as no different from this consciousness supreme, and the actions, and all else that exists, are a part of the dream and therefore, unreal that we view as real, only in our perception.

As we create the world along with our cravings and attachments, these are apparently writing our Destiny, through us. However, rather than being truly written, its being imagined. Since the past, past present and future too, are measures of the mind and for the sake of simplicity, may be viewed as stacked in a layered manner as opposed to linear progression, the fruition is not awaiting a subsequent date, but is also happening in the moment. This is quite like watching a movie at home, one has the ability to forward, rewind, skip and imagine what is likely to happen in the movie. Now imagine the director of the movie conceiving it in his mind — all the parts, wardrobes, the sets, the visual cues and each scene being shot independent of the other to be strung together later as he deems fit. As you start to see how this plays out, so do our lives in terms of Karma and Destiny.

When we identify ourselves as distinct from the infinite consciousness, we create duality as a result of the mind and egotism, however in reality there is only one perpetual truth — simplistically stated as us being the creations of the thought or imagina-



tion of the consciousness supreme. Therefore, all that exists, all beings, their minds, their fruition, exists in the infinite consciousness.

Some like Sage Bhrgu and Nostradamus have seen this movie called destiny because they see the infinite consciousness, and all the memories, tendencies, characters and the actions are ultimately just a part of this consciousness. To explain it in simple terms — if we can wake up, recount and document each detail of the dream we have witnessed, we will be able to write a perceived prophecy, since in each dream there are beings, environments, elements actions and consequences. Like in a dream, in an enlightened state we transcend time since we are capable of viewing all that is on at the same time. In any event, from the place we are viewing it, time is a measure of epochs and not years.

So, what about free will? Is that too an illusion? How can there be free will when it is being conceived of something that in itself is unreal? The action too exists in our mind and has

WHEN WE IDENTIFY OURSELVES AS DISTINCT FROM THE INFINITE CONSCIOUSNESS, WE CREATE DUALITY AS A RESULT OF THE MIND AND EGOTISM

been determined by our memory and tendencies — it is also being created like in a dream where we are imagining new things as we deal with the existing. Our individualised consciousness is the recipient of the memories pending fruition, and we then live part of these out, and create another set of memories for further fruition. This is why it is said that the scenarios repeat till we learn our lessons. If the perceived action plays out in a way that we perceive as wrong, we create a different script from this, for fruition at another time. However, when our embedded memories believe that the action has fruited, the memory is discarded as it creates no further actions and leads us on the path to freedom from *samsara*. All of this too is unreal, much like a simulation or as in a movie like the Matrix or Inception. However, unlike the movies you don't need 'software codes' or 'spinning tops' to second guess the truth.

Once you realise it, you see the movie as the director as opposed to actor impacted and immersed in the

role so deeply that he is unable to see the difference between what is 'real' and what is 'real'.

Can destiny be changed? Only a *Siddh Guru* can change destiny. Being enlightened, he knows the true nature of reality as he is 'one' with the reality. It is easy for him to distinguish between what is real and the unreal. He can alter the unreal through a simple thought. A *Siddh Guru* is the guide who can take you through the journey of self-enquiry and help you overcome the inner turmoil that arises from cravings of the mind.

While the above explanations are perhaps those at a 'school level' in the spiritual journey, you will need a *Siddh Guru* to accelerate your 'Spiritual PHD'. It's a journey of experiencing and realisation through the experiences. And as you go through it, you will know that there are not timelines that can be set in the world we are familiar with in order to help you get there. So be patient and aware of your experiences.

The writer is the author of Hingori Sutras series of spiritual books

Meditate on colours

Colour meditation requires you to focus on chakras and their colours to maintain an ideal balance, writes AARRTI ZAVERI

Colours are an integral and essential part of our daily lives. Their role in our lives is at times dramatic and at others subtle. They can be used to express, impress and more. There are numerous ancient cultures around the world that believe in the healing powers of colours. Chromo therapy also known as light therapy is a popular holistic healing and meditating treatment. Psychologists and medical researchers, have for years, conducted several studies on the effect of colours on the psyche. Advertisements incorporate conscious use of colour to emanate certain feelings about products and places. For the same reason, we believe that focusing on colours during your daily meditation will prove to have a significant impact on your daily meditation.

Before we delve into this, let's understand the relationship between colours and *chakras*. The sanskrit word for wheel, '*chakra*' is known to be located in a straight line with your spine. The seven *chakras* in the body run down the centre, right from the top of your head to the base of your spine. Each *chakra* is an individual energy centre and has a unique colour representing it. Colour meditation requires you to focus on each of your *chakras* and their respective colours to maintain an ideal balance between body and mind. This balance will thereby promote healing and peace of mind. The *chakras* can be related to the ele-



ments of the Earth — air, fire, water, ether, spiritual awakening and enlightenment. The seven *chakras* and the colours associated with them are:

- **Red:** The colour represents the *chakra* located at the root of your spine. It is known as your life force and represents stability. While meditating focusing on the colour red will help you assuage gnawing feelings of frustration and anger. Red is the colour that stimulates your body and mind thereby increasing your stimulation.
- **Orange:** It represents the *chakra* located in the naval area, also known as the sacral *chakra*. Focusing on the colour orange will help you mitigate issues with sensuality, relationships, physical pressure, emotional self

expression and creativity.

- **Yellow:** Just below your breastbone, is located your solar plexus *chakra*. Yellow focuses on your solar plexus *chakra* and has an impact on your optimism, happiness and thought processes. Yellow is the colour that affects your physical vitality, mental awareness and ability to think and process analytically.
- **Green:** The heart *chakra* is located in the centre of your chest. Green focuses on your heart *chakra* and instills emotions of peace, love and nurturing. It initiates physical healing. This is why most hospitals are painted green.
- **Blue:** Located at the base of

- your larynx is the throat *chakra* and blue focuses on it. While meditating, focusing on your throat *chakra* will help you with your confidence and self expression. Physically blue controls your thyroid gland and lymphatic system.
- **Indigo:** This represents the third eye *chakra*, i.e. located in the middle of your forehead. Focusing on the colour while meditation will help with your intuition and peace of mind.
- **Violet:** Located at the top of your skull the crown *chakra* is represented by the violet colour. Meditating on the colour will help you align with universal consciousness and make you more self aware and at peace with your self.

The writer is a visual artist

Are you secure?

Taking shelter of God is tough, because one has to give up *ahankar*, an intrinsic part of us, writes AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

My honest answer is no; I don't except, occasionally. As I am a thinking person, I am always looking for ways to feel secure. There are not so many ways; there is just one. I have to take shelter of God, period. As you may have guessed, I have tried every way, but nothing else could make me feel secure. Taking shelter of God is tough, very tough, because one has to give up '*ahankar*' (ego) — an intrinsic part of us. This is the cosmic design.

The same cosmic design lets us know that we live in two worlds. Yes, there are two, not just one world. One is the material world, about which we are all aware of, and the other is the spiritual world. This world consists of God and those who have realised their identities as souls, i.e. '*aham brahma smi*'. Both these worlds are governed by the '*karmaphala*' principle, which in short means 'what we sow we reap'. All our acts, whether done by our minds, words or the rest of our bodies result in fruits, both good and bad, depending on whether they were good acts or bad acts.

Fortunately, in the spiritual world there are only good acts, i.e. spiritual acts, beginning from a silent prayer of a child asking for the well-being of his parents. Each such act is duly recorded for rewards in future. Lord Krishna states in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "Neither there is waste of effort here nor there is opposite effect. Even a little of this activity protects one from great fear." (2.40) This goes on throughout one's life. All acts add up and continue to be recorded. The question is: Have we totaled enough spiritual acts, especially by the time we reach old age, when we need them the most? Because



knowingly or unknowingly we have also been accumulating bad material acts in the past, including in previous lives, which come to fruition at their appointed times. Why else are we here?

If we have been doing spiritual acts also, God gets involved. He is pleased. He manifests *vis-à-vis* the person/devotee concerned. He begins to take charge of that fortunate soul's life. Guidance and help start arriving. God, being omniscient, is in perfect position to do so. Surprising as it may seem to some, God guides about everything material and spiritual. He even helps in changing people's hearts in our favour, if God becomes so inclined. God also gives us strength to tolerate the inevitable miseries of this material world. Our present activities, i.e. '*kriya-mana*' become highly productive and efficient. Our ego begins to shrink. One becomes more and more dutiful both

materially and spiritually. Personally, I am much gratified when God bails me out of some punishment, which was due to me for bad acts done earlier. God manages to do so without infringing on the '*karmaphala*' principle. He takes into consideration the bad act done earlier, which is due for punishment. He also considers what spiritual acts have been accumulated, which could be used to mitigate the suffering. God has to ensure that His devotees never perish, as promised by Him in the Gita verse #9.31. This means that the resultant suffering must be tolerable.

Having understood what the Lord does for us devotees, I am absolutely amazed. Not only do I feel more secure now than ever before, I am able to control my mind and senses better. Bishnoi is a spiritual writer and can be reached at spiritual@ajitbishnoi.com

Blot on American rights claims: Gitmo turns 20

The infamous Guantanamo Bay military prison completed two decades of its operations this January 11, 2022. Many say that this secret jail is truly an ethical failure of the American justice system. Besides, the last twenty years in Guantanamo have been a catastrophic legal misstep that is bringing home more problems and disgrace than credible solutions. It is increasingly becoming a symbol of torture. The military prison in Cuba is now left with only 39 inmates. During its peak time, it housed nearly 800 prisoners. Indeed, some media reports say that it is symptomatic of CIA-sanctioned torture cells carried out in stealth. Today another critical question looms large over the Biden Administration: Is it worth guarding 39 prisoners with one of the most sophisticated ring of 1,500 commandos? It is felt that the taxpayers' dollars must be spent judiciously at a time of global pandemic like the Covid-19.

The Guantanamo detention camp, also called Guantanamo Bay, Guantanamo or Gitmo, is in the Southeastern part of Cuba. The horrible prison is located at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base of America. It was created by then US President George W Bush in the year 2002 after September 11 terror attacks on the country. And the prison was especially designed to host the inmates who were caught as a part of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). Though the prison was first used in 2002, the American Government has been maintaining a military naval base there since 1903. Interestingly, the original prison was named Camp X-Ray. In fact, after the terror attack on September 11, the prison facility was made ready for immediate use in just 96 hours. Shortly after the Bush administration dethroned the Taliban Government headed by Mullah Omar in Afghanistan, the facility came into being as the most secure prison. The first batch of detainees was brought to the prison on January 11 the very next year and they were classified as "enemy combatants".

Most of the inmates of Guantanamo Bay were from those nations who were either a part of the GWOT or those who had helped harbouring terrorists. Precisely, the majority of them belonged to the countries of West Asia. The worst part of the Guantanamo saga was that these prisoners were captured on foreign soil but were not charged on any particular crime. Further, they



In this February 6, 2002, file photo a detainee is led by military police to be interrogated by military officials at Camp X-Ray at the US Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. At the time the image was taken there were 158 al-Qaeda and Taliban prisoners being held at Camp X-Ray

were detained in this secluded prison for an indefinite period and were denied access to any legal counsel. Another important point to be noted here is that the GWOT is not an official war as there was no declaration of war by the US Congress. On November 13, 2001, barely two months after the terror attack, President Bush announced a military order, officially permitting these actions: it authorised the detention and trial by the Military Commission of any current or former member of the al-Qaeda and anyone who aids or abets its work or harbors its members. Thus, the GWOT has no scheduled end date, and it has handed down an indefinite mandate to the powerful armed forces to carry out the operation as long as the real culprits are not held. And when Osama bin Laden, the brains behind 9/11, was killed by American forces in 2011 during the Obama administration, in a way, the biggest

milestone of the operation was already achieved.

Now, America's withdrawal from Afghanistan was completed last year by handing over the reign to the same Taliban, the butchers against whom America and other liberal nations fought for nearly two decades. Now, there is no point of maintaining the Guantanamo Bay. In fact, the terror has come home all the way. It is ubiquitous now.

Now, the most pertinent questions are: Why Guantanamo was chosen and why is it still open? First of all, the US strategic experts and security agents wanted to keep the global terror suspects outside the purview of public and, most importantly, the constant media glare. Also, when they are housed far away from the US mainland, these detainees will not be able both to demand and enjoy the protection of rights under the country's justice system. Another critical point to note here is that the

117-square kilometre base had enough space and facilities to hold the prisoners for a long time. Many human rights advocates say that this Bay is not technically a part of the US territory, but rather an "island outside law". Second, it is still open as there are tough Congressional roadblocks to close the jail.

Global experts condemn unrelenting human rights violations at Guantanamo Bay. The detention centre is internationally known for its human rights violations committed there. The saddest part is that the international community has failed to discharge their responsibilities to get the prison shut by using pressure on the successive US Government since 2002 or by enforcing international human rights obligations. Rights advocates say that the American actions at the prison violate its obligations under the Third Geneva Convention, the International Covenant for Civil and Political

Rights (ICCPR), the Convention Against Torture (CAT) and the customary international law. It is widely recognised that violations at Guantanamo Bay include illegal and indefinite detention, inhuman conditions, torture, unfair trials (military commissions), etc.

Today, the prison has become a symbol of American injustice and torture. In a nutshell, Gitmo was prepared just to torture the detainees, mostly belonging to the al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Today, this island prison bears the testimony of what many call the first war of the 21st century. This war was a different kind of a war against a different kind of enemy. The GWOT highlights the fact that the enemy is not a nation, but the enemy is massive global terror network that threatens the way of life of all peaceful people.

Frankly speaking, it is clear now that there had been and also continues to have flagrant

violations of international human rights of the detainees inside the prison complex. As the prison has been kept completely out of global media glare, a very few of the tragic incidents that took place inside were brought to the notice of the outside world.

The maintenance of Guantanamo Bay prison is an insult to American democracy and the liberal ethos that Washington has been preaching for decades. President Biden can finally put an end to the extra-judicial and abhorrent system that has existed in Guantanamo for the last twenty years. If one flashes back and observes, they can single out how different US Presidents attempted to deal with the Guantanamo crisis differently after the exit of Bush in 2009. Barack Obama, a Democrat, who took over the reign from the Republican Bush, indeed pledged to shut it down during his first campaign for office. During his electoral march, he

once said: "In the dark halls of Abu Gharib and the detention cells of Guantanamo, we have compromised our most precious values." An eloquent speaker as he used to be, but he found it too difficult to put an end to the tragedies of the prison. Even though he signed an executive order to close the prison within a year, he failed to do so. Sadly, the Congress maintained such restrictions that barred Obama from closing the prison in the first two years of his time in office. And these two years have recorded a Congress, largely controlled by the Democrats. Interestingly, liberal veterans like Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren voted against easing Congressional restrictions in the Senate in the year 2013. But Obama reduced the number of inmates from 242 to 41 during his tenure, by transferring some of them to the United Arab Emirates. When Donald Trump came to office, he maintained the status quo.

Is there any hope that Biden will be able to close down the prison? At present, the Democrats have a razor-thin majority in the Congress. And this is the only golden chance to bring an end to Gitmo, which Obama miserably failed despite his tall promises. If Biden wants to do something on the issue, first he must repeal long-held restrictions on shutting down the prison as the US Congress brings two legislations each year, namely, an annual defence authorisation bill and a Government spending bill. These are legal hurdles that Biden needs to overcome at the moment.

On record, Biden has also pledged to close Guantanamo. But the irony is that those Congressional impediments that prevented Obama are still in the books. However, Biden should give a final push. He must not postpone. This collective scar on American democracy should be buried with full presidential might and by taking all legal nuances. Hope, Biden, a matured and a patient listener to the woes of the world, would be able to fix the rights problem.

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It's high time US President Joe Biden closed the books on the Guantanamo Bay prison which is infamous for its unrelenting human rights violations. The continuation of the Guantanamo prison is an insult to American democracy and the liberal ethos that Washington has been preaching to the world for decades



MAKHAN SAIKIA

PERSPECTIVE

India should use cash crops to its strategic advantage

Tobacco farming is suffering due to the actions of vested groups advocating high taxes on FCV tobacco to achieve tobacco control goals by making cigarettes unaffordable



JAVARE GOWDA

World Bank has held its growth outlook for the Indian economy at 8.3 per cent despite a global pandemic. To support growth, there would be greater demand on natural sources where agriculture holds a pivotal role. Today, we are expecting agriculture to provide alternative fuel and sustainable energy sources. In India, agriculture remains the largest source of employment. It is imperative for India to actualise the PM's vision for farmer welfare at the core of agri development.

Farm production must be aligned with good market infrastructure to enable farmers to sell their produce at reasonable prices and improve the flow of much-needed private investments in the sector for crop development and farm practices.

Many government initiatives in this regard are laudable such as National Agriculture Market (eNAM) to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities, National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) for enhancing agricultural productivity in rainfed areas, and digitisation.

Cash crops like tea, coffee, tobacco, cotton have a strategic role in India's international agriculture play. Take for example tobacco crops which are one of the largest foreign exchange earners with exports of ₹6,500 crore in 2021. Indian FCV tobacco has a new opportunity in the global market due to new-found usage in medicines for several autoimmune and inflammatory diseases, including diabetes. But for this to happen, we must invest in R&D to produce value-added tobacco products that capture growing buyer interest and thus improve the country's position as the 2nd largest exporter of tobacco.

Challenges faced by FCV farmers

Unfortunately, tobacco farming is suffering due to the actions of vested groups advocating high taxes on FCV tobacco to achieve tobacco control goals by making cigarettes unaffordable. This has resulted in reduced crop size with a decline in the acreage of land under tobacco cultivation. According to industry sources, tobacco use in legal cigarettes registered a sharp decline in the

last few decades when illicit cigarettes gained market share. This contributed to shrinkage in FCV crop size by sharp 39 per cent from 316 million kg per annum to 218 million kg per annum between 2013-14 and 2021-22. Our country has also witnessed a big decline of 1 lakh hectares in FCV tobacco acreage between 2013-14 and 2020-21 which led to 35 million man-days of employment loss.

Also, FCV tobacco exports from India have become uncompetitive globally losing share to countries like Zimbabwe, which is catering to the international tobacco market despite its small size.

Today, legal cigarettes have become unaffordable in India. Cigarette in India cost amongst the highest in the world as a percentage of per capita GDP at 7.70 per cent in comparison to 0.46 per cent for the USA and 1.14 per cent for China (WHO Report). This is even though cigarettes are only 8 per cent of tobacco consumed in the country while 92 per cent is other forms of tobacco. This is in stark contrast to the rest of the world where tobacco is synonymous with cigarettes

representing 90 per cent of tobacco consumption.

The World Health Organization (WHO) in a report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic 2021 has acknowledged that the affordability of legal cigarettes in India reduced sharply from 11.10 per cent in 2010 to 13.78 per cent in 2020. These findings were further corroborated with the results of the American Cancer Society study which observed that India has one of the lowest per capita cigarette consumptions in the world.

The above situation is stressing the farm community as consumers shift to smuggled cigarettes that do not use domestic tobacco. This is besides revenue loss to the exchequer which further limits the government's ability to invest in R&D which means farmers are not able to refine their products to meet international standards or come up with other farm innovations which can increase demand for Indian tobacco.

As per FICCI CASCADE's study, the total loss to the economy because of cigarette smuggling has been ₹16,138 crore while the total employ-

ment opportunity lost in the sector is about 3.34 lakh.

Vested groups and flawed research reports

The problem lies in misleading data, which the policymakers are bombarded with, which limits their capacity to make informed and prudent decisions. Take for instance two separate studies conducted in 2018 and 2020 and cited in certain media articles which claim that the illicit cigarette sales figures are exaggerated.

The first study uses empty packs picked from retailers to compare legal and illegal cigarette sales, in total disregard of the fact that retailers would be hesitant to disclose that they are selling illegal cigarettes. No retailer in his right mind would save the empty pack as there is a deep fear because of coercive laws against them. Our custom laws put the onus on retailers to prove that the product being sold is a legal product. So, the researchers using this technique to understand illegal cigarette sales will only get a lopsided view.

The second study, on tax gaps, confirms a steady increase in consumption of

illegal cigarettes between two time periods. Also, the proportion of illegal cigarettes as a percentage of legal ones in the two studies has a difference exceeding 100 per cent, raising doubts as to which of the figures are accurate.

It is unquestionable that smuggled cigarettes are a raging phenomenon not only in India but all international markets. It has been established through studies by reputed research firms that India is the fourth largest and fastest-growing illegal cigarette market in the world.

As per Euromonitor International, illicit cigarette volumes in India registered a whopping 44 per cent in a decade from 19.5 billion sticks in 2011 to 28.1 billion sticks in 2020. This takes the market share of illicit cigarettes in the country from 21.3 per cent in 2015 to 27.6 per cent in 2020.

It is noteworthy to know that a recently released report by Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) states that one of the largest global cigarettes MNC as part of its market expansion strategy has been using smuggling as one of the distribution

channels to increase their market penetration. Unfortunately, vested groups do not share such market developments with the policy makers.

Despite this, the move to project in studies low penetration levels of illicit cigarettes below international markets (which are better regulated) is an obvious mis-projection.

Such grossly unreliable studies should be looked at with caution as they give a skewed picture of the illegal cigarette trade in the country and downplay the severity of the illegal cigarette trade in the country.

India has the option to use cash crops like FCV tobacco to its strategic advantage given the huge potential of tobacco in newer applications. We should not let this opportunity slip and extend all necessary policy support to the FCV tobacco farmers in earnest to capture the growing tobacco market.

(The writer is president of Federation of All India Farmer Associations (FAIFA), a non-profit federation whose mission is to support the farming community in India and create a sustainable future for farmers)



THERE IS ALWAYS ONE MOMENT IN CHILDHOOD WHEN THE DOOR OPENS AND LETS THE FUTURE IN — GRAHAM GREENE



YOUR WEEK AHEAD

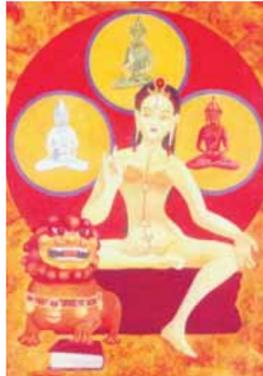
MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

When it comes to health, patience is the key. The expensive tests and diagnosis system may cause a big hole in the pocket, if your health has been out of balance, then you need to act with greater foresight and wisdom. If you are awaiting test results, don't jump to conclusions and panic. Wait it out with courage. On the career front, a raise in your pay or a better position may come to you at this time. Some of you also feel a sense of accomplishment as you have been able to attain your goals after setbacks. You may find that others look up to you for guidance even before you are called upon to head a project or oversee a particular activity. If you are committed, you will move to the next level.

Lucky number 20
Lucky colour Mauve
Lucky day Monday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

Your vitality is strong. This is an excellent time to make changes in your fitness plan as you will make more progress than imagined. You need to take care of channelising this energy in the right manner. Acting on an impulse of any sort may create health problems for you. Professionally, you are filled with analytical energies, how you speak your mind and conduct yourself is important at your workplace. You may find yourself in conflict and disagreeing with others. Choose your battles wisely rather than picking upon every disagreement. Don't let any emotional hurt of the past affect your relationship with your beloved. Know that there is a lot of love in your life, and you must appreciate it otherwise it will slip away.

Lucky number 3
Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Sunday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

Concerning your health, the news is going to be good. You are in a stronger position now and can control what happens around you. Any efforts that you put right now towards the improvement of your health will bear fruit. The only thing that you need to be careful about is to attempt to try alternative ways to treat and deal with health challenges if any. You need to pull up your sleeves on the career front. Some of you are going to experience a new beginning. Those looking for employment will get a new position which will test yours. Be on your toes and keep working hard. This can be a period of chaos and uncertainty in terms of a relationship. Believe in making a solid foundation, whether it is love or marital life.

Lucky number 19
Lucky colour White
Lucky day Tuesday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

If you feel that something is amiss with your body, then you need to pay attention to your concerns. This is not the time to panic and to feel that you can't do anything about it. Trust your intuition and look for ways for help. Take care of yourself with proper diet, rest, and exercise. On the career front, the end of one thing to begin with new is indicated. Things may not be going as per your expectations at the moment. Some of you may have faced or are facing challenges with something related to your work. You need to take a breather from the chaos around you because challenges will return as soon as you are ready to face them. This is a phase where you have an opportunity to improve your relationship with your partner.

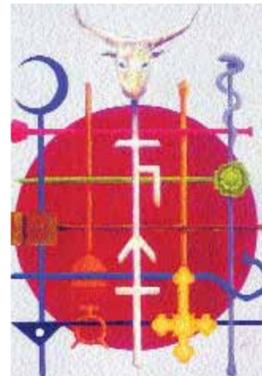
Lucky number 18
Lucky colour Silver
Lucky day Wednesday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

On the health front, your efforts are likely to bear fruit. You can control what happens around you. You take a long-term view of things and investigate the future. This will not only help you to improve your present health situation but also lay foundation for it to be robust in the future as well. What you do at your workplace has consequences. You might be faced with a dilemma and a decision to make. Try to behave as reasonable as you can and consider what others want before you make a choice. It's a time of change on the relationship front. Those committed but experiencing problems with their partner, can have an honest discussion so that each of you can work on changing certain aspects to keep it going.

Lucky number 14
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Thursday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

You need to keep your balance in every way, even in mundane things like eating right and getting rest. Those facing health challenges, know that things will get better. Mentally you are in a strong and stable frame of mind, wherein you know what you should do. You may be faced with a dilemma or situation at your workplace which requires immediate action or decision. It may be of importance and many options are available to you. Analyse all the available information first before you finally come to a conclusion. Emotional as you are but you are filled with forceful energy which some people find abrasive. Beware the impulse to be too forceful. Your mother or a mother-like figure may interfere in your relationship, whether she means to or not.

Lucky number 8
Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

The period has negatives in store for you on the health front. Those suffering from heart ailments & BP may experience a major upheaval on the health front. This has the potential to affect you spiritually, mentally, and physically. So, pay attention to what you are doing for your body. Stay positive and calm about the situation. Stress and anxiety with something relating to work are likely to affect you now. You tend to fear the outcome of your career in the future. Crisis of employment, finances could be faced by some of you. Stay as adaptable and flexible to deal with it. This may be an emotional time in your relationship. Things are not what they appear to be. Take a break if you need it. Treat your partner as your friend.

Lucky number 17
Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Saturday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week your stamina and energy metre will remain good. However, if you do face health challenges then, try to follow a naturopathic or a homeopathic approach in your health regime. Childbirth for those who are due is on the cards too. Things may not be going as per your expectation at the work front. If you are not happy with your current job or are facing a problematic situation at work, know that there is a lot you can do to improve your current environment. Try to adopt the right mindset before making any decision. Others may also oppose you, but that shouldn't deter you from moving forward as you have a lot of choices available. It's a loving time for you in your relationship. You and your partner can connect well.

Lucky number 6
Lucky colour Purple
Lucky day Friday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

You might face health challenges at this time. Worrying unnecessarily is not going to help. Even in the face of serious problems, you need to hold your ground. A cheerful outlook will give you the motivation to do the right thing for your health. If the situation requires you to take medical tests, then go out and get them done by a trusted practitioner. Money is likely to come your way. Some of you may get surprised with an increase in your current pay or getting a promotion. This may be due to all the challenging work you have put in, winning over all the challenges faced and accomplishing your goals. It's love for you this week. Positive emotional energy will be created between you and your partner, which will leave you feeling good about yourself and life in general.

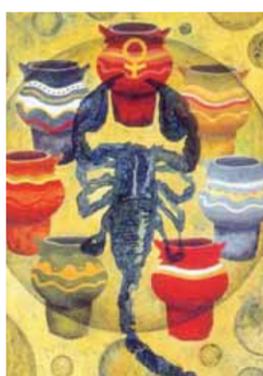
Lucky number 13
Lucky colour Brown
Lucky day Saturday



CANCER June 21-July 22

On the health front, you need to pay close attention to your emotions. There are chances that you are not at best when dealing with challenges. If you have found out that you have an ailment or are awaiting test results then, instead of becoming negative get help by talking to someone. There may be information that you don't know about. On the work front, some of you have accomplished a lot of your goals and have attained great material wealth. You may be financially stable now. Some of you may have a tough time at your workplace. This may be due to your inflexible attitude. In your relationships, you should be clear about what you want and what your hopes and dreams are.

Lucky number 12
Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Tuesday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

You will be required to balance your health efforts with your personal and professional responsibilities. You are moving into a phase wherein you need to be patient and alert. Be sure you take time out for your healing and relaxation. This is a very promising time for you in your career. Your mental abilities and intelligence are your great strength. You will finally be acknowledged for your efforts by others and have been successful in achieving your goals. The success will instill immense confidence in your abilities. Ensure that you don't become arrogant due to this. A wonderful time of love and solidarity is on the cards this week. Your relationship will strengthen more and some of you are likely to get to a stage of future commitment.

Lucky number 15
Lucky colour Sky Blue
Lucky day Thursday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

An upward increase in your health and vitality is seen. For those dealing with a serious illness, a new and improved healing modality or healer will come your way. You are generous and have concern for others, but don't compromise on the health front. Nourish your body and mind. Challenges and opposition might be faced this week, especially on the financial front. If you are not keeping track of your finances, and expenditures, it is likely that your budget crosses the limit. This is a time when you will feel that your long-term committed relationship has come a full circle. As a result, there is a sense of closure and fulfillment of what you desired. More love and gratitude will keep your good fortune going.

Lucky number 11
Lucky colour Beige
Lucky day Sunday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Life: harmony of opposites

“Sir, what is in store of my daughter's destiny? Does it indicate marital break? My son-in-law has serious anger issues, difficult for my daughter to bear with.” Worried parents of a married daughter came asking the other day.

The above questions made me recall Lord Buddha's saying: “In a transitory world, ever changing from within and beyond, there is no scope for having a perfect situation in life. Life is paradoxical — full of contradictions. Even creation is a result of convergence of the opposites. So, reconciling dualities of life is called for. Life, in fact, is an expression of harmony of the opposites.” Those who realise this profound truth, will relate well to the self and those around with relative ease and comfort.

The irony, however, is that every being is born unique, each manifesting varying desire and mind-trends, often in conflict with others, coming as they may as Karmic carryover from the past. So, invariably we are all born with a pre-conditioned mind, which allows a narrow window frame to look at the issues in hand. More often that doesn't let you look beyond with an open mind for a

reality check or better alternatives if any. So, we fail to look at subject matter under consideration in the right perspective due. Consequently, we are neither able to articulate our thoughts and moves rightfully, nor able to respond and react intelligently to external promptings. If that would not be enough, one's ego makes you conduct in a demanding mode — expecting life to move on one's own exclusive terms. That is at the root of all conflicts in life, be it marital, familial or societal. What gets lost sight of in the process is that we don't exist just by oneself and therefore life won't move necessarily to our asking. We can't service even our existential needs by oneself. We, therefore, need to learn to relate well with those around, overriding each other's limitations. It needs to be appreciated here that if one has a few weaknesses, the positives would be much more. The usual human tendency, however, is that we get stuck to few negatives of others, and all the more particularly in a conflicting situation. In the process, their positives elude our attention. So, we are not able to perceive the other side rightfully, and evidently to our detriment. Before answering the questions



raised above, let me make it clear that perception drives a being, which is dependent on one's inherent mind-trends. So, whether any couple is to enjoy a happy marital life or it would be subject to twists and turns, will depend on personality traits of the two. That makes a look into their mind-traits imperative. Your son-in-law does seem to have anger issues, but before expecting him to behave, your daughter too needs to look into her own flaws. Having said that, let me assure you that their marriage is going to stay. Progression of their charts suggest that they are expected to make necessary amends now and try to improve their relationship.

Let us now look at the astrological pointers to personality traits of the two. Your son-in-law is born with Aries *lagna*, which by itself is enough to indicate that he would be impulsive, aggressive, impatient and irritable. Mind signifying Moon occupies the constellation owned by Mars, incidentally the *lagna* lord, which is tenanted in Virgo sign. It brings in a perfectionist streak, by his self-defined measures. If others don't prove true to his expectations, it becomes difficult for him to digest. But then exalted Jupiter in

the 4th house suggests that he would be a well-meaning person carrying the natural urge to improve. In terms of time frame, his progressed *lagna* was placed adverse to Saturn, which accounted for his unseemly conduct. But now he is coming out of that trap, and so is expected to self-reflect upon himself to make necessary amends.

Your daughter is born in Sagittarius *lagna*, which makes her tactless and undiplomatic, marked with indiscreet, ill-phrased and ill-timed reactions, which may offend others. Moon occupies Gemini sign, and is placed adverse to the Sun, which brings in the tendency to live on her own exclusive terms. And when she gets provoked, would be tempted to go for a fight till finish. In her case also, progressed *lagna* is closing up with natal Venus, which implies that life ahead should be comfortable.

These positive indications would however come true only when they are counselled to work upon their fault lines.

The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at Tel: 91-11-9818037273/9871037272 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com