

3

AMITY UNIVERSITY LUCKNOW WELCOMES NEW PRO VC

Extensive experience makes him an
exceptional addition to our leadership team

4

WOMEN'S SAFETY IN JEOPARDY

78% women claim to have been touched
inappropriately in public spaces

8

ONLINE SHOPPING: SCAM OR REAL?

Flash sales and special deals are created for
a sense of urgency and scarcity

9

COACHING CENTERS: WHERE DREAMS DIE

For how long will students' lives be put
at risk?

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HIGHER EDUCATION



Losing edge

ARHAMA ALI

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

For B.Tech student Abhishek Gupta, a skill-based and less theoretical program is preferable to help get into the workforce rather than take a similar degree from a university. "I feel, getting into a university or college to get a degree is a waste of time," he tells Expressions.

Like Gupta, 12th standard passout Neeraj Mehta is pursuing graphic design course from a reputed online platform and is not keen on a university degree. Like these two youngsters, aspirant digital marketer Reshma Chauhan feels university education is outdated and does not resonate with an employer's demands of required skillsets.

The NEP 2020 aims to overhaul the education system, including higher education, with a focus on multidisciplinary learning, skill development, and promoting research and innovation. It proposes increasing the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education to 50% by 2035

The above examples resonate the fact that for many aspiring youngsters, higher education is not the wanted thing. Why?

According to academic reformist Dr Rajeev Kumar, many higher education institutions in India offer outdated curricula, and are not keeping pace with industry demands. He adds there is a need to understand the job market in today's age. Employers are looking for a new set of skills that is not prioritized by universities. He also adds that for previous generations, a university degree mattered most as they paved the path for getting good professional assignments.

But as of today, the number of applications has decreased for these universities. The reason is simple, he says. Graduates graduating from these universities are not procuring the expected jobs. Instead, they often end up doing anything available. Career consultant Ravi Sharma opines that Indian students prefer vocational training over traditional degrees due to an evolving job market. Employers increasingly value practical skills and

hands-on experience. He says with new technologies coming in, the job market is becoming more competitive. Today's employers search for people who can offer a different set of skills. This means that the regular model of higher education is not enough to fetch a job. Automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) have added to the woes. With AI taking over so many jobs, employers are looking for candidates who possess skills like logical thinking, critical evaluation, creativity and emotional intelligence, which are irreplaceable. Sharma continues that online learning platforms like Udemy, Unacademy and Byjus offer students the ability to study academics and applications of the real world in a cost-effective spectrum and therefore they are popular.

Additionally, as online learning can go at self-pace, these platforms find traction with students. Online learning platforms like Massive Open Online

Courses (MOOCs) also impart courses for free. These courses are imparted by top professors and experts and these courses are top of the line in their respective disciplines. The major reason behind the emergence of alternative education models is the disconnect between academics and industry standards.

Academic experts opine that colleges and universities are usually slow in adapting to the changing market. There is a major disconnect between academics and industry standards. Universities predominantly focus on research and theoretical knowledge while industries prioritize practical knowledge and skills.

Ananya Patel, an education technology advocate and Arjun Desai, an educational entrepreneur point out that the impact of online learning platforms and MOOCs are preferred as they are accessible and affordable and aligned with industry trends. ■

Spain's Double Triumph

Rise of a Football Dynasty

ABHINAV VARMA

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

On August 9 this year, Spain's national football team accomplished the extraordinary. Already with triumph in the UEFA European Championship, a 2-1 victory over England on July 14 at the Berlin Olympic Stadium; the Spanish under 23 team also came on top in the Olympic Games, at the Parc des Princes, defeating the hosts France 5-3 in their home. La Roja has once again stamped its authority on the global stage.

But beyond the glitter of trophies lies the brilliance of a tactical masterpiece—a symphony of strategy, skill, and an unwavering belief in a footballing philosophy that has now matured into something spectacular.

The Tactics Behind the Glory

Spain's recent successes are a testament to a brand of football that is as mesmerizing as it is effective. Under the



guidance of a forward-thinking coaching staff, led by Luis de la Fuente, who himself had spent the entirety of his playing years in the La Liga, Spain has evolved its traditional possession-based game into a more versatile and dynamic system, seamlessly blending the old with the new.

Possession with Purpose: The foundation of Spain's success remains their exceptional ball control and possession

play. But unlike the somewhat predictable tiki-taka of the past, as we have all seen its glory with Iniesta, Xavi and Busquets, the new version of Spain uses possession as a weapon, not just a shield.

The midfield, led by maestros like Pedri and Rodri, dictates the tempo of the game, patiently drawing opponents out of position before delivering incisive, killer passes that unlock defenses, they are not just reader of the game, they

don't have to look fifty times above their shoulders; the passes are deliberate and spontaneous.

Fluid Formations: Spain's tactical set-up is a marvel of modern football. Rather than sticking rigidly to a single formation, the team adapts to the flow of the game. Starting in a flexible 4-3-3, Spain often shifts into a 3-4-3 or even a 3-2-5 in attack, pushing the fullbacks high up the pitch and allowing the wingers to cut inside. This fluidity confuses opponents, creating overloads and mismatches that Spain expertly exploits, often using the space between the midfielders and defenders of the opponent to allow them to push members and overload the penalty area.

High Press and Counter-Press: The defensive side of Spain's game is just as impressive. Utilizing a high press, they suffocate opponents, forcing turnovers in dangerous areas. But it's their counter-pressing—a hallmark of modern football—that really stands out.

The moment the ball is lost, Spain's players swarm the opponent, cutting off passing lanes and regaining possession in seconds. This relentless approach not only disrupts the opposition's rhythm but also keeps Spain in constant control of the game.

Versatility in Attack: Spain's attacking play is characterized by its unpredictability. While the team can patiently build up from the back, they are equally adept at launching swift counter-attacks. The wide players provide both width and goal-scoring threat, while the central forwards, often interchanging between Álvaro Morata and others, keep defenders on their toes with intelligent movement and clinical finishing.

A Dynasty in the Making?

Spain's tactical brilliance is brought to life by a golden generation of players, yet again a testament to the youth divisions of the La Liga clubs. Pedri's vision and composure have drawn comparisons to Xavi, while Gavi's tenacity and technique bring back memories of Andrés Iniesta. Rodri anchors the midfield with a blend of physicality and finesse, allowing Spain's creative talents to flourish.

The defense, marshaled by the experienced Aymeric Laporte, is a fortress, and behind them stand Unai Simón, a goalkeeper whose calm under pressure is matched by his shot-stopping ability. But perhaps what sets this team apart is its collective mentality. Spain's players are not just talented individuals; they are a cohesive unit, each one understand-

ing their role in the system. Their total football system has seen Spain prevail in some of the most testing situations, including penalty shootouts and grueling extra-time battles, as evident by the 8-goal thriller final of the Olympics.

The Stars Align

Spain's twin triumphs are not just the culmination of a season but the potential beginning of a new era. The tactical flexibility, depth of talent, and the seamless blend of youth and experience suggest that this team is not just a one-hit wonder. They are building something sustainable—a dynasty that could dominate international football for years to come.

As the dust settles on Spain's historic double, one cannot help but marvel at the artistry and intelligence that brought them to this point. This is not just a football team; it is a well-oiled machine, a symphony of movement and strategy that has captivated fans and outwitted opponents.

In a sport often ruled by individual brilliance, Spain has shown that it is still the collective that reigns supreme. The world is once again at their feet, and with the wind of tactical genius in their sails, Spain is ready to chart a course to even greater heights. ■

Amity University, Lucknow Campus Welcomes New Pro VC



SANJAY M JOHRI

Professor & Director, Amity School of Communication

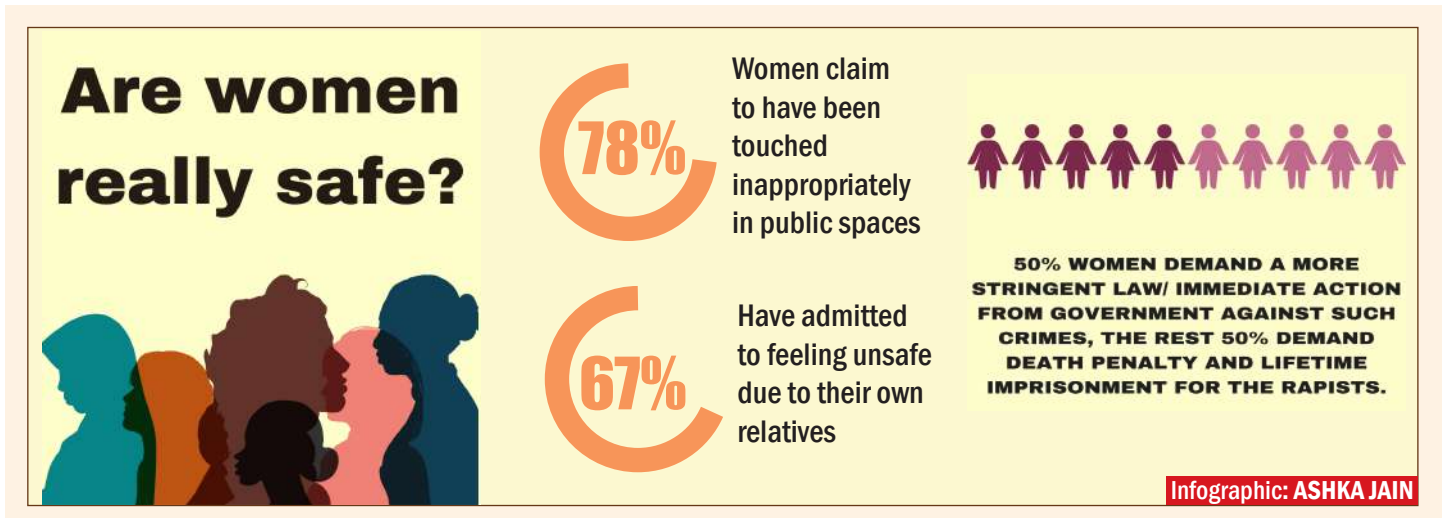
The Amity University Uttar Pradesh - Lucknow Campus extends a warm welcome to Prof (Dr) Anil Vashishth, our new Pro Vice-Chancellor. We are thrilled to have you among us as a young & dynamic leader and we all at campus look forward to the valuable contributions you will, undoubtedly, make in time to come.

Your impressive background and extensive experience make you an exceptional addition to our leadership team. Team Expressions is excited about the fresh perspectives and innovative ideas you'll bring, and we're confident that

your expertise will play a pivotal role in advancing our goals and aspirations.

We're committed to ensuring a smooth transition and providing you with resources and assistance you need to succeed in your role. Prof Vashishth is a distinguished academician with bachelor's in engineering (Electronics), MBA and PhD. After his Corporate stint he undertook a journey in Academics where his footprint extends beyond borders. He remarkably collaborated with Wharton University, Columbia University, MIT Sloan, Harvard Business School, NYU Stern, Kellogg's Business School. He has authored books 'The World of Campus Placement' 'The World of Brands and Branding' besides others. ■

Women's safety in jeopardy



ASHKA JAIN

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

In December 2012, the brutal gang rape and subsequent death of 'Nirbhaya', in Delhi shocked the world. Known as the 'Nirbhaya' case, it not only led to widespread protests but also forced a reckoning with the pervasive issue of sexual violence against women.

Today it is 12 years and as India celebrates its 78th Independence Day, the question that has again taken place in citizens' minds is 'are women really safe in this country or anywhere as a matter of fact?'

A recent case of a gang rape in Kolkata has yet again shaken the entire country due to its brutality where a second-year woman trainee doctor was raped and later murdered during the night shift. The authorities are under fire for not being able to give even a safe working environment to women let alone the public spaces.

Women are often seen being blamed for a crime committed by men like 'she must be wearing something revealing' or 'why was she out so late at night, girls should not roam alone after sun set'. Ragini (name changed on victim's request), a 20-year-old student shared her own experience with Expressions. She said, "I was just 10 years old when my own uncle with whom I was staying tried to forcefully kiss me. Even as a child I knew

what was happening was wrong so I somehow managed to run from him and came back to my own house. It wasn't my fault, yet it took me almost eight years to share this with my own mother. That man is currently living in Delhi comfortably after giving me a lifetime of trauma and trust issues." What was that 10-year-old kid's fault?

Another girl named Ayushi (name changed) a 19-year-old student shared her story with Expressions. She said how she was inappropriately touched by a man inside a temple premises when 'aarti' was going on. It is time to wonder that where is society heading if women are not safe inside temple either.

This is not just a story of Ayushi or Ragini. Every single woman in this country has her own story, her own experiences but not all are comfortable sharing this. Why? Maybe because as a society we have failed yet again to give them a free space to open up where they fear that they will be judged.

Expressions, in order to know more about this issue conducted a survey amongst women on this issue. It was revealed that all the respondents had been victims to some or the other of some type of assault. Our nation's legal systems also fail to adequately safeguard women and uphold the rule of law. Domestic abuse, sexual assault, and harassment laws are frequently not sufficiently enforced, and in certain instances, the definition of these crimes in the law are inadequate

or out of date. Furthermore, for survivors, the court system and law enforcement may exhibit cynicism or victim-blaming attitudes, making the legal procedure frightening and potentially traumatic.

A strategy involving individuals, communities, organizations, and governments is needed to address women's safety. Empowering women via awareness-raising, education, and legal protection is a crucial tactic. It is important to educate women on their rights and the resources at their disposal, such as support services, counseling, and legal assistance. In order to make sure that these resources are useful and accessible, governments and NGOs should collaborate.

Respondents said on punishments that for such heinous crimes public execution should be done whereas some replied with lifetime imprisonment. Unfortunately, it is not as easy and might take over five years to get the accused punished as we all saw in the 'Nirbhaya' case.

Women's safety is a societal issue that impacts all of us. Creating a safe environment for women necessitates a concerted effort to challenge harmful conventions, strengthen legal protections, and empower women through education and resources. Working together, we can create a society in which women may live, work, and move freely, and their rights and dignity are fully acknowledged. Women's safety is a vital human right that we must all work to uphold. ■

Kathak's appeal goes ONLINE



Pictures: SUPRIYA SRIVASTAVA

SUPRIYA SRIVASTAVA

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

Kathak, the dance of storytellers found firm footing under the patronage of last nawab of Awadh, Wajid Ali Shah. Although over the decades, the dance form did have takers, what is welcoming is that there is intense renewed interest in the Lucknow style of Kathak.

So intense is the interest that students from all over the world are now drawn to online learning platforms, such as Natyasutra, ipassio, Devesh Mirchandani free classes. These free online classes allow them to interact with prominent gurus and learn about Kathak from the comfort of their own homes.

Talking to Expressions, Pandit Arvind Mishra, a Kathak guru at the Bhat-

khande Music Institute, remarks, "It's encouraging to see a renewed interest in Kathak in a world where pop culture and contemporary dance dominate. Youngsters are eager to learn about the combination of western and classical dancing that is happening all across Lucknow."

Kathak is one of the eight major styles of Indian classical dance. Its roots can be traced back to the ancient bardic tradition of northern India called Kathakars or storytellers. Lucknow, Jaipur and Banaras are some of the leading gharanas.

Undeniably, with focus being on Lucknow's food, fashion and its monuments, Kathak is a concealed treasure which captures the essence of Lucknow's artistic heritage.

Pragati Mehra, a Kathak student says, "Kathak is not just a dance form, it's a way of life." She adds that being a part of this heritage is a pleasure since every

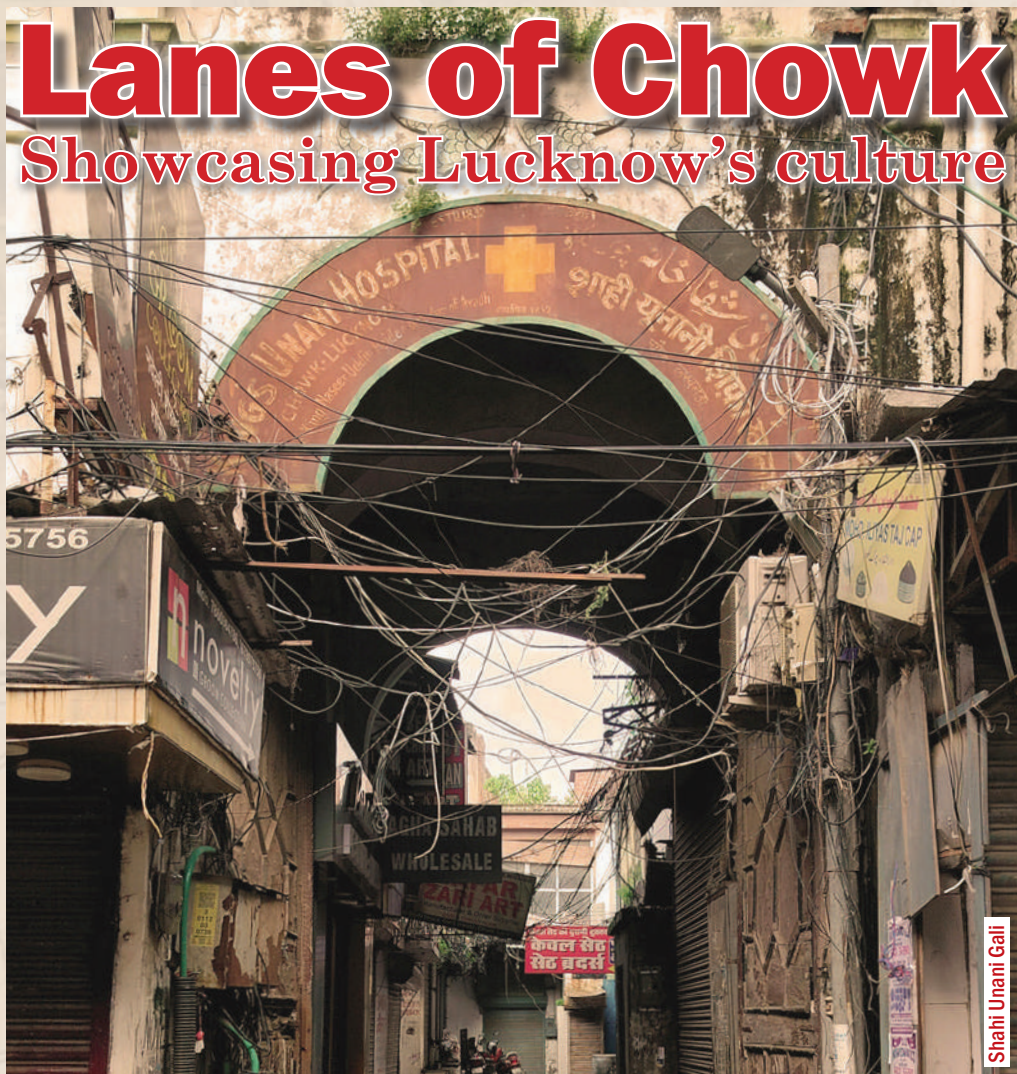
gesture and footwork pattern tells a tale. It is noteworthy that in post-independence era, institutes like Lucknow's Bhatkhande Music Institute became key teaching and promotion centers for Kathak. Against all obstacles, dancing teachers such as the legendary Pandit Birju Maharaj and the brilliant Shambhu Maharaj emerged as torchbearers for Kathak's resurrection.

Prithvi Sharma, a professional Kathak dancer, says, "As a male dancer, I have frequently encountered stereotypes, yet Kathak transcends gender. Even my family was not supportive of it at first, but after seeing my passion for it, they were encouraging."

Ustad Rehman Khan, Kathak artist, states, "As a Muslim dancer, I regard Kathak as a spiritual journey rather than a performance. There is no religion in dance; it is a type of meditation for me." ■

Lanes of Chowk

Showcasing Lucknow's culture



Shahi Unani Gali

SANJAY M JOHRI
Professor & Director, Amity School of Communication

Lucknow has many famous streets and alleys, or galiyan, known for their work or other identities. Some are named after castes, such as *Gujrati gali*, *Marwadi wali gali*, and *Singhan ki gali* while others are named after the businesses located there, such as *Phool wali gali*, originally known for its jasmine garlands, or *Batashe Wale Gali*

There are the lanes of Chowk area, which once had a different glory. Whether it is a book written on Luc-

know or the words of poets, they are mentioned everywhere, but today as times change, one may find them in different appearance too. But their identity is still the same.

The narrow and congested lanes have become dirty, the roads are in bad shape and there is a mess of traffic jams.

From *Choori Wali Gali* to *Batashe Wale Gali* to *Chawal Wali Gali* to *Ban Wali Gali*, all may sound strange by names. Yet, at another gali called, *Kanghe Wali Gali*, you will find artisans who sit here and make combs. Old artisan Waqar says, "We have seen

at that time when people used to work here day and night. They used to make combs from horns, but now times have changed. Most artisans have disappeared. But when it comes to combs made from horns, buyers come here."

Phoolon Wali Gali

The fragrance of roses and jasmine in a street there tells that this is *Phoolon Wali Gali*. Every day, flowers worth lakhs of rupees are traded through this street of Chowk. With time, the charm of these streets may have diminished, but there are some things in them due to which even today people visit here. ■



Phoolon wali Gali



Phoolon wali Gali



Pictures: SURESH SAHU

Ban Wali Gali



Choori wali gali



Batashe Wali Gali



Chawal wali Gali

Online shopping: **Scam** or real?

MANI RANI

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

In today's fast-paced life, online shopping is the new normal. Emergence of e-commerce giants such as Amazon and Flipkart has created a competitive marketplace with regular deals. These offers include Flipkart's Big Billion Days, Amazon's Prime Day, and other holiday season discounts just to name a few as they promise savings too on purchases.

However, the real question is are these sales real or a sham?

Massive advertising campaigns frequently accompany these sales events attracting eyeballs. There's a sense of urgency and excitement when big discounts, time-limited specials, and exclusive bargains are promised. Nevertheless, the workings of these sales can occasionally be complex and deceptive at times.

The practice of artificially inflating prices before a sale is among the most popular strategies used by sellers on the

Net. Retailers can 'slash' prices during a sale by raising the price of a product a few days or weeks prior to the event, giving an impression that the reduction is larger than it actually is. Price anchoring is a tactic used to sway consumers' opinions about what is valuable.

A smartphone that was originally priced at ₹30,000 may, for instance, be marked down to ₹35,000 just a few days prior to the event. It could be 'discounted' down to ₹30,000 or even ₹28,000 during the sale, creating the impression of a significant price reduction while in fact the discount is negligible.

The purpose of flash sales and special deals is to create a sense of urgency and scarcity. Deep discounts are provided on limited quantities of items, but these offers are frequently only valid for a short period of time or for a certain group of buyers. While some customers could profit from these offers, many are let down when they almost immediately expire. Products that are on flash discounts occasionally may be out-of-date models

or lesser-known brands that shops are attempting to get rid of or trying to clear out.

Not every sale is fraudulent. Some really do have fantastic sales, particularly on seasonal goods, fashion items, and older technology models. While some internet discounts provide substantial savings and are legitimate, others are more about marketing than actual value. However, buyers need to exercise caution because manipulative pricing techniques are common.

The secret to successfully navigating internet commerce is consumer awareness. Customers are able to discern between legitimate offers and deceptive marketing tactics with the correct information and resources. It's important to do your homework on the goods and check costs on several platforms before buying during a deal. Sometimes, a less well-known website may provide the same thing for less money. Shopping around might help you find better offers and avoid impulsive purchases. ■

DIGITALISATION *has redefined*

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

MOLLY SINGH

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Digital platforms have redefined civic engagement and participation of people with politics and political issues in the past few years. From participating in online polls and protests to voicing out one's opinion, digital platforms offer new ways to connect with the current political realm. "Social media has made it convenient for me to stay updated about political issues and join discussions with others who share

my views," says Anjana Tiwari, a student, while talking to Expressions.

Although digitalisation has improved engagement and connectivity for general public, there are certain challenges regarding misinformation spread and credibility of news. "I make it a point to cross-check news sources before amplifying any piece of information to make sure spread of right information," said Rajat Singh, Science Educator.

Digital platforms improve engagement but they might hamper the depth of information. In order to enhance awareness about the risks associated with

digitalisation, one must re-examine the source of news and try to enhance digital literacy.

"I believe that initiatives to improve and education digital knowledge in schools, communities and at workplaces can help people better navigate online information and even protect their privacy," said Anjali Gupta, a second year university student. This practice can ensure a balanced perspective about any issue.

Being mindful and deliberate about how and what? We consume and how we respond to a piece of information on a digital platform is crucial. One must engage in political debates and offer their viewpoints on issues of their interests within the community limits, respecting the sensitivity of the subject.

The digital age offer opportunities as well as drawbacks. One must do their part in engaging with important issues and being mindful while consuming any information in order to shape a democracy that reflects values respecting all the sectors of the society. ■

COACHING CENTERS

Where dreams

DIE

BHAVNA SONI

Bachelor of Journalism & Mass Communication

On July 27 of this year, Tanya Soni, 21 from Telangana, Nevin Delvin, 28, from Kerala and Shreya Yadav, 25, from Uttar Pradesh had never envisaged that on this date they would meet a watery grave. As fate would have it, these UPSC aspirants went as usual to their coaching center at Rau's IAS Study Circle in Old Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi. As they were studying in the center's library located in basement, heavy rain flooded the illegally functional basement and the trio drowned. The incident shocked the nation.

Even as the episode was tragic to say the least, what is more shocking is that coaching centers in New Delhi take advantage of the aspirants' dreams who come to the capital to study for exam training. New Delhi is India's main exam training hub. Poor infrastructure and sheer indifference is what they get even as students struggle to survive in Delhi. What it showcases is sheer negligence in maintaining proper infrastructure, uninterested attitude of the responsible authorities and lack of proper environment for students.

July misfortune is not an isolated incident. Earlier, in 2018, a coaching center in Delhi's Karol Bagh area was engulfed by a blaze leading to many students dying. In another incident in Patna in 2021, many students succumbed due to a wall collapse.

It is noteworthy that a month before the tragedy, a student of the institute had filed a complaint on June 26 on a public grievance portal of the Administrative Reforms Department. The complainant stated that classes were being



run in the basement without obtaining a no-objection certificate. The Delhi Master Plan 2021 mandates that basements in coaching centers must have fire and statutory clearances. However, an investigation revealed that Rau's IAS Study Circle was misusing its basement for commercial purposes instead of the designated parking or storage. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) found that the institute had blocked the drainage system by constructing extensions and ramps, which caused the basement to flood during heavy rains.

Moreover, given the influx of myriad students flocking to Delhi annually to train for exams, it is disconcerting to see administrative lackadaisical attitude. Numerous coaching centers operate with inadequate safety measures, frequently situated in congested and poorly maintained structures. The death sparked protests by students and families, demanding accountability from coaching centers and government. The silver lining to the whole incident was now there is increased enforcement of regulations related to the physical infrastructure of coaching centers.

The Delhi Government has decided to introduce a law that will regulate coach-



Pictures: BHAVNA SONI

ing centers across the city. In response to the incident, the Union Home Minister has established a specialized committee tasked with the responsibility of conducting a thorough investigation, determining those accountable, and proposing appropriate policy modifications. The MCD has commenced enforcement actions against coaching centers that fail to adhere to safety regulations, particularly those lacking the requisite fire No Objection Certificate or operating without authorization. Basements of 30 coaching centers in Rajinder Nagar, Mukherjee Nagar, Luxmi Nagar and Preet Vihar have been sealed while notices have been issued to 200 other coaching centers. Delhi Police have apprehended the CEO of the coaching center and several other individuals associated with the incident for contravening regulations. The Supreme Court taking suo motu cognizance of the case, labelled the incident as an 'eye opener'.

However, the pertinent question is for how long will students' lives be put at risk? ■

BINGE on OTT

DR AMIT MASSEY

Assistant Professor, Amity School of Communication

Whether you find pleasure in rewatching *Mirzapur* or *Emily in Paris*, or you're always on the lookout for novel content, there's something for everyone. If you are aligning with the second category, don't worry—we've got this for you. From exceptional

dramas and horror comedies to nonchalant escapism, the coming days bring a range of fresh content on OTT streaming platforms to keep you entertained on your Netflix & Chill times. Here's a list of web series and films to binge-watch on OTT platforms.

'ANGRY YOUNG MEN' (Prime Videos)

Angry Young Men is a docu-series that traverses the remarkable performances of screenwriters Salim Khan and Javed Akhtar. This three-part series explores into their exceptional impression on Hindi cinema during the 1970s. Through interviews with Hindi film industry stalwarts like Amitabh Bachchan, Salman Khan, and Jaya Bachchan, the docuseries provides exhaustive view of how Salim and Javed's duo transformed Bollywood.



'KALKI 2898 AD' (Prime Video & Netflix)

Kalki 2898 AD is a Telugu epic sci-fi film with a sparkling cast that includes Amitabh Bachchan, Kamal Haasan, Prabhas, Deepika Padukone, and Disha Patani. The film's story revolves around the despotic town of Kasi, where the advent of Lord Vishnu's culminating avatar fuels a war against darkness, tampering the town's future.

'THE FROG' (Netflix)

If you have a taste of mystery crime thrillers, you will be missing a treat if you don't watch Korean drama *The Frog*. Starring Kim Yoon-seok, Yoon Kye-sang, Go Min-si, and Lee Jung-eun, the plot promises to keep you excited throughout. The story opens when a suspicious lady checks into a vacation house one normal summer day, starting off a series of episodes that overcome the lives of the owner and those around him.



'BRINDA' (Sony LIV)

Brinda is an enthralling series starring Trisha Krishnan as a strong police officer. As she investigates a series of merciless ritual murders, she explores herself into a shadowy underworld. With clutching screen work from Indrajith Sukumaran and Ravindra Vijay, the series comes up with a gripping narrative that keeps audience glued to the screen.

PHIR AYI HASSEEN DILRUBA (Netflix)

The cat-and-mouse race between Rani, Rishu, and the cops quickly becomes evident, missing the edge-of-your-seat tension that Vinil Mathew's previous work offered. Although there are occasional moments of curiosity, the plot drags, pulled down by not so relevant subplots like two murders—and over the top complexity in twists and turns. Vikrant Massey, Taapsee Pannu & Sunny Kaushal starrer Netflix film fails to deliver the expectation it promised in first outing but story will keep you on the edge of the seats.



Delivering happy meals under **DURESS CONDITIONS**



Pictures: AMBIKA SINGH

AMBIKA SINGH

Master of Arts in Advertising & Marketing Management

In 1889, King Umberto I and Queen Margherita of Savoy (a region in western Alps) were visiting Naples and were keen to try the food of the commoners. That food of the people was delicious pizza of the famous pizza maker Raffaele Esposito. The royal couple were served three pizza flavors which they enjoyed thoroughly.

Legend has it that this is the first instance of food delivery anywhere in the world. In India the home-made food delivery to workplace took roots in late 19th Century in Mumbai called Dabba Delivery System. With onset of digital media and mobile phones in the beginning of the 21st Century, online food delivery is now the flavor of society.

The food delivery system has matured over the decades yet a look at lives and working conditions of delivery agents also shows their contribution in the expansion of this approximately \$43.78 billion industry.

Talking to Expressions, Sunil Kumar, a 52-year-old Blinkit delivery agent based in Lucknow and affiliated with Zomato, says this business has helped him support his family of five. Kumar works approximately 12 hours daily, handling between 20 and 25 deliveries. His earnings depend on the distance he covers, with a rate of ₹30 for every five kilometers. Sunil is responsible for his own bike and petrol expenses while the company provides him with a delivery bag to ensure the safe transportation of items.

Mayank Lal, a 21-year-old Zomato delivery agent and student, is a dedicated young professional who relocated to Lucknow for better pastures. His shifts are from 10 am to midnight. His earnings are based on the distance covered, with a rate of ₹8-10 per kilometer, resulting in a daily income of approximately ₹1,000-1,400.

While the company suggests that work hours are flexible, Mayank typically works 12 hours on weekdays and up to 24 hours on weekends. The company sets performance targets and offers rewards: ₹160 for 17 targets, ₹230 for 22

targets, and ₹270 for exceeding 22 targets in a day. Mayank consistently meets these targets. He covers his own bike expenses, and the company provides him with a branded T-shirt and delivery bag.

Jitendra Singh, a 41-year-old delivery agent for Swiggy and Swiggy Instamart, and Ram Lal Singh, a 29-year-old delivery agent for Domino's for the past five years, have distinct work experiences.

Jitendra Kumar works approximately six to seven hours daily, earning around ₹12,000-16,000 per month. He lives with his wife in a small house near Alambagh. Jitendra faces financial challenges due to his wife's medical needs. In contrast, Ram Lal Singh works four hours a day for Domino's and earns about ₹15,000 per month, with potential for higher earnings when working night shifts. Ram Lal's employer provides him with a bike and covers fuel expenses, which helps alleviate some of his financial burdens.

All said and done, it is the hard work of these delivery agents that is contributing to the boom of food delivery business. ■