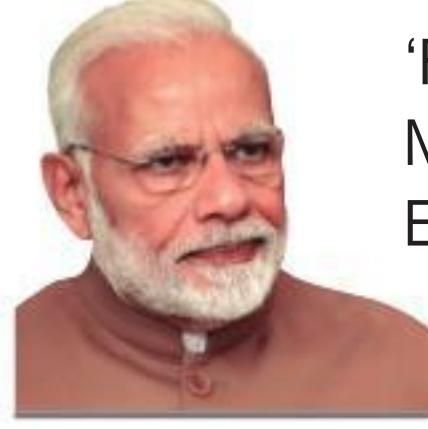




PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



'FARMERS WILL
NOW TURN
ENTREPRENEURS'

P5



THE HARRIS
CAMPAIGN



P6

TRUMP BACK ON
CAMPAIGN TRAIL

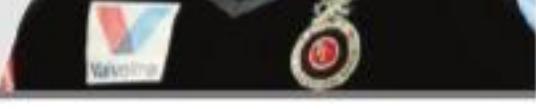
P10

twitter.com/TheStatesmanLtd
facebook.com/thestatesman1875



'THE GENIUS' WHO
PUT IT BEYOND THE
RIDERS' REACH

P12



WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky. The maximum and minimum temperatures would be around 35 and 21 degrees Celsius respectively.

RAINFALL: Nil

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max: 87% Min: 51%
TEMPERATURE
Max: 35.4°C (+2) Min: 19.8°C (0)
SUN RISES SUN SETS
06:22 hrs 17:53 hrs
MOON RISES MOON SETS
04:24 hrs 16:32 hrs

THUMBNAILS



Visitors at Akshardham Temple which was reopened after months of closure due to the pandemic, in the Capital on Tuesday.

AMARJET SINGH (P2)

Mehbooba Mufti released: Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti was released late on Tuesday night, after being detained for over a year "since the eve of the Centre scrapping Article 370" under the stringent Public Safety Act (PSA). Ms Mufti's release comes just as the deadline set by the Supreme Court was set to expire. In September the court questioned the central government and the J&K administration over her detention, asking them: "How long can Mehbooba Mufti be kept in custody?"

CBI team visits spot where Dalit woman was gang raped in Hathras: A CBI team on Tuesday visited the spot in Hathras where a 19-year-old Dalit woman was allegedly gangraped on 14 September, officials said. The team called the victim's brother to identify the place and directed the local police to cordon off the crime scene, nearly a month after the woman was allegedly raped and assaulted by four men.

Media freely commenting on pending cases amounts to contempt: Attorney General to Supreme Court

SNS & AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

Attorney General K.K. Venugopal on Tuesday submitted before the Supreme Court that media comments on pending cases are an attempt to influence judges and their outcome, which is equivalent to contempt of court. The Centre's top law officer contended before a bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar that issues should be clubbed with the questions of law formulated by the top court in 2009 contempt case against advocate Prashant Bhushan. He added that the top court has already upheld that any attempt to influence a sub judice matter will amount to contempt.

The AG said: "Print and electronic media are freely commenting on pending cases,



which is an attempt to influence the outcome of a matter." He added that this amounts to contempt and asked the top court to examine the role of media.

Venugopal emphasised that the trend in media has taken serious proportions these days. Citing a plea in connection

with a bail matter, he added when a bail plea of an accused is scheduled for hearing, a TV channel flashes conversations (between accused and someone), which is very damaging to the accused. Citing the Rafale matter, Venugopal said when this matter was scheduled for a hearing before the top court,

then there were big articles and commentaries with extracts of certain documents, which was published in the morning of the same day.

He contended these issues should also be examined when the top court decides issues connected with the kind of speech and publication amounts to contempt. Senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, representing Bhushan, disagreed with the AG's suggestions to club these issues in the Bhushan's contempt matter.

Dhavan added issues related to sub-judice cases are already covered by the Sahara judgement, and clubbing these issues together would eventually complicate the matter under consideration of the court.

Dhavan quoted Lord Reid

asking when Shylock's case is on, can we tell the Press not to talk about it? Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing journalist Tarun Tejpal, said the contempt law should be seen in the backdrop of a modern communication system. The AG said he will hold discussions with Dhavan and Sibal in the matter. The top court also requested senior advocate Harish Salve, who was amicus curiae since 2009 in the matter, to assist the court on the next date and adjourned the hearing in the matter on 4 November.

The case is in connection with suo moto contempt proceedings initiated by the Supreme Court in 2009 against Bhushan over his remarks against the judiciary in an interview with *Tehelka Magazine*.

2 infections and the immune system's response, but our findings signal that a previous SARS-CoV-2 infection may not necessarily protect against future infection," said Mark Pandori, lead author of the study from the University of Nevada. "It is important to note this is a singular finding and does not provide generalisability of this phenomenon," Pandori said. While more research is needed, the scientists said the possibility of reinfections could have significant implications for understanding COVID-19 immunity, especially in the absence of an effective vaccine.

"It also strongly suggests that individuals who have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 should continue to take serious pre-

cautions when it comes to the virus, including social distancing, wearing face masks, and handwashing," Pandori explained. According to the scientists, at least four other reinfection cases have been confirmed globally in Belgium, the Netherlands, Hong Kong, and Ecuador with the latter being the only other instance in which the second infection displayed worse disease outcomes than the first.

"We need more research to understand how long immunity may last for people exposed to SARS-CoV-2, and why some of these second infections, while rare, are presenting as more severe," Pandori said. "So far, we've only seen a handful of reinfection cases, but that doesn't mean there aren't

more, especially as many cases of COVID-19 are asymptomatic. Right now, we can only speculate about the cause of reinfection," he added.

The study noted several hypotheses that may explain the severity of the second infection, including the possibility the patient subsequently encountered a very high dose of the virus which caused a more acute reaction the second time.

According to the researchers, the patient may also have come in contact with a more virulent variant of the virus.

They said another plausible explanation could be the mechanism of antibody-dependent enhancement in which some protective proteins produced by the immune system

during the first encounter with the virus could make a subsequent infection worse.

This mechanism, the researchers noted, was seen previously with the 2002-03 SARS pandemic virus, as well as other diseases, such as dengue fever. Citing the limitation of the study, the researchers said they were unable to undertake any evaluation of the immune response to the first episode of infection. Since the confirmed reinfection cases occurred among patients who displayed COVID-19 symptoms, the scientists believe there is a possibility that many similar cases among individuals may be asymptomatic, and therefore likely to remain undetected under current testing and monitoring practices.



-- whether previously diagnosed or not--should take identical precautions to prevent infection with SARS-CoV-2. "There are still many unknowns about SARS-CoV-



Covid-19 patients might experience severe symptoms on reinfection: Study

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
HOUSTON, OCTOBER 13

COVID-19 patients infected with the novel coronavirus for a second time might experience more severe symptoms, according to a study which is the first to confirm a case of reinfection with the virus in the US. The study, published in the journal *Lancet Infectious Diseases*, found evidence that an individual with no known immune disorders or underlying conditions was infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus in two separate occurrences.

According to the scientists, including those from the University of Nevada in the US, the patient, a 25-year-old male, was infected with two distinct

SARS-CoV-2 variants within a 48-day time frame, while testing negative in between infections.

The study noted that the patient's second infection was more severe, resulting in hospitalisation with oxygen support, indicating previous exposure to COVID-19 may not translate to guaranteed total immunity. The patient tested negative for the virus after testing positive for SARS-CoV-2 in April 2020, the researchers said. Then in June 2020, after experiencing severe COVID-19 symptoms, including fever, headache, dizziness, cough, nausea, and diarrhoea, the patient was hospitalised and tested positive for a second time. The patient has since been discharged from the hos-

pital and has recovered from the second infection, the study noted.

While further research into reinfection is required, the scientists believe all individuals

-- whether previously diagnosed or not--should take identical precautions to prevent infection with SARS-CoV-2. "There are still many unknowns about SARS-CoV-

2 infections and the immune system's response, but our findings signal that a previous SARS-CoV-2 infection may not necessarily protect against future infection," said Mark Pandori, lead author of the study from the University of Nevada. "It is important to note this is a singular finding and does not provide generalisability of this phenomenon," Pandori said. While more research is needed, the scientists said the possibility of reinfections could have significant implications for understanding COVID-19 immunity, especially in the absence of an effective vaccine.

"It also strongly suggests that individuals who have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 should continue to take serious pre-

cautions when it comes to the virus, including social distancing, wearing face masks, and handwashing," Pandori explained. According to the scientists, at least four other reinfection cases have been confirmed globally in Belgium, the Netherlands, Hong Kong, and Ecuador with the latter being the only other instance in which the second infection displayed worse disease outcomes than the first.

"We need more research to understand how long immunity may last for people exposed to SARS-CoV-2, and why some of these second infections, while rare, are presenting as more severe," Pandori said. "So far, we've only seen a handful of reinfection cases, but that doesn't mean there aren't

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Held a fruitful meeting with Bangladeshi High Commissioner to India, H.E. Muhammad Imran today (Tuesday) where we discussed the progress of various projects between the two nations in Tripura.

BIPLOB KUMAR DEB
TRIPURA CHIEF MINISTER

Centre has failed to curb air pollution in N India: Sisodia

Air pollution along with Covid pandemic has turned lethal, says Dy CM, urging Modi govt to play a crucial role in curbing pollution and controlling the menace of stubble burning in North India

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

Coming down heavily on the Centre for "completely failing" to save North India from air pollution, Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia today urged the central government to play a pro-active and "crucial role" in curbing pollution and controlling the menace of stubble burning in several North Indian states that devastates the air quality in the entire region every winter.

The AAP leader's blistering attack on the Narendra Modi government over air pollution came on a day when the national capital's air quality deteriorated to "very poor" category in the morning – the first time this season.

"Stubble burning has started in neighbouring states and smoke has started reaching Delhi. The Delhi government has taken several measures to reduce pollution throughout the year but why is that suddenly when stubble burning begins everybody is concerned about pollution and nothing is done throughout the year," Sisodia told reporters.

"We say it again and again that it is not just Delhi which is affected by pollution but whole of North India," he said.

By the time smoke from crop residue burning reaches Delhi, its "intensity is somewhat reduced but imagine how badly it will be affecting people living in Punjab and Haryana where stubble burning is actually taking place," Delhi's deputy CM said.

"The Centre should take



responsibility," Sisodia said, appealing to "the central government to play a crucial role in controlling pollution in North India and also curb stubble burning".

Sisodia pointed out that "This year, due to the Covid-19 crisis, stubble pollution is very deadly," alleging that "The central government has completely failed to save North India from pollution. The Delhi government is continuously making efforts to stop pollution throughout the year while the central government keeps sitting idly and engages in tokenism when pollution levels increase."

He charged that the central government's concern about the pollution issue could be witnessed only during the winter months. "The entire northern part of India is suffering the adverse consequences of the central

government's inaction. We should not only talk about the pollution of Delhi but of entire North India."

The deputy CM also questioned the role of the Environment Pollution (Prevention & Control) Authority (EPCA) and urged them to take concrete steps. "Why EPCA has been so unsuccessful in getting pollution control from the respective states? Like those state governments, EPCA also seems to fail in pollution control," he charged.

Earlier in the day, CM Arvind Kejriwal also said that state governments should stop blaming each other and work together to find a solution to the issue of stubble burning in North Indian states like Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, which has been one of the major reasons for the yearly menace of toxic air in

Delhi-NCR during the winter months.

Kejriwal said while farmers of neighbouring states and people of Delhi have been bearing the brunt of stubble burning, the governments of the region have shut their eyes.

"State governments should stop blaming each other. We have to work together to find a solution to the issue. All agencies and governments need to take it seriously now," Kejriwal said.

told reporters in Hiranki village in Narela where the spraying of Pusa Institute-developed bio-decomposer solution on farmlands got underway. The solution, according to experts, could turn the stubble into manure in 15-20 days and could thus check stubble burning.

Kejriwal said that if the

Delhi government could make efforts to prevent stubble burning, other state governments in the region could also do it.

"When the (Pusa solution) process was in its initial phase, I made attempts to contact the central government and if they wanted, they could have worked with us to address the issue," the CM said.

He said he was worried about farm fires in neighbouring states. "The smoke has started affecting Delhi's air quality. Air pollution was under control for the last 10 months, but it has started increasing again."

"Imagine the impact of stubble burning on the families of farmers who have no option but to burn the crop residue. Farmers don't burn it willfully," Kejriwal said.

"While the farmers of neighbouring states and the people of Delhi are bearing the brunt of stubble burning, governments have shut their eyes. I hope that they take concrete steps so that the entire North India gets rid of high levels of air pollution," the CM added.

Smoky haze envelops Delhi; air quality worst in 8 months

PTI

NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

A smoky haze shrouded the national capital as its air quality hit an eight-month low on Tuesday, largely due to calm winds and low temperature that allowed accumulation of pollutants.

According to the Ministry of Earth Sciences' Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi, an increase was also observed in farm fires in Punjab, Haryana and neighbouring regions of Pakistan, but its impact on the capital's air quality was marginal.

The city's air quality index (AQI) hit very poor levels in the morning and stood at 306 at 11 am. Thereafter, the pollution levels dipped slightly due to an improvement in the ventilation index.

The 24-hour average AQI was recorded at 300 at 4 pm, which falls in the poor category. The last time the air quality hit such a poor level was on February 12 when the AQI was 320.

It was 261 on Monday, 216 on Sunday and 221 on Saturday. Dwarka Sector-8 (AQI 390) Wazirpur (AQI 372), and Mundka (AQI 352) recorded the highest pollution levels on Tuesday.

An AQI between 0 and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.

VK Soni, a senior scientist at the India Meteorological Department, said the dip in the air quality can be attributed to low wind speed which allowed accumulation of pollutants.

The ventilation index has improved slightly and no drastic change is expected in the AQI, he said.

Ventilation index is the speed at which pollutants can get dispersed. A ventilation index lower than 6,000 sqm/second, with average wind speed less than 10 kmph, is unfavourable for dispersal.

Kejriwal on Tuesday said

which can be attributed to unfavourable meteorological conditions, farm fires in neighbouring regions and local sources of pollution.

According to an analysis by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water, a Delhi-based think tank, transportation contributes to the most – 18 to 39 percent – to Delhi's air pollution.

Road dust is the second largest source of air pollution in the city (18 to 38 percent), followed by industries (2 to 29 percent), thermal power plants (3 to 11 percent) and construction (8 percent).

This year, the Delhi government has launched a massive anti-air pollution campaign – Yuddh Pradushan Ke Viruddh – which is being led by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Environment Minister Gopal Rai.

A green war room with a 10-member expert team has been set up at the Delhi Secretariat to monitor the steps being taken to deal with high levels of air pollution in winters.

The environment department has also taken stern action against project proponents at large construction and demolition sites flouting dust control norms.

The government also started the spraying of Pusa bio-decomposer solution in non-basmati rice fields in the national capital on Tuesday.

The solution, experts say, can turn the stubble into manure in 15 to 20 days and, therefore, can prevent stubble burning.

Kejriwal on Tuesday said state governments should stop blaming each other and work together to find a solution to the issue of stubble burning.

Starting October 15, stricter measures to fight air pollution will also come into force in Delhi and its neighbourhood as part of the Graded Response Action Plan, which was first implemented in Delhi-NCR in 2017.

Classified

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE COURT OF
MS. SHEFALI BARNALA
TANDON

Administrative Civil Judge-cum-ARC (Central)
Tis Hazari Courts,
Delhi-110054

Petition No. SC/74/2020
N.D.O.H. : 21-11-2020

1. Smt. Pushpa, w/o Sh.
Ravinder Kumar, d/o Late
Rajender Kumar, r/o 1/41, 201,
Village Hastals, Hastals, Delhi.

2. Sh. Gurav
3. Sh. Lokesh
Both sons of Late Rajender Kumar

Both r/o 2202, Gali Ravidass
Telivara, Barten Market, Sadar
Bazar, Delhi GPO, North Delhi,
Delhi-110006.

– Petitioner
Versus

The State.
FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE
UNDER INDIAN
SUCCESSION ACT, 1925

To All concerned,

Whereas in the abovementioned petition, the applicant/petitioner has applied for Succession Certificate to the Hon'ble Court Under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 in respect of the debt and securities amount of Rs. xxx. As per record to be standing in the name of Late

I, RITA Deb, daughter of Lt. Sukumar Chandra Deb, resident of 8, Ganesh Banerjee Lane, Dhakuria, P.O.: Dhakuria, P.S.: Garfa, Kolkata-700031 have changed my name from Rita Deb to Rita Dutta, vide affidavit dated 20/02/2020 at Alipore 1st Class Judicial Magistrate Court, Alipore, Kolkata.

E-AUCTION, E waste, on 23-10-2020 at 2:30 Inspection 20 & 21-10-2020 from 11:00 to 4:00 at Garage, Shastri Bhawan Delhi. Security Rs. 20,000/- Accurate 9868215515

SALE BY
AUCTION

E-AUCTION, E waste, on 23-10-2020 at 2:30 Inspection 20 & 21-10-2020 from 11:00 to 4:00 at Garage, Shastri Bhawan Delhi. Security Rs. 20,000/- Accurate 9868215515

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Just as the BJP has been telling people what to eat, what to wear, what language to speak, who to love, who to marry etc, it is now trying to control people on their spending preferences.

P. CHIDAMBARAM
FORMER FINANCE MINISTER

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 14 OCTOBER 2020

Rahul slams central govt over farm laws

The Cong leader says farmers give the country food security, but the Modi govt 'betrayed' them

PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi Tuesday again attacked the Centre over the recently enacted agriculture-related legislations, saying the farmers gave the country food security, but the Modi government just "betrayed" them.

The three farm bills -- the Farmer's Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020; the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020; and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020 -- were passed by Parliament recently. Subsequently, Pres-



ident Ram Nath Kovind gave his assent to the bills.

Tagging a video which had snippets from his recent vis-

its to Punjab and Haryana during which he held tractor rallies and public meetings against the laws. Gandhi tweeted in Hindi, "The farmers gave the country food security, and the Modi government only betrayed them. But not anymore."

The 3.31-minute video also featured comments of farmers saying they will protest against and oppose these laws vehemently.

The Congress, many other Opposition parties and several farmers organisations have been protesting against these legislations, claiming these will harm the interests of farmers and benefit corporates, a claim denied by the government. The Centre has asserted that these new laws will be beneficial for farmers

and will increase their income.

Earlier in the day, Gandhi also tagged a video report by a media portal on caste discrimination prevailing in Haryana and said the video was for those who "were running away from reality".

"We will change, the country will change," he said in a tweet in Hindi.

In a tweet on Sunday, Gandhi had said the shameful truth is many Indians do not consider Dalits, Muslims and tribals to be human.

The Congress has been attacking the UP government over the Hathras incident in which a 19-year-old Dalit woman from the district was allegedly raped and attacked by four men. She later succumbed to injuries at a Delhi hospital.

Agri laws stir: 31 Punjab farmers unions agree for talks with Centre

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 13 OCTOBER

Thirty-one farmers unions in Punjab on Tuesday agreed to hold talks with the Centre to discuss the new farm laws.

These Unions, who had shown historic solidarity against the controversial agriculture laws passed by Parliament last month, however vowed to continue their protests against the new farm laws.

While representatives of 29 organisations met here on Tuesday and decided to hold discussions with the Centre (on their invitation), Bharatiya Kisan Union BKU (BKU) Ekta Ugrahan--the largest farmer Union, which has been holding separate protests, in coordination with these other unions, too, announced yesterday that they will be going for talks with the Union government's agriculture secretary.

The Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee is the only organisation now which has decided not to participate in the talks.



Kokrikalan, general secretary of the union. The other unions, however, have decided to continue their 'Rail Roko' protests, besides protesting outside the residences of BJP leaders, said Balbir Singh Rajewal, president of BKU Rajewal.

Meanwhile, a delegation of Punjab government comprising of Ministers Tripti Rajinder Singh Bajwa and Sukhbir Singh Sarkaria, met the representatives of these 29 Unions, and assured them that a special Assembly session is being convened by the state government next week, to reject the Agriculture Laws passed by the Centre. The ministers are learnt to have asked the farmers to lift the 'Rail Roko' strike, but they refused to relent.

Farmers in Punjab have been demanding that the three laws passed by Parliament recently be repealed.

Farmers have expressed apprehension that the new laws will pave away for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporates.

HC asks EC to expeditiously decide complaint against MLA for 'concealing' poll expenses

PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

The Delhi High Court Tuesday asked the Election Commission of India (ECI) to expeditiously decide the complaint filed by Congress candidate Abhay Mishra seeking disqualification of BJP MLA Rajendra Shukla for allegedly incurring expenses in campaigning for the 2018 assembly polls in Madhya Pradesh beyond the permissible limit and not furnishing correct expenditure figure.

Justice Jayant Nath recorded the statement for the ECI counsel that the commission will expeditiously deal with the complaint which was filed in January this year.

along with proof. He added that around nine months have passed since the date of filing of the complaint but the commission has not yet considered it.

Advocate Suruchi Suri, representing the ECI, submitted that there was some delay due to the ongoing pandemic and they will decide the complaint expeditiously.

Mishra, in his plea, said Rule 90 of the Conduct of Election Rules presently prescribes a

maximum limit of Rs 28 lakh on such election expenses and section 10A of the RP act provides for disqualification of a candidate for failure to lodge account of election expenses. He said on December 11, 2018, Shukla was declared the returned candidate after having secured 69,806 votes in the MP polls for Rewa constituency.

He alleged that during the campaigning phase, Shukla had spent "unrestrained amounts of money on various public meetings and arrangements and blatantly exceeding the maximum limit on election expenses.

He also claimed that professional videos were made for promotion and circulation on social media and even hoardings and banners were placed on public property and around Rewa, which led to huge expenses being incurred by Shukla.

On January 17, 2020, after gathering pertinent data and information from various sources, the petitioner submitted a comprehensive and detailed complaint to the respondent no. 1 seeking disqualification of the respondent no. 2 under Section 10A read with Section 77 of the Representation of People Act, 1951. However, despite repeated follow-ups and reminders the respondent has not considered / taken up the petitioner's complaint, the petitioner said. It said Mishra has filed the petition in Delhi as ECI, which is the adjudicating authority, is situated here.

MAKING A SPLASH



A bird taking a dip in an earthen pot at Sector 34 in Chandigarh earlier this week.

PARDEEP SAINI

Cong govt had removed foundation stone with Sonia's name from Atal tunnel: BJP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 13 OCTOBER

Himachal Pradesh Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) chief Suresh Kashyap on Tuesday criticised state Congress chief Kuldeep Singh Rathore for blaming the BJP-led state government for removing plaque bearing names of Sonia Gandhi and other leaders at Atal tunnel Rohtang and charged that it was the previous Congress-led government which had removed it.

Kashyap said former Chief Minister Prem Kumar Dhumal



HP BJP chief Suresh Kashyap (left), HP Congress chief Kuldeep Singh Rathore (right)

regime removing foundation stones laid by the BJP gov-

ernment in the state," he added. State BJP chief said everyone knows what Congress party did for the state and the Atal tunnel was the dream project of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee which was fulfilled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi who inaugurated it on 3 October.

"It is a matter of pride for Himachal Pradesh and its people that Atal Tunnel is the highest in the world that will boost the tourism activities in the state, besides providing all weather connectivity to tribal people of Lahaul Spiti.

The tunnel will become a tourist attraction for domes-

tic as well international tourists and it will prove a lifeline for Lahaul Spiti residents," he added. It is worth mentioning here that state Congress chief Kuldeep Singh Rathore on Monday had accused BJP of trying to distort history of Atal Tunnel by removing the foundation stone that was laid by the former UPA government, bearing names of Sonia Gandhi, Dhumal and Virbhadr Singh.

Congress party had filed a complaint in this regard with the police and Rathore had urged Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur to restore the plaque within 15 days, otherwise the party would stage statewide protests on the issue. Rathore had said he had also received such reports of removal of foundation stones laid by former Chief Minister Virbhadr Singh and other leaders from Shimla, Solan, Lahaul Spiti districts and other constituencies of the state.

such tactics to serve its political motives.

Congress party had filed a complaint in this regard with the police and Rathore had urged Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur to restore the plaque within 15 days, otherwise the party would stage statewide protests on the issue. Rathore had said he had also received such reports of removal of foundation stones laid by former Chief Minister Virbhadr Singh and other leaders from Shimla, Solan, Lahaul Spiti districts and other constituencies of the state.

Rathore had termed the act as illegal and against democratic norms and had claimed that the BJP was indulging in

DU admission portal slows down, hampers process

PTI
NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

Slow speed of the online admission portal of Delhi University hampered the process of admission to undergraduate courses on Tuesday, a college principal said.

The university's first completely-online admission process began on Monday amid the coronavirus pandemic, with more than 19,000 applications being received on the first day.

Only 1,628 of the applications received on Monday have been approved.

Ramjas College principal Manoj Khanna said the university admission portal was slow in the initial few hours and it was only after 2 pm that the speed increased.

He said they could only process 60 applications till 2 pm since it was taking almost 30 minutes for the process.

The university's first completely-online admission process began on Monday amid the coronavirus pandemic, with more than 19,000 applications being received on the first day.

"There are 550 applications that have been cleared by respective departments and I have cleared 200 of them. We will try to clear the rest by 9-10 pm," he said.

He said he spoke to various officials who informed him that the portal was receiving close to 30,000 hits.

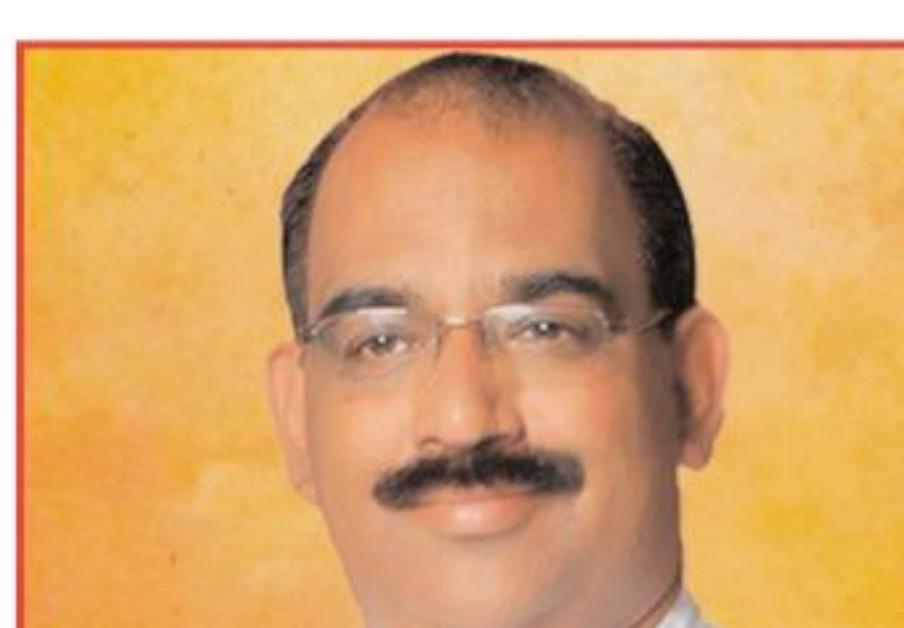
Payal Mago, the principal of Shaheed Rajguru College of Applied Sciences for Women, said they have had 160 admissions till now.

The teacher in-charges calculate the best of four percentage, then the documents are verified online and the final admission is approved by the principal, she said.

The varsity received over 3.54 lakh applications for nearly 70,000 undergraduate seats. Wednesday is the last day of admission.

This year, the admission process is being completely held online due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Sukhbir condemns attack on Punjab BJP president



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, 13 OCTOBER

The SAD president said nothing could be achieved by resorting to violent activities and all acts of violence were condemnable.

ties and all acts of violence were condemnable.

"Those resorting to such attacks can never be well-wishers of the farming community," he added.

Badal also asked the Congress government to come down heavily on anti-social forces that were being used to defame the farmers' cause and not encourage them in any manner whatsoever.

Condemning the attack, Badal said it was the work of anti-social forces who wanted to sabotage the ongoing farmers' agitation against the agricultural marketing Acts.

The SAD president said nothing could be achieved by resorting to violent activi-

ties and all acts of violence were condemnable.

Badal asked the government to take required measures to ensure such incidents do not reoccur.

He also made an appeal for following peace and communal harmony at all costs even as he called upon the centre to talk to agitating farmers in the state to resolve their grievances at the earliest.

While cars in Sharma's convoy were attacked and vandalized, he was also assaulted and manhandled.

Sharma was rescued by his security guards and taken to the Dasuya police station.

BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh in a statement suspected Youth Congress leaders' role in the attack.

He accused the state government of giving patronage to assaulters.

Terming the attack a well-planned move to disturb peace in the state, Sharma said it seemed to be the handiwork of anti-social elements.

"Farmers can never do such an act," he said, adding the anti-social elements would never succeed in their designs.

HP to start inter-state buses

on 25 routes from 14 Oct



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
SHIMLA, 13 OCTOBER

Himachal Pradesh Transport Minister Bikram Singh said here on Tuesday that the state government has decided to operate inter-state bus services of the Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC) from 14 October.

The inter-state bus services would ply on 25 routes in the first phase, in which Chandigarh, Pathankot, Baddi, Hoshiarpur, Ludhiana, Ambala, Haridwar, etc. have been included.

state government has taken this decision in view of the upcoming Navratri and festive season.

He said that people have been demanding to start inter-state bus service.

He said that soon inter-state bus services would be started for other states as well.





When there is no freedom to speak the truth within the party (Congress), how then could one expect it to do good for the country.

ACTOR-POLITICIAN KHUSHBOO SUNDAR
STATING THAT SHE WAS INSULTED IN THE CONGRESS

India

THUMBNAILS



A health worker collects swab sample from a child to test for Covid-19 at a centre in Hyderabad on Tuesday. ■ AFP

First Response Vehicles: Hero MotoCorp Limited has presented four First Response Vehicles (FRVs) to the Himachal Pradesh Health department under CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) activity, which was received by Secretary, Health and Family Welfare Amitabh Awasthi. Awasthi said that this small Ambulance would be very useful during Covid-19 situation as it is equipped with a stretcher, oxygen cylinder, medical kits. ■ SNS

No breakthrough in Sino-India military talks

Both sides, however, agreed to disengage troops to resolve stand-off at LAC

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

India and China made little headway at the marathon talks held on Monday between corps commanders of the two countries though the two sides agreed to disengage troops as early as possible to resolve the ongoing stand-off at the LAC.

"Both sides are of the view that the meeting was positive and constructive and agreed to earnestly implement the important understandings reached by the leaders of the two countries not to turn differences into disputes and jointly safeguard peace and tranquillity in the border areas," said a joint Press release issued by the two countries after the seventh round of military-level talks.

It said the two sides agreed to maintain dialogue and communication through military and diplomatic channels and arrive at a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution to disengage as early as possible.



It said the two sides had a sincere and in-depth exchange of views and enhanced understanding of each other's position on the disengagement of their frontline troops along the LAC on the western sector of the India-China boundary.

The talks, which began around 12:30 p.m. on Monday at Chushul, concluded around 11:30 p.m.

The Indian delegation at the talks was led by Lt Gen Harinder Singh of the 14 Corps based in Leh, and included Lt

Gen P G K Menon who is expected to take over from Singh later this month. It also included Naveen Srivastava, Joint Secretary in-charge of China in the External Affairs Ministry, who also participated in the discussions with the Chinese on 21 September in Moldo.

At yesterday's meeting, India insisted on restoration of status quo ante of early May and comprehensive disengagement of troops by China from all the friction points in eastern Ladakh to resolve the stand-off, sources said.

Indian forces had taken an aggressive stand and occupied several strategic heights on the southern and northern Pangong Lake area preempting Chinese attempts to take them over.

As the border stand-off entered the sixth month, an early resolution to the row appeared dim with close to 100,000 Indian and Chinese troops remaining deployed in the high-altitude region and showing readiness for a long-haul.

home minister Amit Shah was keen on modernisation of police forces. During the financial year 2019-20, the government released Rs 780 crore for the modernisation of police across India.

Reddy said a fingerprint was an essential tool because of its uniqueness, permanency, individuality and ease in acquisition. The digitisation of records and fingerprint data was an important step in documenting and tracking crimes and criminals.

He expressed his confidence that the fully computerised National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS) would become functional soon and benefit police forces.

Inaugurating the eCyber Lab, Reddy said the month of October was observed as the National Cyber Security Awareness Month and eCyber Lab would provide virtual experience in investigation of cyber crimes.

According to NCRB Director Ramlal Pawar, NAFIS would be a game changer in investigation of crime.

'Govt trying to hoodwink people from real problems'

CPI said the economy was in shambles and any piece-meal approach to boost consumer sentiments was in fact aimed at diverting focus on the Government's failures

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

The National Secretariat of the Communist Party of India (CPI) today termed Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement of measures to revive consumption and investment activity in the economy as nothing but a move to hoodwink people from the real problems faced by the country.

CPI said the package would not result in any meaningful, durable push to economic activity. The economy was in shambles and any piece-meal approach to boost consumer sentiments was in fact aimed at diverting focus on the Government's failures.

The real problem for lack of demand was the people did not have money. Instead of boosting employment, the government policies were reducing existing employment in the country.

Calcutta HC orders 20 per cent tuition fee cut in pvt schools

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 13 OCTOBER

Hearing a petition on the reduction of private school fees in the backdrop of outbreak of COVID-19, a Division Bench Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Moushumi Bhattacharya of Calcutta High Court today inter alia directed that there will no increase in fees during the financial year 2020-21. From the month beginning April 2020 till the month following the one in which the schools reopen in the physical mode, all 145 schools will offer a minimum of 20 per cent reduction of fees across the board.

Non-essential charges for use of facilities not availed of will not be permissible. For instance, additional charges for laboratory, craft, sport-



vious financial year.

For the financial year 2020-21, a maximum of five per cent excess of revenue over expenditure will be permissible; the balance excess (without any mathematical precision) should be passed on by way of general concession or special concession in individual cases of extreme distress.

If any school makes a loss as a consequence of following these directions, such loss can be made up in course of the next two financial years, 2021-22 and 2022-23, if normal physical functioning resumes by 31 March 2021.

No amount towards the arrears on account of revision of pay to teachers or other employees can be passed on in the fees for the financial year 2020-21.

Beirut blast effect: Shortage of Ammonium Nitrate hits coal yield in India

KANCHAN SIDDIQUI
KOLKATA, 13 OCTOBER

The Coal India mines operations have been impeded by the ramifications of Beirut explosion which occurred nearly 5,300 km away in Lebanon.

The devastating blast has curbed the production of the mines due to shortage of Ammonium Nitrate, a major element used to blast topsoil to produce coal.

Coal India Limited (CIL) targeted to secure 710 mn tons in 2020-21 fiscal year from its 350 operating collieries across the country, incidentally is assigned to ensure 1 bn tons of production by 2023-24 year.

"Scarcity of Ammonium Nitrate in several CIL subsidiaries already has started causing inconvenience to our production and if this situation continues, we may have to face the worst time," said Sanjay Srivastava, GM (Pro-

duction), CIL. Srivastava told The Statesman: "Our officials are continuously in dialogue with the port officials in Visakhapatnam as well as with the administrative officials and the police there where the crisis faced by our mines is narrated from time to time."

CIL buys explosives worth Rs 2,000 crore annually and even the smaller subsidiaries like the Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL) receive 45 to 50 Ammonium Nitrate loaded tankers a day.

The Beirut explosion meanwhile has posed a threat to the scenario. The Western Coalfields Limited (WCL) has suffered the worst due to halt in supply of the chemical, running 53.58 per cent shortage of supply that requires 321 MT of Ammonium Nitrate a day.

The Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCCL) that requires 197.5 MT of the explosive

chemical is the lone subsidiary which hasn't recorded any shortage as yet.

The ECL requires 203 MT of Ammonium Nitrate currently has 123 MT in possession and is facing 39.41 percent of shortage (see the picture).

On 4 August, 2,750 MT of Ammonium Nitrate stored in the warehouses in Beirut—Lebanon's capital exploded, which shook the world causing at least 203 deaths, 6500 injuries and US\$ 15 billion property damage, besides rendering an estimated 3 lakh people homeless.

In India, the immediate impact of the blast was an embargo in unloading of the explosive chemical at Visakhapatnam port—the key gateway for its import to India. The MP, Narasaraopet in Guntur in Andhra Pradesh, Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayulu wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi

to stop import of Ammonium Nitrate until safety and security is ensured.

Considering the present difficulties faced by the CIL mines, Devarayulu told The Statesman today: "After the Beirut blast the entire world went into a flurry and it was highly essential to check the safety status of the warehouses. I had suggested to the PM that the port shouldn't be made vulnerable and storage of Ammonium Nitrate should be arranged far away from the port and localities."

As a result, a merchant vessel MV Kraszewski that had reached Visakhapatnam port in the middle of August carrying 20,041 MT of Ammonium Nitrate was stranded and the district authorities suspended berthing of the vessel and ordered that cargo wouldn't be handled until the concerned government departments give clearance.

Kerala HC stays FIR against LIFE Mission

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOCHI, 13 OCTOBER

In a partial relief for the LDF government, Kerala High Court on Tuesday stayed for two months the CBI probe into the alleged Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) violation against the LIFE Mission, which handles the state government's housing project envisaging total housing for the homeless.

However, the court has not stayed the investigation against other accused, which include private contractors who got the tender.

A single bench of Justice V G Arun passed the stay order in the petitions filed by UV Jose, CEO of the LIFE Mission Project, and Santhosh Eappen MD of Unitac, seeking to quash the FIR registered by the CBI alleging violations of the FCRA over the receipt of foreign contributions from the United Arab Emirates for the construction of housing units for flood victims at a plot in Vadakkancherry in Thrissur district.

Justice Arun said there was no reason to interdict the investigation in the FIR-RC No 5 (A) /2020-CBI/ACB/Cochin.

At the same time, the provisions of the FCRA and the materials on record do not justify the implication against LIFE Mission.

The project, aimed at building free houses for poor, got into a controversy after the NIA seized Rs 1 crore cash and two kg gold from the bank locker of gold smuggling case accused Swapna Suresh in July.

Kolkata airport records highest passenger count since resumption of flight services



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 13 OCTOBER

Despite the prevailing partial flight ban to Kolkata from six cities, the passenger count at the NSCBP airport reached a record number of 33,000 passengers and 262 flights in one day, the highest since resumption of flight operations.

The airport authorities today said that a total of 33,000 passengers were handled at the airport on 12 October. The passengers were flown in and out in 262 flights in total. Earlier on 9 October, it was 32,000 passengers.

An airport official said: "The numbers are promising. It indicates a good chance of recovery from the huge losses that Indian aviation industry incurred due to the pandemic. The passengers are feeling confident in opting for air travel."

The present numbers are despite the flight bans from six cities which is yet to be withdrawn. Airport authorities confirmed the state gov-

Bengal govt brings back Kolkata's iconic double-decker buses

CM also announced that Amazon logistics hub at Uluberia will create 20,000 direct and indirect jobs

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 13 OCTOBER

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee today flagged off two double-decker buses for sightseeing the heritage and cultural trails of the city followed by a ride on the Hooghly that will be conducted during the festive days.

Miss Banerjee said that the hoodless double-decker buses are akin to those that ply on London roads. The trip would be conducted in two slots ~ 10:30 am to 1:30 pm and 11:30 am to 2:30 pm and Lok Prasar Shilpi folk artists will perform in the bus during the ride, she said.

The trail will cover the iconic landmarks of Victoria Memorial, Fort William, St John's Church, GPO, Old Currency Building, St Andrews Church, Dalhousie Square, Great Eastern Hotel, Curzon Park, Town Hall, Eden Gardens, Lal Dighi, Princep Ghat, Babughat and others.

Bookings will be available on WBTDC website www.wbtdc.com from 23 October.

Deliberating on the rapid Covid spread, Miss Banerjee said an alert has been issued in Maharashtra and urged people to wear masks as well as maintain physical distance while visiting puja pandals. We have to be cautious in following Covid protocol so as to ensure that the infection does not spread further, she added.

Reiterating that cultural programmes would not be allowed near puja pandals, Miss Banerjee suggested holding such programmes in halls and open air theatres



(From left) Inaugurated double-decker bus, in Kolkata on Tuesday. ■ SNS; Chief minister Mamata Banerjee inaugurating double-decker bus, in Howrah on Tuesday. ■ SNS

with sitting capacity of 100.

On the occasion, Miss Banerjee announced that Amazon logistic hub has started operating at Uluberia logistics park and the venture will create scope for over 20,000 direct and indirect jobs. Amazon will provide services in the east and north eastern areas. Flipkart has already started operating at the logistics hub from 12 March with over 2,000 crore investment and henceforth more companies will start operating from the logistics hub, said Miss Banerjee.

Meanwhile Miss Banerjee today urged the Centre not to withdraw the recent-

ly introduced Kolkata-London flight and assured all kinds of facilities so as to enable more passengers to board it.

State chief secretary Alapan Bandopadhyay will write a letter in this regard to the Civil Aviation Ministry. "It was after pursuing the Centre for 10 to 12 years that the direct flight to Europe was started recently and we want it to continue. If needed we are ready to offer whatever facilities are required," said Miss Banerjee.

To ensure that more passengers are able to board the flight and make travel seamless, the state government has decided to conduct



Banerjee.

According to Miss Banerjee, Kolkata is the gateway to north eastern states as well as Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha. "We want a state like West Bengal having an international airport facility to have direct connectivity to Europe."

As the passenger load for European countries is very high, the state government wants the Kolkata-London flight to be considered a permanent flight route", she said adding that former chief secretary Rajiva Sinha had written to the Ministry earlier and now the issue will be pursued by Bandopadhyay.



Isn't secularism a key component of the Constitution...Don't need your certificate on Hindutva

REFERRING TO GUV B S KOSHYARI'S LETTER ON REOPENING PLACES OF WORSHIP AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF COVID

MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER UDDHAV THACKERAY

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY 14 OCTOBER 2020

THUMBNAILS



A man rides on a bicycle past India Gate amid smoggy condition in New Delhi on Thursday. ■ AFP

Show cause notices for closure to Flipkart, Patanjali: The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has told the NCT that it has issued show cause notices under Section 5 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 for closure of operations to Flipkart and Patanjali Peha as they are not registered with it and have not responded to its communications on the matter. ■ PTI

SC on access of social media, illicit content: The Supreme Court on Tuesday sought a response from the Centre on a PIL filed by law students seeking age-based control on access to social media. They suggested development of profile verification to remove unlawful content like online harassment videos and promoting obscene content. ■ SNS

SC allows transportation of iron ore till 31 Jan: In a move that will restart mining business in Goa, the SC on Tuesday allowed the transportation of already extracted iron ore for which royalty has been paid, from mining leases to loading points. The state's mining industry has been impacted by two bans on fresh excavation of iron ore due to irregularities in the last one decade. ■ SNS

T'gana reservation for women: Telangana Legislative Assembly on Tuesday approved the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation Amendment Bill 2020 paving the way for 50 per cent reservation for women. Following this legislation women will be elected in 75 out of 150 divisions in the upcoming elections. "Telangana is the first state in the country to provide 50 per cent reservations to women in all local bodies," claimed minister KT Rama Rao. The amendments also made it necessary for the State Election Commission to take state government's concurrence while conducting CHMC elections. ■ SNS

'Farm laws will turn farmers into entrepreneurs'

PM Modi terms his government's farm reforms as 'historic'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, OCT 13

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said his government's 'historic' farm reforms will create opportunities to take farmers to entrepreneurship and added his regime is focused on increasing their income.

Modi was speaking after releasing the autobiography of former Union minister Balasaheb Vikhe Patil and renaming the Pravara Rural Education Society in Ahmednagar district after the Padma Bhushan recipient, via video conferencing.

Terming the farm reforms as historic, the Prime Minister said, "Today opportunities are being created to take farming and farmers from the role of annadata (food provider) to entrepreneurship."

Referring to high milk, sugar, and wheat production in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Haryana and Punjab, Modi said such models of local enterprise will take the country forward.

He said there was a time after Independence when the country did not have sufficient food stock. "The government's priority then was to increase food production. So the entire focus was on increasing production. Farmers toiled hard to achieve the objective,"

Prime Minister Modi said, "But the attention of the governments and policies, while being concerned about increasing productivity did not go towards profitability of farmers," he said.

"People forgot about income for farmers. But for the first time, this thinking has been changed," he said and listed steps the Centre has taken for the welfare of farmers.

Modi said microfinance has a special role in the economy and social order of villages, adding that under the Centres Mudra Yojana, self-employment possibilities have gone up.

Seven crore women of self-help groups have been given loans of over Rs three lakh crore in the country, he said.

Noting that the Covid-19 threat still persists, Modi said people should not show dhalai (laxity) towards Covid-19, observe social distancing norms and maintain personal hygiene till a vaccine is available. Modi said the concern is more in Maharashtra, which has reported the highest number of Covid-19 cases in India.

"And there are no middlemen (involved). Not only this, there has been unprecedented work on setting up cold chains, mega food parks and agro processing infrastructure," he said.

In Maharashtra, efforts were strengthened after 2014 (when the BJP came to power) to supply water for drinking and agriculture purposes, he said. Under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchay Yojana, 26 long-pending irrigation schemes from Maharashtra were expedited and work on nine of them was completed, Modi said. These schemes

will help provide irrigation to five lakh hectare area, he said.

"In July 2018, work on 90 irrigation schemes was initiated. Around four lakh hectare land will be provided irrigation facility when these schemes are completed in two-three years," he said.

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"And there are no middlemen (involved). Not only this, there has been unprecedented work on setting up cold chains, mega food parks and agro processing infrastructure," he said.

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TV in the dock

The fact that leading film producers of Mumbai have chosen to petition the Delhi High Court against the ugly characterisations of their industry by two television channels ought to serve as a wake-up call to the News Broadcasting Standards Authority, the self-regulatory mechanism created by television channels to curb offensive content. The Code of Ethics and Broadcasting Standards put together by NBSA enjoins channels to be impartial and objective, to avoid defamation and libel, to ensure neutrality, to strive to ensure allegations are not reported as facts or that charges are not conveyed as acts of guilt. While covering crime and violence, television channels are prohibited from reconstructions of crime scenes that are in poor taste and are specifically advised that "visuals or details of suicide or self-harm of any kind" should not cross boundaries of decency. Two facts are apparent. First, most viewers should immediately be able to assess how far and to what extent television news channels have adhered to their own Code, and whether they have in fact transgressed it insofar as adhering to neutrality, or reporting allegations as facts are concerned, or indeed whether they have crossed boundaries of good taste and decency. The second, and more worrying aspect from NBSA's perspective, is that the film producers have chosen not to place their faith in television's self-regulation mechanism but approached a court of law.

The NBSA is headed by a well-regarded former judge of the Supreme Court and has four eminent retired bureaucrats as members. It also has four representatives of television channels. NBSA, in terms of its powers of authority, may on its volition investigate violations of the Code, but seldom does so, preferring to wait for complaints to be made before taking them up for adjudication. Clearly, not too many complaints come up for NBSA's adjudication, for information available in the public domain would suggest that the body has not decided a single complaint since 24 January 2020, nearly nine months ago. On that day, the NBSA decided five matters, including four complaints preferred by the Government, and let off with a warning a channel that had shown a photograph of a rape victim on the ground that it only did so once, while dismissing the other four. While the decisions may be merited by the facts placed before the NBSA, the impression that the television industry is indulging in a self-serving rather than a self-regulatory exercise is difficult to escape.

Whether words such as "filth", "scum" and "druggies" are apt characterisations of the film industry, or whether it is indeed "cocaine and LSD-drenched" is now for the Court to decide. The burden of proof while seeking prior restraint on news dissemination is heavy, and the plaintiffs will have to contend with this in pressing their action. But, equally, to suggest that a defence of the right to excess forms part of a battle for the truth may prove a stretch. If the NBSA chooses not to regulate, perhaps a court will.

Death for rape

It is not a coincidence that most nations in South East Asia are, amid the coronavirus-induced restrictions, seeing a sharp increase in incidents of rape. Nepal's government has been battling charges of letting rapists get away with impunity. Horrific instances of rape are being reported almost every day from India, and Pakistan was rocked by the rape of a woman near Lahore recently. But it is the Bangladesh government of Sheikh Hasina that has reacted substantively to outrage over a series of gape rapes and sexual assaults. Rocked by nearly 1,000 incidents of rape between January and September, a fifth of them gang rapes, the country's Cabinet this week approved the death penalty for rapists. But the extreme penalty may not prove a deterrent as a majority of those charged with rape manage to slip through the cracks of a lethargic judicial system which sees a very low rate of conviction. This problem is not peculiar to Bangladesh, for similar lacunae allow rapists to get away in both India and Nepal. Enhancing the punishment alone will not address the problem, as India has learnt. For even though laws were made far more stringent in the wake of the Nirbhaya rape case, and the rapists were hanged seven years after they had committed the crime, it did not prove a deterrent, with cases being reported almost daily from different parts of the country, including Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The latest outrage in Bangladesh followed the circulation of a video from Naokhali, which showed a group of men stripping and repeatedly attacking a woman for almost a half hour. An investigation by the country's National Human Rights Commission revealed that the woman had been raped and terrorised with weapons for the past year by one of the men in the video. This case led to the outpouring of protests on the streets of Dhaka, forcing the government to issue an ordinance mandating the death penalty.

But as activists say, the culture of impunity is well engrained in society and they cite a United Nations report of 2013 which had found that 88 per cent of rural respondents and 95 per cent of urban respondents in Bangladesh said they faced no legal consequences after committing rape. The problem is compounded by victims who do not report the crime, fearing stigmatisation. Activists say rapists manage to obtain protection and even patronage from political figures who then use them to further their activities. While Sheikh Hasina's government may have managed the direction of the discourse for now with the announcement of the death penalty, it will, like governments in India, Pakistan and Nepal, have to radically transform the system of criminal justice if it truly wants to deter rapists.

The Harris Campaign

Babu Jagjivan Ram in his 34-year-long career (1946-1979) in the Indian Cabinet, never once talked about his caste, or that he was a Dalit. His reasoning was that to become Prime Minister, he would have to have the support of all castes. The Dalits across India would not exceed 15 per cent. How far would that carry me, he would ask in private



There is no doubt that Kamala Harris, the Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee and Joe Biden's mate, is campaigning with energy and extraordinary enthusiasm. Her emphasis on the USA being divided between blacks and whites, apart from causing a flutter in the roost, is not correct. The country can be more accurately described as multi-coloured, comprising yellows, Indian browns, Hispanics of bright brownish hue and what not. When Biden invited her to be his running mate, she insistently declared herself to be a black. Lately, Harris has been talking of dosa and filter coffee, reflective of her association also with Chennai. In Indian election campaigns, the contestants do not introduce themselves. The reasoning is that they are supposed to be leaders and therefore well known. They do not carry their visiting cards, as only unknown persons have to do that. Whether this practice applies to the USA or not I do not know, but I feel that the same reasoning is likely to apply in that country. Ms. Harris' familiarity with American history is impressive, but it might have been better if she did not raise from the platform the issue of "one country 2 systems". That must be so, but for a candidate it may not be desirable. Emphasizing the fact carries the peril of a likely polarisation of the electorate along the lines of black versus white.

For a white candidate, the remark could pass, but for a black lady to declare her deep sympathy for blacks would mark her as a clear proponent of identity. The opposition could retaliate by alleging that Kamala Harris has come out to represent the blacks of America. Biden could look after white interests. The others should fend for themselves. Carrying the logic further, a Republican Party vote or supporter could raise the question: what happens if Mr Biden happens to resign midway? Who would be President for 85 per cent of America? Mind you, these comments are based on Indian experience. To give an outstanding example, Babu Jagjivan Ram in his 34-year-

long career (1946-1979) in the Indian Cabinet, never once talked about his caste, or that he was a Dalit. His reasoning was that to become Prime Minister, he would have to have the support of all and various castes. The Dalits across India would not exceed 15 per cent. How far would that carry me, he would ask in private. Unfortunately, he did not become Prime Minister, but certainly retired from politics as Deputy Prime Minister of India in 1979.

Anybody who has a sensitive conscience would sympathise with the suffering the blacks have undergone for centuries. How they were captured from their homes and dragged out and sold to white traders who regularly visited West Africa. They were then packed into ships in abnormally large numbers as if they were goods and not living beings. There were no toilets for them in these ships because they occupied the holds and not the cabins. The result usually was abominable, apart from being terribly unhygienic. Before they reached the coasts of the New World, up to 30 per cent of the black passengers would have died; the dead bodies were flung into the ocean. There was no question of a coffin or any ceremony.

Fortunately, William Wilberforce, an active member of Britain's House of Commons, spent most of his political career trying to abolish this barbaric trade in slaves. More fortunately, William Pitt the Younger was his friend. Pitt remained Prime Minister for 22 years and supported Wilberforce in his tryst with the abolition of the slave trade. Once England stopped trading in slaves, other countries too slowed down and stopped. Once the slaves were sold, the barbaric treatment suffered during the ship voyages no doubt stopped but the tale of long oppression began.

A glimpse of the oppression

of slavery, is in many ways, eloquently depicted in the famous novel Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe. However well some masters and their families treated their slaves, they could not appreciate how miserable human life is as a slave, which is devoid of aspiration. Another facet of slavery from the work point of view is interesting. The Yankees or north Americans who ran industries came to the conclusion that the productivity of an average slave is less than that of a paid worker. In other words, it was better to employ and pay a wage than forcibly extract work out of a slave. This was one of the reasons why the Yankees supported abolition and even the Civil War. The Confederate southerners were obsessed with large labour forces to run their plantations, whether of cotton or other produce. No doubt, in the America of those early decades, so much manpower, other than the slaves, was not available.

For Ms Harris, it may be useful to praise President Barack Hussein Obama. To push the black point of view, of course, to talk about Floyd George and other murders would be music to the ears of black people. But such examples are likely to give offence to many white voters. He or she would feel that the candidate is trying to tease their conscience.

This is the same logic that influenced Babu Jagjivan Ram. In any case, it has been said by the wise that a victim is not his own best advocate. The other factor which Ms. Harris would be unaware of is that a brown person, whether Indian or any other, can be as prejudiced against blacks as some whites are. If she were to live in India for a little while, she would discover this herself.

An interesting question would be what might have been the calculation that motivated Joe Biden to select Kamala Harris

as his running mate. The women's vote is probably the largest segment in an American election. But then why has there been only one Presidential candidate so far? Hillary Clinton was expected to do well, but Donald Trump came from behind and overtook her at the last moment. Governor Sarah Palin of Alaska, although articulate and active could not help Senator John McCain perform better; McCain eventually lost to Obama. For the success of the Biden team, a disproportionate responsibility rests on Kamala Harris' shoulders. For one, he is old; for another, he has not shone with success in any presidential contest.

The fact that women have not been able to do better in American politics ought a subject of questioning and research by the Harris electoral team. The so-called South Asian subcontinent where India is, has done far better in this context. Indira Gandhi was Prime Minister; so was Benazir Bhutto Prime Minister of Pakistan. Bangladesh has produced two women prime ministers, Sheikh Hasina Wajid and Begum Khaleda Zia and Sri Lanka threw up Sirimavo Bandarnaike and later her daughter Chandrika Kumartunga.

Could this be attributed to the fact that the Indian or Hindu civilization is almost unique in traditionally worshipping female deities? Eastern India is dominated by goddesses, beginning with Durga, Kali, Lakshmi, Saraswati and many others. This is not a new phenomenon; in Vedic times, women were virtual equals of men, educationally and socially. All this, so much so, that even Islam in this region has been influenced by this Hindu tradition. Not merely Pakistan and Bangladesh, but even Indonesia and possibly Burma have been similarly influenced.

Sukarnoputri Megawati has been Indonesia's President while Aung San Suu Kyi is the State Counselor (a position equivalent to Prime Minister) of Myanmar (Burma). Has religion been the inspiration in Asia? Otherwise, why should an advanced country like the United States of America be so much behind in this context of gender justice?

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**
ASIAN NEWS NETWORK

ASIAN VOICES
Covid-19 & environmental challenges ~ two sides of a coin

The number of Covid-19 cases continues to increase rapidly in Indonesia, while some Southeast Asian neighbors are beginning to live normally and moving closer to winning the battle against the pandemic. Almost every day, Indonesia continues to peak off the chart in the region, which comes as no surprise at all. Taking a step back, when the pandemic began to take the world by storm, some countries were adept at tackling the pandemic, while Indonesia responded slowly and even looked reluctant to announce the current state. As a consequence, Covid-19 transmission escalated, while lax health protocols saw many adopt a tererah (whatever) attitude, as they felt frustrated by the government's inconsistent policies.

Looking at the prolonged health crisis, we cannot dismiss the striking similarity as to how the government responds to environmental problems. Indonesia's long-standing environmental problems, such as climate change, air and water pollution and deforestation, have been placed on the back burner, putting us in a state of tererah. These environmental problems are no less important than Covid-19 and require an immediate response, as they may increase the risk of a future pandemic. With great aspiration, this pandemic could steer Indonesia into a green recovery, and that merits a discussion on how to address the existing environmental challenges after learning from our Covid-19 experiences. The agonising experience of dealing with Covid-19 thus far should be a call to be extra

The Jakarta Post
mindful that there are environmental concerns that are equally worth our attention. However, a major drawback is that the government seems confident that everything is under control.

Indonesian Health Minister Terawan Agus Purwanto assured the public late in January that Indonesia was more than ready to handle the outbreak and he even repeatedly stated that there was no danger, as the coronavirus was just like a common cold. Seven months later, by the end of September 2020, Indonesia had recorded the highest case number and death toll in Southeast Asia. This exactly reflects the existing environmental challenges we face today.

Indonesia's neglect and its overconfidence and that environmental problems are under control are completely misplaced and should stop. Ironically, unlike Covid-19, Indonesia's environmental problems are not unprecedented. We have the annual Jakarta floods that no governor has ever coped with. Another interesting case that is similarly alarming is the seasonal haze. For more than two decades, the smog greets everyone every year on a not-so-happy morning, as many continue to set alight forests and farmland because it is the cheapest way of clearing land for plantation. Each of these environmental problems records new worst cases almost every year, which has left Indonesians, again, with a tererah mentality. Covid-19 has plunged the world into a recession. The Indonesian government therefore prioritises the economic recovery over the pandemic.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Bose's idea of nationalism

SIR, I take strong exception to what Jaydev Jana said in his article 'Fact vs Falsehood' (10 October), to the effect that 'Bose was not averse to the idea of violence for independence. He was deep believer in aggressive nationalism'.

Netaji is what Swamiji could have been had he actively engaged himself in India's freedom movement.

It's as if Vivekananda manifested himself politically in Subhas. Vivekananda's quintessence of teachings, atmano mokshartham jagad�ityaya cha, shaped Subhas's idea of nationalism which calls for boundless love for the suffering humanity and a reckless concern for the downtrodden, something Tagore had conceptualized in Home and World.

Subhas himself admitted how Swamiji's teachings transformed him, "There followed a revolution within and everything turned upside down". Vivekananda's idea of nationalism of which Subhas was the practicing propagator is very much relevant in today's India when

the skewed concept of nationalism is sweeping the country.

Nationalism devoid of truth, love and compassion is akin to jingoism. Subhas, though invoking shakti (power) as desired by Swamiji to win the independence of India, never took recourse to violence, impetuosity or volatility like Sandeep, the tamasic in Tagore's Home and World.

On this point he differed with Gandhiji's policy of compromise with the British on the question of India's freedom. Unfortunately, the Gandhians misinterpreted Subhas's idea of nationalism as opposed to Gandhiji's theory of non-violence.

As desired by Swamiji, Subhas replaced Caesar's mart of meanness and mutual distrust with God's gifts of love and compassion in realizing India's independence. Toeing Swamiji's line, Subhas felt what Tagore said about Swaraj, "...Swaraj is not a matter of mere self-sufficiency in the production of cloth. Its real place is within us - the mind with its diverse



power goes on building swaraj for itself..." (Towards Universal Man).

Mr Jana tried to play down the differences with Gandhi to obfuscate the truth, to elevate Gandhi to a

mythical personality. It's the mummifying manoeuvre of myth-prone minds precluding one reaching a proper perspective on persons like Gandhi.

How could swaraj, the end, be sacrificed for dogged adherence to the ideals of non-violence and satyagraha, the means? Subhas treated non-violence and satyagraha as only a means to an end 'to be adjusted and altered, as exigency and expediency demand', unlike Gandhi who 'adhered to that highest standard of non-violence, even if the pursuit means sacrificing and giving up the political goal of swaraj' (KF Nariman, Non-violent murder).

The political goal of swaraj should not have lost its direction in the means-end conundrum. It was as if the top leadership of Congress was at war with Subhas, rather than with the British, simply because of the ideological differences of Gandhi with Subhas. Subhas was hounded till he resigned from the post of Congress president, on the pretext of indiscipline.

Yours, etc, Sudipta Ghosh, Jangipur, 11 October.

HALF-HEARTED

SIR, Jaydev Jana's observation (Facts and Falsehood, 10 October) on Gandhi's role in connection with execution of Bhagat Singh and his two comrades that "Gandhi tried his best to save their lives" needs to be commented upon. Gandhi did make some effort in this regard but that was half-hearted. A quote from Subhas Chandra Bose's 'The Indian Struggle 1920-1942', eleventh impression, page 126 would throw light. "I was reminded of a similar incident during the armistice between the Sinn Fein Party and the British government, when the strong attitude adopted by the former, had secured the release of an Irish political prisoner sentenced to the gallows. But the Mahatma who did not want to identify himself with the revolutionary prisoners, would not go so far and it naturally made a great difference when the Viceroy realised that the Mahatma would not break on that question".

Gandhi's 'Satyagraha' did not always mean adherence to truth. When Subhas Chandra became the Congress President for the second time, defying Gandhi's diktat, Gandhi did not mind diluting the meaning of Satyagraha. This election made it clear that Subhas's popularity in the country was more than that of Gandhi, a matter of worry for a leader who was till then the supreme commander of Congress. Gandhi wanted to teach a lesson to Subhas and succeeded in doing so, in a not so clean manner. The President could not function without the support of the Working Committee, majority of whom were Gandhi loyalists. The venerable Bapu instructed members of the committee not to cooperate with the President, a democratically elected one. The result was as expected: Subhas could not function and resigned in disgust.

Yours, etc., Sanjit Ghatak, Narendrapur, 10 October.

Have academic journals crossed the line of bipartisanship?

ATANU BISWAS

Less than four weeks prior to the all-important US presidential election, an unprecedented and blistering editorial entitled "Dying in a Leadership Vacuum" in the 208-year-old *The New England Journal of Medicine* – one of the most prestigious peer-reviewed medical journals which is published by the Massachusetts Medical Society – is set to redefine the relationship between academics and politics. The editorial, signed by 34 editors including the editor-in-chief Eric J. Rubin, who are US citizens (one editor is not) – which itself is a rare phenomenon, pointed out that the response of American leaders who have undercut trust in science has been consistently inadequate in combating the pandemic. What's more, in addition to condemning the Trump administration's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, the editorial called for voting them out of office.

The editors have commented: "although it is impossible to project the precise number of additional American lives lost because of weak and inappropriate government policies, it is at least in the tens of thousands in a pandemic that has already killed more Americans than any conflict since World War II." And add: "We should not abet them and enable the deaths of thousands more Americans by allowing them to keep their jobs."

The scientists, while pointing out that this pandemic and its severe economic and health crisis has produced a test of leadership, have complained that American leaders have failed that test, and they have taken a crisis and turned it into a tragedy. "But this election gives us the power to render judgment," the editorial says. And it asks for a better leadership. It is to be noted that Dr. Thomas H. Lee, a professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and a member of the journal's editorial board, did not participate in writing or voting on the editorial.

The scathing editorial essentially calls on American voters to throw the president out of office. *The New England Journal of Medicine* is at least the third widely respected medical or science journal to call for a change in US leadership in the November election. Can or should they go this far? While the *New England Journal of Medicine* article did not explicitly

endorse anybody (i.e. Joe Biden), an editorial in a recent issue of the 175-year-old prestigious magazine *Scientific American* endorsed Democratic nominee Biden over President Trump. This marked the publication's first endorsement of a presidential candidate in its long history. The magazine's editors explained that they felt compelled to break with tradition because they believed Trump had badly damaged the US and its people by dismissing evidence and science and by mishandling the coronavirus pandemic. Projections from the University of Washington School of Medicine asserted that if almost everyone in the US wore masks in public, it could have saved about 66,000 lives by the beginning of December. But Trump and his vice president Mike Pence flouted local mask rules themselves.

All these were possibly started in May when an unsigned editorial in the British medical journal *The Lancet*, one of the world's leading medical periodicals since its founding in 1823, sharply criticised the Trump administration's "inconsistent and incoherent national response" to the Covid-19 crisis, and opined: "Americans must put a president in the White House come January 2021, who will understand that public health should not be guided by partisan politics." Subsequently other medical journals followed the same line.

These editorials, however, instigate us to rethink the scope of academic freedom. Academic freedom is widely defined as the right of the scholar to think, write, and speak whatever he or she wants to think, write, and speak. Of course, there are numerous instances of attempts to curb this freedom by the political entities of different countries. However, there are not many examples where academics directly stepped in and confronted politics within the academic setup as in this case. Will more and more scientific journals now be wading into politics? That might be a huge diversion from the academic tradition, in general, I'm afraid. Forget about a scientific journal, even an academic journal on politics or political science cannot do that, I suppose. In fact, personally I feel quite uncomfortable with such editorials in *The New England Jour-*

nal of Medicine or *Scientific American* or *The Lancet*.

There may be arguments favouring and opposing such direct political views being expressed in academic journals. On the one hand, some may argue that it's the duty of a responsible medical or scientific journal to point out the underlying reasons for the severity and mishandling of a pandemic, which, they believe, have caused "tens of thousands" of additional lives. Then, shouldn't an academic journal and its editorial stop after pointing out the mistakes and mishandling of the Trump administration?

Wasn't a call for change in regime (or directly endorsing the opposition candidate for a presidential election) much too political? Isn't that too much for a medical journal?

Are these scientists playing the role of self-appointed guardians of society, which is beyond the scope of academia? Are they actually misusing their scope to write an editorial in a reputed and widely-circulated academic journal? Certainly, these editorial members and scientists are also people of our society, they're responsible citizens, and they've full right to express their political views – which may very well be blended with their scientific knowledge and expertise. Personally, I would have no problem if the editors wrote similar articles in *The New York Times* or in *The Washington Post*, for example. However, they chose to write these in editorials of respected medical journals instead.

Overall, I firmly believe that they have overstepped their limits. However, the broader issue is much beyond my personal discomfort. According to a recent article in *Forbes*, "many prominent scientists



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have recently pointed out the upcoming election is no longer about 'partisanship.' Will academics be entangled with politics much more directly and more frequently from now on? That is certainly not the millennia-old style of functioning of academics. Socrates or Galileo, for example, had to fight relentlessly for establishing 'truth,' but they never mixed their struggle with a fight against the political regime of the day. Academics usually thrive for knowledge, but seldom fight with the political power on this scale.

One must of course appreciate the democratic yardstick in the United States which allows a few scientists to pen down such impactful edi-

torials in leading scientific journals. But, are these just a few exceptional events, or is this a paradigm shift in the style of functioning of academics that might have emerged as a by-product in this era of post-truth?

The editors of *The New England Journal of Medicine* wrote: "truth is neither liberal nor conservative." I agree. In addition, I believe that a scientific journal's quest should be towards scientific truth only, advising citizens in casting ballots is nothing but officiousness on their behalf. Knowing the line of control is very important – for scientists and for society.

The writer is Professor of Statistics, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

Sir Reginald Craddock's pointed inquiry addressed to the Khalifate agitators regarding the agency they propose to employ to undo the Turkish peace treaty is a pertinent one. Are British troops to be employed to attack the King of the Hedjaz and compel him to return the Holy Cities to Turkey, to re-impose on the Armenians and the liberated Greeks of the Smyrna area and on the Jews and Christians of Palestine the hated Turkish tyranny and, if necessary, to fight the French, Italians and other European nations which assisted to frame the settlement just reached? It is hardly possible that Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Shaukat Ali believe that such a programme is feasible. They can hardly suppose that India's exchequer will support the strain, to say nothing of the task such a programme would impose on her army. They must, however, have considered an alternative before they commenced their raging tearing propaganda. What is that alternative? While India waits to hear, it would be worth her while to consider the answer to Sir Reginald's other inquiry, namely, what have the Turks ever done for India's interest? The attitude assumed by the Ottoman Turk before the war towards the Indian Musselman was unmistakable and the members of the Indian Red Crescent detachment who visited Constantinople in 1912 know what that attitude was. The more the Khalifate agitation is studied the less possible it seems that it should lead to any practical result.

NEWS ITEMS

DAMAGES FOR NON-SUPPLY OF MEALS

An interesting suit for damages for the non-supply of meals was decided by the Fifth Judge of the Calcutta Small Cause Court yesterday, in which Mr. Dar Frizoni, through his valik, Mr. Chippendale, sought to recover from Miss Thomas. Mr. L. MacGuire defended. The plaintiff's case was that Miss Thomas was supplying outside meals to himself and his daughter at Rs 85 per month for both, and that he also paid Rs 5 towards her servant for carrying their food to them. Without due notice, he said, the defendant suddenly stopped his food, in consequence of which he was compelled to get his food elsewhere. Mr. MacGuire for the defendant said that the plaintiff had broken his contract by demanding meals out of hours, and that he refused to keep his own servant, which he originally agreed to do.

JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN

There was an interesting incident in the Commons on the occasion of the Prime Minister moving that His Majesty should be humbly asked to direct the erection at the House's expense of a monument within the precincts of the Palace at Westminster to the memory of Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, with an inscription expressing the House's high sense of his eminent services to the country and the Empire. Mr. Lloyd George, in the course of a long and glowing tribute, said there were few men in the history of Britain who had retained the passionate attachment of so many millions of their countrymen over such a long period. Mr. Chamberlain's vision of the importance of strengthening the partnership of the Empire had already been justified by the most searching test applicable to any proposal.

SPORT IN RANGOON

What appears to have brought about a climax in public betting on football games occurred with the closing of a shop in 37th Street, run under the name of G. Ross, Turf Accountant. It appears that the accountant from time to time took money on B.A.A. Football games, besides money on races run at Rangoon and Kambe, when ten to one was laid against Friends Union Club winning the contest. They played with the Royal Scots. On that evening a good deal of money came on the Friends Union, and the accountant stood to lose about Rs 16,000. The game resulted in a win for the Friends Union by four goals to one. Successful bettors on turning up this morning were confronted with a notice purporting to have come from the police to the effect that all betting on football was to be stopped.

LADY DOCTOR AT AMRITSAR

The Bombay Municipal Corporation devoted part of the afternoon in discussing Mrs. Easdon's appointment as medical officer of a Municipal maternity home. Mr. Clayton, Commissioner, who spoke with warmth, made a lengthy statement explaining the circumstances under which Mrs. Easdon's appointment was made. He considered her to be the most suitable of three candidates he had selected from among twelve applicants. Referring to allegations of callousness at Amritsar made against her the Commissioner was convinced that she had been maligned. In a letter she had written to him she most emphatically denied the accusations made against her before the Congress Committee, and it was only when she read the discussion in the newspapers that she first knew that such an accusation had appeared against her in the Congress Committee's report.

Does Nepal need a popular revolt?

ACHYUT WAGLE

The classical theory of change suggests that any desired transformation can only be achieved through three inevitable steps, namely unfreeze, change and refreeze. The task of unfreezing the adherence to the status quo in a few hundred ruling elites, across ideologies, is proving to be the most arduous task of all. Therefore, the chances of transforming Nepal's political system and public delivery mechanism through incremental reform appear increasingly slimmer. Lamentations don't help; what is needed is a structured call for quality in governance and change. While the delivery of good governance from the state has historically remained pathetic, the indifference among masses is as responsible in constraining the growth and prosperity of the country. This has never allowed the country's growth to hit an optimal level.

On Sunday, Dr Govinda KC ended his latest fast-unto-death protest, or satyagraha, after an agreement signed with the government to address his demands, mainly, related to reform in the country's medical education system. But had Nepal been an accountable democracy, he need not have struggled for years for simple demands like making medical education more accessible geographically and accessible to the

people from the lower economic strata, and to stop corrupt practices surrounding the affiliation of medical colleges by the universities, among others. Unfortunately, not only has the Nepali state failed to do so on its own, but successive governments failed to even honour the agreements they had reached with Dr KC, accompanying each of his previous satyagrahas. The fate of the recent agreement also may not be any different.

The Covid-19 infection rate among the tested crossed the 25 per cent mark and the total number of proven infections broke the psychological ceiling of 100,000 last week. But the federal government, instead of assuaging and facilitating the people to overcome fear and contain the infection, is effectively indulging in fear-mongering on the one hand and terribly failing to implement containment and cure protocols on the other. The government can do nothing to contain the virus, Prime Minister KP Oli reportedly told his ministers last Thursday. Initially, he had dismissed the impending scale of threats projected by the scientists and public health experts. Government officials are also terrorising the public with confusing information.

For example, the spokesperson in the Ministry of Health, while highlighting the achievements of the five-

month-long lockdown claimed that the country increased intensive care unit (ICU) beds from 900 in March to 2,600 by the end of September and provisioned ventilators from 80 to 900. But just after two days, when patients in the ICU reached 321 and the occupied number of ventilators was 77, the same spokesperson declared that the ICU beds and ventilators were no longer available to patients in hospitals of 'convenient' locations, whereas, almost 70 per cent of ICU beds and 80 per cent of ventilators are within the Kathmandu Valley where about 60 per cent of the infected population is concentrated. The central government has miserably failed to enforce the social distancing and health safety rules, including in the public transports. It has also failed to take along the provincial and local governments so as to enable them to meaningfully contribute to the containment measures.

Every country in the world is now keenly committed to salvaging their respective economies affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. But Nepal for the past one and a half months is without a standalone finance minister, since Yubaraj Khatiwada resigned. When he was immediately appointed as an advisor to the prime minister, general perception, despite his miserable performance while in

the post, was that he would function as the de facto finance minister. But now, amidst all this, Khatiwada has now been appointed as Nepal's ambassador to the United States. Such an ad-hoc approach of the government in managing the economy at the time of this unprecedented national crisis only shows its lack of ability to identify and tackle important national priorities.

The media is inundated with barbaric stories of rape in every corner of the country. This certainly has several socio-economic dimensions that need to be addressed to control this menace. But the government has completely turned a blind eye towards widespread political patronage of criminals and the ever-increasing sense of impunity perpetrators seem to feel. In the meantime, victims have very limited access to justice, cultivating Nepal's image as a 'horrible rapist nation'. These issues have failed to be part of the pressing political agenda.

Despite all the problems the government has been unable to counter, the organised public anger that should have been pressurising the government is virtually non-existent. The course correction of non-performing or underperforming governments would be impossible without citizens' recourse to public pressure, protest, revolt and even revolution.

But this possibility looks very distant in Nepal. To borrow the term from Karl Marx himself, the rise of the lumpen proletariat class in Nepal has only facilitated the extractive political class to dedicate themselves in fulfilling petty vested interests without interference and fear of retribution.

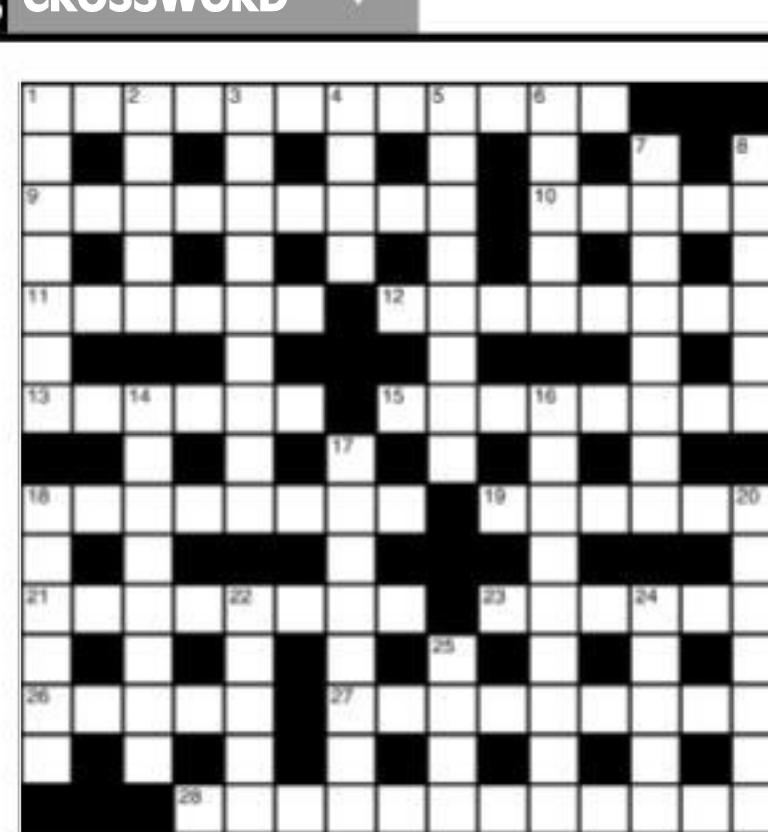
In his classic book, Democracy in America (1835), French political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville said, 'In order that men remain civilised or become so, the art of associating must be developed and perfected among them in the same ratio as equality of conditions increases.' He also contended that for citizens without the taste to unite in political goals, their independence would run great risks. The Nepali conscience yet seems to be acquainted with this particular 'taste', thus, exacerbating the inequality between the ruler and the ruled.

Nevertheless, it is beyond question that Nepal would be able to unshackle herself from the suffocating status quo without weeding out the current set of self-indulgent and extractive political class without a bold and ethical democratic revolution. A contingent question, then, is: How proximate is yet another popular revolt in Nepal that can effectively reset the existing socio-political order? The Covid-19 pandemic can perhaps be the best eye-opener for the citizens-in-slumber.

The Kathmandu Post/ANN

CROSSWORD

NO 28103



YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

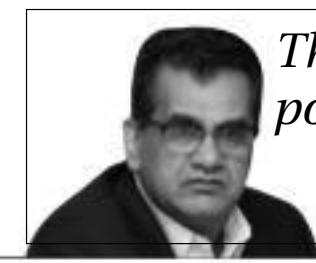
ACROSS

- 7 This is in every way sacred for audience (6)
- 8 Cyclist, say, cycling before and behind (8)
- 10 Maybe ecology sees Crosophile in landscape catching cold (7)
- 11 An ancient royal pub joins a row over hotel (7)
- 12 I heard a common pet's expensive in Paris for anybody who's striking (10)
- 13 Fruit and veg recipe (4)
- 15 Mainland/North Iona steamship's working and we're all connected (2,3,2,6)
- 18 Adolescent initially needs support earlier on (4)
- 20 Instrument held in one area?
- 24 Tree in WWI battle swathed in gas (7)
- 25 Give up the burden (7)
- 26 Brings up return of routine work, ends in more stress (8)
- 27 A cereal crop, except on pastureland (6)

DOWN

- 1 Stadium music featuring ELO post-break-up, making comeback (8)
- 2 A soldier in the pampas? That's bananas (9)
- 3 Folk hero regularly seen to split apple with head shot (6)
- 4 In our Airbnb we have this climbing wild rose (5)
- 5 Rat seen in a river several years running (6)
- 6 Edward holds that place is linked with a painter (8)
- 7 Refuse to break sweat (5)
- 9 Crimes of these receivers? (6)
- 14 15A refuted (4,2,3)
- 15 Regarding request for plain cake? (8)
- 16 Character's new, not initially fully developed (6)
- 17 A fury flies up with consort high above the ground (8)
- 19 Formerly fortified wine and strong beer (6)
- 21 I'll stay in festival for short time - it's more relaxed (6)
- 22 Bread - a way to get Japanese sort to rise (5)
- 23 A film for everyone in the round is a wonderful thing (5)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)



The government has been working on multiple fronts to position India as a truly global manufacturing hub

AMITABH KANT
NITI AAYOG CEO

THUMBNAILS

PSE policy: The Union Cabinet will soon consider new public sector enterprises policy that will define strategic sectors, which will not have more than four PSUs, finance ministry official sources said on Tuesday. As part of the "Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan" package, the government in May had announced that there will be a maximum of four public sector companies in the strategic sectors, and state-owned firms in other segments will eventually be privatised. Under the policy, a list of strategic sectors will be notified where there will be at least one and a maximum of four public sector enterprise, apart from private sector companies. PTI

BPCL privatisation: Oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday said there was no scaling down of the capacity of the planned mega 60 MTPA refinery on the west coast as it was essential to meet future fuel and petrochemical demand in the country. Pradhan also said the privatisation of Bharat Petroleum Corp Ltd was very much on track but the government was treading cautiously given the size of the divesture. PTI

Green city: New Town, Kolkata, has been awarded the Green Cities "Platinum" certification by CII's Indian Green Building Council (IGBC). A delegation from CII-IGBC visited Hidco Bhawan on Tuesday to present the green city plaque and certificate to Debashis Sen, chairman-cum-managing director, West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. The delegation was led by Sushil Mohta, co-chair, IGBC Kolkata chapter and chairman, Merlin Group, according to a Press release. SNS

Embassy JV: Realty major Embassy group on Tuesday said it has partnered with US-based Columbia Pacific group to foray into senior living housing segment, and will together invest Rs 1,000 crore over the next four years to develop multiple projects for the elderly across various cities in the country. PTI

SBI Card offer: SBI Card is all set to add to the festive cheer of its cardholders this festive season. With 1000+ offers across 2000 cities, specially curated to meet the changing trends and consumer preferences, SBI Card endeavours to bring customers a rewarding shopping experience on their festive season purchases, according to a Press release. SNS

Vivo phone: Smartphone maker Vivo on Tuesday kicked-off its festive celebrations by launching the much-awaited Vivo V20 as the latest addition to its camera focused V-series portfolio. The V20 sports a segment-first 44 MP eye-autofocus selfie camera and also boasts of being India's slimmest smartphone of 2020, said a Press release. SNS

Economy to contract by 10.3% this year: IMF

It is likely to bounce back with an impressive 8.8 percent growth rate in 2021

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 13 OCTOBER

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

The Indian economy, severely hit by the coronavirus pandemic, is projected to contract by a massive 10.3 per cent this year, the IMF said.

► The country, however, is likely to bounce back with an impressive 8.8 per cent growth rate in 2021, thus regaining the position of the fastest growing emerging economy, surpassing China.

growth rate of 1.9 per cent in 2020, it said.

The IMF in its report said that revisions to the forecast are particularly large for India, where gross domestic product (GDP) contracted much more severely than expected this year and bounce back to 5.2 per cent in 2021.

As a result, the economy is projected to contract by 10.3 per cent in 2020 and grow by 3.9 per cent the next year, it said. In 2019, India's growth rate was 4.2 per cent.

According to the IMF, India is among those likely to suf-



► Global growth would contract by 4.4 per cent this year and bounce back to 5.2 per cent in 2021, the report said.

asters, damage to infrastructure from thawing of permafrost in Russia) and negative global spillovers from large economic disruptions in other parts of the world.

Last week, the World Bank said India's GDP this fiscal is expected to contract by 9.6 per cent. "India's GDP is expected to contract 9.6 per cent in the fiscal year that started in March," the World Bank said in its latest issue of the South Asia Economic Focus report.

"The situation is much worse in India than we have ever seen before," Hans Timmer, World Bank chief economist for South Asia, told reporters during a conference call last week. "It is an exceptional situation in India. A very dire outlook," he said.

There was a 25 per cent decline in GDP in the second quarter of the year, which is the first quarter of the current fiscal year in India.

In the report, the World Bank said the spread of the virus and containment measures have severely disrupted supply and demand conditions in India.

Wipro board approves up to ₹9,500-crore buyback plan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

IT services major Wipro today announced an up to Rs 9,500-crore buyback plan at Rs 400 per equity share.

The announcement comes a week after its rival Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) announced a mega Rs 16,000-crore buyback plan at Rs 3,000 per equity share.

In a regulatory filing, Wipro said its board of directors has approved a buyback proposal for purchase of up to 23,750 crore equity shares at Rs 400 per share and aggregates to an amount of up to Rs 9,500 crore. This is 4.16 per cent of the paid-up equity share capital of the company as on 30 September 2020, it added.

At Rs 400 apiece, the buyback is 6.4 per cent higher than today's closing price of Rs 375.5 on the BSE.

In a statement, Wipro chief financial officer Jatin Dalal said the company's free cash flows as a percentage of net income for the first half was at 160.7 per cent of net income.

"The announcement to buyback equity shares is part of our philosophy to deliver consistent returns to shareholders," he added.



Last year, Wipro had undertaken a buyback programme of 32,31 crore shares at Rs 325 apiece, aggregating to about Rs 10,500 crore. Wipro had previously announced a buyback worth Rs 11,000 crore in 2017, and Rs 2,500 crore in the year 2016.

sequential growth of 1.5-3.5 per cent. Its IT services segment revenue in the September quarter was at \$1,992.4 million - an increase of 3.7 per cent on-quarter.

"We had an excellent quarter with growth in revenues, expansion of margins and robust cash generation. I am very excited about the opportunities that are ahead of us and encouraged by the acceleration in business momentum we have seen this quarter," Wipro CEO and managing director Thierry Delaporte said.

Acquisition: Wipro on Tuesday said it will acquire engineering services company Eximius Design for \$80 million (about Rs 586.3 crore). In a regulatory filing, Wipro said the purchase consideration is \$80 million. "Eximius complements Wipro's EngineeringNXT core strengths and 35-year pedigree in VLSI and systems design," it added.

This acquisition will help Wipro to expand into newer market segments and elevate the customer's journey in next-generation technologies such as connected products, embedded AI and security, it said.

PLI scheme for more sectors likely: Kant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

CIL's e-auction allocation jumps 65% in Apr-Sept

NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

State-owned Coal India Limited today said the total coal allocation under its four e-auction windows registered about 65 per cent year-on-year rise during the first half of the current financial year.

Coal India Ltd (CIL) booked 41.4 million tons (MT) raw coal in e-auctions during April-September 2020, compared with 25.1 MT booked in the corresponding period last fiscal, the company said in a statement.

The increase in volume terms stood at 16.3 MT, it added.

With the industrial and commercial activities reviving after the unlock, CIL is hopeful that the demand sustains and the sales get boosted soon.

PTI

Govt permits 20 states to raise ₹68,825 cr through borrowing

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

ra, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

"In the meeting of GST Council held on 27 August 2020, these two options were put forward and were subsequently communicated to the states on 29 August 2020. Twenty states have given their preferences for option-1," reads the Press release of the finance ministry.

Explaining the benefits, the finance ministry shared that the states that have chosen option-1 will have a facility of a special borrowing window, coordinated by the ministry of finance to borrow the amount of shortfall in revenue through issue of debt.

These states are Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Sikkim, Tripura,

The additional borrowing permission has been granted at 0.50 per cent of the gross state domestic product (GSDP) to those states who have opted for option-1 out of the two options suggested by the ministry of finance to meet the shortfall arising out of GST implementation.

final installment of 0.5 per cent of GSDP out of the 2 per cent additional borrowings permitted by the Government of India in view of the Covid pandemic, waiving the reforms condition," reads the Press release.

The department of expenditure, on 17 May, had provided an additional borrowing limit of up to 2 per cent of GSDP to the states. The final installment of 0.5 per cent out of this 2 per cent limit was linked to carrying out at least three out of four reforms stipulated by the Government of India. However, in case of states who have exercised option-1, to meet the shortfall arising out of GST implementation, the condition of carrying out the reforms to avail the final installment of 0.5 per cent of GSDP has been waived. Thus, the 20 states, who have exercised option-1, have become eligible to raise an amount of Rs 68,825 crore through open market borrowings. Action on the special borrowing window is being taken separately.

Vodafone Idea ropes in IBM for 'big data' platform

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

Equity indices rise for 9th session in a row

MUMBAI, 13 OCTOBER

Equity benchmarks the Sensex and the Nifty ended marginally higher after choppy trade today, propped up by RIL and IT stocks amid lacklustre cues from the global markets.

Rising for the ninth session in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 31.71 points or 0.08 per cent higher at 40,625.51 points. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty inched up 3.55 points or 0.03 per cent to 11,934.50 points. HCL Tech was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, climbing 3.94 per cent, followed by Kotak Bank, Infosys, Reliance Industries, UltraTech Cement and Tech Mahindra.

According to analysts, the recent recovery in market was led by expectations of fresh fiscal stimulus from the government, but the sops announced have failed to cheer investor sentiment.

PTI

Vedanta says committed to India after failed delisting

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, 13 OCTOBER

Shrugging off a failed bid to get its Indian flagship firm delisted from stock exchanges, mining baron Anil Agarwal's Vedanta Resources today said it is committed to investing in the country that offers unparalleled opportunities and growth.

Last week, Vedanta Ltd's delisting went from almost-a-success to failure due to a large number of unconfirmed orders.

The BSE on 9 October evening showed 137.74 crore shares, out of a total 169.73 crore shares held by the public, to have been offered for sale to promoters, larger than the threshold of 134.12 crore. Some bids, however, were pending confirmation from custodians. Reconciliation

of data led to the number of shares offered for sale being trimmed to 125.47 crore.

"Launching the delisting bid to garner approx 134 crore shares was indeed a mammoth task. We saw enthusiastic participation by our shareholders that took us within striking distance of our goal, short by only 7 per cent," Vedanta Resources, the parent firm of Vedanta Ltd, said in a statement. The delisting bid, it said, "has not been successful."

"The bid would have resulted in FDI inflow of over \$3.15 billion into the Indian economy and helped boost growth between 0.4 per cent and 0.8 per cent through the multiplier impact of such large infusion of funds," the firm said.

The reverse bookbuilding process for public share-

holders to tender their shares, which began on 5 October, had concluded on 9 October.

For successful delisting of the shares, 134.12 crore shares needed to have been validly tendered for the promoter shareholding to cross the 90 per cent shareholding threshold as per regulations.

Vedanta had tied up \$3.15 billion in loans to finance the buying of shares but returned the money to lenders no sooner had the delisting bid failed.

"We wish to reiterate our unflinching commitment to India particularly in the natural resources sector. We are confident that Vedanta Ltd will continue to grow from strength to strength as a listed entity on the Indian stock exchanges," Vedanta Resources said.

'India to achieve self-reliance in supercomputers'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, 13 OCTOBER

In a significant move with far-reaching development potential, the ministry of electronics has announced partnering leading technology institutes in the country to manufacture critical components for supercomputers in India. The partnership is part of the National Supercomputing Mission to achieve self-reliance in supercomputing.

The Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) and other premier "host institutes" across India have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) for estab-

C-DAC PACT WITH LEADING INSTITUTES

► The Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) and other premier "host institutes" across India have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) for establishing supercomputing infrastructure in the country.

► As part of the Supercomputing Mission, the C-DAC under the ministry of electronics is accelerating the pace of research and

Supercomputing Mission was set up to provide necessary computational power to the academia, industry, scientific and research community, medium and small scale enterprises (MSME) and the startups," Dhotre said.

The supercomputing self-reliance is to tackle India-specific major challenges and complex real-life problems

in science and engineering.

The MoU was signed in the presence of minister Dhotre and C-DAC director-general Hemant Darbari who also serves as director of the National Supercomputing Mission (NSM) Host Institutes. These institutes are part of the new high-technology infrastructure to assemble and manufacture supercomputing



components in India. Institutes that signed the MoU for the supercomputing self-reliance mission include the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, the National Institute of Technology in Tiruchy and IITs in Kanpur, Hyderabad, Guwahati, Mandi, Gandhinagar, Chennai, Kharagpur, Goa and Palakkad.

The minister of state for electronics Dhotre announced the C-DAC has already established a supercomputing ecosystem at IITs in Bhubaneswar and Kharagpur, the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research in Pune and the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research in Bangalore.

The National Supercomputing Mission is to accelerate the pace of research and innovation using computational science techniques with indigenously manufactured critical supercomputing components (such as server boards, interconnects, rack power controllers and hydraulic controllers, direct liquid cooled datacenter, high performance computing software stack). This is a step towards self-reliance in the crucial field of supercomputing.

High performance computing (HPC) is an important tool for science, industry and decision making, in the increasing significance of supercomputing for innovation and socio-economy boosting technologies.

C-DAC director-general Hemant Darbari mentioned the supercomputing endeavour is to enhance India's capability and empower scientists and researchers with state-of-the-art supercomputing facilities. This is to enable India attain global competitiveness and ensure self-reliance in the strategic area of supercomputing technology lead-

ing towards exascale computing.

Exascale computing refers to computing systems capable of calculating at least 10¹⁸ floating point operations per second (1 exaFLOPS).

"Our mission is to establish dependable and secure exascale eco-system with innovative designs, disruptive technologies and expert human resource," declared Darbari. He said India's goal is to develop hardware encompassing exascale chip design, design and manufacture of exascale server boards, exascale interconnects and storage including silicon-photronics at C-DAC, in line with Atmanirbhar Bharat to achieve complete self-reliance.



We don't see any security risk, it's very low and we find it better that they are inside because we could have unannounced inspections

PHILIPPINE MILITARY CHIEF GEN. GILBERT GAPAY

ON MILITARY CAMPS BY A CHINA-BACKED TELECOM FIRM

The Statesman

NEW DELHI WEDNESDAY 14 OCTOBER 2020

09

Bangladesh approves death penalty for rape amid protests

President Md Abdul Hamid on Tuesday signed an ordinance approving the death penalty for rapists

AGENCIES

DHAKA, 13 OCTOBER

Bangladesh President Md Abdul Hamid on Tuesday signed an ordinance approving the death penalty for rapists, amid nationwide protests after a series of frequent sexual assaults in the country. "The President assented the Cabinet decision and issued an ordinance on Women and Children Repression Prevention Act," a presidential palace spokesman said.

On Monday, the Cabinet approved an increase in the maximum punishment in rape cases to death from life imprisonment.

The Law Ministry in a statement said that from now on the "death penalty" instead of "lifetime rigorous imprisonment" would be the maximum punishment for rape.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said that the government has introduced capital punishment in rape cases in an effort to prevent the "brutality" of rapists. "A man when he is a rapist turns into an animal. They become so brutal; that is why women suffer so much these days. Hence we amended the law, she said while speaking at an event here on Tuesday.



"Besides the life-term imprisonment, we have elevated the maximum punishment for rape to death and approved it in the cabinet. As the parliament is not in session right now, we're issuing an ordinance," she said.

Bangladesh was rocked

over the weekend by an unprecedented level of protest after footage of a brutal gang assault on a woman went viral on social media. Demonstrators carried signs reading "Hang the rapists" and "No mercy to rapists".

The changes to the law were demanded by thousands of demonstrators across the Muslim-majority nation calling for more stringent punishments for the perpetrators of sexual assaults.

Police arrested eight suspects after the video of the assault went viral more than a month after the attack occurred at the victim's home in Noakhali. In a separate case, another woman was allegedly gang-raped last week in a hostel in the northern district of Sylhet, leading to the arrest of several members of the student wing of the ruling party. Protesters in the capital Dhaka and elsewhere have demanded stiffer punishments for rape, faster trials for rapists and an end to what they see as a culture of

impunity. According to rights group Ain O Salish Kendra or ASK, at least 889 women have been raped in Bangladesh between January and August 2020.

Rights activists believe the numbers are much higher because many of the victims do not complain to the police. Experts, however, said tougher penalties would not be enough to tackle the problem and authorities needed to immediately address systemic problems in rape trials and the extremely low conviction rates.

Rights activists blame the increasing number of assaults on a culture of impunity and protection of suspects by influential individuals for political reasons. The cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, approved the proposal to make the death penalty the highest punishment for rape, Law Minister Anisul Huq said. "The law needed to be amended quickly... (Cabinet) has decided an ordinance will be promulgated tomorrow, with the approval of the president, as the parliament is not holding sessions currently," he said.

An investigation by an autonomous state body, the National Human Rights Commission, found the woman in the video had been raped repeatedly and terrorised with weapons by one of the group over the last year.

"Every day, newspapers carry fresh stories of sexual violence against women," said Sahana Islam, a university student, who joined the protests. "I fear I am next. I want death penalty for the rapists so that the rest of the inhuman creeps can learn what will happen to them if they ever dare to do it."

When survivors file a complaint for sexual assault in Bangladesh prosecution is very rare and takes years to complete, and the conviction rate in trials that do go to court is very low.

In addition, many rapes go unreported because women fear being stigmatised.

Pakistani dissidents blame military for multiple crises

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
WASHINGTON, 13 OCTOBER

Terming Prime Minister Imran Khan as a "military puppet," prominent Pakistani dissidents, including former and current members of parliament, have blamed the powerful army for the country's fragility, insecurity and inability to get along with its neighbours.

ing Rubina Greenwood of the World Sindhi Congress, Tahira Jabeen from Gilgit-Baltistan, Shahzad Irfan of the Seraiki Movement, and Rasool Mohammed of Pashtun Council of America - emphasised that various minorities in Pakistan were being oppressed and denied their rights.

Irfan said that military intervention in politics reinforced Punjab's dominance and was a key factor in oppression of national and religious minorities. Greenwood said that the only way for Pakistan to win over the Sindhi and Baloch people would be to recognise that Pakistan is a multi-national state. She said that "Sindh is a historical entity that cannot be divided, or its identity denied".

Jabeen called for ending "73 years of political, constitutional, social, economic, geographical and cultural isolation of Gilgit-Baltistan" and pitched for an autonomous set up. Shia rights activist Jaffer Mirza lamented anti-Shia violence and blamed the authorities for legitimising anti-Shia politics through legislation, especially the Tahafuz-e-Islam Bill.

"The higher ranks of the Pakistan Army must realise that a truly elected government must be in place to bring Pakistan from the brink where the current regime has brought it," said former ambassador, Kamran Shafi, who is also a retired military officer.

SAATH is a group of pro-democracy Pakistanis co-founded by former Pakistan ambassador to the US Husain Haqqani and US-based columnist Dr. Mohammad Taqi. Previous annual conferences of SAATH have been held in London and Washington but this year participants met virtually, according to a statement. The participants termed Prime Minister Khan as a military puppet.

Members of the group include politicians, journalists, bloggers, social media activists, and members of civil society, many of whom have been forced to live in exile in various countries.

Pakistan's security services have tried to disrupt SAATH meetings in the past and banned its members living in Pakistan from travelling to vote," he said.

Haqqani noted that Prime Minister Khan had recently publicly blamed him and SAATH for weakening Pakistan's international standing.

"Pakistan's international standing is being lost due to its policies of encouraging extremism and suppressing freedom, not due to the activism of those fighting for human rights," he said.

Several speakers includ-

Malaysia's Anwar meets king in bid to form new govt

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KUALA LUMPUR, 13 OCTOBER

Syrian President Bashar Assad has made a rare public visit to the coastal province of Latakia where he toured areas that suffered heavy damage in last week's wildfires that killed three people, state media reported.

Assad's public visits to areas around Syria have been rare since the country's conflict began in March 2011. State news agency SANA said Assad visited the village of Ballouran to inspect the damage and met the local population during a tour to some areas that were affected by the fires, which were brought under control on Sunday.

AP

majority and has been grappling to maintain support amid infighting in his coalition. Allies in Muhyiddin's ruling coalition have denied supporting Anwar, and branded Anwar a desperado for seeking to wrest power as the country struggles with the coronavirus. The audience with the king was slated three weeks ago, but postponed as the king was hospitalised.

Anwar has been tight-lipped and said he would only reveal details after meeting the king.

I frankly do not think it will be a smooth and easy ride for Anwar. For one, even if the king is convinced of Anwar's command of parliamentary majority, the king still has the alternative constitutional option of dissolving the parliament, said Oh Ei Sun, a senior fellow at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs.

Anwar's Alliance of Hope was elected in 2018 but collapsed after Muhyiddin withdrew his party and tied up with opposition parties to form a Malay-centric government in March.

Judge probing Beirut blast receives FBI's investigation

BEIRUT, 13 OCTOBER

The judge investigating a massive blast in Beirut that killed and wounded many people two months ago has received a report from the FBI about their own probe of the blast, state-run National News Agency reported on Tuesday.

The news agency said Judge Fadi Sawwan received the FBI report on Monday, adding that he is still waiting for similar reports from French and British explosives experts. It gave no details about the content of the report.

The August 4 blast at Beirut's port killed nearly 200 people, injured about 6,500 and caused damage worth billions of dollars. Nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate, a highly explosive chemical used in fertilizers, exploded at Beirut's port.

The material had been stored at the facility for six years.

AP

READY TO FISH



Fishermen prepare a fishing net along a beach on the Bay of Bengal in Sha Porir Dwip, Bangladesh on Tuesday. ■ AFP

Filmmaker's trial raises concerns over freedom in new Sudan

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAIRO, 13 OCTOBER

More than a year after the overthrow of Sudanese strongman Omar al-Bashir, amid the promise of new leadership, Sudanese film director Hajooj Kukawa was arrested during a theater workshop by the security forces that had served al-Bashir for years.

Although a higher court overturned the ruling and released Kuka earlier this

month, the case has raised concerns about personal freedoms in Sudan.

The country has been ruled by a joint civilian-military government for 14 months, after a popular uprising led to the military's ouster of al-Bashir in April 2019 and put the country on a fragile path to democracy. While these rules exist, we will never have a freedom of expression, Kuka said. Kuka, who is a member

of the film academy that awards the Oscars, was one of a group of young artists taking part in a three-day theater workshop in August when neighbours complained about the noise, and the fact that women and men were mixing at the event.

The organizers responded by lowering the volume, but the dispute escalated. One of the neighbours physically assaulted Duaa Tariq, an artist

and office manager for Civic Lab, the organisation hosting the workshop. Other neighbours beat and threw stones at participants and staff. Dozens were trapped for a couple of hours before the police arrived. When they did, they took 11 artists, including Kuka and Tariq, along with several neighbors, to a police station. The neighbours were quickly released, according to both artists.

He was tried and sentenced to prison on vague

charges often used by the former government to enforce its conservative interpretation of religion. The jarring episode, including alleged beatings by guards, rattled Kuka and other artists and activists, who say that the country has a long way to go before it can overcome the legacy of three decades of autocratic rule under al-Bashir.

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Republicans defying will of Americans by pushing Judge Barrett's nomination

DEMOCRATIC VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE KAMALA HARRIS

WEATHER

CITY	MAX	MIN
SINGAPORE	29°C	25°C
HONG KONG	26°C	20°C
TOKYO	18°C	12°C
LONDON	10°C	07°C
DUBAI	27°C	23°C
SAN FRANCISCO	13°C	04°C
NEW YORK	14°C	11°C
MOSCOW	13°C	09°C

S=sunny, CL=clear, H=hazy, R=rainy...

THUMBNAILS



People walk near the Kremlin wall in central Moscow on Tuesday. ■ AFP

Croatia shooting: Police have found weapons in the home of a gunman who shot and wounded an officer outside the Croatian government headquarters, they said Tuesday. The man's father was detained for possession of two rifles with optical sights and silencers, as well as over 1,000 pieces of ammunition, police said. ■ AP

Race hate crimes in UK: Racially aggravated attacks registered a spike in hate crimes recorded in England and Wales in 2019-2020 even as religious hate crimes showed a downward trend, according to official UK Home Office statistics released on Tuesday. There were 105,090 hate crimes recorded in the past year, which marks an increase of 8% on the previous year. ■ AP

Germany, France call for UK concessions in EU-UK trade talks

BRUSSELS, 13 OCTOBER

Germany and France on Tuesday pressured the United Kingdom to make concessions in three key areas of Brexit trade negotiations or face a no-deal situation as of January 1 which would hit hard a UK economy already hurt by the pandemic.

EU negotiator Michel Barnier left negotiations in Brussels to travel to Luxembourg where EU ministers are meeting to deliberate on the state of play and make sure the 27 member nations keep a united front, something which they have done ever since the U.K. decided to leave the EU four years ago.

Germany's Europe minister, Michael Roth, stressed that as the deadline to have an outline deal on a basic trade relationship has whittled down to days and weeks instead of months, key priorities still need to be addressed by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

"Frankly speaking, we are at a very critical stage in the negotiations," Roth said. Time is running out. That's why we expect substantial progress" in key areas centering on rules to ensure fair economic competition, legal oversight of any deal and fisheries. Roth's French counterpart, Clement Beaune, said that particularly on access of U.K. companies to the EU market, the bloc had to be very strict in making sure British firms would not be able to undercut their continental rivals because of minimal regulation and excessive state subsidies.

Otherwise we would have an unfair competition which is not backed by our citizens, companies and workers," Beaune said.

Since last month, the member states have also become ardent in demanding legal guarantees on governance of any deal since Johnson in September introduced legislation that breaches the Brexit withdrawal agreement he himself signed with the EU only last year. ■ AP

Trump back on campaign trail in Florida

While addressing thousands of supporters, many not wearing masks, President said he could give them a 'big fat kiss', at a rally in Florida

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON, 13 OCTOBER

President Donald Trump has returned to the campaign trail less than two weeks after testing positive for coronavirus. He told thousands of supporters, many not wearing masks, that he could give them "a big fat kiss", at a rally in the battleground state of Florida. His rival, Joe Biden, speaking in Ohio, accused the president of "reckless behaviour" since his diagnosis.

The two presidential candidates are scrambling to secure votes with three weeks until the 3 November election.

Opinion polls suggest Biden has a 10-point lead over Trump nationally. However his lead in some key states is narrower - as is the case in Florida, where the Democrat is 3.7 percentage points ahead, according to an average of polls collated by Real Clear Politics.

Battlegrounds like Florida and Ohio are crucial for gathering the 270 electoral college votes needed to win the White House, which is not determined by a simple count of votes nationwide. Vehemently opposing those advocating perpetual lockdowns to address the coronavirus pandemic, US President Donald Trump has said that cure cannot be worse than the problem itself.

Speaking on Monday at this first rally since contracting coronavirus, Trump said that lockdowns have done a tremendous damage to the states. We gotta remember I said it right at the beginning.

The cure cannot be worse than the problem itself. Can't. The cure cannot be worse, Trump told thousands of his supporters in the battle ground State of Florida.

Trump was briefly forced to pause his re-election campaign after he tested positive on October 1 and was admitted to a military hospital for three nights and four days. White House doctors have now cleared him for holding election rallies.

Trump said that the World Health Organisation just came out a little while ago and they admitted that he was right.

The lockdowns are doing tremendous damage to these Democrat-run states where they're locked down, sealed up, he asserted.

Expected to intensify his



US President Donald Trump holds a Make America Great Again rally as he campaigns at Orlando Sanford International Airport in Sanford, Florida. ■ AFP

campaign in the coming days, Trump, told his supporters that he is feeling younger than before he was infected with Covid.

I don't have to be locked up in my basement and I wouldn't allow that to happen anyway. I wouldn't allow it to happen. When you're the president you can't lock yourself in a basement and say I'm not gonna bother with the world. You gotta get out. And it's risky. It's risky. But you gotta get out, Trump said.

He urged his fellow Americans to come out and continue with their work.

One thing with me - the nice part - I went through it. Now they say I'm immune. I feel so powerful. I'm walking through that audience I'll walk in there. I'll kiss everyone in that audience, he said amidst applause from the audience.

Trump said he felt good recovering from Covid and thanked Walter Reed Medical Hospital and Johns Hopkins physicians who treated him.

These guys are incredible.

You know we're 90 percent better now than we were six,

seven months ago in terms of a cure for people that get really sick. 90 per cent. It's

incredible what's happened. And with children it's 99.9 per cent. You're gonna be okay. You're gonna be okay, he said.

Trump said that this is the most important election in the history of the United States.

"This is the most important election in the history of our country. And I used to say it

in 2016. I'm sorry at the time. I thought it was. These people are crazy. We have to win," Trump said addressing thousands of his supporters.

"Most important we've ever had. Biden has made a corrupt bargain in exchange for his party's nomination. He's handed control to the socialist, the Marxist, and the left-wing extremists. And you know that. And he's got no strength left. He's got no power left. He's got nothing going, he said.

Trump said if Biden won, the radical left will be running the country, asserting that and they are addicted to power.

"God help us if they ever got it. Because we would never have the same country again and you couldn't make a comeback. You don't make comebacks from where they'd take us. If I do not sound like a typical Washington politician, it's because, frankly, I'm not a politician. I'm embarrassed by the term, Trump said.

"Joe Biden is also owned by the radical globalist, the wealthy donors, the big money, special interest who shipped away your jobs, shut down your factories, through open your borders, and ravaged our cities while sacrificing American blood and treasure in this ridiculous endless wars, set up endless wars that we've been in for a long time. 19 years, he said. The troops are now coming back home, he said.

"They are all coming back home, you know that, right?

They're all coming back home. Are great warriors, are great soldiers, he said.

"The corrupt political class is desperate to regain their power by any means necessary. We're the ones standing in their way. Were the one standing up for the American worker, the American family, and for the American dream, and that's what we're doing in this beautiful evening, Trump said.

With the crucial elections just 22 days ahead, Trump exuded confidence of winning Florida, the battle ground State where, according to Real Clear Politics, Biden is leading by 3.5 percentage points.

Florida has 29 electoral college votes. Trump had narrowly won by a narrow 1.2 percentage or just 112,911 votes. To win elections, a candidate needs to win 270 of the 538 votes.

In 2016, Trump had received 304 electoral college votes as against 227 by his Democratic challenger Hillary Clinton.

Based on their population, every State sends different number of members to the electoral college.

California sends the maximum 55 members to the electoral college, followed by Texas 38, while Florida and New York send 29 each. Seven States Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming along with District of Columbia send three members each.

Addressing his support-

Bipartisan Christian group forms super PAC to oppose Prez

WASHINGTON, 13 OCTOBER

A group of prominent Christians from both sides of the aisle, including a past faith adviser to former President Barack Obama, is forming a political action committee designed to chip away at Christian support for President Donald Trump in the final weeks of the 2020 campaign.

Dubbed Not Our Faith, the new super PAC plans to roll out six-figure TV and digital ads focused on Christian voters - particularly the evangelical and Catholic voters who helped power Trump to victory in 2016. Its first digital ad, set to run in Michigan and Pennsylvania, takes sharp aim at Trump's claim to a foothold with Christians.

The ad, shared with The AP in advance of its release, says Trump "has used Christianity for his own purposes," invoking imagery of the Republican president's photo op outside a historic Washington church amid this summer's racial justice demonstrations.

Urging Christians to break from Trump, the ad states that they don't need Trump to save them. The truth is that Trump needs Christians to save his flailing campaign."

That sharp critique of Trump's standing with Christian voters comes as the president looks to evangelicals in particular to help him muscle to reelection over Democratic nominee Joe Biden.

While Biden's campaign is mounting a well-organized faith outreach effort, that work largely focuses on an affirmative case for the former vice president rather than the overtly anti-Trump case that the new PAC is making. ■ AP

ers, Trump alleged that Biden and the Democratic socialists will kill their jobs, dismantle police departments and dissolve borders.

SC nominee to face senators on health care, legal precedent

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, 13 OCTOBER

Supreme Court nominee Amy Coney Barrett will face senators' questions over her approach to health care, legal precedent and even the presidential election during a second day of confirmation hearings on track to lock in a conservative court majority for years to come.

The mood is likely to shift to a more confrontational tone as Barrett, an appellate court judge with very little trial court experience, is grilled in 30-minute segments Tuesday by Democrats gravely opposed to President Donald Trump's nominee, yet virtually powerless to stop her rise. Republicans are rushing her to confirmation before Election Day.

"This should not be President Trump's judge," said Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Democrats say the winner of the presidential election should choose the nominee. "This should be your judge," she said.

Barrett presented her approach to the law as conservative and fair on Monday at the start of fast-tracked confirmation hearings. Democrats cast her as a threat to Americans' health care coverage during the coronavirus pandemic.

With her husband and six of their seven children behind her in a hearing room off-limits to the public and altered for Covid risks, Barrett delivered views at odds with the late Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the liberal icon whose seat Trump nominated her to fill, laying out a judicial philosophy she has likened to that of her conservative mentor, the late Justice Antonin Scalia.

"Courts are not designed to solve every problem or right every wrong in our public life," declared the 48-year-old federal appeals court judge, removing the protective mask she wore most of the day to read from a prepared statement. Americans deserve an independent Supreme Court that interprets our Constitution.

Ginsburg's legacy was felt throughout the hearing, with some Democrats wearing lapel pins with her likeness. Barrett also praised the liberal icon, saying she was "forever grateful" for Ginsburg's trailblazing path as a woman on the court.

Yet Kamala Harris warned that Barrett's nomination puts in jeopardy everything Ginsburg fought to protect. Testifying from her office because of the pandemic, Harris said that the court is "often the last refuge for equal justice" and that not only health care but voting rights, workers' rights, abortion rights and the idea of justice are at stake.

Barring a dramatic development, Republicans appear to have the votes to confirm Barrett to a lifetime seat on the Supreme Court, and they spent their time portraying her as a thoughtful judge with impeccable credentials. She would be Trump's third justice.

NOT CAMERA-SHY



A woman takes picture with her mobile phone as swans sunbathe on the beach in Cannes, France, on Tuesday. ■ AFP

UK unveils 3-level lockdown plan

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON, 13 OCTOBER

The British government carved England into three tiers of coronavirus risk on Monday in a bid to slow a resurgent outbreak, putting the northern city of Liverpool into the highest-risk category and shutting its pubs, gyms and betting shops.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said the three-level national system was designed to simplify and standardize a confusing patchwork of local rules, as the country enters a crucial phase.

Johnson said hospitals are now filling up with more patients than in March, when he ordered a national lockdown. These figures are flashing at us like dashboard warnings in a passenger jet, and we must act now, he said during a televised news conference.

Johnson told lawmakers that the goal of the new sys-

tem was to save lives without shutting our lives and our society through a new national lockdown. The government considered stricter measures including a short circuit-breaker lockdown. The government rejected the idea. After falling during the summer, cases are rising in the UK as winter approaches, with northwest and northeast England seeing the steepest increases.

Liverpool has one of the country's most severe outbreaks, with about 600 cases per 100,000 people, even more than the hard-hit European cities of Madrid and Brussels. Liverpool has one of the country's most severe outbreaks, with about 600 cases per 100,000 people, even more than the hard-hit European cities of Madrid and Brussels. Liverpool has one of the country's most severe outbreaks, with about 600 cases per 100,000 people, even more than the hard-hit European cities of Madrid and Brussels.

Johnson said authorities were still talking with other local leaders across the north of England. Pubs, gyms, leisure centers, betting shops and casinos in Liverpool will close beginning Wednesday.

'Climate change means more weather disasters'

GENEVA, 13 OCTOBER

In the wake of heat waves, global warming, forest fires, droughts and a rising number of hurricanes, the UN weather agency is warning that the number of people who need global humanitarian help could rise 50% by 2030 compared to the 108 million who needed it worldwide in 2018.

The World Meteorological Agency's report says more disasters attributed to weather are taking place each year. It said over 11,000 disasters have been attributed to weather causing 2 million deaths and racking up \$3.6 trillion worth of economic costs. ■ AP

J&J pauses coronavirus vaccine trials due to unexplained illness

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J., 13 OCTOBER

Final-stage testing of a vaccine made by AstraZeneca and Oxford University remains on hold in the U.S. as officials examine whether an illness in its trial poses a safety risk.

Companies are required to investigate any serious or unexpected reaction that occurs during drug testing. Given that such tests are done on tens of thousands of people, some medical problems are a coincidence.

In fact, one of the first steps the company said it will take is to determine if the person received the vaccine or a placebo.

The halt was first reported by the health news site STAT.

Final-stage testing of a vaccine made by AstraZeneca and Oxford University remains on hold in the U.S. as officials examine whether an illness in its trial poses a safety risk. That trial was stopped when a woman developed severe neurological symptoms consistent with transverse myelitis, a rare inflammation of the spinal cord, the company has said. That company's testing has restarted elsewhere.

Johnson & Johnson was aiming to enroll 60,000 volunteers to prove if its single-dose approach is safe and protects against the coronavirus. Other vaccine candidates in the U.S. require two shots.

Pfizer modifies protocol for virus vaccine study

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sustainability is at hand

Life in 2050 can be essentially the same with energy consumption at the level of the 1960s

SAVANTHANARAYANAN

Please to cut down on consumption and save the planet are met with the question, "Would you like to go back and be cave dwellers?"

Joel Millward-Hopkins, Julia K Steinberger, Narasimha D Rao and Yannick Oswald, from the Universities of Leeds, Lausanne and Yale, and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Linz, Austria, describe in the journal, *Global Environmental Change*, a study that shows comfortable and modern, but sustainable living is entirely within reach. If the planet is being pushed over its limits, it is because of avoidable waste and not the essentials, the study shows. It is possible for the world population, in 2050 to have shelter, mobility, food, hygiene access to healthcare, education and the Internet, with less than 40 per cent of the current energy bill, the study shows.

The total energy, including food and fuel, used by a person in the later Stone Age, some 12,000 years ago, was under 300 kWh in a year, the paper says. By 1850, with the growth that agriculture enabled, this figure rose to some 5,600 kWh, a 20-fold increase. And now, after 170 years of fossil fuel-driven development, the total energy the world consumes is some 180 million GWhs, which comes to around 23,000 kWh for every person. Along with the attendant harm to the environment and climate change.

A question arises, has this rise in energy consumption made for better quality of life? During most of the first 10,000 years of agriculture, the paper says, most populations had a harder time than their forager ancestors. While it has changed in recent centuries, with all round improvements in health indicators, the paper wonders whether our current situation is really better than that of ancient foragers. While ancient societies were socially and politically quite sophisticated, unlike what is often assumed, there are some things about modern society, the paper says, that can be said with certainty.

* The levels of energy use have led to scarcity of resources and geopolitical instability, in a growth-dependent economy -- with the poorest affected



From the paper

* There has been great improvement in efficiency of industrial processes, but they have mainly enabled more production, and more growth.

* There have been huge, recent increases in energy consumption, but with meagre social returns. Still, "some countries achieve high social outcomes with far lower energy consumption than others, but none currently manage to achieve high social outcomes while staying within planetary boundaries," the paper says.

While it is clear that we need to cut down our energy use, it also appears possible to cut energy use without affecting our state of well-being. But does this mean we go back to primitive living? No, not even if we wished to, as primitive foraging cannot cater for the current global population, and there are cultural and technological realities that need to be provided for. The question then is, what is that reduced level of energy we need, for well-being, with the comforts and conveniences of modern living?

The authors refer to recent attempts to make this estimation, and the belief that, despite the variety of cultural, historical and technological factors, one can identify a set of satiable needs, which apply to all, that lie at the base of human satisfaction. The authors make use of a study, "Decent living standards: material prerequisites for human wellbeing," by Rao (one of the current authors) and Min, which had drawn up a list of such basic, material needs, and based on the study, they estimate how much energy it would take to provide these needs, to the whole world.

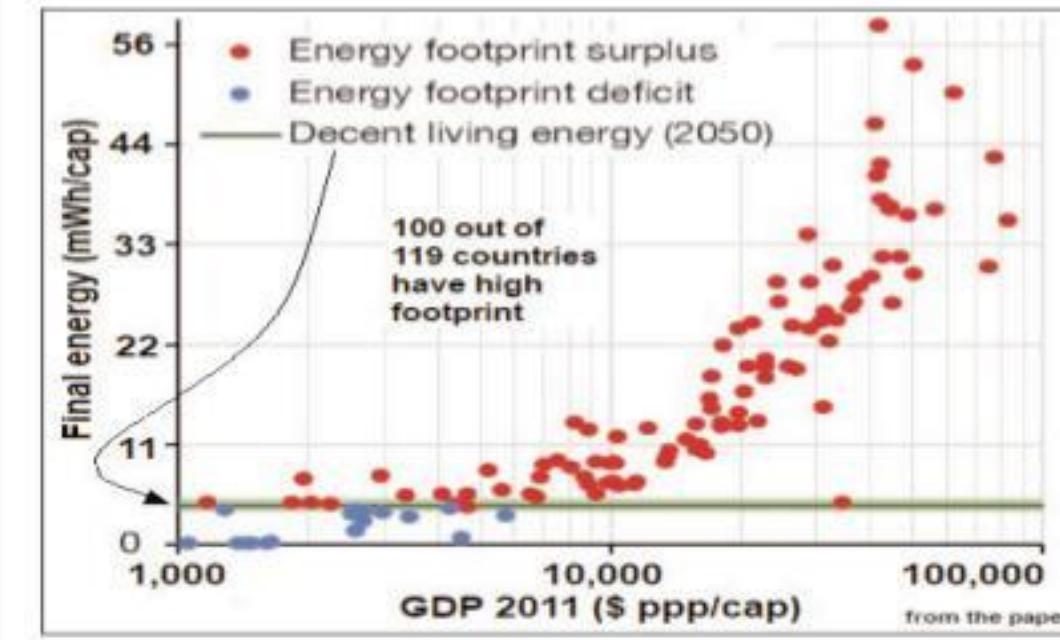
"To the clichéd populist objection, that environmentalists are proposing that we return to living in caves, a response, with tongue firmly in cheek: Yes, perhaps, but these caves have highly-efficient facilities for cooking, storing food and washing clothes, low-energy lighting, 50L of clean water daily, with 15L heated to bathing temperature, air temperature of around 20°C, a computer with access to global ICT networks, extensive transport networks, healthcare, education – all with substantially reduced working hours."

Rao and Min had drawn on concepts of poverty and basic justice, as well as the formulation of the Human Development Index, which considers health, education as well as per capita income rather than only the GDP, as the appropriate indicator of development of a country. And based on these indicators of well-being, they devised a set of essential material conditions, to provide a Decent Living Standard (DLS) in the figure, universally applicable, with corrections in the context of local customs and choices.

Now, for estimating what energy it would take to assure a given level of life quality, the paper says, one approach is to consider environmental measures, like energy use, carbon footprint and corresponding measures of well-being, like life expectancy or HDI, or indices derived from the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. This approach, however, is affected by the range and changeability of the indicators and the variety of factors that drive consumption.

The other approach, which the authors have followed, is to compile

Dimension of DLS	Material requirements
Nutrition	Food, cooking appliances, cold storage
Shelter, living conditions	Housing space, thermal comfort, illumination
Hygiene	Water supply, heating, waste management
Clothing	Clothes, washing facilities
Healthcare	Hospitals
Education	Schools
Communication	Phones, computers, networks
Mobility	Vehicles, fuel, roads



inventories of the essential items, and then to estimate the ecological impact, and energy demand, that these requirements would have. Factors like unequal shares or overconsumption by groups can be built in. And care taken to list all essentials, and the ecological impact of the entire supply chain.

Based on the Rao and Min list of essentials, values have been set for these requirements, like 2,000-2,150 Kcal of daily nutrition for a person, 15 sqm to live and 5,000-15,000 km of travel. And on these bases, energy requirements have been worked out for a population of 10 billion, expected in 2050. And the result, with these levels of consumption, is that the projected global energy need comes to what the world consumed in the 1960s – when the population was just three billion.

The estimate is well below those of the International Energy Agency, mainly because, the paper says, the IEA's estimate is focused on fulfilling the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals by increasing

things like electricity access and availability of clean cooking stoves to 100 per cent. It only sets the minimum of energy needed and does not consider putting a cap on the world's largest consumers. Of the 119 countries considered, the paper says, 100 were consuming well over what was estimated as required for decent living standards. And the answer to saving power is to rein in this wasteful use, with no loss of comforts to those concerned.

Achieving energy use at this level, obviously, would require sweeping changes in current consumption, widespread deployment of advanced technologies and the elimination of mass global inequalities. This would call for people of the world to become conscious, and for the richer countries to realise that the change is not to benefit poor countries, but themselves. That said, the argument that we would need to turn back the dial of modernisation to achieve sustainability is firmly rebutted.

The writer can be contacted at response@simplescience.in

SIMPLE & BEAUTIFUL

This year's Nobel Prize in chemistry honours an exquisitely precise gene-editing technique. A gene engineer explains how it works

PIYUSH K JAIN

Researchers have been able to manipulate large chunks of genetic code for almost 50 years. But it is only within the last decade that they have been able to do it with exquisite precision -- adding, deleting and substituting single units of the genetic code just as an editor can manipulate a single letter in a document. This newfound ability is called gene editing, the tool is called CRISPR and it's being used worldwide to engineer plants and livestock and treat diseases in people.

For these reasons the 2020 Nobel Prize in chemistry has been awarded to Emmanuelle Charpentier, director of the Max Planck Unit for the Science of Pathogens in Germany, and Jennifer Doudna, professor at the University of California, Berkeley, for discovering and transforming CRISPR into a gene-editing technology. It's the first time two women have shared a Nobel Prize. I'm a CRISPR engineer, interested in developing novel CRISPR-based gene-editing tools and delivery methods to improve their precision and function.

In the past, my colleagues and I have created a version of CRISPR that can be controlled using light, which allows precise control of where and when gene editing is performed in cells, and can be potentially used in animals and humans. We've also created a targeted system that can package and deliver the editing components to desirable cell types -- it's like GPS for cells. Most recently, we engi-

nered a tool that improved the speed and precision of CRISPR so it could be used in rapid diagnostic kits for Covid-19, HIV, HCV and prostate cancer.

While CRISPR scientists like me have been speculating about a Nobel Prize for CRISPR, it was exciting to see Charpentier and Doudna win. This will encourage young, talented engineers and researchers to enter the field of gene editing, which can be leveraged for designing new diagnostics, treatments and cures for a range of diseases.

CRISPR/Cas systems as gene editors

Many variants of CRISPR/Cas systems have been discovered, engineered and applied to edit genes. There are already over 20,000 scientific publications on the topic.

CRISPR dates to 1987, when a Japanese molecular biologist, Yoshizumi Ishino, and colleagues discovered a CRISPR DNA sequence in *E. coli*. The CRISPR sequence was later characterised by a Spanish scientist, Francisco Mojica, and colleagues, who named it CRISPR, which stands for clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats.

While people and animals have evolved complex immune systems to fight viral attacks, single-cell microorganisms rely on CRISPR to find and destroy a virus's genetic material to stop it from multiplying. Charpentier and Doudna figured out how to borrow this innate biological capability from microbes and apply it to genetic engineering of bacteria.

In a landmark paper, published



Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier

online on 28 June 2012, Charpentier and Doudna showed that the CRISPR gene-editing machinery includes two components -- a guide molecule that serves as sort of a GPS to find and bind the target gene site on the DNA of an invading virus, which then teams up with a CRISPR-associated protein (Cas) that serves as a molecular scissor that snips the DNA.

Around the same time, Virginijus Saksnis, a Lithuanian biochemist at the University of Vilnius, made a similar discovery and submitted results for publication that appeared a few months later, in September 2012. Feng Zhang, a biologist at the Broad Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and colleagues showed that CRISPR can be improved and used for editing mammalian cells. He currently owns one of the first patents on using CRISPR for gene editing, which is being contested by Doudna's institution, UC Berkeley.

Once the DNA has been cut in the right spot, the cell will try to repair the cut. But the repair mechanism is error prone, and oftentimes the cells fail to fix the cuts perfectly, ultimately disabling the gene. Disrupting a gene is particularly useful for studying its

function and find out what happens if you stop a gene from working. This technique is also useful for treating cancer and infections, where turning off a gene can potentially stop cancer cells and pathogens from dividing or kill them outright.

During this cutting-repair process, one can fool the cells by providing a new piece of DNA. The cells will then incorporate this piece of DNA with desirable edits into the genetic code. This enables researchers to correct a genetic mutation that causes a genetic disease or replace a defective gene with a healthy one.

The beauty of CRISPR lies in its simplicity. CRISPR can be easily customised to target any gene of interest, whether it is in plants, animals or people. CRISPR applications range from tools for understanding biology, as diagnostics and as new kinds of therapeutics to applications in producing better crops, biofuels and transplantable organs.

Why CRISPR deserved a Nobel Prize

While there is still plenty of room for improvement of these technologies, scientists have already begun

testing CRISPR in several clinical trials for treating cancer and genetic disorders. CRISPR-based diagnostics have also been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration under emergency use authorisation for Covid-19 testing.

CRISPR does come with a lot of ethical concerns that warrant caution. For example, in 2018, a Chinese scientist prematurely and unethically used CRISPR for editing human embryos and created CRISPR-edited babies that could pass these genetic alterations to their offspring for generations to come. Some have used the technology for other CRISPR-related "do it yourself" biohacks that raise more concerns over regulating the gene-editing technology.

Despite these concerns, CRISPR has huge potential to transform how scientists can detect, treat and even eradicate diseases as well as improve agricultural products. Society is already seeing the benefits of this Nobel Prize-winning technology.

The writer is assistant professor of chemical engineering, Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering, UF Health Cancer Center, University of Florida, US. This article first appeared on www.conversation.com

PLUS POINTS

We are evolving



Some babies are now being born without wisdom teeth, and more people have a previously rare additional artery in their forearm, as humans undergo a "micro-evolution", a new study suggests.

Scientists in Australia have discovered several changes in humans which are appearing over a short period of time. Tegan Lucas, of Flinders University in Adelaide, said faces are also becoming shorter due to changes in our diet, and our smaller jaws mean there is less room for teeth. "This is happening in time as we have learnt to use fire and process foods more. A lot of people are just being born without wisdom teeth," she said.

In addition, the investigation by Lucas, along with University of Adelaide professors Maciej Henneberg and Jaliya Kumari, showed a "significant increase" in the prevalence of the median artery since the late 19th century. The artery forms while a baby is in the womb and is the main vessel that supplies blood to the forearm and hand, but it disappears during gestation and is replaced by the radial and ulnar arteries.

Since the 18th century, anatomists have been studying the prevalence of this artery in adults and our study shows it's clearly increasing," Lucas said. "This increase could have resulted from mutations of genes involved in median artery development or health problems in mothers during pregnancy, or both actually. If this trend continues, most people will have a median artery of the forearm by 2100."

Lucas said the study demonstrates that humans are evolving at a faster rate than at any point in the past 250 years. The investigation's authors suggested changes in natural selection could be the major reason for micro-evolution.

The research is published in the *Journal of Anatomy*.

— THE INDEPENDENT

Food wrapping



Indian Institute of Technology-Madras has developed a sustainable antimicrobial wrapping material that can tackle two major problems -- prevent packaged food contamination by bacteria as well as reduce the plastic waste generated in the environment when disposing the wrapers.

The IIT-Madras team was recently awarded the "SITARE-Gandhi Young Technological Innovation Appreciation 2020" for their project. The researchers have also filed for an Indian patent. The research was led by Mukesh Doble, department of biotechnology, IIT-Madras, and Puja Kumari, research scholar, department of biotechnology, IIT-Madras.

Doble said, "We have developed a biodegradable wrapping material with in-built antibacterial activity to prevent bacterial growth in stored food. The wrapping material also degrades at various environmental conditions with the rate of degradation varying from four to 98 per cent in 21 days. It degraded rapidly in moist conditions when compared to dry ones. Hence, our wrapper is eco-friendly and can play a major role in plastic waste reduction."

The films developed by IIT-Madras researchers were made with polymeric blends containing starch, polyvinyl alcohol and cyclic beta glycans. The composition was optimised to achieve the best film with a smooth texture, flexibility, uniform thickness and good clarity. The polymers used are approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration.

The antibacterial agent selected is also approved by the food authority for consumption and includes eugenol, chlorogenic acid, betanin, curcumin and gallic acid, among others. These compounds are used regularly in Indian food and are known to possess antibacterial, antioxidant and many other beneficial bioactivities. The compound is either immobilised on the surface or coated or mixed with polymer before preparation.

Kumari said, "Our study found 99.99 per cent reduction in the bacterial colonies in food samples wrapped with our antibacterial wrap and stored at 30°C for 10 days when compared with a plain wrapper. This study also suggests that our antimicrobial wrapper can, to some extent overcome, the reduced availability of cold storage units."



THE RIGHT LESSON

Novak Djokovic (photo, left) has vowed to use his French Open final drubbing as motivation for his continued chase of Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal at the peak of men's tennis. Nadal's victory at Roland Garros gave him a 13th French Open title and a 20th Grand Slam crown overall, drawing him level with Federer at the top of the all-time men's list.

For more updates

www.thestatesman.com

THUMBNAILS

PTI
DUBAI, 13 OCTOBER

Bolstered by the arrival of Ben Stokes, Rajasthan Royals will hope for a stronger show from its slightly off-colour top order when the side tries to settle scores against second-placed Delhi Capitals in their return leg IPL match here on Wednesday.

The Capitals had beaten RR by 46 runs last week and Steve Smith's men will look to return the compliment when they meet for the second time in the tournament.

The last time the two teams clashed, RR didn't have Stokes in the ranks and even though the England all-rounder didn't set the stage on fire in his first game but his presence inspired the former champions to snap a four-match losing streak with a five-wicket

win over Sunrisers Hyderabad.

"With Stokes back, it brings a nice balance to us. He just bowled one over as he just got out of a lockdown and is just working back into things," Smith had said.

While Stokes will be an important cog in the RR wheel, the team will also have to fix its top order which has been short of runs in the last five games, leaving too much for the lower-order to get.

Skipper Smith and Sanju Samson have failed to make any significant contribution with the bat since setting the Sharjah ground on fire in their first two matches.

Jos Buttler produced a superb 44-ball 70 against Mumbai Indians but didn't capitalise on the starts in the last two matches.

In fact, if it wasn't for Rahil Tewatia, the Royals would



still be in the dumps. The all-rounder, who had blasted five sixes against Kings XI Punjab, once again rescued RR with a 28-ball 45 in their last game against Sunrisers.

Delhi, on the other hand, were brought down by Mumbai Indians in their last game and Shreyas Iyer's men will look

to shrug off the odd defeat and get back to the top with a professional display.

The Capitals possess an explosive batting department as well as a formidable bowling unit with Kagiso Rabada emerging as the best bowler this season, snaring 17 wickets so far.

He has been supported well by fellow South African pacer Anrich Nortje (8 wickets) and Harshal Patel.

Ravichandran Ashwin too has bowled well in the powerplay and along with Axar Patel, has done well to suffocate the opposition teams.

However, it was Marcus

Stoinis, whose all-round show floored RR in their last face-off and Smith would hope that his side has his match in Stokes.

In bowling, Jofra Archer has led the charge for RR. He, along with the spin duo of Tewatia and Shreyas Gopal, have consistently figured in the XI, which has gone through a lot of chopping and changing.

For DC, Shikhar Dhawan's return to form further boosts their batting order featuring Prithvi Shaw and Iyer in the top four.

However, with wicket-keeper batsman Rishabh Pant ruled out for a week due to a hamstring injury, DC have been forced to drop Shimron Hetmyer and include Australian Alex Carey.

It also gave Ajinkya Rahane his first match of this IPL.

Teams:

Rajasthan Royals: Jos Buttler, Ben Stokes, Sanju Samson, Andrew Tye, Kartik Tyagi, Steven Smith (c), Ankit Rajpoot, Shreyas Gopal, Rahul Tewatia, Jaydev Unadkat, Mayank Markande, Mahipal Lomor, Oshane Thomas, Ryan Parag, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Anuj Rawat, Akash Singh, David Miller, Manan Vohra, Shashank Singh, Varun Aaron, Tom Curran, Robin Uthappa, Anirudha Joshi, Jofra Archer.

Delhi Capitals: Shreyas Iyer (c), Ravichandran Ashwin, Shikhar Dhawan, Prithvi Shaw, Shimron Hetmyer, Kagiso Rabada, Ajinkya Rahane, Amit Mishra, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ishant Sharma, Axar Patel, Sandeep Lamichhane, Keemo Paul, Daniel Sams, Mohit Sharma, Anrich Nortje, Alex Carey (wk), Avesh Khan, Tushar Deshpande, Harshal Patel, Marcus Stoinis, Lalit Yadav.

Match starts 7.30 PM

Royals eye revenge against Delhi Capitals

Skipper Chris Gayle is back for training, having recovered from a stomach illness, and is likely to be available for his outfit's next Indian Premier League match - against Royal Challengers Bangalore - fixed for Thursday.

Stokes' choice: Rajasthan Royals all-rounder Ben Stokes feels Royal Challengers Bangalore's Yuzvendra Chahal bowled exceptionally well against Kolkata Knight Riders and that is why the leg-spinner should have been adjudged Man of the Match.

Why few Sri Lankans make it to T20's Indian show now

THE ISLAND/ANN
COLOMBO, 13 OCTOBER

and Chaminda Vaas. Even Suraj Randiv, who had played a handful of Twenty20 Internationals for Sri Lanka had an IPL contract with N Srinivasan acquiring his services for his Chennai franchise.

It is no secret that it has been all downhill for Sri Lankan cricket in the past decade and it is reflected in the number of Sri Lankans in the IPL. South Africans, Australians and even Englishmen are in high demand for the franchise-based T20 tournament. But such is India's clout in world cricket today that there is little international cricket scheduled during the time the IPL is played.

This year's edition has produced some cracking games that have resulted in super overs. With virtually no cricket being played elsewhere, there is a lot of chinwagging about Ravichandran Ashwin not Mankading Aaron Finch and MS Dhoni losing his golden touch and much more. Sadly, there is very little representation from Sri Lanka in recent IPL events and this year there is just Isuru Udana.

Time was when the entire Sri Lankan team and even some of the reserves featured in the IPL. The likes of Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene captained IPL sides and did terrific jobs.

Business tycoon Mukesh Ambani paid almost US \$1 million a year to acquire the services of Sanath Jayasuriya. There was a fierce bidding battle for Jayasuriya, who is immensely popular in India and eventually Mumbai Indians paid him \$975,000. It made you wonder how much Aravinda de Silva would have fetched if there was an IPL in his time.

Some other popular Sri Lankans in the IPL were Lasith Malinga, Muttiah Muralitharan, TM Dilshan

That is why Sri Lanka's efforts to conduct a franchise-based tournament of its own needs to be commended. We know that SLC's effort to launch an event has failed on a few occasions but they have got to start somewhere. Boards like the ones of the West Indies, Australia, Pakistan and even Bangladesh have started franchise-based competitions of their own and their players are benefiting from these.

De Villiers is a genius; it was a special knock, says Kohli

IANS
SHARJAH, 13 OCTOBER

While paying glowing tributes to his team-mate AB de Villiers (in photo) for his brilliant unbeaten 73-run knock in Royal Challengers Bangalore's big win against Kolkata Knight Riders yesterday, captain Virat Kohli called him a genius.

"I thought I had a few balls under my belt so I'll start striking. But he came in and hit his third ball nicely. On a pitch like that, only AB can do that. It was a special knock. We got 195 purely because of the genius of that man," Kohli said after the 82-run win.

"At the toss the pitch didn't have the usual Sharjah sheen. I knew the wicket was going to get slower and slower. Barring one super-human (de Villiers), everyone struggled on that pitch. Speculative talk suggested a total around 165-170," he said at Sharjah Cricket Stadium.

RCB won the toss and posted 194 for two wickets in 20 overs, with big contributions from Aaron Finch (47 off 37 balls) and Kohli (33 off 28), Devdutt Padikkal (32 off 23), besides the de Villiers knock.

They then restricted KKR to 112 for nine wickets.

Kohli also praised his bowlers.

"They've played good cricket in this IPL. Coming here, it was important to get the right start. Great to see individuals step up when the team require. Bowling unit, with Morris coming in, looks all the more potent. Very happy," he said.

"If your bowling unit is strong, you have a great chance of going deep into the tournament. [It] was unbelievable."

Kohli said the team's prepa-



ration had been really good.

"A three-week camp helped us. I have some clarity around our plans. I know exactly what we want to do on the field. All depends on the mindset. It's very positive," he said.

De Villiers said he surprised himself. "I am very happy with the performance. Got a (two-ball) duck in the last game (against Chennai Super Kings); a terrible feeling -- very happy that I contributed.

Surprised myself out there tonight. Knew the wicket was quite tough to bat on. But I thought 145-150 wasn't enough. So I looked to go further, and was surprised to get 195," said the South African.

"They (KKR) have got a really good bowling attack. The margins are small and you have to use every bit of energy. As Virat (Kohli) said.

"There was a light in my eye;

felt it in the bus itself," he said.

On wicketkeeping, the 36-year-old said he enjoyed the job as it gave him a good view.

"Always enjoyed taking the gloves. Very excited about it, I must say. I do bounce off ideas with Virat. As a keeper you have a really good view of the pace of the game. Different skills completely. It depends. Have worked really hard with the gloves. Want to be the best I could, that's always been my attitude," he said.

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"There was a light in my eye;

Watson-Rayudu power CSK to 167 vs Sunrisers

PTI
DUBAI, 13 OCTOBER

Shane Watson and Ambati Rayudu shared a 81-run stand but Sunrisers Hyderabad did well to restrict Chennai Super Kings to 167 for 6 in an Indian Premier League match here on Tuesday.

Watson's 42 off 38 balls was studded with one four and three maximums, while Rayudu hit three boundaries and two sixes in his 34-ball 41-run knock.

Jadeja (25 not out) and Dhoni (21 off 13 balls) played quick cameos smashing a total of five fours and two sixes between them in a stand of 32 in just 2.4 overs.

SRH bowlers did a commendable job, claiming four wickets for 47 runs in the last six overs. Sandeep Sharma (2/19), Khaled Ahmed (2/45) and TNatarajan (2/41) picked up two wickets apiece.

Desperate to snap their two-match losing streak, CSK elected to bat. The three-time champions sent young England all-rounder Sam Curran instead of Watson to open the innings with Faf du Plessis.

Sharma drew first blood for the Sunrisers, removing du Plessis in the beginning of the third over. The South African sneaked one to Jonny Bairstow off the very first ball he faced for a golden duck.

The win took RCB to the joint top position and although they had 10 points, the same as Mumbai Indians (+1.327) and Delhi Capitals (+1.038), Kohli's team were third on the net run rate (-0.116). All eight teams have played seven matches each -- the halfway stage of the league phase of the 13th edition of the IPL.

SCOREBOARD

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS INNINGS	
SM Curran	b Sharma
F du Plessis	c Balstow b D Sharma
S Watson	c Pandey b Natarajan
AT Rayudu	c Warner b Ahmed
MS Dhoni	c Williamson b Natarajan
RA Jadeja	not out
DJ Bravo	b Ahmed
DL Chahar	not out
Extras	(lb 3, w 2)
TOTAL:	(20 Ov, RR: 8.35) 167
BOWLING:	Sandeep Sharma 4/0, 19.2 KK Ahmed 4/0, 45.2 S Nadeem 4/0, 29.0 T Natarajan 4/0, 41.2 Rashid Khan 4/0, 30.0



Premier League reform plan is for football's 'greater good'

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON, 13 OCTOBER



criticised "backroom deals."

But Parry, a former chief executive of Liverpool and the Premier League, was fulsome in his praise for Liverpool and United, England's two most successful clubs.

"It is two of our great clubs showing leadership when it is needed, exercising greater responsibility, and from the EFL point of view it is making our clubs sustainable and bridging the gap between the top of the Championship and the bottom of the Premier League," he said.

"The cherry on the icing on the cake is the prospect of a £250 million rescue fund immediately, which does of course help, but the principal part of the story is the biggest reset since the formation of the Premier League for the next 25 years.

"The proposal is designed for the greater good of English football."

Parry said the Premier League has had plenty of opportunity to come up with plans of their own.

"They could have come up with a plan like this at any time," he added.

"How long has it taken to get a short-term rescue package even to the starting gate? Months."

"The message from Liverpool and Manchester United and their ownership is they actually genuinely do care about the pyramid," Parry said.

"This hasn't been rushed together, this isn't a Covid plan, it has been years in the thinking and months in the making."

Salford co-owner and former Manchester United defender Gary Neville (in photo) said "there is too much good in this plan to dismiss it".

"There are parts of the proposal that require negotiation," he said.

"We understand the levels of performance and char-

acter that will be needed to see through our last two games in this tournament," he added.

Hood feels that his side has played "two very distinct games in the tournament so far."

"Two very distinct games as far as our performance and intent were concerned and we remain committed to the same levels of energy and unity that we have said so far," he added.

Meanwhile, ARA FC believe that the 1-4 loss that they suffered at the hands of local heavyweights Mohammedan SC was a "wake-up call" for them.

Despite the losses in their respective opening games, both the sides are optimistic about their chances in the tournament, looking to bounce back into the title race.

"It's a huge loss, definite-

Pep talk: International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach and Yoshiro Mori, head of the Tokyo Olympic organising committee, gave an online pep talk on Monday to national Olympic committee representatives to allay fears about the postponed games.

Shooting camp: A two-month national camp for core Olympic sharpshooters will begin at the Karni Singh Shooting Range on Thursday. All Tokyo Olympic quota winners will be in the camp which will run till 17 December. There will be 32 sharpshooters, 18 of them men.

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