Hindu, March 15, 2018, Pp. 01 & 12

**In civic ranking, Pune is Maximum City**

None of the 23 cities surveyed had a good platform for citizen engagement

MOHIT M. RAO

The Annual Survey of India's City Systems (ASICS) 2017, which uses 150 parameters to judge 23 cities, has placed Pune at the top and Bengaluru at the bottom of the rankings. While Pune scored 51.6 out of a maximum score of 100, Bengaluru got just 31. But Indian cities lagged behind global cities like New York and London, which scored 88.

The survey, carried out by the NGO Janagraha Centre for Citizenship and Governance, revealed that Pune was the only city that not only worked on civic issues, but also provided solutions.

The survey also highlighted the importance of public participation in civic issues. Pune has about 10,000 civic clubs, which are actively involved in solving problems. The city has also introduced various initiatives, such as community kitchens and recycling programs, to empower the public.

**The way forward**

Unlike other cities, it elected local bodies that determine urban planning in Pune. - JANAGRAHA ASSOCIATION

**SC rejects convict’s plea in Rajiv case**

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday dismissed a plea of one of the convicts in the former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi assassination case seeking relief of the May 1, 1991 verdict he was found guilty of conspiracy.

The apex court said that material brought to record before it does not inspire confidence to interfere with the conviction of A.G. Perarivalan, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in the case.

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Unlocking the Universe's secrets

Hawking's work centred around bringing together relativity and quantum theory

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
LONDON

Stephen Hawking, who has died aged 76, Britain's most famous modern day scientist, a genius who dedicated his life to unlocking the secrets of the Universe. Inside his lab, he's an increasingly useless body was a razor-sharp mind, fertilised by the nature of the Universe, how it was formed and how it might end.

Following Newton

"My goal is simple," he once said: "It is complete understanding of the Universe, why it is as it is, and what it means to be a human being in a Universe like this.

Marking that work centred on bringing together relativity - the nature of space and time - and quantum theory - how the smallest particles in the Universe behave - to explain the creation of the Universe and how it is governed. In 1974, he became one of the youngest fellows of Britain's most prestigious scientific body, the Royal Society, at the age of 32.

In 1979 he was appointed Reader in Applied Mathematics at Cambridge University, where he had moved from Oxford University to study theoretical astronomy and cosmology. A previous holder of the prestigious post was the 17th-century British scientist Isaac Newton. Mr. Hawking eventually put his own gravitational theories to the test in 2007 when, aged 59, he went on weightless flight in the United States as a prelude to a sub-orbital spaceflight.

"I think the human race has no future if it doesn't go out into space," he said.

"I believe life on Earth is at an ever-increasing risk of being wiped out by disaster - such as sudden global warming, nuclear war, a genetically engineered virus or other disaster. More recently the said artificial intelligence (AI) could contribute to the eradication of disease and poverty, while warming its potential dangers.

Science and beyond

His 1988 book, A Brief History of Time is an attempt to explain the fundamental theories of the universe and it became an instant bestseller, bringing him global acclaim. It was followed in 2001 by The Origin of the Universe, which is more technical. Beyond scientific debate Mr. Hawking also brought politics into, describing Donald Trump as "a demagogue" who was "a threat to the planet".

"I have always thought of myself as a human being first and a scientist second," he said. "I believe that the future of humanity lies in space, and that we must act now to prevent the destruction of our planet.

"If we don't take action now, we will be left with no alternative but to colonise other planets," he added.

China sets up agency to focus on foreign aid, Belt and Road

It's focus will be to "better serve the country's global strategy and to build the Belt and Road Initiative," the state council said.

Xinhua reported that the new agency "will be responsible for making strategic guidelines, plans and policies on foreign aid. It will also be involved in making "foreign aid plans and over evaluating its operations," the announcement said.

Global aid donor

The decision, which is pending approval during the ongoing session of the National People's Congress, is in line with Beijing's "new era of global aid," a statement said.

China's Belt and Road Initiative is a global plan to build transport links, trade routes and ports in 70 countries, with a budget of $1 trillion.

China has already signed more than 250 agreements with countries on the belt and road, including projects in Africa, South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.

China has been increasing its aid programmes in recent years, including in Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East.

China is also one of the largest providers of foreign aid in the world, with its aid programmes playing an important role in the country's global strategy.