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OTHER OF HUMANKIND

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BIDEN, PUTIN SET VIDEO CALL
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SINDHU SETTLES FOR SILVER
IN BWF WORLD TOUR FINALS

BHUBANESWAR, MONDAY DECEMBER 6, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



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14 civilians killed in Nagaland

Anti-insurgency op of Assam Rifles goes wrong; CoI instituted even as one jawan dies in violence

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/KOHIMA

In one of the most serious incidents of violence in the past few years in northeast India, at least 14 civilians and a soldier were killed in Nagaland on Saturday after an Army squad reportedly fired on a mini-bus carrying labourers returning home, after mistaking them for insurgents. The incident took place at Tiru in Mon District of Nagaland.

Irate villagers later ran amok and in the resultant rioting, a soldier was killed.

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Sunday promised a high-level probe into the incident and appealed for peace. The State Government constituted a five-member Special Investigation Team (SIT). He was in the national Capital for a meeting with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and rushed back to handle the situation.

The State Government has banned mobile internet and data services as well as bulk SMSs in the district to curb "circulation of inflammatory videos, pictures or text." The incident triggered protests in some parts of the State with the mobs setting an Assam Rifles camp on fire.

Home Minister Amit Shah in a tweet expressed "deepest condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives. A high-level SIT constituted by the State Government will thoroughly probe this incident to ensure justice to the bereaved families."

Given the nature of the incident, the Army ordered a Court of Inquiry (CoI) and said: "The incident and its aftermath is deeply regretted. The cause of the unfortunate loss of lives is being investigated at the highest level and



Placards and black flags have been put up at the venue of the Hornbill Festival in solidarity with the civilians killed in a botched up anti-insurgency operation, in Kisama, Nagaland on Sunday

PTI

appropriate action will be taken as per the course of law. The security forces have suffered severe injuries in the incident including one soldier who suc-

cumbed to the injuries."

The Army said that based on credible Intelligence of the likely movement of insurgents, a specific operation was

planned to be conducted in the Tiru area.

Reports from the ground indicated that the incident took place when some daily wage labourers were returning home in a pick-up van at about 5 PM.

The security forces reportedly mistook the workers to be insurgents belonging to the Yung Aung faction of the proscribed group NSCN(K). Six workers were killed in the firing on the spot and two died in the hospital.

When the workers did not reach home till late in the evening, villagers began looking for them. When they came to know of the firing, they surrounded the Army vehicles and set some of them on fire. The Army jawans then reportedly fired in self defence. Six more civilians were killed and a soldier died in the attack by the villagers.

The incident triggered protests in some parts of the State on Sunday afternoon as mobs vandalised the offices of the Konyak Union and an Assam Rifles camp.

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Omicron spreads its tentacles in India

Jaipur sees 9 of 17 new cases in country; tally goes up to 21

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The super mutant Omicron, a variant of Covid-19, is spreading fast across the country. As many as 17 new cases were reported on Sunday — Jaipur (9), Pune (7) and Delhi (1) on Sunday — taking the tally to 21 so far.

Delhi on Sunday reported its first case of the Omicron infection. State Health Minister Satyendar Jain said that a man of Indian origin who had come to Delhi from Tanzania a few days ago and was infected with the Omicron variant. The patient, a resident of Ranchi, had travelled from Tanzania to Doha and from there to Delhi on a Qatar Airways flight on December 2. He stayed in Johannesburg, South Africa, for a week, officials said. The person is "fully vaccinated" and is currently admitted to the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan (LNJP) Hospital with "mild symptoms", an official said.

Elsewhere, as many as seven people tested positive for Omicron in Maharashtra's Pune district on Sunday. A 44-year-old



Despite the arrival of Omicron in Delhi on Sunday, people crowd the Sarojini Market without social distancing and masks

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

woman from Lagos, Nigeria, who had come to visit her brother on November 24 in Pimpri-Chinchwad, along with her two daughters, has been found to be infected with the new variant by the National Institute of Virology, Pune. Her 45-year-old brother and his two daughters aged two and seven, were also found to be infected with Omicron. Additionally, a 47-year-old man, who had recently travelled to Finland, also tested positive for the variant in Pune.

Four of those found positive were fully vaccinated, while the other three are minors, said the officials.

Meanwhile, nine members from a family in Adarsh Nagar in Jaipur tested positive for Omicron after returning from South Africa.

The family of nine recently returned from South Africa. The family members, resident of the Adarsh Nagar area, had tested positive for Covid-19 on Friday. Their samples were sent for genome sequencing and the report confirming Omicron infection came on Sunday.

As per a senior medical official, the family had already been admitted to the Rajasthan University of Health Sciences (RUHS). Five other people who came in contact with the family and were found Covid-19 positive are also being admitted to the RUHS. In the wake of the new Omicron cases, the Rajasthan Government imposed a curfew in the Rohisa area of Nagaur.

In the meantime, five passengers, who came from Omicron-affected countries of Africa, were detected Covid positive in Bihar's Gopalganj district on Sunday, and their samples have been sent for genome testing.

The new variant of Covid-19 was first reported to the WHO from South Africa on November 25. As per the WHO, the first known confirmed B.1.1.529 infection was from a specimen collected on November 9 this year. India has added several countries 'at risk' to the list from where travellers would need to follow additional measures on arrival in the country, including post-arrival testing for infection.

New Covid testing rules for inbound US, UK travellers

Passengers must carry negative test report or proof of recovery

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK) have made it mandatory for all incoming passengers, including those from India, to carry a negative Covid-19 test report or proof of recovery from the contagion amid the rising number of Omicron cases.

In the US, the new protocol will come into effect from December 6. The UK will implement the measures from December 7.

As per the new amended order, effectively for flights departing to the US from a foreign country at or after 12:01 AM EST (5:01 AM GMT or 10:31 AM IST) on December 6, 2021, passengers are required to show a negative Covid-19 viral test result taken no more than one day before travel. Documentation of a negative SARS-CoV-2 viral test result



from specimen collected no more than one calendar day preceding the passenger's flight to the US or documentation of having recovered from Covid-19 in the past 90 days, before they board their flight.

Air passengers will also be required to confirm in the form of an attestation that the information they present is true. The one-day period is one day before the flight's departure. The order uses a one-day time frame instead of 24 hours to provide more flexibility to the air passenger and aircraft operator.

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Opp slams Centre, seeks Amit Shah's sacking

Incident set to rock Parl today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Nagaland incident is set to rock Parliament on Monday with the Congress and several Opposition parties on Sunday attacking the Centre over the killing of civilians during an anti-insurgency operation by the Army.

Declaring that they will take up the issue in Parliament,

they said the Government must answer what the Home Ministry is doing as "neither civilians nor security personnel are safe in our own land."

Demanding Home Minister Amit Shah's sacking over this crisis, the Opposition parties also announced that the Nagaland issue would be taken up in Parliament on Monday.

Reacting to the incident, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi tweeted, "This is heart wrenching. GOI must give a real reply. What exactly is the Home Ministry doing when neither

civilians nor security personnel are safe in our own land?"

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee demanded a thorough investigation into the incident which took place in a district along the border with Myanmar. "Worrisome news from Nagaland. Heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. I pray for the speedy recovery of those who were injured. We must ensure a thorough probe into the incident and ensure that all victims get justice," Banerjee tweeted.

AIMIM president

Asaduddin Owaisi asserted that he will raise the Nagaland civilian killings in the Lok Sabha on Monday. He further demanded that Union Home Minister Amit Shah be sacked. "Shah should not be allowed to resign. Only sacked. I will be giving an Adjournment Motion tomorrow in Lok Sabha," the Lok Sabha MP said.

The Nagaland Congress general secretary GK Zhimomi regretted that ultimately, innocent civilians continue to suffer and die.

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Intel agencies warn of suicide bombers in India

9 JeM terrorists have sneaked in to bolster outfit's ops in J&K

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Pakistani terror group Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) recently infiltrated two groups of highly trained suicide attackers into India, Intelligence agencies have warned.

While one group sneaked in from Shakargarh area of Pakistan (bordering Indian Punjab), the other group came in from Pak Poonch area along Jammu

According to the input, the JeM has infiltrated nine terrorists who are "well-trained" and have been sent to bolster the outfit's terror operations in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K).

Pakistan Army and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) are believed to have plotted the infiltration with inputs suggesting that 3,000 Afghan SIMs have been activated in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. Intelligence agencies have noticed attempts by Pakistan-based groups to rope in Afghan mujahideen to ramp up terror attacks in the Valley.

JeM boss Maulana Masood Azhar and Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) chief Hafiz Sayeed have been frequenting Afghanistan to liaise with the ISI-propped Haqqani Network and also to strengthen Jaish bases in



Helmand and Kandahar, experts tracking terror networks in the region said.

The ISI has plans to temporarily shift some of its terror sanctuaries from its home bases in Pakistan amid scrutiny from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The shifting is aimed at providing safe havens to global terror masterminds like Sayeed and Azhar, who are on the radar of global agencies. By shifting them, Pakistan obviously wants to shed its image as a terror-sponsor and avail of international financing to bring its shattered economy on the growth tracks, they said.

The ISI is also working on using the terror proxies like JeM and LeT networks to counter-balance the Taliban regime from acting independently.

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TROUBLE IN WINTER WONDERLAND



Vehicles stuck in a traffic jam on the Tangmarg-Gulmarg road during a heavy snowfall, in Baramulla district on Sunday

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MP scripts end of own kahani; quits Sansad TV

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a mark of protest, one of the 12 suspended Rajya Sabha MPs, Priyanka Chaturvedi on Sunday resigned from Sansad TV where she was roped in to host a TV show 'Meri Kahani'.

In a letter to Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu, the Shiv Sena MP expressed her wish to step down as the host of 'Meri Kahani' following her suspension from the House during the Winter Session of Parliament.

"After my arbitrary suspension, that has totally disregarded established Parliamentary norms & rules, to stifle my voice, my party's voice inside the chamber, I am unwilling to continue taking

space on Sansad TV when my primary oath to the constitution is being denied to me," the Shiv Sena leader wrote.

She and some other MPs, including Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor, were roped in by the Parliament secretariat to host a series of human interest program on Sansad TV.

"That this suspension also chose to disregard my parliamentary track record and my contribution beyond the call of duty so as to give a platform to women parliamentarians to share their journey, I believe injustice has been done but as it is considered valid in the eyes of the chair, I must respect it," Priyanka said in her letter to Naidu.

Priyanka Chaturvedi, along with 11 other Members of



Parliament, was suspended from the Upper House for alleged unruly conduct towards the end of the monsoon session in August when marshals were called after Opposition mem-

bers stormed the Well of the House during the passage of the General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2021.

Chaturvedi further wrote

to Naidu, saying, "It is with great anguish but with a sense of responsibility and having thought through this, I wish to inform you that I would like to step down as an anchor for Sansad TVs show 'Meri Kahani'."

"I believe it is my duty that when today the highest number of women MPs have been suspended in the recorded history of Rajya Sabha for an entire session for speaking up for the people of this country then I need to speak up for them and stand in solidarity for them. Also, not to forget 12 MPs being suspended for an entire session for their conduct in previous session has never happened in parliament's history," she added.

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CAPSULE

AIR POLLUTION: BUILDERS' BODY MOVES APEX COURT

New Delhi: A builders' body has moved the Supreme Court seeking to vacate its order by which it had re-imposed the ban on construction activities in Delhi and the National Capital Region. The plea filed by the Developers and Builders Forum, a body of more than 60 builders, contended that they use the latest construction technology so as to reduce dust pollution.

HC TO HEAR DAMEPL PLEA AGAINST DMRC

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court will on Monday hear a plea by Delhi Airport Metro Express Private Limited (DAMEPL) seeking execution of an arbitral award of over ₹4,600 crore against Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC).

OVER 540 TREES TO MAKE WAY FOR RRTS

New Delhi: Over 260 trees will be felled and 280 transplanted in the capital for the implementation of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Regional Rapid Transit System (RRTS), according to an official notification. The environment department has exempted an area of 1.69 hectare for this purpose. A total of 543 trees will make way for the RRTS corridor.

MYANMAR ARMY TRUCK RUNS DOWN PROTESTERS

Bangkok: An army vehicle barrelled into a peaceful march of anti-Government protesters in military-ruled Myanmar's biggest city on Sunday, reportedly killing at least three people, witnesses and a protest organiser said. Sunday's march was one of at least three held in Yangon, and similar rallies were reported in other parts of the country a day ahead of an expected verdict in the first of about a dozen criminal cases.

Covid-19
‘Odisha’s testing rate better than nat’l average’

Overall situation in control: Govt

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
In response to the Central Government's concern over the reduction in number of Covid-19 tests in Odisha and the surge in infections, the Odisha Government on Sunday said the State's testing rate is better than the national average.

present situation, but about the last week when as many as 53 infections were reported from Dhenkanal district. In the meantime, the picture has changed. No district is reporting any surge of cases. Khordha district which used to report 150 to 200 daily cases is reporting around 80. "The number of tests done by today noon is over 59,000. Yesterday, people did not turn out for testing, which might be due to the prevailing cyclonic situation. If the positivity rate

is taken into consideration, the State's positivity rate is 0.4 per cent as against the Centre's 1.1 per cent. Similarly, the State's testing rate in every 1,00,000 is 4,542 as against the Centre's 2,685," Mohapatra said. "In comparison to the national Covid case fatality rate, Odisha is in a better position. While the State's case fatality rate is 0.8 per cent, the national figure is 1.3 percent. These figures prove that the Covid-19 situation in the State is under control," he added.

DSBM holds talk ‘Leadership for Sustainable Career’

For BBA, B Com students

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The DAV School of Business Management (DSBM) organised a CEO talk, "Role of Leadership for Sustainable Career for Professional Students" so as to instil managerial temper and international corporate culture in their BBA and B Com honours students. MD cum CEO of NAPCO and Emirates Holding Kamal Krushna Mishra was the invited CEO who cited numerous real life strategic plans and approaches to achieve success in career. He emphasized on the values like faith, flexibility and timely decisions which are essential for obtaining a sustainable career. Mishra also involved some students in case



study through which he highlighted many management concepts. Renowned academician and former Chairman, PG Department of Commerce, Utkal University Prof Ranjan Kumar Bal attended the event as the guest of eminence and spoke about the values of self-discipline and will power as the key to success and leadership. He mentioned that "passion and emotions" are very crucial for choosing the right career path. Prof Bal also specified that

change is the only constant thing in the world which can be addressed through the concept of "learning by doing." The event also had a dedicated interactive session wherein the students raised many questions which were answered by the dignitaries. DSBM Principal Dr DN Mishra delivered the welcome address and opined that the development of core competence and integration of skill sets leads to sustainability of a professional career in the corporate sector.

‘Qualitative research needed to tackle Covid’

2-day workshop concluded at AIIMS

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Understanding human behaviour towards health and why they behave in a certain way, which has an impact on their health, is much more important than medicine. Particularly in Covid pandemic situation taking perspectives of the people, their emotions, opinions and their reasons for making choices related to their health is very crucial, said Dean (Research) and Professor

(Head) Department of Community Medicine at AIIMS, Nagpur Dr Pradeep Deshmukh.

Speaking on the occasion of a workshop organised by the Department of Community Medicine and Family Medicine, AIIMS Bhubaneswar on "Qualitative Methods in Health Research" on Saturday, Dr Deshmukh stressed upon qualitative research more than quantitative research.

The two day workshop was inaugurated on Friday by



AIIMS Bhubaneswar Director Dr Gitanjali Batmanabane. During her inaugural address, Dr Batmanabane emphasized the importance of qualitative research and stressed to utilise it not only for health but also in

medical education. Head, Department of Extension Programmes, Pramukhswami Medical College, Karamsad, Gujarat, Dr Amol Dongre attending the workshop as resource faculty

said that qualitative research can be utilized to bring about positive changes in health behaviour to improve health of the people. Faculty members, residents and PhD scholars from AIIMS Bhubaneswar as well as from SCB Medical College and Hospital, Cuttack, KIIMS, MKCG Medical College, Brahmapur, VSS Medical College and Hospital, Burla and neighbouring States participated in the workshop.

Polavaram project to hit Odisha’s 6,923 people

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The controversial Andhra Pradesh Polavaram dam project would affect as many as 6,923 people in over 25 villages besides 6,771 hectares of agricultural land and 3,469 hectares of forestland in Odisha's Malkangiri district. Replying to a question of BJD MLA Soumya Ranjan Patanik in the State Assembly on Saturday, Water Resources Minister Raghunandan Das said that in the year 2006 the Central Water Commission (CWC) raised the high flood level of the project from the initial 36 lakh cusec to 50 lakh cusec. That's why the length and breadth of the affected area increased. The Minister also said that

according to the last Detailed Project Report (DPR) of Neradi Barrage being constructed in Andhra Pradesh, there is a need to construct a flood protection wall to protect land in Odisha from submersion. Additionally, the AP Government needs 1,326 acres of land in Gajapati district for the project. On Andhra Pradesh's proposed Jhanjabati dam, the Minister said, 1,175 acres of land spread over 10 villages under Narayan Patna block in Koraput district would be affected. Regarding the Vansadhara river water dispute, the Minister said the Odisha Government has already filed a case in the Supreme Court, the further hearing of which is fixed on December 8.

Pact signed to promote swimming in State

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
In order to develop, promote and expand the swimming ecosystem in Odisha and India, the Government of Odisha, through its Sports and Youth Services Department and the Swimming Federation of India (SFI) entered into a partnership on Saturday.

Through this collaboration, Odisha would provide support the SFI in conjunction with the Odisha State Swimming Association (OSSA) providing its technical expertise. The partnership will be valid for one year extendable to five years. Sports and Youth Services Secretary R Vineel Krishna and SFI Secretary General Monal Chokshi signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) at the Kalinga Stadium here. The partnership, over the



next five years, would be towards a holistic development of the sport from grassroots to the elite, including conduct of national and international-level swimming competitions and events and conduct "Train the Trainers" courses in Odisha. Vineel Krishna shared, "Swimming is a major discipline in multi events. The sport has a lot of potential to grow and many young swimmers are showing great prospect at the national level. The Swimming Federation of In-

dia will assist in developing all forms of aquatic sports in the State and to produce elite swimmers." "Our Biju Patnaik Swimming Pool Complex at Kalinga Stadium is one of the finest swimming infrastructures in the country and we are strengthening our grassroots swimming training centres too. Our high-performance partnership with JSW Sports and this association with the SFI will give an added impetus to the sport of swimming," he added.

Petrol-filled jerkin as wedding gift !

Cong youth’s novel protest against rising fuel prices

PNS ■ BALESWAR
A gift in a wedding reception function has become a talk of the town here. An invitee has gifted a jerkin filled with five litres of petrol to the newly wedded couple. The

weird incident occurred at Atapur village in Soro. Congress student wing general secretary Rahimat Ali gifted the item to Tapas Jasmukh in his reception. Ali in his reaction told while the prices of diesel and petrol have been skyrocketing day by day, resulting in price rise of essential commodities, the common people are in a dire straits. So he thought it the

best way to create awareness among the people, he said. "For the common man, the current unprecedented price hike of petrol and diesel and cooking gas is unbearable as it has has a cascading effect on the economy. The petrol price hike is more pinching than a hike in prices of gold and silver," Ali said, adding that the gift was a symbolic protest.

Woman found hanging in house in city

Husband alleges foul play

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Mystery shrouded the death of a woman, who was found hanging in her house at Kaibhya Nagar in GGP Colony under the Mancheswar police station here on Sunday morning. The deceased was identi-

fied as Shradhanjali Patnaik, a resident of the Patkura area in Kendrapada district, who had married Ghanashyam Mohanty six years back. She was suspected to have committed suicide over domestic feud as the couple was not in good terms. It is alleged that one Lalu used to frequent their house, which led to frequent quarrels between the husband and wife.

Following Shradhanjali's unnatural death, two cases have been filed at the Mancheswar police station. In one complaint, Ghanashyam has alleged that Lalu killed Shradhanjali by hanging her. Acting on the complaints, the Mancheswar cops went to the spot and sent the body for postmortem and started an investigation.

Book Review : Life comes in its full circle

CHINMAY KUMAR HOTA

The world looks increasingly stormy and hostile for someone barely out of her teens and living away from her family with peers. Yet, while the young soul strives to find her moorings, her perceived discrimination and imaginary defects shake up her efforts to make out her true identity. No wonder then that the universe presented in the anthology "Ink from Night Skies" by the young poet Mahima Sethi is characterised by tumult and chaos with violent nature unfolding itself at every turn. Like the mother earth emerging from the fiery inception process, the poet also undergoes the creative throes. She is aware of the agony involved in creation when she writes, "I have to cut open/ my insides every time/ to draw ink for my page" or "I am waiting, as I bleed/ to write" (Navigating, p-3). She finds her world



strewn with fireworks, lightning, thunderstorm, tempest and "wrestling hellhounds" while her "earth shudders along my feet/ locking up fidgeting demons/ inside the ground" (Defence Mechanism, p-12). But like the primordial violence controlling the world outside, she is tormented by "cloudbursts inside of me" (No Refuge, p-89). She laments, "The roars and rumbles outside/ are not louder than/ this vehement tempest inside" (Three Pillows, p-80). Sleep eludes her often as she tosses on her bed waiting for the sunrise. In 'For-



lorn', she writes, "Stray thoughts keep me awake/ like a ticking time bomb in my head" (p-86). She is afraid of night and darkness. She is torn apart by sorrow as it insinuates into her existence not by hitting her loudly but "Instead/ it eats away your core/ in silence" (Void, p-88). In such a milieu, doubt becomes the most defining feature of her life. She questions her worth when she asks, "Scepticism haunts me to-night/ Am I good enough?/ Surely I can't be the best,/ but am I good enough,/ or just a charlatan holding a pen?" (In-

Ink from Night Skies
By Mahima Sethi
Publisher: Har-Anand, New Delhi
Pages: 119
Price: Rs 695

quietude, p-93). The body-shaming and doubts of self-worth festered by social media have doomed the confidence of many a young one today; her poetic self is also troubled by this obnoxious trend when she writes, "I utterly despised the mirror/ wanted to get out of my body,/ shed and rip apart my skin,/ beseeching for a straighter nose" (Unapologetic, p-8). All these fears and doubts leave her foundering with hopelessness as she grimly concludes, "And the most potent herb/ could not numb/ the pain of my scars" (Scars, p-70). Her poetry en-

shrines her angst and her ennui. Melancholy turns to rage and her words radiate vengeance and retribution for her perceived but unnamed foes. With a tone of finality, she wishes to destroy the wrongdoers when she proclaims, "Dare not take refuge under my branches,/ I shall burn you along with me" (No Refuge, p-89). Or again, when she takes it out on the burden inherent in the culture of physical glamour with the piquant words, "Do not teach little girls,/ to need to have a sharp jawline./ Instead,/teach them/ to slit tongues of imbeciles,/ with their sharp brains and wits" (Proportions, p-30). At places, her poetry flourishes fierce feminism. However, all these rage and retribution, doubts and despair, violence and virulence do not condemn her poetic galaxy to an irremediable dark hole. On the contrary, hope and optimism lurks in

many places. As her poetic horizon is quite expansive, there are plenty of scopes to redeem her doubtful soul. She has her spiritual bent of mind, her faith in the glory of God, the power of nature to sustain itself, her love for humanity and, above all, her creative words to fall back on. She is sure that she herself is "God's glory/ I'm God's Mahima". With the grace of God, even death does not sting; it brings "eternal rest" while the moon becomes her "confidant, my witness/ of my yearning" (Swargadwar, p-34). While her faith in God soothes her anguish, her poetry becomes her balm; her creation relieves and energises her. The night sky may be murky, but the ink it oozes out has the power to brighten her world. Her life comes a full circle when, with certitude in her voice, she sings, "Perhaps/ fear that torments/grants power to learn to love/what terrifies you" (Perhaps, p-85).

5-point charter of demand
Coop staffers’ stir begins before Assembly



Warn of gheraoing Ministers if apathy continues

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
Over 5,000 employees of the 2,708 Seva Samabaya, LAMP and 17 District Central Cooperative Banks in 30 districts of the State who are members of the Odisha Cooperative Employees' Federation have been agitating since November 14 on the Cooperative Day with various demands. Addressing a Press meet here, leaders of the association said that though they performed an important role in distribution of seeds and fertilizers, paddy procurement,

besides other agricultural activities for which Odisha has become a leading State for bumper harvest and achieved Krushi Karman Awards for three times, still the State Government was not granting them status of Government employees and salary as per the 7th Pay Commission recommendations. They warned that they would not co-operate with the Government in any field, including paddy procurement and gherao the Ministers if their demands were not fulfilled. General secretary Digambar Nayak, president Sitaram Pradhan, vice president Ghanashyam Jena, working president Nityananda Das and organising secretary Sailendra Kumar Swain addressed the Press.

85 births recorded amid cyclone in JSpur

KAHNU NANDA ■ JAGATSingHPUR

In view of cyclone Jawad, the Jagatsinghpur district administration shifted as many as 168 pregnant women to safe places, including cyclone shelters across the district. And in the process, 85 women gave birth to children, 43 of them male and 42 female.

A block-level drive had been undertaken for two days identifying the pregnant women in different locations through hospitals and Anganwadi Workers. Many women who happened to be in the last leg of their pregnancy were moved to cyclone shelters and hospitals.

Two medical teams comprising doctors, nurses and other health staffs were



deployed to keep watch on the women.

Sharing her experience, an Anganwadi Worker of Erasama block informed that many pregnant women were initially reluctant to move to cyclone shelters but later agreed.

Interestingly, one woman did not want to move out stating that her delivery date was scheduled as December 10. It took a lot of persuasions to shift

her to a cyclone shelter. Surprisingly, the woman gave birth to a boy on Saturday evening, six days ahead of the schedule. Now, she and her baby are well under the medical supervision at the Erasama hospital, the Anganwadi Worker added.

A handful of women gave births in the multipurpose shelter homes and CHCs and District Headquarters Hospital.

Jawad-triggered rains damage paddy crop in K'pada

Farmers worried about loan repayment

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA

The farmers of Kendrapada district are now a worried lot as incessant rain triggered by cyclonic storm Jawad damaged standing paddy crops in large areas.

Earlier due to scarcity of water for irrigating the field, the Kharif paddy cultivation had been affected. Coupled

with untimely rain in November, the incessant rain caused by Jawad has thrown cold water on the last hope of the farmers as it damaged crops in thousands of acres.

"Both the harvested crops and those on field have been damaged due to the rain in last 24 hours," said farmer leader Gayadhar Dhal.

The farmers are now worried over repaying their loans that they have made to do the cultivation, he added.

According to Sukadev Rout,



a farmer of Saranga, who raised paddy in three acres of land, the standing crops were lying flat on ground and damaged.

According to official sources, the Agriculture Department earlier had alerted the

the produce safely before the cyclonic storm hits the district. The department will assess the damage of Kharif paddy after the rain stopped, said an official.

The rain also severely damaged many vegetable farms across the coastal pockets. Most of the vegetable growers stated that they have suffered huge losses.

INBRIEF

NAVY DAY HELD AT INS CHILKA

Khordha : On the Navy Day on December 4, Cmde NP Pradeep, Naval Officer-in-Charge (Odisha) and Commanding Officer, INS Chilka, laid a wreath at the War Memorial of the station as a mark of respect to the sailors who have made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty. The Navy Day is celebrated to mark the decisive victory achieved by India in 1971 which was made possible by the daring missile attack on Karachi by warships.



J'SUGUDA VEDANTA HOLDS AIDS AWARENESS DRIVE

Jharsuguda: The Vedanta Limited, Jharsuguda observed the World AIDS Day with a weeklong awareness programme, aiming to sensitise its employees and business partners and the local community. As part of the campaign, Vedanta's Mobile Health Unit along with Wockhardt Foundation, Odisha State AIDS Control Society (OSACS) and employee volunteers reached out to more than 6,000 employees and business partners. The company intends to cover nearly 2,000 community members, including migrant workers, college students and police personnel in Jharsuguda. Deputy CEO – Vedanta Limited, Jharsuguda, Deepak Prasad and Program Manager, Technical Support Unit (Hindustan Latex Family Planning Promotion Trust) of OSACS, Shrivprasad Ojha spoke on the occasion among others.



AIDS, FIT INDIA DRIVE LAUNCHED BY UAIL

Rayagada: To sensitise migrant workers, contract labourers, truck drivers and employees on prevention of AIDS, an awareness campaign was held on the World AIDS Day by the Utkal Alumina International Limited (UAIL). The UAIL volunteers distributed red-ribbons and leaflets and put hoardings and banners. Unit head of Utkal Alumina Mazhar Beig applauded the effort of the volunteers. This was followed by a week-long celebration of 'Fit India School Week' at Aditya Birla Public School, Doragada. Principal LN Dash hoisted the Fit India Flag and addressed the students on the importance of fitness.



Move for bus-stand in K'handi Varsity field decried

Dist admn unmoved despite protests from KU, locals

PNS ■ BHAWANIPATNA

A decision of the Kalahandi district administration to construct a temporary bus-stand in the playground of the Kalahandi University at Bhawanipatna has invited sharp criticism and protests from various quarters, including the locals and the university administration.

Despite a letter written by the Registrar of the university to the district Collector, Kalahandi, showing the groundswell of dissent against the move and the inconveniences the bus stand would create for the students using the playground, the district administration has started the leveling and razing of structures works.

Notably, the district headquarters town Bhawanipatna

will have a new bus terminal and for this, the old bus stand will be razed. Consequently, for a temporary bus stand, the district administration has selected the Kalahandi University playground. However, university Registrar Pitambar Blioi in a status report on the university field selected for the temporary bus stand said that it would lead to students strike and agitation of public, including the Alumni Association and the inhabitants of the area.

"The students have already requested not to convert it into Bus Stand as they have been doing practice to attend Inter- University Athletic and Sports Meet to be held in January, 2022. The senior citizens and residents of the area have been opposing the temporary bus stand because of dust and other reasons. The Alumni Association approached the

Vice-Chancellor and requested him not to give consent in the said matter as the playground is quite necessary for the students. The Association also pleads that the playground will be damaged and it will hamper the study atmosphere," said the letter by the Registrar, requesting the district Collector to reconsider the matter.

However, the district administration has, seemingly, rejected the report of the Registrar as the Bhawanipatna Municipality has already set the process in motion for the construction of the temporary bus stand. Meanwhile, non-resident Odia Professor of the American University of Beirut (AUB), Lebanon, Dr Digambar Patra, who is a native of Kalahandi district, has objected to the move and said the conversion of the playground to a bus stand would cause more harm than any good.

N'garh ACSO has Rs 2.31-cr assets

PNS ■ PARADIP

The Vigilance police on Saturday conducted simultaneous house searches on the properties of Jayant Kumar Das, Assistant Civil Supplies Officer (ACSO), Nayagarh, on the allegation of possession of assets disproportionate to his known sources of income,

During the searches, one four-storied building at Lenkudipada, in Nayagarh district, two double-storied buildings at Odagaon in Nayagarh, nine plots, including one plot at Bhubaneswar and other eight plots in Nayagarh district, one four-wheeler, three two-wheelers, bank and postal



deposits over Rs.9.30 lakh, insurance deposits over Rs.8.64 lakh, gold and silver ornaments worth over Rs.4.92 lakh, cash of Rs.2.75 lakh and other movable and immovable properties, all totaling over Rs 2.31 crore have been unearthed so far. Das was arrested by the Vigilance on Sunday.

Guv honours Paradip environmentalist

Samanta figured in Mann Ki Baat

PNS ■ PARADIP

Governor Prof Ganeshi Lal felicitated to Amaresh Nareish Samanta, an engineer in Paradip Port, for his contribution in protecting the environment.

Currently, Samanta is coordinating various activities by involving volunteers in the industrially affected districts through his organisation Baba Balunkeshwar Gramya Vikas Parishad. He has been raising awareness among people on environment safety for last



three decades in Paradip and Kujang area. Samanta travelled from Paradip to Brahmapur covering a distance of about 715km by bicycle to create awareness about environment. He moved across many districts urging people to plant trees.

The Governor also men-

tioned the Prime Minister's 75th Mann Ki Baat programme in which PM Modi referred to Samanta's works and praised him for his service towards the betterment of environment.

Among others, Arvind Swain and Bandana Mishra were present.

In Sambalpur

Youth steals office cash, flees with married woman

In case duo marries, married woman, who is much senior to him in age, will be his third wife, his earlier wives having left him over tiffs

NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR

An employee of Filpkart here stole Rs 2.64 lakh office cash and fled with a married woman of four kids, senior to him in age, creating a flutter in the area.

Both his company and the husband of the woman have lodged separate cases against him in Sambalpur and Burla respectively.

As per information, Deb Kumar of Kumbharpada under town police station works in the Flipkart office in Budharaja under Ainthapali police station. On one occasion, the money collected from the customers couldn't be deposited in the bank. Taking it as an advantage, Deb opened the office and took away the entire cash of Rs 2.64 lakh.

However, the matter doesn't end here. Deb had love

affairs with a married woman in Burla. Deb went to the woman and fled away with her in the same night.

"We are on a hunt to nab them very soon," said a police officer.

The interesting part of the story is that, if the woman is treated as the wife of the young man, then she would be his third wife as he had two wives earlier who left him for funny reasons. The woman has taken her eight-year-old daughter, the youngest of her children, with her. The youth and the woman are cousins and belong to the same caste.

Meet held for BU colleges' NAAC accreditation

KRUSHNA CHANDRA PANDA ■ BRAHMAPUR

A two-day non-academic training workshop for the Principals of affiliated colleges for NAAC accreditation was held at the Berhampur University on Monday.

Inaugurating the workshop, Vice Chancellor Prof Govind J Chakrapani emphasized on creating good academic environment in colleges.

Director, College Development Council (CDC), Prof Arundhati Rath, Chairman, PG Council, Prof Pratap Kumar Mohanty, Regional Director, Department of Higher Education, Dr Laxmikant Tripathi among others were present.

Prof Rath coordinated the event while Prof Sudhakar Patra offered vote of thanks.



Of the 108 colleges who were not recognised by NAAC and did not receive a grant from the UGC, 53 of them were present on the first day. The pre-preparation of the NAAC course, such as mark sheet, various exam-related documents and mechanism to upload them on the website, was elaborately explained by Dr Surendra Sethi and the NIC staff.

On the occasion, textbooks for +3 students were

also distributed by the Department of Higher Education. Deputy Registrar Dr Babuji Samal, Assistant Registrar Dr Saroj Kumar Das and A Surya Prakash were the keynote speakers. Dr Shankar Majhi, Pratap Kumar Rout, I Loknath, Rabindra Kumar Panigrahi, Pramod Kumar Sahu, Dr Mihir Kumar Tripathi, Ramnarayan Sahu, Ujjalavati Nayak, and Debashis Dalai managed the workshop.

Nuapada villagers oppose rice millers' lobby

Decry closure of mandi at Liad

AJIT PANDA ■ NUAPADA

Farmers of Liad village of Boden block are up in arms against rice millers' lobby of Nuapada district, particularly the Mahavir Prasad Binod rice mill, for allegedly conspiring to influence the district administration to close the mandi in their village running since 2007. "We met the Collector Swadha Dev Singh in her office and pleaded for continuing the mandi in our village, but unfortunately the Collector madam didn't listen to our appeal," said the farmers who met the DM on December 1.



The aggrieved farmers, in a Press meet held in their village on Saturday, informed that the decision to close the mandi was arbitrary. "In the procurement committee meeting held on November 18, it had been decided that the mandi would continue to be operated by the PACS as usual and will start functioning from November 29. Weighing machines, poly sheets and other equipments required for paddy procure-

ment were also brought to the centre. But when we reached the centre with our paddy on November 29, we were punished for our resistance against corrupt practices by millers. We fail to understand how a pro-farmer and straight forward district Collector took such an arbitrary decision," rued the farmers.

The shifting of the mandi will also affect the livelihood of about 25 labourers of the village who usually earn about

to the Makhapadar procurement centre run by an SHG, 7 km far from Liad, where the total procurement of paddy last kharif season was about 5,000 quintal.

"We have been punished by the administration for opposing 'katni & chhatni' by the miller. We opposed the monopoly of the miller, who deducted 7 to 8 kg of paddy per quintal last time. We have been punished for our resistance against corrupt practices by millers. We fail to understand how a pro-farmer and straight forward district Collector took such an arbitrary decision," rued the farmers.

The shifting of the mandi will also affect the livelihood of about 25 labourers of the village who usually earn about

Rs 18,000 to Rs 20,000 every year for loading and unloading of paddy.

The farmers had approached the elected representatives of the district requesting them to help in continuation of the mandi. "But for unknown reasons, the leaders have become evasive," said the farmers.

Nuapada CSO Prabhakar Patra, when contacted, however, said the allegation of the farmers that the miller influenced the district administration for closing the mandi is not true. "A team would visit the village to enquire the matter and efforts would be made to procure paddy in Liad. The SHG managing the Makhapadar mandi would take this responsibility," said

Media losing credibility: Parliamentary panel

Reflected in paid news, fake news, TRPs' manipulation, media trials, sensationalism, says Tharoor-led panel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Parliamentary standing committee on Communications and Information Technology has expressed concern that the media is gradually losing its credibility and integrity, which is reflected in the form of paid news, fake news, TRPs' manipulation, media trials, sensationalism and biased reporting. In its 27th report on 'Ethical Standards in Media Coverage', the panel, headed by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, said that it is a matter of grave concern that media which was once the most trusted weapon in the hands of the citizenry in our democracy and acted as trustees of the public interest is gradually losing its credibility and integrity where values and morality are being compro-



mitted. "Rampant instances of violations of code of conduct of ethics by the media reflected in the form of paid news, fake news, TRPs manipulation, media trials, sensationalism, biased reporting, etc. have placed a big question mark on its credibility in the minds of people which is not a good sign for the healthy democracy,"

the report said. On the television audience mechanism in the form of television rating points (TRP) the Committee also observed that the present TRP system is heavily biased towards urban areas and there is a need to change the system of measurement by giving equal weightage to rural and semi-urban areas through increasing

the sample size. The Committee said that the Ministry should study global practices adopted in the TRP system including the possibility of finding a solution to the privacy issues in the STBs through appropriate technical measures such as the use of scramblers to ensure accuracy, confidentiality and transparency within the TRP system. "The Government has constituted a Committee to examine BARC. The Committee desires to examine the report of the BARC inquiry Committee, commissioned by the Government of India. Must be placed before them for examination," it said. The committee has also asked the information and broadcasting Ministry to properly define the term "anti-national attitude" used in the

Cable Network Rules, 2014, saying it may be the cause of unnecessary harassment of private channels. The Committee further said that the term 'anti-national attitude' has, however, not been separately defined in the programme code enumerated in the CTN Rules, 1994. The Ministry has justified that 'anti-national' is commonly understood as opposed to national interests or nationalism. There are a total of 1,44,893 newspapers/ periodicals which have been registered with Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI), 926 permitted satellite television channels (with 387 channels being under News and current affairs category and 539 being under non-News and current affairs category), 36 Doordarshan channels with 2 News and 34 non-

News channels, 495 All India Radio FM radio stations and 384 private FM radio stations. The Committee finds that in addition to the above, social media platforms, like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, etc. have placed journalism in the hands of the citizens. Citizens use their personal recording devices including cell phones to capture events and post them on the internet. Though, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) does not have a record of the number of internet websites in India, according to a popular site 'Internetlivestats.com, there are at present more than 150 crores websites across the world and it is expected that around 20 crores out of these are active websites across the world.

Responsibility of PAC to make executive accountable: Om Birla



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Sunday said that since the relevance of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and people's expectations from it have increased over a period of time, it is the "responsibility" of the PAC "to evolve itself and be flexible in its processes and procedures" and make the "executive accountable for the development of the country". He also suggested that it should directly interact with people. The Centennial Year Celebration of the PAC, which was inaugurated by President Ram Nath Kovind in the Central Hall of Parliament House on December 4, concluded on Sunday. Birla, Deputy Chairperson, Rajya Sabha, Harivansh and Chairperson, Public Accounts Committee Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury attended the valedictory session. Union Ministers, Members of Parliament, Presiding Officers of State Legislative Bodies, Chairpersons of Public Accounts Committees of States and several other dignitaries also attended the valedictory session. In his valedictory address to the the Centennial Year Celebration of Public Accounts Committee of Parliament (PAC), Birla said that as part of our endeavour to ensure that the Committee "works for the benefit and welfare of the last person standing in the row, it should make the executive accountable for the development of the country and ensure

transparency in the working of the government." The Speaker suggested that a common digital platform of the Public Accounts Committees of the Parliament of India and State Legislatures should be created where such Committees can share their best practices and monitor execution of their recommendations. He said parliamentary committees should directly interact with people and take inputs from them. The more they will interact with people, the more effective and meaningful their recommendations will be, said Birla. Emphasizing on further strengthening PACs and better coordination among the PAC of the Parliament of India and State Legislatures, he advocated that there should be a Committee of Chairpersons of PAC and that committee should have a comprehensive discussion on the working of the PACs and brainstorm on the manner in which the working of such committees can be more effective. The report or suggestions made by this committee can be discussed among the Presiding Officers for implementation of the suggested reforms "which will make PACs more accountable, transparent and beneficial to the public." Highlighting the wider ambit and scope of the Public Accounts Committees in the contemporary times, Birla called for more and more use of information technology tools for ensuring transparency in governance.

India developing its own anti-drone tech to thwart threat to security: Shah



Jaisalmer: India is developing indigenous anti-drone technology to thwart the growing threat from these devices on the country's borders and it will soon be made available to the security forces, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Sunday. Speaking on the occasion of the 57th Raising Day of the Border Security Force (BSF) in Jaisalmer, Mr Shah said for the Modi government, border security is national security and it is committed to providing the best border guarding technologies in the world to the force.

NSG are trying to develop an anti-drone technology. I have complete faith in our scientists that we will be able to develop an indigenous anti-drone technology soon," he said. Mr Shah said since 2014, the Modi government has given special emphasis to border security. "Wherever there were attempts of incursion on the borders, attack on security forces and CAPFs, we have ensured immediate retaliation. India has ensured that no one can take our borders or soldiers lightly. The central government under (Prime Minister Narendra) Modi ensured a strong retaliation in the form of surgical and air strikes after Uri and Pulwama attacks, respectively. The entire world appreciated this action," he said. In order to fill vacancies in the BSF, the government has recruited 50,000 jawans and their training has started, he said. "The road construction budget for border areas was ? 23,000 crore during 2008-14. Between 2014 and 2020, the Modi government increased the budget from ? 23,700 crore to ? 44,600 crore. This shows the commitment of the Modi government to improve the border area infrastructure," he said. PTI

RS shows signs of return to normalcy

PRODUCTIVITY GOES ABOVE 95 PER CENT IN LAST TWO DAYS

NEW DELHI: After several days of the ongoing winter session of Parliament being washed away due to "disruptions and forced adjournments" amid Opposition ruckus, Rajya Sabha showed signs of a return to normal functioning as the productivity remained above 95 per cent on the last two days of the first week of the winter session.



The best productivity of 100 per cent was reported on Friday and 95 per cent on the previous day last week showing signs of a return of the House to normal functioning. Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu on Friday met with some opposition leaders and ministers and urged both sides to further discuss their views on the suspension of 12 members of the House in the wake of the Opposition's demand for its revocation. During the first week of the current monsoon session, two

Bills-- the Farm Laws Repeal Bill and the Dam Safety Bills-- were passed by the House. As many as 27 Zero Hour and 15 Special Mentions were made in the House. 23 of the listed 67 Starred Questions were orally answered. 8 listed Questions had to be deleted further to suspension members who raised those questions. Rajya Sabha has taken up the Private Members' Business for the full scheduled time of

two and half hours on Friday, doing so after one year nine months and 24 days and after 66 sittings. The last time it happened was on February 7, 2020, during the Budget session, the 251st session of the House. The Upper House has lost 52.30 per cent of the scheduled sitting time during the first week of the ongoing winter session that concluded Friday on account of disruptions and

forced adjournments. The productivity of the House during the last week has been 47.70 per cent of the scheduled time. However, with the House sitting for 33 minutes beyond the scheduled time on Thursday last, the overall productivity for the first week against the scheduled time has improved to 49.70 per cent. On Friday last week, 22 Private Members' Bills were introduced in Rajya Sabha and one was discussed. The introduction of one such bill seeking to amend the Preamble of the Constitution was put on hold. Private Members' Business was not scheduled during the 252nd session, the first full session held under Covid protocol. It was dispensed with during the 252nd to take up other business. No business could be transacted during the 254th session on Fridays, meant for Private Members' Business due to disruptions. Agencies

He noted that it is the first time since 1965, when the BSF was raised, that its Raising Day function is being celebrated at the border. "A country can prosper and move ahead in the world when it is safe. You ensure the safety of the country... Always remember that by guarding the borders you are ensuring the safety of the country and providing a platform to it globally," Mr Shah told the BSF personnel. He said the government will ensure that the world's best technologies are made available to the BSF. "It is the commitment of the government. There was a mention of a growing threat from drones. BSF, DRDO and

negligence in performance of service by the petitioner were to be enquired into....Whether the petitioner failed to control and supervise his subordinate Mr Sachin Waze (who was appointed as the head of the Crime Investigation Unit despite the opposition of the Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime), against whom a case has been registered by the NIA in view of his involvement in parking an explosive-laden car near the Antilia building, Mumbai, which was found on February 25, 2021," it said. PTI

Cop Param Bir Singh cannot be considered as whistle-blower: Maha to SC

NEW DELHI: Former a under the law as he chose to speak out against alleged corruption involving former home minister Anil Deshmukh only after his transfer, the Maharashtra Government has told the Supreme Court seeking dismissal of his plea. A bench headed by Justice S K Kaul had granted a major relief to Singh on November 22 by directing the Maharashtra Police not to arrest him in criminal cases lodged against him and had wondered if he was being hounded for filing cases

against police officers and extortionists, "what could happen to a common man". In the affidavit, Joint Secretary of Maharashtra Home Department Venkatesh Madhav said, "Petitioner (Singh) cannot be considered a whistleblower. I state and submit that, contrary to what is stated in the SLP (special leave petition), I deny that petitioner is a whistleblower as contemplated under the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014 or that the ratio laid down in the case of...applies to the facts of the present case."

"As evident from the petitioners own letter dated March 20, 2021, the petitioner cites instances of alleged corruption that took place few months prior to March, but only sought to expose these allegations on March 20, that is three days after he was transferred. Thus it is denied that the petitioner's letter dated March 20 was issued in public interest or for a bonafide purpose and therefore it is denied that the petitioner is a whistleblower." In the 83-page reply, the state government said Singh

who was recently suspended from the Mumbai Police over allegations of misconduct is indirectly trying to seek a stay on the criminal investigations pending against him through the petition and has failed to disclose material and relevant facts. "At the outset, I say that this court in a catena of judgements....has observed that it must be left to the discretion of the investigating agency to decide the course of investigation and that a court should interfere with an investigation only in rare cases.

"The Petitioner has filed the SLP against the impugned judgement dated September 16, 2021, passed by the Bombay High Court, but is really seeking a stay of further proceedings into various criminal complaints registered against him and this, with great respect, ought not to be permitted by this court," the state government said. The state government said that various enquiries against the suspended police officer are pending and being conducted. "The following instances of

negligence in performance of service by the petitioner were to be enquired into....Whether the petitioner failed to control and supervise his subordinate Mr Sachin Waze (who was appointed as the head of the Crime Investigation Unit despite the opposition of the Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime), against whom a case has been registered by the NIA in view of his involvement in parking an explosive-laden car near the Antilia building, Mumbai, which was found on February 25, 2021," it said. PTI

Polysaccharide Ulvan in seaweed may prevent Covid infection: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ulvan, the major water-soluble polysaccharide extracted from the cell wall of green seaweed, an edible marine algae, could help stop Coronavirus from infecting human cells, according to a team of researchers from Tel Aviv University. "The lack of access to vaccines takes the lives of many victims and even accelerates the creation of new variants," said TAU's Prof. Alexander Golberg, who led the study on ulvan that was recently published in PeerJ - a peer-reviewed science journal. "The study is still in its early stages, but we hope that the discovery will be used in the future to develop an accessible and effective drug, preventing infection with the coronavirus.



"Ulvan is extracted from marine algae called Ulva, which is also called 'sea lettuce', and is food in places like Japan, New Zealand and Hawaii," Golberg explained. "It has previously been reported that ulvan is effective against viruses in agriculture and also against some of the human viruses - and when coronavirus arrived, we asked to test its activity." They grew Ulva algae, extracted the ulvan from it and sent it to the Southern Research Institute in Alabama. There, the US team built a cellular model to assess the activity of the substance produced in Golberg's

laboratory. The cells were exposed to both the coronavirus and to ulvan. It was found that, in the presence of ulvan, the coronavirus did not infect cells. "In other words," he said, "ulvan prevents the cells from being infected with coronavirus." He noted that the ulvan the team used was actually a mixture of many natural substances and therefore more work is needed to determine specifically which is the one that prevents infection. Additionally, tests need to be done on small animals, monkeys and then, of course, humans.

Amid Omicron scare vaccination crosses 1 crore mark on Sat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid fears of the new Omicron variant of coronavirus, the number of Covid vaccine doses administered in a day crossed one crore on Saturday after more than two months, taking the total jabs given so far to over 127.5 crore. Senior officials from the Union Health Ministry said that the vaccination has gathered pace in the country over the last one week after South Africa reported the new variant which has been designated as a variant of concern by the World Health Organisation (WHO). "India achieves another 1,00,00,000 #COVID19 vaccinations today! With The #HarGharDastak campaign in full swing, the world's #LargestVaccinationDrive is touching new heights & accomplishing new feats under PM @Narendra Modi ji's leadership," Union health minister Mansukh Mandviya tweeted. The daily vaccination tally is expected to increase with the compilation of the final reports for the day by late Saturday night. According to the government data, 59.32 lakh vaccine

doses on an average were administered per day in November compared to 19.69 lakh doses per day in May this year. Besides, 55.77 lakh doses on an average were administered per day in October, 78.69 lakh in September and 59.29 lakh in August. Officials said around 84.8 per cent of the adult population in India has been given the first dose of the Covid vaccine, while 50 per cent has received the second dose. The countrywide vaccination drive was rolled out on January 16 with healthcare workers (HCWs) getting inoculated in the first phase. The vaccination of frontline workers (FLWs) started from February 2. The next phase of COVID-19 vaccination commenced from March 1 for people over 60 years of age and those aged 45 and above with specified comorbid conditions. The country launched vaccination for all people aged more than 45 years from April 1. The government then decided to expand its vaccination drive by allowing everyone above 18 to be vaccinated from May 1.

Patients with severe Covid develop pronounced scarring of lungs, say researchers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A majority of patients with severe Covid-19 develop unusually pronounced scarring of the lungs, due to misguided immune response, according to a team of researchers led by Charite - Universitätsmedizin in Berlin, in the journal Cell. They said that macrophages - immune cells which engulf and digest foreign substances - play a central role. In patients with severe COVID-19, damage to the lungs is so severe that the body can no longer absorb sufficient oxygen from the air - a condition known as Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS). "At the very least, SARS-CoV-2 is a potential trigger for a misguided macrophage response," explained Prof. Dr. Matthias Selbach, from the Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine (MDC). "Rather than replicating inside the immune cells, the virus appears to reprogramme them," he added. The researchers considered a number of potential causes for this prolonged lung



failure, including a particular type of ARDS, which causes pulmonary scarring leading to tissue thickening and stiffness. Tissue remodelling of this type (known as fibrosis) had been observed in certain patients relatively early on in the pandemic. As part of their research, the team used a number of microscopic imaging techniques to study lung tissue from deceased Covid-19 patients. "Almost all affected patients showed extensive tissue damage. The majority of the alveoli had been destroyed and the alveolar walls showed extensive thickening. We also found ubiquitous deposits of collagen, the main component of scar tissue. All of this is characteristic of severe fibrosis," said Prof. Dr. Peter Boor, lead at the RWTH Aachen University Medical Center's

Institute of Pathology. The reason for this phenomenon was initially unclear. In patients with Covid-19, respiratory failure typically only develops in week two or three after symptom onset, at a point when viral loads have started to decline. "This suggests that lung failure is not caused by the uncontrolled viral replication, but by secondary host responses, including those involving the immune system," explained Prof. Dr. Leif Erik Sander of Charite's Department of Infectious Diseases and Respiratory Medicine. The researchers, therefore, analysed the composition and characteristics of immune cells taken from bronchioalveolar lavage and lung tissue samples of severe and deceased COVID patients. They found that the pronounced accumulation of macrophages is one of the key features in Covid-19 patients who develop respiratory failure. Using cell cultures, the researchers discovered that SARS-CoV-2 exerts an effect on macrophages which may, in turn, accelerate the process of fibrosis.

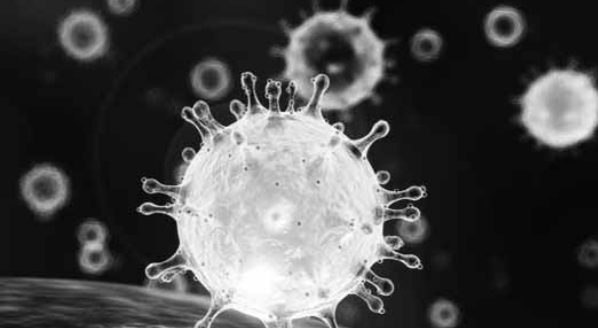
K'taka: 69 including 59 students in JNV test +ve

Chikkamagaluru (K'taka): As many as 69 people including 59 students of the Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya here have tested positive for Covid-19 and all are asymptomatic, a health officer said.

"We had conducted tests on 457 people in the JNV here, of which 59 students and 10 staff tested positive for Covid-19. They are asymptomatic but we have isolated them," District Health Officer Dr S N Umesh told PTI.

The officer said the test reports of all the people who were tested have arrived and only 69 were found infected.

Umesh also said the teaching and other staff in the JNV have been vaccinated. According to sources in the district authorities, the school



has been sealed temporarily and doctors and paramedical staff have been deployed there. Rooms are also being sanitised, they added.

The schools and colleges, especially residential ones in the state, are witnessing a spurt in Covid-19 cases. However, the severity of the infection and

fatality are almost nil in these places as most of the students and staff are asymptomatic.

Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai had recently said that the Covid-19 cases are appearing in two types of clusters -- one is the schools and colleges, and second one is the residential apartments. PTI

Kerala logs 4,450 new Covid-19 cases, 161 deaths

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,

Kerala on Sunday recorded 4,450 fresh Covid-19 cases and 161 deaths, raising the caseload to 51,54,092 and the toll to 41,600 respectively, the State government said.

Of the 161 deaths, 23 were reported over the last few days and 138 were designated as Covid-19 deaths after receiving appeals based on the new guidelines of the Centre and the directions of the Supreme Court, an official press release said.

With 4,606 more people recovering from the virus since Saturday, the total recoveries reached 50,80,211 and the active cases dropped to 43,454,

the release said.

As many as 57,722 samples were tested in the last 24 hours, it said. Among the 14 districts, Thiruvananthapuram recorded the highest with 791 fresh cases followed by Ernakulam 678 and Kozhikode 523. Of the new cases, 35 were health workers, 26 from outside the State and 4,163 infected through contact with the source of it not being clear in 226.

There are currently 1,67,693 people under surveillance in various districts, of whom 1,63,323 are in home or institutional quarantine and 4,370 in hospitals, the release said.

7 more test Omicron +ve in Maha

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Seven more cases of Omicron were detected in Maharashtra, as six members of a family that returned from Lagos, Nigeria on November 24 and a man from Pune tested positive for the new Covid-19 variant.

With the seven latest cases, the total number of Omicron positive patients in Maharashtra has gone up to eight. The first case of "Omicron" was detected in the twin township of Kalyan-Dombivli in Thane district where a 33-year-old man - who had arrived from South Africa to Mumbai via Dubai and New Delhi - tested positive for the Covid-19 variant on Saturday.

Of the latest seven cases, a 44-year-old woman who had come from Lagos, Nigeria on November 24 to meet her brother in Pimpri-Chinchwad municipal area, her two daughters accompanying her, the brother and his two daughters - a total of 6 persons - have tested positive for Omicron variant, according to the report received from the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune on Sunday evening.

Additionally, a 47-year-old man from Pune has also tested positive for the Omicron vari-

ant, as reported by the National Chemical Laboratory (NCL). "Thirteen contacts of these three women were traced and tested, and her 45-year-old brother with his daughters, 7 and 1.5 years old, have also tested positive. The Omicron variant has been found in all three contacts," a state health department official said.

Three out of the six persons have come from Nigeria, while the rest are their close contacts. "The Nigerian woman has mild symptoms and other five have no symptoms at all. Out of the six persons, three are under 18 years of age and therefore have not taken any vaccine. The three adults have taken both doses of vaccine - 2 have taken Covishield and 1 has taken Covaxin. All these patients are being treated at the Jijamata Hospital in Pimpri-Chinchwad and they are stable," the health official said.

Giving details of the situation in Pune, a statement issued by the State Health department said: "A patient was found positive for Omicron variant in Pune through routine surveillance. He visited Finland from 18 to November 25 2021. He tested owing to mild fever on 29th November and was found Covid positive. He has taken both doses of Covishield vaccine

and he is completely stable without any symptoms".

Meanwhile, the authorities said the total passengers who arrived at Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur airports since December 1 was 28,221 (4901 from At-risk countries and rest of 23,320), while passengers whose RT-PCR has been done are 5444 (4901 from high-risk countries and 543 were other country. Similarly, RT-PCR same and samples sent for genomic sequencing was (all from high-sick countries)

Additionally, field surveillance of all international passengers who have arrived since 1st November is underway.

"Through airport and field surveillance, 30 samples have been sent for genomic sequencing. Genetic changes/mutation in viruses is a natural phenomenon and people should not panic, the state health department said.

The State Public Health Department appealed to the citizens that they should follow Covid Appropriate Behaviour, inform the Public Health Department authorities if they have had an international travel history in October and those who have not taken Covid-19 vaccine or have had only one dose should complete their vaccination at the earliest.

UP Govt failed to provide security to traders: Akhilesh

Lucknow: The BJP Government in Uttar Pradesh has failed to provide security to traders, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav claimed Sunday, alleging the dial-100 helpline started by his Government has been rendered "useless" as it has been tinkered with by the ruling dispensation.

"If any trader has come to seek security from the chief minister (Yogi Adityanath), he was also not spared. A trader - had come from Pratapgarh and told the CM that he needs security. When he reached Pratapgarh, he was killed," the former chief minister alleged.

Addressing a meeting of traders organised by his party, Yadav also said his government launched the dial-100 helpline on the lines of the one in New York in the US for people to reach out to the police for any help.

"The police would reach the spot and help the caller. But, the Dial-100 was changed to 112, and the arrangement was rendered useless," he claimed.

The SP chief also asserted that traders, youths and farmers have made up their mind to vote out the BJP Government. He said wherever he visited in the state in the recent past people told him that they don't want the BJP Government anymore. "Not only traders, even farmers and youths are facing problems," he claimed.

He also mocked Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for "working 24 hours a day". "We have no doubts about it. And since he works for 24 hours, there is so much of unemployment, and the farmers and the youth are facing so much of problems besides the traders.

"People's earnings have halved. There is a dip in profit, but the inflation has doubled. Do you think that this will usher in prosperity in your family and in your lives?" Yadav asked.

He further attacked the BJP government over the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, claiming that traders committed suicide during the pandemic. He also attacked the Government over demonetisation.

UP polls: Mamata likely to visit Varanasi, support Akhilesh

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Trinamool Congress president Mamata Banerjee is expected to visit Varanasi next month amid indication that her party will support Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party in the upcoming Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls.

"Didi has already said in Delhi that if Akhilesh Yadav needs our help, we are ready to extend help. The gesture of senior SP leader Jaya Bachchan seeking votes for the TMC during the West Bengal Assembly elections will be reciprocated in Uttar Pradesh," said Laliteshpati Tripathi, who recently joined the TMC.

"The target is the same and we have to leave no stone unturned to ensure that these forces (led by the BJP) are defeated. We are also with SP chief Akhilesh ji in his fight," Tripathi told PTI on Sunday.

He said Banerjee would visit Varanasi probably around the second week of January.

"The TMC is holding meetings and deliberating how to strengthen itself in Uttar Pradesh. As far as party chief Mamata Banerjee's visit to Varanasi is concerned, we have not finalised the dates. We were planning to organise her visit in December, but owing to her previous engagements, we could not get the dates," Tripathi said.

Uttar Pradesh is not the immediate focus of the TMC, he said. For the TMC, Goa and Tripura are the states of immediate focus, Tripathi said, adding his party is not in the fray in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election due early next year.

SP finds new icon in 'missile man' APJ Abdul

Lucknow: Aggressively positioning itself against the BJP in the upcoming Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls, the Samajwadi Party seems to have found a new icon for itself -- former president APJ Abdul Kalam -- who shares space with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and socialist leaders on Akhilesh Yadav's campaign rath.

The 'Samajwadi Vijay Yatra' rath -- Akhilesh Yadav's personalised campaign vehicle -- carries pictures of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and socialist icons like Acharya Narendra Dev, Ram Manohar Lohia and Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar, apart from that of former president Kalam.

The use of the former president's picture for election purposes appears uncommon, but Samajwadi Party leaders justify it, citing his proximity to party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav who they claimed was the first person to propose his name for presidency in 2002.

They dismissed charges that it was an attempt by the party to compensate for the loss of the party's "Muslim face" Azam Khan, who is lodged in a jail in Sitapur with dozens of cases registered against him.

"The Samajwadi Party respects all the great personalities, and an attempt has been made to incorporate photographs of a large number of eminent personalities who have given a direction to the country and the society," SP Chief spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary told PTI.

"It was Netaji (Mulayam Singh Yadav) who had proposed his (Kalam) name for the presidential elections in 2002," Chaudhary said.

He also dismissed the "loss of Muslim face" theory.

"There is no communal angle involved in this, and it is purely a nationalist angle. Azam ji enjoys the same respect, which he was getting earlier in the party."

Kerala BJP leaders turn en mass against State party chief Surendran

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The return of Koderi Balakrishnan as secretary of the Kerala CPI(M) after a brief spell of ill health and personal issues has its ramification in the BJP's State unit. The demand to reconstitute the Kerala BJP has reached a crescendo with most leaders of the party expressing their unanimity in removing K Surendran, the reigning president who stands as an accused in many cases.

A senior leader of the party, P P Mukundan, who is a former State president, did not hide his disappointment over the High Command's decision to extend the tenure of Surendran. "I do not see any future for the party at least for the next 30 years. Surendran has to go as he has proved to be a liability for the party," Mukundan told The Pioneer.

The veteran leader, though does not hold any official position in the party, is in regular touch with the cadre spread across the State. He has his own reasons to feel dejected over the state of affairs. "Surendran is the first chief of a political party in the State to be interrogated by the police in connection with hawala transactions, electoral malpractices and prevention of corruption act," said Mukundan.

K Sundara, a BSP candidate who had filed his nomination papers from Manjeshwar in Kasaragod district from where Surendran was contesting had told the police that he was pressurised by Surendran to withdraw from the race. Associates of Surendran give Rs 2.5 lakh and a smartphone to Sundara in lieu of withdrawing from the race. Police have registered a case against Surendran.

A woman by name Praseetha Azheekode, a close aide to tribal leader C K Janu, had alleged that Surendran offered the latter one crore rupees to remain with the National Democratic Alliance during the 2021 assembly election.

Despite its best efforts to open its account in the Kerala Legislative Assembly, the Surendran-led BJP came a cropper in the hustings failing to retain even the single seat won by the party in the 2016 election.

"The assembly election in 2021 had offered the BJP a big opportunity to win at least five or six seats. But the party squandered the chances with poor management and propaganda style," said a senior leader who too is disgusted with the style of Surendran.

The BJP which had polled 14.96 per cent of the popular votes in the 2016 assembly election could score only 12.36 per cent votes in the 2021 assembly polls, pointed out Mukundan. The CPI(M)-led LDF polled 1.05 crore votes while the Congress-led UDF managed 8.1 million votes. The BJP had to content with 2.5 million votes which shows that the party is yet to make any kind of inroads in Kerala politics, said a BJP leader who has been with the party since 1980.

P Sujathan, political commentator, said that there were no leaders in the Kerala BJP who has the stature of leaders in other political parties. Party supporters spread across the State through social media postings have made their presidential candidate known to all-Valsan Thillankeri, an RSS leader and educationist from Kannur.

IIT-Madras faculty founded 94 startups valued at ₹1,400 Cr; hybrid aerial vehicles among projects

NEW DELHI: From a startup aiming to make hybrid aerial vehicles to the ones working on converting waste to crude oil and efficient water transport solutions, faculty members at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras founded at least 94 enterprises having a combined valuation of over ₹ 1,400 crore.

According to officials, the IIT faculty members have founded, mentored or advised over 240 startups in the past decade which today have a combined valuation of ₹ 11,500 crore. The number of companies directly founded by IIT-Madras faculty members stood at 94 in October this year. These have a combined valuation in excess of ₹ 1,400 crore, based on investment raised by these startups from angel investors or venture capital firms.

According to data shared by the IIT Madras Incubation Cell (IITMIC), the number of faculty-

founded startups rose sharply from 37 in April 2017 to 69 in June 2019 and 80 in 2020 before touching 94 by October 2021. These startups were incubated by the IIT Madras Incubation Cell, one of India's leading deep technology startup hub.

As many as 77 faculty members from various departments of the institute were involved in setting up startups. This figure is nearly 13 per cent of the total institute faculty strength of around 600, which is considered on par with the best universities in the world, the IITMIC claimed.

A startup is aiming to make a new breed of aircraft called hybrid aerial vehicles for vertical takeoff and landing as well as long-distance flight to carry goods and passengers, ultimately leading to air taxi operations.

Another working on mini launch vehicles to launch micro- and nano-satellites into space orbits.

A startup aiming to produce micro gas turbines for decentralized power generation and another aiming to convert any kind of waste -- from municipal solid waste to agri waste -- into crude oil are among the notable ones.

Another enterprise aims to make earth observation satellites with multi-sensor fusion and edge-computing in space.

Tamaswati Ghosh, Chief Executive Officer, IIT Madras Incubation Cell, said, "over 12 per cent of institute faculty are co-founders in our incubated startups working across a breadth of globally critical domains. This underlines our ability to translate cutting-edge scientific innovations to the field."

The highest numbers of associated startups or spin-outs are from the Departments of Electrical, Mechanical and Civil Engineering, followed by Aeronautics and Applied Mechanics.

At Mumbai airport, ED stops actor Jacqueline Fernandez from flying abroad

New Delhi: The ED on Sunday stopped actor Jacqueline Fernandez at the Mumbai airport preventing her from flying abroad, stating that she may be required to join an ongoing money laundering investigation against alleged conman Sukesh Chandrashekar and others, officials said.

The 36-year-old actor was first stopped by the immigration authorities at the airport on the basis of a Look Out Circular (LoC) issued by the federal probe agency, they said.

Agency sleuths then reached the Mumbai airport and disallowed her travel, asking her to remain in the country as she may be required to join the probe, they added.

It is understood that she was either travelling to Dubai or Muscat and after she was stopped, she left the airport around 6 pm.

The Sri Lankan-origin actor was questioned by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in multiple sessions in connection with the over ₹ 200 crore money laundering case being probed against Chandrashekar and his actor wife Leena Maria Paul.

The agency on Saturday filed a charge sheet before a special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court in this case and named Chandrashekar, his wife and six others in it. It had alleged in the charge sheet that

Chandrashekar had gifted the actor numerous costly gifts, including some Persian cats and a horse. He is accused of cheating some people, including some high-profile individuals such as former Fortis Healthcare promoter Shivinder Mohan Singh's wife Aditi Singh.

Another Bollywood actor-dancer Nora Fatehi has also been grilled by the ED in this case.

Investigation found that Chandrashekar was lodged in the Rohini jail here when he allegedly ran an extortion racket using phone spoofing technology.

The ED had arrested the couple and two co-accused, Pradeep Ramnani and Deepak Ramnani, in this case.

In August, the ED raided some of Chandrashekar's premises and seized a sea-facing bungalow in Chennai, ₹ 82.5 lakh in cash and over a dozen luxury cars.

It had claimed in a statement that Chandrashekar is a "known conman" and is being probed by the Delhi Police in a case of alleged criminal conspiracy, cheating and extortion to the tune of about ₹ 200 crore.

"Chandrashekar is the mastermind of this fraud. He has been part of the crime world since the age of 17. He has multiple FIRs against him...", the ED had said.

Fed up with regular fights with husband, Kota woman jumps into well with 5 minor daughters

PTI ■ KOTA (RAJASTHAN)

Upset over regular fights with her husband, a 40-year-old woman allegedly jumped into a well with her five minor daughters, all of whom died, when the man had gone to attend the condolence meeting of a relative, police said Sunday.

They said the villagers spotted the six bodies Sunday morning and informed the police who rushed the bodies to a local hospital. The deceased woman has been identified as Badamdevi, a mother of seven and the wife of Shival Banjara, a resident of Banjaron Ka Dera at Kaliyahi village under Chechat police station. The five minor deceased girls are Savitri (14), Ankali (8), Kajal (6), Gunjan (4) and one-year-old Archana.

Police said the two other daughters -- Gayatri (15) and Punam (7) -- escaped the ill-fate as they remained asleep. Chechat Circle Officer DSP Praveen Nayak said prima facie the routine fights between the woman and her husband was the reason behind the woman taking the extreme step. Shival worked as a blanket and cloth vendor.

The CO said the man was not present at his home when the incident occurred on the intervening night of Saturday on Sunday as he had gone to attend the condolence meeting at his relative's home in another village.

Chechat police station SHO Rajendra Meena said the well is just 100 meters from the house of the woman. Shival returned to home Sunday morning after being informed of the incident but he did not tell the police why his wife took the extreme step, the SHO said.

A case under section 174 of CrPC would be lodged in the matter to investigate carried out, he said. The postmortem of the six bodies is underway, he said. **PTI**

Mathura: Anti-riot drill conducted ahead of Dec 6 mosque threat

PTI ■ MATHURA (UP)

The city police conducted an anti-riot drill to check its preparedness against the threat by right wing groups to place a Krishna idol in a mosque on December 6, an official said here on Sunday.

Even though the call was withdrawn last week by the group which planned it, police are not taking any chances.

The drill was conducted on Saturday at Police Lines area, SSP Gaurav Grover on said.

He said proper functioning of weapons was also checked in presence of District Magistrate Navneet Singh Chahal.

Police had earlier beefed up security in the city after the announcement by right wing groups to install the deity's idol inside the Shahi Idgah Masjid.

The Aurangzeb-era mosque shares its premises with Keshav Dev Temple here in the city.

Police imposed section 144 in the city banning any public gatherings. Security checks including frisking began to be conducted at borders

from Saturday evening, SP city Martand Prakash Singh said. The city has been divided into two super zones, four zones, and eight sectors with senior officers in charge of each zone/sector. Para-military forces were deployed from Sunday morning at different points, officials said.

Traffic restrictions have been imposed till December 7, with complete suspension of any vehicle movement near the temple and mosque area, SP traffic Harendra Kumar said.

Speaking to media last month, Akhil Bharat Hindu Mahasabha leader Rajyashree Choudhary had called for installation of the Krishna's idol inside the mosque after conducting a 'jalabhishek'.

The group, along with a few others, has claimed that the actual birthplace of Lord Krishna is inside the mosque. The administration has since refused to allow any such activity, with Chahal earlier saying that no permission was sought for any such act in first place.

December 6 also happens to be the date when Babri Mosque was demolished in 1992 by kar sevaks. PTI

5 pilgrims killed in car crash in AP

Tirupati: Five pilgrims, including an infant, were killed and three others seriously hurt after their speeding car crashed into a road divider at Ithelpalli near here on Sunday, police said. The accident occurred when the vehicle carrying 8 people from Vijayanagaram district crashed into the divider and flipped onto the other side of the road before it caught fire.

The passers-by doused the flames and pulled the victims out of the car. However, five people died on the spot and three others were admitted to a hospital here with injuries. It is not immediately known whether the pilgrims were on their way to Tirumala hills, the abode of Lord Venkateswara or returning from the temple as all belongings and other papers related to their identities were completely destroyed in the blaze after the car caught fire, police said adding efforts are on to establish their identities. **PTI**

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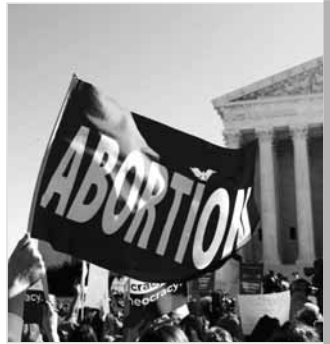
PAPER WITH PASSION

‘Birth’ right

The law prohibiting abortion after six weeks of pregnancy questions women’s federal rights

The United States is caught in a raging debate over human rights violations after its Supreme Court backed an unprecedented Texan law that prohibits medical abortion after the first six weeks of pregnancy. The law came into force on September 1. Democrats and liberals say they are stunned that their Supreme Court would support a law that assaults women’s reproductive rights. The issue has snowballed into a controversy with four Supreme Court justices, including the Chief Justice, dissenting against the 5-4 verdict. Texas is a Republican stronghold and pushed the law through. In a State where the majority of abortions generally happen after the six-week mark, the new law gives a woman barely over a week to detect her pregnancy, consult family and get the abortion done. Doctors admit it is difficult for a woman to know she is pregnant in the time the law allows her. The law is being played

also because it denies a woman the right to abort even when she is pregnant because of rape or incest. The Republicans have been dismissive saying, with a straight face at that, that they will rid Texas of rapists. The law has determined that the fetus gains a heartbeat at the sixth week of pregnancy. Doctors say the heartbeat sound is created by the cardiac valves which do not exist at six weeks of gestation. However, the most controversial part of the law is that it empowers any private citizen to drag a doctor to court for an abortion after the sixth week and impose a hefty fine. The law explicitly



refuses to consider the woman’s consent as moot.

The Texas law stands out as a glaring example of where the conservative American society is going with laws concerning women. For close to 50 years, American law protected a woman’s federal constitutional right to have an abortion during the first stage of pregnancy. The law also provided that nobody has the authority to regulate such abortion. The Texas law dismisses both laws summarily. What is surprising is that the Supreme Court did not address the constitutionality of the State law before supporting it. The petitioners did raise the matter, but the court said they did not meet the burden to prove their point. It is also without precedent of the apex court deciding such a crucial case without full briefing or argument and after less than 72 hours of thought. That is what the dissenting justices said. The first inadequacy is the apex court backing such a law. The ruling amounts to protecting the Texas law from judicial review until the Supreme Court takes up another petition challenging the law. Secondly, the Supreme Court has to look into the prospect of the Texas law turning ordinary citizens into bounty hunters and making pregnant women subjects of illegal surveillance and possibly, stalking. Is Texas outsourcing the implementation of a questionable law to its citizens? Who but the Supreme Court can protect women’s choice on birth or abortion?

PICTALK



Police use tear gas to disperse demonstrators during a protest in Brussels, Belgium

AP

Clouds in balcony

Efforts to get acquainted with the culture and customs of North-east is in our best interest

It’s like being on that Assam-Meghalaya highway; on your side, you are in one State but take a U-turn and are into the other. No differentiators, weather is the same, temperature is the same, even the people are more or less the same. But somehow the warmth that you get, and need, up in the higher altitudes, is missing. Like the warm embrace of the *ma*, or a sibling, or just a loved one. Like so many other places on earth, the North-east has developed in a major way: in terms of *bhasha*, in terms of inclusivity, in terms of food. From the frontier gateway of Guwahati (the old-timers though these days miss the romance of calling it Gauhati, which mostly remains in the High Court’s name) to the scenic beauty of Meghalaya and the lonely cherubs of Arunachal Pradesh, it’s all there. A feast for the eyes and the hungry soul. But let’s not try to forcibly convince you until after you’ve seen it yourself. Like the gent, Rakesh Sharma, said while offering compassion to a visually impaired child, telling him how the Moon looks: “*Ab main kaise bataun; dekh paate toh to batata...?*”

People are lush with friendly smiles, kids glow with inherent purity, neighbours and acquaintances will follow up with queries about the well-being of your own self and the larger family, including *chachi* and *naani*, and they all offer special warmth during

the festive Christmas season; basically get enveloped in the Yuletide spirit, and share it fully with an open, overflowing-with-love heart! Now what we — as an entire nation, because they are reaching out and giving us dollops of love and affection — need to do with utmost urgency is to throw out our limbs and cling on to them, making them feel not as different from the mainstream. They are our brothers, sisters, and friends, after all! We met a few who have been in Assam via Bangalore and Chennai, and even earlier, Frank Anthony’s school in *saadi Dilli*’s Lajpat Nagar. So, the theme here should be that the Government’s ‘Look East’ policy is very welcome, but it rather not turn out to be a case of myopia. There are many good things that the rest of India doesn’t know well about the North-east and its habitants and we shall do ourselves a great service if we make sincere efforts to get acquainted with their culture and customs. Let’s keep all our good people on our side, and let’s row the boat with them.

Women: Significant other of humankind

Education, rather than reservation, may well be the key to women’s emancipation and genuine progress as compared to mere tokenism



PRAFULL GORADIA

An Arabic proverb says, “Trust neither a king, nor a horse nor a woman”. Another one questions, “What does a woman have to do with the council of a nation?” A third one says, “Obedience to a woman will have to be repented of” (*Dictionary of Islam* by Thomas Patrick Hughes; Rupa & Co, 1999). Prophet Mohammad improved upon such sentiments. Nevertheless, it is not easy to erase what has been part of a culture for long. As a result, even today, in any matter, if a man happens to be a witness, two women will be required to counter him, according to the Sharia. Which means a woman is half a person compared to a man. But in our sub-continent, we have worshipped *devis* — Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati and many others. As far as I know, the pantheon of no other religion practiced today worships any goddess.

A possible explanation is that Hinduism has intuitively followed nature’s trail of man and woman being indispensable for the perpetuation of the species. Hinduism is not the gift of any prophet, unlike most other faiths. Mostly, religions were founded by men who assigned a subordinate role to the woman.

Intriguingly, foreign faiths that came to India have been influenced by the peculiarity of Hinduism. *Devas* and *Devis* both have to be worshipped, not just the male deities or messiahs. It is possible that other faiths have been deeply influenced or affected through the converts who came into their fold. This possibly explains why Bangladesh has had two women Prime Ministers, Sheikh Hasina Wajed and Begum Khaleda Zia. Pakistan, with comparatively more imported blood, has had only one lady Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto. The cultures of both countries allowed their womenfolk to reach the portals of politics, but not into the gates that may lead them to godliness. We can only hope that the era may not be far when this too will come about. A clergyman, I am friendly with, told me that this is very unlikely as it would threaten our god-given faith.

Upon arguing further, the



clergyman was rather obstinate on the issue of women. My contention was that shutting out women means excluding half the population from participating in civilisation’s progress. If the wheel of progress is to move on as well as accelerate, such exclusion would mean the loss of half the people. Having done so, one cannot complain that one’s community is poor and backward. Prof Timur Koran of the Duke University, USA, has dwelt at length on the backwardness of most of West Asia. What embarrasses me is that the community whose princes ruled large tracts of India should now claim to be poor and backward. Some speakers even compare the condition of their community with that of the Dalits.

Uncannily, the USA, the world’s great democracy, has yet to elect a woman president. Only recently has a lady become the Vice-President of America after 240 years of the country’s flourishing. This evokes the question as to whether female backwardness is an Abrahamic flaw and not merely an Islamic fault? The prejudice against women, however, clashes with the current march of time. Women



THE GENUINE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMENFOLK CAN ACHIEVE NOT ONLY SOCIETAL BALANCE BUT ALSO A CIVILISATIONAL ETHOS BASED UPON EMPATHY, WHICH ARE NATURAL FEMININE ATTRIBUTES

have progressed in many fields except perhaps in the realm of power. This is not to suggest that the current Hindu ethos merits unqualified applause. It too needs to lockstep with time and enable its womenfolk to attain and avail of a wider scope, without resorting to the escapism of reservations. Such marking out of seats has been an Indian obsession, which has not really taken anyone forward.

What is perhaps necessary is to create special opportunities for women to get educated. Education, rather than reservation, may well be the key for women’s emancipation and genuine progress as compared to mere tokenism. Especially so if a girl is encouraged in accordance with her aptitude. This lever of learning has not been consciously attempted even for the Dalits.

It is no mere cliché to state that empathy for and acceptance of women as equals in the endeavour of life brings about greater harmony in societies and nations. Setting aside the religious aspect briefly, we cannot overlook the fact that societies and cultures that have traditionally relegated womenfolk to a subordinate position have also been less tol-

erant of ways of life that differ from their own. Historically, this has engendered societal tension, conflict and warfare which humankind is still forced to endure and come to terms with. It is not a coincidence that the most debilitating projects of expansionism, wars and civilisational upheavals emanating from them have come from the western side of the world.

On the other hand, genuine empowerment of womenfolk can achieve not only societal balance but also a civilisational ethos based upon empathy, which are natural feminine attributes. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen’s contention that education and health are the best guarantors of economic development is particularly relevant when it comes to the application of these two very crucial indices for women. It would be no exaggeration to state that the better half of humanity must be really worshipped, for the sake of not only democracy and progress, but for a secure future of human society itself.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ELEPHANTS FACE A MAMMOTH RISK

Sir — The information accessed from the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) via the Right to Information Act by activist R Pandiarajan, in wake of the deaths of five elephants in railway accidents at Madukkarai in Tamil Nadu’s Coimbatore district on November 26, and at Jagiroad in Assam’s Morigaon district on November 30, observed that 1160 elephants lost their lives to electrocution, train hits, poaching and poisoning in the last 11 years; it has lent a new urgency to elephant conservation.

The elephant is a fascinating animal; it is a delight to behold; its bigness, its hue and attributes stand out and capture our eyes and imagination. With its thick grey skin, large ears, tusks and a trunk, it is an aesthetically pleasing giant. As per a 2017 count, India has a total of 29,964 wild elephants; it is a small number that should alert us to take steps in real time to save them and create an environment congenial to an increase in the elephant population. Live wire fences and train collisions account for most of the casualties; it should prick our conscience that we are solely responsible for the avoidable deaths of elephants for ‘reasons other than natural causes’.

G David Milton | Maruthancode

ARE WE PREPARED FOR OMICRON?

Sir — Despite the concerns over the detection of a new COVID variant Omicron, mask compliance still remains at the lowest. A latest survey conducted by digital community based platform LocalCircles reported that one in three Indians, say the majority of people in their area, don’t even carry masks with them when stepping out. The Government’s efforts have not proved enough to educate people about the virus, spread awareness about mask compliance and complete vaccination amid growing concerns of the newly emerged variant.

Getting each person’s attention is not an easy task but the Government should adopt different mechanisms. The OTP system for vaccination has achieved its

A life lived large comes to an end



It’s always a daunting challenge to encompass in words the personality and contributions of a man such as veteran TV journalist Vinod Dua, who passed away yesterday. He was arguably one of the country’s most popular and influential news broadcasters, who will be best remembered as the doyen of Indian television journalism. When TV was at a budding stage in India, he worked at Doordarshan and NDTV. His

wife Chinna Dua had succumbed to COVID-19 earlier this year. He was also the host of the highly popular food show ‘*Zaika India Ka*’ for NDTV that saw him exploring distinct food cultures of different cities and towns in India.

For his excellence in journalism, the veteran journalist was honoured with several awards, including India’s fourth highest civilian award Padma Shri by the Government of India. He was also the first electronic media journalist who was awarded the coveted Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Award in 1996. The nation is poorer when great personalities like Vinod Dua fade away. He will always be remembered as a towering figure in the world of Indian TV journalism and with his demise, an era ends leaving behind a legacy of excellence. A glorious chapter of Indian TV journalism has come to an end. May you be at peace, Vinod Dua.

Ramesh G Jethwani | Bengaluru

goals. Now, such systems should be replaced by a non-OTP system to achieve 100 per cent vaccination because a significant number of people residing in rural areas don’t have a mobile number linked with their Aadhaar which is mandatory to receive an OTP. The public should realise that it is the need of the hour to think out of the box by supporting the Government’s efforts to combat the new variant. After the horrific consequences followed by the first and second wave of COVID-19, neglecting the new variant is not a wise move at all.

Shivesh Patidar | Ujjain

WEATHER IN GOA IS ACTING DRUNK

Sir — Goa is in the throes of a peculiar weather pattern which threatens to disrupt normal life in all respects. The rather strange phenomenon where the State gets to experience all the three weathers of the year in the course of 20 hours truly merits a discussion in international science forums. The region’s ‘sensational’ climat-

ic upheaval which could be hailed as a tourism ‘attraction’ leads the locals through a pleasant winter in the early hours of the morning, peak summer in the afternoon and light to heavy showers accompanied by thunder and lightning thereafter.

This is precisely what has been happening in the past few days. Suffice to say that the undulating climatic ‘configurations’ have left everyone in a state of utter confusion. However, the erratic weather conditions are indeed a matter of concern. As two of the most pressing issues of the world today — global warming and climate change — have purportedly reached a point where it is almost irreversible. If that in itself is not portentous, the increase in the frequencies of cyclones and other natural disasters is a veiled warning about the dangers in store for mankind in the coming future.

Pachu Menon | Margao

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

What exactly is the Home Ministry doing when neither civilians nor security personnel are safe in our own land?

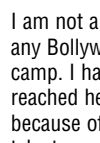


Congress leader —Rahul Gandhi



President Biden will underscore US’s concerns with Russian military activities on the border with Ukraine.

White House press secretary —Jen Psaki



I am not a part of any Bollywood camp. I have reached here because of my talent.

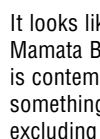


Actor —Kartik Aaryan



England will take confidence from India’s win over Australia at the Gabba earlier this year.

England captain —Joe Root



It looks like that Mamata Banerjee is contemplating something new excluding the Congress.



Shiv Sena MP —Sanjay Raut

FIRST COLUMN

HANDLING STRESS
OF THE TIMES

A scientific response to the threat is going to take some time and a bit of luck as well



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The 'World International Day of Kindness' has come and gone. The planet has perhaps never needed such a theme for focussed attention as now. Just about everyone is under some kind of stress; personal, social, financial, wellness, travel related and more. The surfacing of Omicron has sent a new wave of fear in a situation showing its first sign of recovery from a pandemic after nearly two years.

The regulatory system globally, nationally and state-wise has not always been aligned. Threat perceptions are determining the regulatory system. It multiplies the burden of the individual's response to keeping on the right side of the regulations which often come in suddenly and at times get changed abruptly. The argument for this would be lack of clarity and variegated data on the nature of the threat itself. This, however, does not mitigate the stress burden of the individual or groups that have to respond.



Consider the case of the Omicron threat. As of now there seems to be little consensus on the efficacy of the vaccines to handle it. This is understandable because of the nature of the mutations in the virus continue to be undefined and are still under study. That being so, the line of treatment also becomes a matter of dealing with a situation which in many ways remains undefined.

Omicron has been detected in 38 countries. Predictably, the response has been to tighten the screening system. There is the inevitable option of the administration taking over the monitoring system directly if there is a perceived violation. This could be in the way of taking the suspected person infected with this virus to a government quarantine system. The adequacy of the government quarantine is in many cases open to doubt. Media reports have the description of a couple in a Dutch airport offloaded from the aircraft and sent to a government-monitored quarantine in a tuberculosis cure centre. There was a reported attempt at escape by one of the couple. It was infructuous. What followed is another story. The substantial point is that the overall environment of stress has magnified many times in the last few days and threatens to intensify with passage of time.

Under such circumstances, a scientific response to the threat in all its dimensions is going to take time and perhaps a bit of luck. Scientific breakthroughs cannot always be programmed and it is good when they can happen.

The simple point till then is the practise of the virtue of kindness and understanding. This thought is not new but the practise of it over the years has not intensified. In dealing with another person and in interacting with him, it is important to keep reminded that the other person may be as much under stress as one is oneself. This requires the quality of patience, reasonableness and empathy. The sooner it becomes a two-way street, the less painful would be the response to a totally unprecedented situation which this planet is faced with.

To sum up, therefore, where it is obvious that tracks keep changing and the scientific response is tentative, one has to keep faith alive. Kindness to oneself and the other person has to be the desired underpinning of relationships. Perhaps under such circumstances, urges of consumerism and profiteering may be somewhat kept under control. Several narratives are available on the behaviour of people when pushed to the brink because of COVID-appropriate anxiety. There will be wisdom in trying to control the threats with sensitivity, greater logic and some lead time built into getting to know of the updated regulations.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal.)

Colombo project gives tactical edge to China

The Hambantota and the Colombo ports can serve as nodal points involving future Chinese military communication and intelligence network systems



NISHTHA KAUSHIKI

In 2014, on his visit to Sri Lanka, China's President Xi Jinping launched the Colombo Port City (CPC) Project worth \$1.4 Billion, second biggest after the Hambantota Project. In February 2021, the cabinet ousted India and Japan from the tripartite agreement and a month later, Sri Lanka awarded a contract to China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) to construct the second phase of Colombo Port's East Container Terminal (ECT) for a lease of 99 years. The Rajapakse administration further approved the Colombo Port City Economic Commission Bill that established a Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

The most striking feature of the Bill is that it establishes a 'Commission' whose geographical jurisdiction extends to the entire 'Area of Authority of the Colombo Port City', thereby giving China the 'right to decline' to any other third country, or to Sri Lanka itself, requests for establishing businesses. It also gave China a freehold over the 'Area' for 99 years as per Clause 67, which explicitly states that the 'permit' cannot be cancelled before the stipulated time or till China wished for it. Thus, any other foreign presence on the port will require a Chinese nod, and even if Sri Lanka objects to any of the Chinese officials or the activities resulting from the agreement, there would be little that the island country would be able to do. Sri Lanka would not be able to oust China if it increases its hostile behaviour against its neighbouring states or Sri Lanka itself. It would not be wrong to say that it will genuinely establish a 'Chinese Enclave', a terminology coined by the opposition political parties of Sri Lanka.

The importance of the Project is ascertained from the fact that Colombo ranks among the top 25 busiest container ports of the world and gives access to the Arabian sea and the Bay of Bengal. The approved Bill thus has international ramifications from a security aspect. Located in India's strategic backyard, CPC gives the PLA-Navy (PLAN) of China a tactical and strategic edge. The presence of China in Hambantota has already raised the threat perception for India and other countries like Australia. The distance between the two ports is approximately 250 nautical miles. The logistical limitation that PLAN had in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) now seems to be done away. The debt trap policies of China aim to disturb the traditional balance of power in the IOR. The dual-use capabilities of the Hambantota port might be an intelligence and surveillance hotspot apart from providing the deep berthing rights to the Chinese submarines. Both the ports are close to Djibouti and create for Beijing a safety lane for PLAN in times of open hostilities. The dots of its 'ports' can be connected with the Chinese strategic intent of joining them with Chabahar, Gwadar and the Karachi ports, apart from the news of Uganda's airport takeover. China's peacekeeping force in



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PROJECT IS ASCERTAINED BY THE FACT THAT COLOMBO RANKS AMONG THE TOP 25 BUSIEST CONTAINER PORTS OF THE WORLD AND GIVES ACCESS TO THE ARABIAN SEA AND THE BAY OF BENGAL. THE PRESENCE OF CHINA IN HAMBANTOTA HAS ALREADY RAISED THE THREAT PERCEPTION FOR INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES, LIKE AUSTRALIA

(The writer is an Assistant Professor at Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. The views expressed are personal.)



Africa multiplies the magnitude of the problem as they can be immediately called upon to participate in case of conflict. In this way, China is an active threat to the critical choke points of world trade.

In the Eastern sector of the IOR, China has overcome its 'Malacca Dilemma' through its presence in Myanmar, and its naval presence in the Coco and the Greater Coco islands and Thailand's. The strategic experts well understand the use of canals for military purposes. China has militarised the IOR by disturbing the 'zone of peace', which India has focused on since 1947. The Hambantota and the Colombo ports can serve as nodal points involving future Chinese military communication and intelligence network system.

Apart from the port acquisitions, China simultaneously internally balanced itself, which is evident through its Science of Military Strategy (2013) had spoken of local wars and then rapidly shifted to prioritising an enhancement of its capabilities for 'system warfare' (2015). The warfare encompasses overall strengthening of its reconnaissance, early-warning and command and control systems apart from the rapid development of medium and long-range precision strike capabilities through land, air and sea joint operations. Accordingly, what we see today is the culmination of its strategy in initiating battles in the enemy land (Galwan) and heightened vertical proliferation of its precision strike capabilities (hypersonic missiles and quantum increase of missiles).

Nevertheless, China has also made critical technologies available to Pakistan (horizontal proliferation).

Apart from the doctrinal incorporations at a tactical level, to confuse its enemies, the ports of OBOR provide China with a camouflage wherein anything ranging from critical arms such as conventional missiles to its military personnel can be hidden to 'act' at a suitable time. The military build-up in these ports can be used for deception purposes to hide its 'intent and area of action'. The intelligence agencies need to keep a stern watch over what military facilities are placed in the Sri Lankan ports apart from the LAC. Indian ministries of foreign affairs and defence should not miss the rising sentiments against India and Japan in Sri Lanka. The ports of Karachi and Gwadar are feasible options for China, but the Sri Lankan ports will serve as the nodal points of its future military actions given their strategic position in the IOR. Further, the ports are a gateway to the European shipping lanes. A new war theatre near the southern coastal states of India thus seems to be rapidly building up.

However, most actions have a flip side too. The political resolve of AUKUS to restrict Chinese hegemonic designs against India and Australia exposes China to immense vulnerabilities. Whether the Chinese supply chains use the Malacca Straits or the Kyaukphyu port, they have to pass through the Southern IOR and cannot solely depend upon the CPEC which lends Beijing to the mercy of the Taliban in the vicinity. The military dependence

on these ports, especially at Hambantota as a 'stocking point' of Chinese military assets, can cost Beijing significant disadvantages in a short 'local war' or a few hours of tension build-up.

The democratic nations have already been vocal about ensuring a free passage of the IOR in other critical international waters such as the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. The joint naval drills only display the building resolve against the Chinese hegemony. Multilateral naval presences in batches of two to three nations at different locations on high seas in the Southern IOR and Taiwan Strait can counter the Chinese threat and militarily confuse Beijing. The options of various permutation combinations by the joint armed forces of AUKUS can implement economic and military blockages in case of a, first, collusive Sino-Pak threat to India, second, military actions to usurp Taiwan. It is possible that the 'game' that China has planned for others, especially India, fails miserably, and it might suffer multiple losses.

For this reason, Xi had stated that AUKUS aims to 'stifle China in its Asian areas of influence'. His statement was followed by Qi Zhenhong, the Chinese ambassador to Sri Lanka, reiterating that AUKUS would endanger Sri Lankan security. The previous week, the Chinese Envoy Wang Qun bitterly criticised the deal and stated it jeopardised the 'post-war international security order. Perhaps it becomes easy to understand who is at more risk — China or Sri Lanka.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

I WANT TO ASSURE YOU THAT I ADDRESSED THE ISSUES OF TEACHERS IN DELHI AND WILL RESOLVE ISSUES IN PUNJAB AS WELL.
—DELHI CHIEF MINISTER
ARVIND KEJRIWAL



THE AAP PROMISED TO REGULARISE CONTRACTUAL TEACHERS AND GIVE THEM EQUAL WAGES, BUT MADE IT WORSE BY HAVING GUEST TEACHERS.
—PUNJAB CONGRESS CHIEF
NAVJOT SINGH SIDHU

The creeping-in tendency of global capital

The manner in which global finance sought to creep into the power sector through reforms should be a warning for the farmer community



VEERIAIAH KONDURI

Finally, the central government repealed the three contentious farm laws buckling under pressure from a sustained peaceful movement of farmers. The victory of the farmers makes us to reflect on the linkage between public resistance and policy makers' response. Whether the central government is honest in its commitment to the farming community is the core question.

Though the net outcome partially meets the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) demands, the government failed to present a reasoning why it initially thought the farm laws would enhance the living conditions of the farmers and why it backed out from that stand. In the whole exercise, the Union Minister for

Agriculture is nowhere visible. When the three acts were passed, several commentators from government and autonomous think tanks seriously defended the government. But such voices are missing when the laws were repealed. At the time of passing the repeal bills, surprisingly, the government was not inclined to debate them clause by clause. All in all, the time spent on Farm Laws Repeal Bill 2021 in Lok Sabha was a mere two minutes; eight minutes in the Rajya Sabha.

The statement of objects and reasons mentioned in the Farm Laws Repeal bill curiously sticks to the euphemism that only a group of farmers were protesting against these laws. This clearly indicates the fact that nothing has changed in



the government's perception about the year-long peaceful agitation and the demands of the farmers cutting across the political spectrum. Through the repeal bill, the government tried its best to miscommunicate when it said: "These enactments were made for the overall socio-economic develop-

ment of the farmers and rural sector after extensive consultations with various stakeholders following the felt need and demand of the farmers' organisations, suggestions and recommendations of the experts, professionals, agricultural economists, expert committees over the years." This is exactly contrary to the argument of the SKM which alleged that the government seldom consulted any one of them.

There are several other justifications the government tried to put forward in the repeal bill that we cannot find in the Prime Minister's address to the nation on Guru Purab day. That is because it does not want to expose itself before the global investor community for buckling under pressure.

The government's dishonesty was evident when it used the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav to substantiate backtracking on the farm bills.

The above facts clearly bring us back to the tendency of global finance capital that tries until it succeeds in its ventures. The creeping-in nature is the most dominant form of international finance capital's maneuvering capacities. To buttress this impending danger, we should recollect what had happened to power sector reforms as a whole.

The deregulation and privatization of power sector was prescribed to India by Fund-Bank think tanks two decades ago. They found their brand ambassador in Chandrababu Naidu who wanted to be a pioneer of reforms at the state

level and often at national level. After resuming power, he immediately resorted to unbundling of the power sector in the then Andhra Pradesh. He had to encounter a sustainable resistance from the Left as well as government employees. The subsequent agitation culminated in the then Telugu Desam government letting loose police action in which five people died. Following that movement, the power sector reforms failed to pick speed like the proponents of globalization wanted to and neither Telugu Desam nor Chandrababu Naidu were successful in retaining the public trust. And this was the agitation that catapulted the late YS Rajasekhara Reddy to power and played a solid role in mopping up numbers for

Congress during the UPA years.

Despite the heroic struggle of the people of Andhra Pradesh, the international finance capital crept into the power sector slowly but steadily, charting out the progressive reforms at its own pace by co-opting government after government. Now, it is struggling to push through complete privatization of distribution which is being met with stiff resistance.

The two-and-a-half-decade experience with power sector reforms compels any keen observer of the reform path in India and warn the farming community about the creeping tendency. This is further buttressed by the government through what it states in repeal bill.

(The writer is an independent researcher and runs Mana Manchi Pustakam Youtube Channel. The views expressed are personal.)

IN DAMAGE CONTROL EXERCISE

Pakistan PM calls Lankan President

Imran Khan assures justice to lynched Lankan man

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan has assured Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa that there will be no mercy to the mob which lynched Sri Lankan national Priyantha Kumara Diyawadana over allegations of blasphemy, the President's office here said on Sunday.

Khan telephoned Rajapaksa and said that 113 people have been arrested so far, it said.

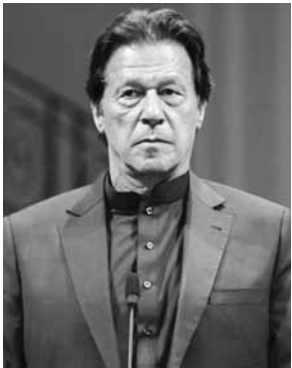
"All the videos and information related to the incident have been

obtained by the Pakistani security forces," a statement from the President's office said.

Prime Minister Khan informed President Rajapaksa that Diyawadana, who had served in Pakistan for a long time, had shown a high level of professionalism as a manager.

In a shocking incident on Friday, angry supporters of the headline Islamist party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) attacked a garment factory and lynched its general manager Diyawadana, who was in his 40s, before setting his body on fire over allegations of blasphemy.

As pressure mounted on the Pakistani government to bring the guilty to justice, over 800 people have been booked



under terrorism charges while 13 prime suspects are among 118 arrested so far in the horrific lynching of the Sri Lankan national in Punjab province.

Diyawadana, a graduate from the University of

Peradeniya, is survived by his wife and two children. He left for Pakistan for employment in 2010 and has been working as the manager of the Sialkot factory since 2012.

He was working as the general manager in the Rajko industries (dealing in garments – sportswear) in Sialkot district, some 100 kilometres from Lahore.

Sri Lankan Parliament and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa on Saturday condemned the lynching and hoped that Prime Minister Khan will keep his commitment to bring all those involved to justice and ensure the safety of the rest of the island nation's expat workers.

‘Nearly all bones of victim were broken, 99% body burnt’

PTI ■ LAHORE

Nearly all bones of Sri Lankan national Priyantha Kumara Diyawadana were broken and his body was 99 per cent burnt in the horrific lynching incident in Pakistan's Punjab province, a media report on Sunday said, citing his post-mortem report.

Angry supporters of the headline Islamist party Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) attacked a garment factory on Friday and lynched its general manager Diyawadana, who was in his 40s, before setting his body on fire over alle-

gations of blasphemy.

The post-mortem report of Diyawadana cited skull and jaw fractures as the cause of death, the Geo News reported.

All his vital organs, liver, stomach and one of his kidneys, were affected, while torture marks were visible all over his body and his spinal cord was broken at three different points, the report said.

The post-mortem report of the Sri Lankan national revealed that 99 per cent of his body was burned, and with the exception of one foot, all his bones were broken, it said.

Pak rights activist convicted of espionage; gets RI for 14 years

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani rights and political activist has been convicted of espionage and sentenced to 14 years of rigorous imprisonment, according to a media report on Sunday.

The verdict on Idris Khattak was pronounced this week after the trial concluded in Jhelum.

"Khattak was found guilty of espionage and leaking of sensitive information by a Field General Court Martial (FGCM). He was handed down 14-year rigorous jail term," a security source was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper.

The source said he was tried under the Pakistan Army Act and Official Secrets Act, 1923. He was accused of providing the sensitive information to a foreign intelligence agency.

Defending his court-martial, the source said that any

individual accused of espionage, whether or not he is a serviceman, can be tried by a FGCM. Khattak has reportedly been shifted to Jhelum district jail for serving the sentence. The source said he could appeal before the appellate tribunal and subsequently before the army chief.

Khattak remained associated with Amnesty International and had investigated enforced disappearances in erstwhile tribal areas and Balochistan.

He was travelling from Islamabad to Peshawar on November 13, 2019, when he was picked by an intelligence agency near Swabi interchange.

After nearly six months of a public campaign by his family and filing of a habeas corpus petition at the Peshawar High Court, the defence ministry on June 16, 2020, admitted that he was in military's custody and had been charged

with treason under the Official Secrets Act.

Khattak's brother later filed a petition with the Peshawar High Court seeking an end to his trial by the military court. The high court, however, on Jan 28, 2021, rejected the appeal.

Meanwhile, three retired military officers were given varying jail sentences by another FGCM in Rawalpindi, reported Dawn.

According to the security source, Lt Col (retd) Faiz Rasool was given 14 years rigorous imprisonment, Lt Col (retd) Akmal 10 years rigorous imprisonment, and Maj (retd) Saifuddin 12 years rigorous imprisonment.

All three officers were also convicted of espionage and leaking sensitive information.

The source said all the three were retired at the time of the commissioning of a crime.

Three feared dead as Myanmar Army truck runs down protesters

AP ■ BANGKOK

An Army vehicle barreled into a peaceful march of anti-government protesters in military-ruled Myanmar's biggest city on Sunday, reportedly killing at least three people, witnesses and a protest organizer said.

Sunday's march was one of at least three held in Yangon, and similar rallies were reported in other parts of the country a day ahead of an expected verdict in the first of about a dozen criminal cases against

Myanmar civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who was toppled in a military takeover Feb. 1.

A video posted on social media showed a speeding small army truck heading into the marchers from behind. Voices can be heard, saying: "The car is coming ... Please help! It hit the children ... Oh! ... Dead! ... Run, ... run!" The video shows about a dozen people running from the spot.

A witness told The Associated Press that the protesters had been on his street for just two minutes when the

military truck hit them, leaving three people without any sign of movement lying on the road.

"About five armed soldiers got out of the vehicle and chased after the protesters," said the witness, who insisted on anonymity for fear of arrest. "They opened fire and also arrested young people who had been hit by the car. At least 10 people were arrested."

Security forces have previously used cars to attack protesters since the army took power. They have also freely

MEA flags ‘sharpening of tensions’ on territorial issues across Asia

PTI ■ ABU DHABI

The consequences of China's rise and its growing capabilities are "particularly profound", External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said as he flagged the "sharpening of tensions" on territorial issues across Asia with Beijing's actions raising a question mark on the agreements of yesteryears.

Speaking at the fifth Indian Ocean Conference — IOC 2021 — in Abu Dhabi on Saturday, Jaishankar also said that in a globalised world, it is vital that the freedom of navigation and overflight and unimpeded commerce are respected and facilitated.

Noting that a number of developments have taken place that have direct bearing on the well-being of the Indian Ocean region, the minister said that two developments - the chang-

ing American strategic posture and the rise of China - have influenced the evolution of the Indian Ocean in recent years.

"Since 2008, we have witnessed a greater caution in US power projection and an effort to correct its over-extension. It may have taken different forms and be articulated in very different ways. But there is a larger consistency over three Administrations that they themselves may not readily recognise," he said.

"It is expressed in footprint and posture, terms of engagement, extent of involvement and nature of initiatives. Overall, the United States is moving towards greater realism both about itself and the world. It is adjusting to multipolarity and rebalancing and re-examining the balance between its domestic revival and commitments abroad," he said.

GLOBE TROTTER

AVALANCHE IN AUSTRIA KILLS 3, INJURES 2

Berlin: Three skiers have been killed and two injured in an avalanche in central Austria, authorities said Sunday. The victims were part of a group of 11 skiers, eight of whom were hit by a roughly 200-meter (655-foot) wide slab of snow as they ascended a slope during a ski tour on Saturday in the Tweng area, in Salzburg province.

PRINCE WILLIAM OPENS UP ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

London: Prince William, the second in line to Britain's throne, has opened up about sensitive topics such as coping with mental health pressures during his work as an air ambulance rescue pilot and memories of his late mother Princess Diana.

HUNDREDS MARCH AGAINST COVID CURBS IN BELGIUM

Brussels: Hundreds of people marched through central Brussels on Sunday to protest tightened Covid-19 restrictions imposed by the Belgian government to counter the latest spike in coronavirus cases. Marchers came to protest the measures that were announced Friday, the third week in a row that the government has tightened its rules as the latest surge in cases strains the country's health services, depriving people with other life-threatening diseases.

WOMEN ACTIVISTS CALL FOR MORE RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN

Kabul: Women's rights activists in the Afghan capital of Kabul insisted Sunday they would continue fighting for their right to education, employment and participation in Afghan political and social life, and said a recent Taliban decree banning forced marriage was not enough to address the issue of women's rights.

LINGDEN ELECTED PREZ OF NEPAL'S PRO-HINDU PARTY

Kathmandu: Nepal's pro-Hindu Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) elected Member of Parliament Rajendra Prasad Lingden as its chairman, after incumbent, president Kamal Thapa was defeated at the outfit's General Convention here on Sunday. Lingden, 58, secured 1,844 votes, while Kamal Thapa, 68, secured 1,617 votes. Lingden is the only elected Parliament Member belonging to the RPP.

कार्यालय, अधिशासी अभियन्ता, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, ऊधमसिंह नगर

पत्रांक: 1519 /निविदा / 2021-22

अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना

दिनांक: 04.12.2021

एतद्वारा मुख्य महाप्रबन्धक महोदय, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, देहरादून की ओर से अधोस्ताक्षरी द्वारा "जल जीवन मिशन" के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु उत्तराखण्ड पेयजल निगम/उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, उत्तराखण्ड सरकार या अन्य राज्य सरकार/भारत सरकार के किसी भी उपक्रम में उल्लेखित श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदार/फर्मों से आईटमवार दर अनुबन्ध के आधार पर ई-निविदा (टु-बिड) के माध्यम से आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा से सम्बन्धित सभी सूचना www.uktenders.gov.in पर दिनांक 10.12.2021 के सायं 5:00 बजे से उपलब्ध होगी।

निविदा सं.	कार्य का विवरण	धरोहर धनराशि	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य	निविदा की वैधता	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि	ठेकेदार की श्रेणी
	शाखा ऊधमसिंह नगर की बाजपुर व गदरपुर इकाई के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित पेयजल योजना के निर्माण हेतु नलकूप का छिद्रण, उर्ध्व जलाशय का निर्माण, पम्प गृह/स्टाफ़ क्वाटर का निर्माण, राईजिंग मेन/वितरण प्रणाली बिछाना, सबमर्सिबल मोटर पम्प सेट की आपूर्ति, विद्युतीकरण एवं नलकूप का स्वाचालितिकरण बाउण्ड्री वॉल, सॉकपिट एवं रेन वाटर हार्वैस्टिंग इत्यादि का निर्माण/मरम्मत कार्य तथा पाइप लाइन कार्य के दौरान विभिन्न विभागों की क्षतिग्रस्त होने वाली मोटर मार्ग, नाली इत्यादि का पुनर्निर्माण कार्य समस्त सामग्री, श्रम, टी0एण्डपी0 की आपूर्ति, अधिष्ठापन एवं टेस्टिंग सहित कमलैट कार्य।					
4	वि0ख0 गदरपुर की मदनापुर बहुल ग्राम	7.65	रु. 7000 +जीएसटी	120 दिन	12 माह	A-Class
5	वि0ख0 गदरपुर की महतोश एकल ग्राम	6.33	रु. 6000 +जीएसटी	120 दिन	12 माह	A-Class
6	वि0ख0 गदरपुर की कुल्हा एकल ग्राम	10.00	रु. 8000 +जीएसटी	120 दिन	12 माह	A-Class
7	वि0ख0 गदरपुर की अलखदेवी एकल ग्राम	3.60	रु. 5000 +जीएसटी	120 दिन	12 माह	बी एवं उच्चतर
8	वि0ख0 गदरपुर की खानपुर पश्चिम एकल ग्राम	3.48	रु. 5000 +जीएसटी	120 दिन	12 माह	बी एवं उच्चतर
9	वि0ख0 गदरपुर की खेमपुर एकल ग्राम	2.70	रु. 4000 +जीएसटी	120 दिन	12 माह	सी एवं उच्चतर
10	वि0ख0 बाजपुर की बरवाला एकल ग्राम	4.27	रु. 5000 +जीएसटी	120 दिन	12 माह	बी एवं उच्चतर
11	वि0ख0 बाजपुर की मुण्डिया कला एकल ग्राम	7.45	रु. 7000 +जीएसटी	120 दिन	12 माह	A-Class

शर्त :-

- शासनादेश संख्या-121(1 XXVII(7)21-32/2007)/ टी.सी. दिनांक 29.04.2021 के द्वारा निविदा प्रपत्र के साथ धरोहर धनराशि जमा करने से छूट प्रदान की गयी है, यदि किसी ठेकेदार द्वारा निविदा के साथ धरोहर धनराशि जमा नहीं की जाती है तो संबंधित ठेकेदार को रु0 100.00 मात्र के स्टाम्प पेपर पर इस आशय का शपथ पत्र निविदा के साथ संलग्न करना अनिवार्य होगा कि निविदा स्वीकृति उपरान्त अनुबन्ध से पूर्व निविदादाता द्वारा कुल कार्य की लागत का 03 प्रतिशत के समतुल्य धनराशि जमा करा दी जायेगी।
- ई-निविदा दिनांक 10.12.2021 के सायं 5:00 बजे से डाउनलोड की जा सकेगी एवं दिनांक 24.12.2021 की सायं 5:00 बजे तक अपलोड की जा सकेगी तथा दिनांक 27.12.2021 को प्रातः 11:00 बजे तकनीकी बिड खोली जायेगी। कॉमर्शियल बिड खोलने की तिथि पृथक से सूचित की जायेगी।
- निविदा प्रपत्र के साथ अपलोड की गई धरोहर धनराशि, निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य, शपथ पत्र, स्टाम्प पेपर्स के Originals अधिशासी अभियन्ता, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, ऊधमसिंह नगर के कार्यालय में दिनांक 24.12.2021 के सायं 5:00 बजे तक अनिवार्य रूप से जमा करायें जाने होंगे।
- निविदादाता द्वारा निविदा प्रपत्र के साथ सम्बन्धित कार्य का कम से कम 03 वर्षों का अनुभव प्रमाण पत्र संलग्न करना आवश्यक होगा, जो अधिशासी अभियन्ता अथवा उच्चाधिकारी द्वारा प्रमाणित हो।
- निविदादाता द्वारा निविदा प्रपत्र के साथ हैसियत प्रमाण पत्र संलग्न करना अनिवार्य होगा, जो निविदा आमंत्रण की तिथि से छः माह से अधिक पुराना न हो।
- उपरोक्त निविदा सूचना में यदि कोई संशोधन किया जाता है तो संशोधित निविदा सूचना सीधे वैबसाइट www.uktenders.gov.in पर ही अपलोड की जायेगी। संशोधित निविदा सूचना का प्रकाशन समाचार पत्र में नहीं किया जायेगा।
- तकनीकी बिड में सफल पाये गये निविदादाताओं के नाम की सूची अधिशासी अभियन्ता, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, ऊधमसिंह नगर के कार्यालय नोटिस बोर्ड पर लगायी जायेगी।
- निविदा प्रपत्र के लिफाफे पर कार्य का नाम अंकित करना अनिवार्य है। तकनीकी बिड एवं कामर्शियल बिड अलग-अलग लिफाफे में सील बन्द कर कार्यालय में निर्धारित तिथि तक प्रेषित करनी होगी तथा लिफाफे पर मोटे अक्षरों में तकनीकी बिड एवं कामर्शियल बिड अंकित करना अनिवार्य है।
- तकनीकी निविदा से सम्बन्धित प्री बिड मीटिंग दिनांक 18.12.2021 को अपराह्न 2:30 बजे कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, ऊधमसिंह नगर के अधिशासी अभियन्ता कक्ष में आहुत की जायेगी।
- निविदा बिक्री खुलने की तिथि को किसी कारणवश अवकाश घोषित होने पर अनुवर्ती कार्य दिवस मान्य होगा।
- किसी भी निविदा को बिना कारण बतायें निरस्त करने का अधिकार विभाग में निहित है।
- शेष समस्त नियम एवं शर्तें निविदा प्रपत्र में देखी जा सकेगी।

आर.के. श्रीवास्तव,
अधिशासी अभियन्ता

Biden, Putin set date for call as Ukraine tensions grow

AP ■ MOSCOW

Presidents Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin will speak in a video call on Tuesday, the White House and Kremlin said, as tensions between the United States and Russia escalate over a Russian troop buildup on the Ukrainian border that's seen as a sign of a potential invasion.

Biden will press U.S. concerns about Russian military activities on the border and "reaffirm the United States' support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Saturday, confirming the planned call after first word came from Moscow.

Putin will come to the call with concerns of his own and intends to express Russia's opposition to any move to admit Ukraine into the NATO military alliance. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said "the presidents will decide themselves" how long their talk will last.

The last known call between the leaders was in July, when Biden pressed Putin to rein in Russia-based criminal hacking gangs launching ransomware attacks against the United States. Biden said the U.S. would take

any necessary steps to protect critical infrastructure from such attacks.

Ransomware attacks have continued since then, though perhaps none has been as alarming as the one from May that targeted a major fuel pipeline and resulted in days of gas shortages in parts of the U.S.

Russia is more adamant than ever that the U.S. guarantees that Ukraine will not be admitted to the NATO military alliance. But NATO's secretary-general, Jens Stoltenberg, said this past week that Russia has no say in expansion plans by other countries or the alliance. Numerous former U.S. and NATO diplomats say any such Russian demand to Biden would be a nonstarter.

U.S. intelligence officials, meanwhile, have determined that Russia has massed about 70,000 troops near its border with Ukraine and has begun planning for a possible invasion as soon as early next year, according to a Biden administration official who was not authorized to discuss that finding publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The risks for Putin of going through with such an invasion would be enormous.

Israel urges hard line against Iran at nuclear talks

AP ■ TEL AVIV, ISRAEL

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett on Sunday urged world powers to take a hard line against Iran in negotiations aimed at reviving an international nuclear deal, as his top defense and intelligence officials headed to Washington to discuss the flailing talks. Israel has been watching with concern as world powers sit down with Iran in Vienna in hopes of restoring the tattered 2015 deal. Iran last week struck a hard line as talks resumed, suggesting everything discussed in previous rounds of diplomacy could be renegotiated. Continued Iranian advances in its atomic program have further raised the stakes.

The original deal, spearheaded by then-President Barack Obama, gave Iran much-needed relief from crippling economic sanctions in exchange for curbs on its nuclear activities. But then-President Donald Trump, with strong encouragement from Israel, withdrew from the deal in 2018, causing it to unravel.

No shortage of sanction options if Russia invades Ukraine

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration has plenty of options to make good on its pledge to hit Russia financially if President Vladimir Putin invades Ukraine, from sanctions targeting Putin's associates to cutting Russia off from the financial system that sends money flowing around the world.

The United States and European allies have made no public mention of any plans to respond militarily themselves if Putin sends troops massed along the border into Ukraine, a former Soviet republic with close historical and cultural ties to Russia but now eager to ally with NATO and the West. Instead, payback could be all about the money.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken this week promised financial pain — "high impact economic measures that we've refrained from taking in the past." President Joe Biden on Friday said the U.S. had developed the "most comprehensive and meaningful set of initiatives to make it very, very difficult for Mr. Putin."

The United States over the past decade already has put a range of sanctions in place against Russian entities and individuals, many of them over Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea and its support for armed separatists in eastern Ukraine in 2014. U.S. sanctions also have sought to punish Russia for election interference, malicious cyber activities and human rights abuses.

Since 2014, the West also has helped Ukraine build up its military. So while Putin denies any intention of launching an offensive, his troops would face a Ukrainian army much more capable of putting up a fight.



Villagers look at the broken bridge destroyed by the lava flow by the eruption of Mount Semeru in Lumajang district, East Java province, Indonesia on Sunday. AP

return during Sunday's lull in activity. But some were desperate to check on livestock and possessions left behind. In sev-

eral areas, everything — from the thinnest tree branch to couches and chairs inside homes — was caked with ash.

Time of ‘extreme pain’ in India: Abhijit Banerjee

ECONOMY BELOW 2019 LEVELS

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

People in India are in “extreme pain” and the economy is still below the 2019 levels, with “small aspirations” of people becoming even smaller now, Nobel laureate economist Abhijit Banerjee has said.

He was virtually addressing students of the Ahmedabad University in Gujarat on Saturday night from the US during the varsity’s 11th annual convocation which was also held online.

The economist was sharing his observations from a recent visit to West Bengal.

“You (students) are in a place where you can give back. Society really needs it. We are in a time of extreme pain in India,” he said.

“I just spent some time in rural West Bengal and stories you hear about, you know, all the aspirations that have been a little bit dashed are very real...Small aspirations which became smaller now,” Banerjee



said.

“I think we are in a moment of great pain. The economy is still well below as against what it was in 2019. We don’t know how much below, but it is substantially below. And I am not blaming anybody, I am just saying,” said the economist, who won the Nobel Prize along with Esther Duflo and Michael Kremer in 2019.

He also urged the students not to succumb to pressure from family or society in choosing their career paths, but have the courage to do what they really want to do in life.

Banerjee also informed the audience that he had spent 10

days in Tihar jail during his student days at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi.

“When I was about to leave the JNU and go to Harvard, I was in a student demonstration and then I was taken to Tihar jail, and kept there for ten days. When I came out, lot of elders told me that I have ruined my career, and Harvard or the US will never let you in. They thought I should be regretful,” he said.

To make his point about choosing careers, Banerjee

pointed out that two of India’s great filmmakers - Satyajit Ray and Shyam Benegal - were economics graduates but chose to walk a different path.

RBI likely to keep key policy rate unchanged, say experts

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Amid global scare due to a new coronavirus variant Omicron, the RBI is likely to maintain status quo in its upcoming monetary policy and wait for a more opportune time to calibrate benchmark interest rate to promote growth without sacrificing the main objective of containing inflation.

The Reserve Bank Governor-headed Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is scheduled to meet during December 6-8, 2021. The decision of the rate setting panel would be announced on Wednesday (December 8). The central bank had kept the benchmark policy rate unchanged in October.

“...We believe the talks of a reverse repo rate hike in the MPC meeting may be premature as RBI has been largely able to narrow the corridor without the noise of rate hikes and ensuing market cacophony,” said an SBI research report.

According to it, the RBI is not obliged to act on reverse repo rate only in MPC. “Also, change in reverse repo rate is an unconventional policy tool



that the RBI has effectively deployed during crisis when it moved to a floor instead of the corridor,” it added.

A Kotak Economic Research report said with uncertainty around the new Covid variant, the RBI would possibly wait for some clarity before moving decisively on rates.

“We maintain our call for a reverse repo rate hike in February with the December meeting remaining a close call. We expect the RBI to continue on its path of normalisation with the reverse repo rate hike in February policy and repo rate hike in mid-2022-23,” it said.

Property consultant Anarock said there have been expectations that the RBI may

raise the reverse repo rate to a nominal extent during the forthcoming monetary policy.

“However, it is likely that the RBI will hold on to the current regime in reaction to the flare-up of Omicron concerns at a time of generalised economic recovery. Therefore, home loan borrowers may enjoy the ongoing low interest rate regime for some more time to come,” said Anuj Puri, Chairman, Anarock Group.

That said, an increase in repo rates and consequent increase in home loan interest rates is inevitable and will definitely take place in the future, he added.

If the RBI maintains status quo in policy rates on Wednesday, it would be the ninth consecutive time since the rate remains unchanged.

The central bank had last revised the policy rate on May 22, 2020, in an off-policy cycle to perk up demand by cutting interest rate to a historic low.

The RBI has been asked by the central Government to ensure that the retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

IT Minister asks bankers to create robust, digital platform for easy credit availability to small businesses

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Sunday exhorted the banking industry to create an innovative digital platform - as powerful, seamless and robust as UPI - for providing quick and easy credit to MSMEs, small businessmen, and those at the bottom of pyramid.

The building blocks required to create such a platform are already available, given the strong ecosystem of Aadhaar, mobile phones, UPI platform and digilocker, he said asking the banking industry to come up with innovative idea and solutions in three months.

Vaishnaw was speaking at ‘Digital payment Utsav’ which was part of a week-long showcase of India’s achievements in digital space titled ‘Azadi Ka Digital Mahotsav’ in the capital. Throwing a “challenge” at the bankers present in the audience, the minister said: “Can we create a platform as powerful, seamless, good, as digital as UPI platform for providing very quick and easy credit to the MSME, small industries, small businessmen...People really at bottom of



pyramid.” The minister expressed willingness to look at promising concepts that are brought after three months, in response to the poser by him.

“You have today a good ecosystem of Aadhaar, mobile phones, UPI platform, digilocker, practically everything you need to create this ecosystem is today available. Take this challenge...Next three months work on it, come back and I will be very happy to spend one full day with you to look at concepts you bring,” Vaishnaw said.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the event, the minister further said the idea is to ensure that easy credit at good terms, through a seamless process can be made available to people at bottom of pyramid especially for micro and small industries, small businessmen, street vendors amongst others.

HC to hear Anil Ambani group firm’s plea against DMRC over arbitral award today



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court will on Monday hear a plea by Delhi Airport Metro Express Private Limited (DAMEPL) seeking execution of an arbitral award of over ₹ 4,600 crore against Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC).

The matter will be heard by Justice Suresh Kumar Kait who had issued notice on the Reliance Infrastructure subsidiary’s execution plea in September.

Recently, the Supreme Court had dismissed the DMRC’s plea seeking a review of its judgement which upheld the 2017 arbitration award in favour of DAMEPL, enforceable against it.

The apex court on September 9 had upheld the arbitration award enforceable against DMRC and said there was a disturbing tendency of courts setting aside arbitral awards.The top court had quashed the order passed by a division bench of the high

court that had set aside the arbitration award in favour of DAMEPL which had pulled out from running the Airport Express metro line over safety issues.

The arbitral tribunal in its May 2017 award had accepted DAMEPL’s claim that the running of operations on the line was not viable due to structural defects in the viaduct through which the train would run. The division bench’s decision had come on DMRC appeal against a single judge order of March 6 last year upholding the arbitral award in DAMEPL’s favour.

The concession agreement between the two was signed on August 25, 2008. Under the agreement, DMRC was to carry out the civil works, excluding at the depot, and the balance, including the project system works, were to be executed by DAMEPL, a joint venture of Rinfra and a Spanish construction company -- Construcciones Y Auxiliard De Ferrocarriles -- with a shareholding of 95 and five percent respectively.

The Airport Express line was commissioned on February 23, 2011 after an investment of over Rs 2,885 crore, funded by the DAMEPL promoters’ fund, banks and financial institutions.

LIC improves asset quality ahead of IPO; lowers net NPA to 0.05%



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of its proposed initial public offering (IPO), insurance behemoth LIC has improved its asset quality for the financial year ended March 2021.

The non-performing assets (NPAs) as of March 31, 2021, are ₹35,129.89 crore out of a total portfolio of ₹4,51,303.30 crore, according to the latest Annual Report of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).

The sub-standard assets are ₹254.37 crore whereas the doubtful assets are ₹20,369.17 crore and loss assets are ₹14,506.35 crore.

An amount of ₹34,934.97 crore is provided as per IRDAI guidelines in the books of

accounts towards non-performing assets, it said.

The percentage of gross NPA is 7.78 per cent while the net NPA is 0.05 per cent at the end of March 2021. This is lower than gross NPA of 8.17 per cent (as a percentage of its debt portfolio) and net NPA of 0.79 per cent in the previous year.In absolute terms, the NPA was ₹36,694.20 crore out of a total debt of ₹4,49,364.87 crore in 2019-20. Stress threshold for banks is different from that for insurers.

LIC usually makes full provisions for all NPA in the debt book. The corporation has made provisions to the tune of ₹37,341.6 crore, of which ₹34,934.97 crore is towards doubtful, sub-standard, and loss assets.

Bitcoin slumps up to 20% after Wall Street sell-off

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies fell sharply Saturday, another sign that investors were pulling back from riskier bets after this week’s stock-market selloff, MarketWatch reported.

Bitcoin, the largest cryptocurrency by market value, was down 18 per cent at \$46,571.84 according to data from CoinDesk. It temporarily dipped to \$42,000 before bouncing back. Ether, the second-largest cryptocurrency, was down close to 16 per cent, the report said.

The declines were widespread across the crypto universe. Other widely traded cryptocurrencies including Solana, Dogecoin, and Shiba Inu coin lost more than a fifth of their value.

Disquiet in the stock market over the new Omicron variant of Covid-19 and the Federal Reserve’s response to inflation might have played a role, the report said.

Another possible factor accelerating the bitcoin selloff was the unwinding of heavily leveraged crypto derivatives, said Noelle Acheson, head of market insights at cryptolender Genesis Global Trading.

Over 3 cr income tax returns for FY21 filed, says FinMin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry on Sunday said over three crore income tax returns have been filed for the financial year 2020-21 so far and advised taxpayers who are yet to file their return to do so at the earliest.

The number of ITRs filed per day is over four lakh and increasing everyday as the extended due date of December 31 is approaching, an official statement said.

The department has been issuing reminders to taxpayers through e-mails, SMS and media campaigns encouraging taxpayers to file their income tax returns without further delay.

All taxpayers who are yet to file their income tax returns for the assessment year 2021-22 are requested to file their returns at the earliest to avoid the last-minute rush, it said.

“The income tax department strongly urges all taxpayers to view their Form 26AS and Annual Information Statement (AIS) through the e-filing portal to verify the accuracy of the TDS and tax payments and avail of pre-filing of ITRs,” it said.

It is important for taxpayers to cross check the data in



the AIS statement with their bank passbook, interest certificate, Form 16 and capital gains statement from brokerages in case of purchase and sale of equity/ mutual funds, etc, it said.

“Income tax return (ITR) filing has increased to 3.03 crore ITRs for AY 2021-22. 58.98 per cent of these are ITR1 (1.78 crore), 8 per cent is ITR2 (24.42 lakh), 8.7 per cent is ITR3 (26.58 lakh), 23.12 per cent are ITR4 (70.07 lakh), ITR5 (2.14 lakh), ITR6 (0.91 lakh) and ITR7 (0.15 lakh).

“Over 52 per cent of these ITRs are filed using the online ITR form on the portal and the balance are uploaded using the ITR created from the offline software utilities,” it said.

The process of e-verification through Aadhaar OTP and other methods is important for the income tax department to commence processing of the ITR and to issue refunds if any.

Tata Motors, Honda mulling price hike from next month

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With input costs continuing to rise, automakers like Tata Motors, Honda and Renault are looking to increase vehicle prices from January next year to offset the impact. Already, car market leader Maruti Suzuki and luxury automakers Audi and Mercedes-Benz have announced to hike vehicle prices from next month. While Maruti said the price rise planned for January 2022 will vary for different models, Mercedes-Benz said its hike will be on select models by up to 2 per cent due to feature enhancement and rising input costs.On the other hand, Audi said its price increase effective January 1, 2022 will be up to 3 per cent across its entire model range owing to rising input and operational costs. When contacted over the issue, Tata Motors President Passenger Vehicles Business Shailesh Chandra said:“Prices of commodities, raw material and other input costs continue to rise. An appropriate price hike to at least partially offset this increase in costs seems inevitable the near to short term.”

PUBLIC NOTICE
Reg: (1) Plot No.69, Sector-16, HSIIDC, Industrial Estate Bahadurgarh, Haryana, (2) Commercial Booth No. 39, Sector-16, Industrial Estate Bahadurgarh, Haryana, (3) Commercial Booth No. 40, Sector-16, Industrial Estate Bahadurgarh, Haryana.
The captioned Plot & Booths are in the name of Shri Mandepak Singh Chhabra S/o Sh. Tegh Singh Chhabra. Re-allotted by HSIIDC vide Re-Allotment Letter Ref No.: HSIIDC/Estate: Bahadurgarh: 173-A dated 17.06.2021., Re-Allotment Letter No.: HSIIDC/IE/ B. GARH: 2021/ 4000 Dated 24.02.2021 & Re-Allotment Letter No. HSIIDC/ IE/ B. GARH 2021 - 35 Dated 15.04.2021 respectively.
That Smt. Pawan Chhabra W/o Late Shri Mandepak Singh Chhabra vide her request letter dated 23.11.2021 intimated that Shri Mandepak Singh Chhabra has expired on 08.05.2021. That the legal heirs has/have furnished the death certificate of Late Shri Mandepak Singh Chhabra and an Undertaking indicating the names of the legal heirs of the deceased i.e: (1) Smt. Manbir Kaur (Mother), (2) Smt. Pawan Chhabra (Wife), (3) Ms. Ekas Chhabra (Daughter) & (4) Ms. Drishti Chhabra (Daughter). That the legal heirs has requested to transfer the said Plot & Booths in favour of Smt. Pawan Chhabra W/o Late Shri Mandepak Singh Chhabra and have also submitted/intimated that they are the only legal heirs of deceased and they have no objection, if the said Plot & Booths are transferred in favour of Smt. Pawan Chhabra W/o Late Shri. Mandepak Singh Chhabra. Through this Public Notice it is here by informed that in case any person has any reservation/ objection to the said transfer, he/she can file his/ her objection(s) in writing before the undersigned along with supportive documents and an Affidavit with in a period of 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. In case no response / objection is received within the aforesaid period, it will be presumed that no person has any objection for transfer of said Plot and Booths in favour of Smt. Pawan Chhabra W/o Late Shri Mandepak Singh Chhabra and the Corporation shall go ahead with the request of Transfer/Re-allotment of said Plot & Booths in favour of Smt. Pawan Chhabra W/o Late Shri Mandepak Singh Chhabra. The HSIIDC thereafter will not entertain any objections, whatsoever.
On behalf of
Estate Manager, Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited, Sector-17, Industrial Estate, Bahadurgarh (Haryana)

WESTERN RAILWAY
DESIGN, SUPPLY AND VARIOUS OTHER WORKS OF OHE
E-Tender Notice No.: EL-TRD-W-118-21-22-160-2R Dated 03/12/2021. Name of Work: **Design, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 2 x 25 KV AC OHE between Virar-Surat Section on Mumbai Division of Western Railway in connection with Raising of Train Speed to 160 KMPH Work (Phase-II).** Advertised Value: ₹ **97,55,12,909/-**. EMD: ₹ **50,27,600/-**. Date and Time of Submission: **06/01/2022, 15.00 hrs.** Date and Time of Opening: **06/01/2022, 15.30 hrs.** Regarding detailed nature of work, containing cost of tender document (non-refundable), EMD, eligibility criteria, similar nature of work, detailed tender conditions, please visit **www.treps.gov.in**. Manual offers will not be considered. 6578
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Govt expands SCALE committee, appoints three new members

New Delhi:The Government has expanded the SCALE committee (Steering Committee for Advancing Local Value-Add and Exports) by adding three new members, hailing from diverse industry backgrounds, according to an industry insider.The new appointees are Panasonic India Chairman and CEO Manish Sharma, Toyota Kirloskar Vice-Chairman Vikram S Kirloskar, and Asian Paints co-promoter and Chairman AdverbB Technologies Jalaj Dani, he said. Currently, the 14-member Steering Committee for Advancing Local Value-Add and Exports (SCALE) committee is headed by former Mahindra CEO Pawan Goenka. Besides, Invest India CEO Deepak Bagla, PI Industries CMD Salil Singhal and JSW Steel Group CFO Sehshagiri Rao are on the board of the SCALE Committee.

It has representation from industry bodies such as FICCI, CII, ASSOCHAM and officials from commerce and other ministries. The SCALE Committee is formed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has been working closely with the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) under the guidance of the Ministry.

RBI rate decision, Omicron worries to drive stocks this week, say analysts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Volatility is likely to continue in the stock market this week amid Omicron uncertainty and the RBI monetary policy meeting will be a key driver for benchmark indices going ahead, say analysts.

It will be an event-packed week for the markets, with RBI policy and several macro-economic numbers scheduled to be announced, they added.

“Volatility is likely to continue amid Omicron uncertainty, RBI credit policy, and macroeconomic numbers. There are lots of news flows on the Omicron variant which are causing volatility in the market while on the domestic front we will have the outcome of an important monetary policy of RBI that is scheduled on December 8.

“We will also have our IIP and inflation numbers this week however they will be released on Friday after market hours,” said Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd.Equity benchmarks on Friday tumbled after India reported its first case of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

“We expect volatility to remain high this week as well

as we have some important data and events lined up. First, participants will be closely eyeing the monetary policy review meet outcome on December 8. On the macroeconomic front, IIP number and CPI inflation are scheduled for December 10,” Ajit Mishra, VP Research, Religare Broking said.

Yesha Shah, Head of Equity Research, Samco Securities said that with a slew of events on the horizon, traders should brace themselves for an action-packed week. Market players will attempt to read between the lines of the RBI’s monetary policy outcome.

During the last week, the BSE benchmark gained 589.31 points or 1.03 per cent.

“RBI’s monetary policy meeting which is scheduled to start this week will be a key market driver in the coming days as investors await MPC’s policy decision considering the uncertainty surrounding the new virus which persists in the global economy.

“Major domestic data points awaiting its release this week are November’s inflation data and October’s industrial & manufacturing production data,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Tata Teleservices’ shares almost doubled in a month

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Tata Teleservices have nearly doubled its investors’ money in the past one month.

Accordingly, shares of the company have risen from ₹67 in early November to ₹130 on Friday’s session close.

Mumbai-based Tata Teleservices, a subsidiary of the Tata Group, deals in broadband, telecommunications and cloud services.

Notably, the shares of the company hit the 5 per cent upper circuit for several consecutive days in the recent past.It is important to note that the rise in share prices of the company comes at a time when major Indian telecom operators have raised their prepaid tariffs by around 20 per cent.In late November, telecom majors Vodafone Idea, Bharti Airtel and Reliance Jio raised their tariffs, which had already come into effect.”The tariff hike, led by Bharti Airtel, is expected to improve ‘ARPU’ (average revenue per-use) and free cash flow of the telcos. Incremental cash flows would aid the much-needed network expansion and 5G rollout,” Mohit Nigam, Head-PMS, Hem Securities had said.

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is for notice of the general public that a political party is proposed to be registered by the name of **Samrat Mihir Bhoj Samaj Party**. The office of the party located at **F-64/C9/197, Sec.-40, Noida, (Near Sai Nath Mandir), Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, Pin Code-201303**. This Party has submitted application to the Election Commission of India, New Delhi for its registration as Political Party under Section 29A of the Representation of People Act, 1951 – Names/address of the office – bearers of the Party are as follows: **President/Chairman: Harender Kumar Gurjar, (Guruji), F-197, Sec.-40, Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P.-201303**
General Secretary / Secretary : Anil Kumar Vashisht, 29, Nithari, Sec.-31, Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P.-201303
Treasurer : Anita Devi, F-64/C9/197 Sec.-40, Noida, Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P.-201303.
If any one has any objection to the registration of **Samrat Mihir Bhoj Samaj Party** they may send their Objection with reasons thereof, to the Secretary (Political Party) Election Commission of India, Nirvachan Sadan, Ashoka Road, New Delhi-110001 within 30 days of the publication of this notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed that my clients **Sh. Rajesh Agarwal S/o Late Sh. Shyam Sunder Agarwal & Mrs.Sandhya Agarwal W/o Late Sh. Rajesh Agarwal both R/o Flat No. 103, Block-3/19 Rajpur Road, Civil Lines, Delhi** have debarred and disowned their son **NITIN AGARWAL** from their family and all movable and immovable properties and assets. Now my above named clients and their family would have no concern with **NITIN AGARWAL** in any manner and he will not have any share or interest in the properties/assets owned by my clients.
If any person deals with **NITIN AGARWAL** in any way, he/she would do so at his own risk and my clients **Sh. Rajesh Agarwal and Smt. Sandhya Agarwal** will not be responsible for his any act or liability.
NAVNEET GOEL, (Advocate) 430, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008
Date 2.12.2021

PUBLIC NOTICE
Be it known to all that my client **Sh. Sunil Datt S/o Sh. Charanjil Lal Kanda R/o 19, Farquhar Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, U.K** had already severed all his relations with his son **Sahil Datt** & he is now specifically debarred/disowned from all his movable immovable property. My client has already taken divorce form **Ms. Jyoti (Mother of Sahil Datt)** in the year 2000.
Any one dealing with him shall do so at one's own risk. My client will not be responsible for any of his act.
Rakesh Sharma (Advocate), Chamber No.1, Civil Wing, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi,

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This is to inform/confirm that we have discontinued our Business Relations with the above mentioned Authorized Persons. Clients and General Public are warned against Dealing in with them in his/their capacity as our Authorized Persons and we hereby confirm that we will not be liable in any manner for any consequence of such dealings/deals. Clients are requested to contact our centralized desk **022-3355 1111/4218/5454** or email us to **support@angelbroking.com**.
Place : Delhi
Date : 06.12.2021

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Authorised Signatory



With a splash of red, a hint of black, a deep indigo — Bagh print — made from natural dyes extracted from various plants and vegetables provides a source of livelihood for the people from Bagh village. It also upholds the importance of sustainable art.

The renowned traditional Indian handicraft is believed to be over 1,000 years old and is an important source of rural livelihood. From the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh, it typically comprises geometric, paisley or floral motifs, predominantly in red or black. Mohammed Bilal Khatri, the master craftsman of Bagh print, has made significant contributions to the advancement and promotion of this traditional art form on both national and international levels. In September, he also got the opportunity to showcase his handicraft in a four-day long Turtuk Festival, organised by the Ministry of Culture.

GOING PLACES

Mohammed Bilal Khatri, the master craftsman of Bagh print, is taking the art beyond the physical confines of his village, says RUBY SARKAR

This young artisan hails from Bagh village in Madhya Pradesh. He has learned this art form from his father, Mohammed Yusuf Khatri and grandfather Ismail Sulemanji. From the age of eight, he has been involved in this traditional handicraft and has gained more than 20 years of experience. In 2011, he was awarded the National Merit Award by the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India, followed by Russian Diploma Award

from International Ethnomir 'Dialogue of Cultures- United World' Fund in 2014. Sharing his experience at the Turtuk Festival, he said, "I was really delighted to be honoured by the Ministry of Culture of Government of India and secondly, by the Turtuk Executive Councilor, Ghulam Mehndi on behalf of the administration. Furthermore, coming to Turtuk village and interacting with the locals provid-

ed me with a sense of peace." Turtuk, the last village of India, is approximately 203 km away from Leh in the Union Territory of Ladakh. The village was under the control of Pakistan after 1947, but India regained it after the war of 1971. To mark 50 years of this historic accomplishment, the Indian government organized Turtuk Festival under 'Aazadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' — an initiative to commemorate 75 years of its rich his-

tory, diverse population, culture and achievements. A total of 200 artisans from across India participated in this festival, Bilal being one of them.

"I provided complete information to the locals about the historic importance of this art. They showed great interest in knowing more about Bagh print and also tried their hand at stamping the prints," informed Bilal.

According to him, the beauty of Turtuk, which is situated amidst the ancient Shyok river and snow-clad Himalayas, coupled with its generous locals, is unparalleled. "This area is surrounded by the Karakoram Mountain range. As far as the eyes can see, there are mountains. And besides the natural beauty, even the people here are so simple," shared Bilal heartily.

Further, diving deeper into the details of this traditional handicraft, Bilal mentioned that the printing of Bagh prints and the treatment of fabric is a multi-stage process, which includes colour treatment, fabric soaking, boiling, drying, washing and printing. These steps are usually repeated depending on the number of colours used on the fabric.

"The process starts with soaking the fabric in raw salt, hot water and goat dung. This step is the reason for the light-yellow colour of the fabric. After this, the fabric is washed, spread and dried in the open. At this stage, the red colour is extracted by soaking and boiling tamarind seeds and alum in a big copper vessel. The red colour distinguishes the Bagh print," explained Bilal.

The blocks are made with great precision to complement cotton, crepe, silk and other types of fabrics. After this, the fabric is spread on a plank or a table with many layers of jute, straws and fabrics which provides a flexible base for block printing, which is done skillfully by the artisans. The red colour extracted from tamarind seeds is highlighted using different blocks. There are many patterns including flowers, leaves and traditional sculptures.

"Till further instructions, the artists use their imagination to bring fabric to life by meticulously embossing the designs," he added.

—Charkha Features

The toughest part of a race is right before the finish line. The same is the case with a phenomenon called 'Year-end fatigue', which means that feelings of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion will encompass you. It will leave you feeling irritability, exhaustion, and low motivation.

Are you just tired or is it something more? Fatigue is when you perpetually exhausted or weak. You need to remember that fatigue is a symptom, not a condition. If you feel like this exhaustion is impeding your daily routine, it may be a medical condition and you are advised to visit a doctor as soon as possible.

Reasons for year-end burnouts:

The end of the year means that people are in a rush to get things done. From work goals to family pressures, you are faced with the need to get things done. But accompanied by the constant sense of fatigue, it makes accomplishing anything next to impossible.

Here are a few ways to deal with this exhaustion and fatigue and begin 2022 with a fresh perspective.

Take a social media break

You must have heard about the phrase — digital detox. The constant need to keep in touch through social media can get overwhelming, and while it is difficult to shut yourself off from social media completely, you can fit a mini digital detox into your workday. Giving your complete attention to a particular activity -- spending time with family or friends while leaving your phone aside is one way of doing so. Another way is you can download apps that limit screen time and alert you when you exceed the set limit. According to UW Health psy-



Ace your game

SONAL SINGH has some tips up her sleeve to bid adieu to year-end-fatigue

chologist Shilagh Mirgain, one can improve productivity, focus, mindfulness and bonds with friends and family by restricting the use of technology.

Rest up

A side effect of fatigue is that it also impacts your sleep. You may experience broken sleep patterns or even fail to sleep peacefully at all. While you might feel that sleeping for 18 hours would help solve your fatigue, in fact all you need to do is reset your sleep cycle by trying to get seven to eight hours of sleep. Not only will this



improve your mood, but it will also help you feel revitalised.

Keep your physical activity in check

At such a time, you are bound to get tired with even the thought of picking yourself off the couch and exercising. You need not spend two or three hours a day at the gym, but a simple 30-minutes' walk or jog will set a tone for the day and

help reduce stress, eventually making you feel fit and healthy.

Healthy food is a must

You may not realise the value of eating healthy and its effect on your mood, stress and energy. Not only does it help in combating stress, but it also leaves your body feeling nourished. Be cautious of skipping meals at such a time, as it may worsen your mood. Instead, include a healthy and balanced meal plan in your routine. A study published in the journal Nutrients shows that consumption of junk food leads to increased stress. Also, do remember to not pressurise yourself at such a time and indulge in comfort food, if need be.

Be grateful

Dr Guy Winch, author of the book Emotional First Aid said that 'gratitude is an emotion that grounds us and is a great way to balance out the negative mindset that uncertainty engenders'. It is crucial to keep in mind that negative feelings will only bog you down. You must show gratitude and remind yourself of the bigger things in your life. This helps release dopamine and serotonin – happy hormones that make us feel light and happy internally, and in turn helps beat stress.

To stay ahead of the curve and practise the suggestions above to beat the year end fatigue. Prevention is better than cure, so ensure that you are mindful of your feelings, the pace at which you're moving in life. Slow down, take a deep breathe to start the new year with a fresh outlook to explore the numerous possibilities.

(The author is co-founder and director, Fitr.)

Wars Don't Bring Peace

The conflict between nations is rooted in religious bigotry, a scramble for power or a spirit of revenge, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI



A recent violent face-off between the two emerging world powers over a long-disputed border issue has highlighted the repercussions that this can entail. Unless the concerned countries desist from the use of force, even a small, old issue can develop into a big war, with possibilities of involving the superpowers and influencing the whole world. As the world, with a huge nuclear stockpile, has turned into a powder keg, every sane person wants that war should be banished from society. But to cure the malady of wars, one will have first to identify the causes of war.

A well-known epigram, on this question, says, "Wars are born in the minds of men." Though this is true in general terms, it would be better if, to explain the origination of wars it is said, "Wars — hot or cold — are born either from the temptation to possess more territories or from the feelings of national pride or hurt pride, or from hatred, suspicion and fear that grip men's mind and finally, from the will to prove its superior strength or to wreak vengeance on the opponent." The recent issue between the two powerful Asian countries is no exception to this rule. One cannot explain as to why the soldiers of one nation barged into the territory of another nation, despite knowing very well that there has been a peace treaty between the two nations for years. Was it some kind of fear or some insecurity, feelings of national pride or wounded pride? Whatever may be the reason, the fact remains that today the whole world is in danger of nuclear war and that makes every nation build up heavy stocks of weapons of mass destruction in the name of self-defense and security. If, therefore, mankind wants to do away with wars, once for all, the first thing it must do is to remember well that war is an inhuman, brutish and insane way of settling disputes.

It would be useful to know, in this context, that behind every action, there is in one's mind, "a related conviction or what may be called 'philosophy of action'". So also, behind wars, there is what may be called a 'philosophy of wars', perverted though it may be. Students of history would know that by the end of the 19th century, a powerful war cult had arisen in Europe, inspired by the belief that only the fittest should survive. War, it was argued, was an instinct of mankind. Death on the battlefield was described as the loftiest of human sacrifices or the most heroic devotion to society. Philosophers, such as Renan, said, "War is, in a way, one of the conditions of progress, the cut of a whip which keeps a country from going to sleep." John Ruskin called war, "the foundation of all arts... of all virtues and faculties of men." Obviously, this war cult ignored war's brutalising effects and the indelible scars it inflicted on both the victors and the vanquished.

If, now, the philosophy of Renan and Ruskin and such other men, as Prussian Marshal Moltke, who said that "war is an element of the order of the world, established by God", continue to be believed by the nations, then, of course, wars cannot be banished. Nations will take to the path of reconciliation and non-violence if — like the Indian king, Ashoka — they keep uppermost the suffering wars cause uppermost in their minds. Today, the lack of peace is an outcome of mankind's inability to realise the truth behind the factors that lead nations to race for military superiority, build up weapons and subjugate other people and territories. These are powered by religious bigotry, a scramble for power or a spirit of revenge. Because of his lust for power, man cheats himself of happiness. It is a pity that he easily forgets that the power of arms or money without the power to rule one's own mind is pure evil. Also, man does not realise that the political power without the power to rule one's physical senses and without the intent to use power for human good, leads to turmoil. Lasting happiness of the human race depends not on the power to dominate others but on his mastery over his demonic traits. So, the rub of the matter is that man needs to be reminded effectively that if he does not kill the demons of hate, anger and war with the weapons of love and universal brotherhood, the demons will kill mankind.



“

You will face many defeats in life, but never let yourself be defeated.

—Maya Angelou

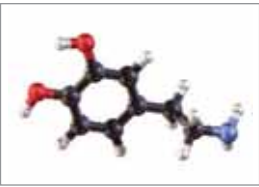
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DOPAMINE LEVELS ELEVATE DUE TO STRESS

Pioneering research shows that dopamine levels increase in response to stressful stimuli, and not just pleasurable ones, potentially rewriting facts about the 'feel-good' hormone — a critical mediator of many psychiatric diseases. This discovery is cause to rethink treatment for psychiatric disease and addiction.

This research was led by Erin Calipari, assistant professor of pharmacology, and Munir Gunes Kutlu, a postdoctoral fellow in Calipari's laboratory.

"A common theme of all drugs of abuse is that they increase dopamine release in the brain, which helped feed the notion of dopamine as a reward molecule. This work clearly demonstrates a much more sophisticated role for this neurotransmitter, and it means we need to rethink models of addiction that depend on the dopamine/drug reward mentality," said Danny Winder, director of the Vanderbilt Center for Addiction Research.



POTENTIAL STRATEGY FOR FIGHTING OBESITY

UT Southwestern scientists may have identified a method of safely mimicking the weight-loss benefits of a plant compound that — despite its harmful side effects — hold critical answers to developing therapies for obesity.

Celastrol, derived from the root extracts of a white-flowered plant in China, has drawn increased attention in recent years after studies showed it can both prevent and reverse obesity in mice. However, because celastrol can cause reactions such as high blood pressure and lethargy in mice, researchers have sought to understand how the compound works and use that knowledge to develop safe weight-loss treatments for people.

"This new understanding of how celastrol works on the cellular level opens more possibilities for targeting pathways that can improve our metabolism without the negative health impact," said Kevin W Williams, an investigator at UT Southwestern's Center for Hypothalamic Research.



ARE THERE DBPs IN THAT CUP OF TEA?

Surpassed only by water, tea is the second most consumed beverage worldwide. When boiled tap water is used to brew tea, residual chlorine in the water can react with tea compounds to form disinfection byproducts (DBPs). Now, researchers measured 60 DBPs in three types of tea, unexpectedly finding lower levels in brewed tea than in tap water. However, they also detected many unknown DBPs with uncertain health effects.

Although disinfection is important to ensure drinking water safety, a downside is DBP formation. Tea contains about 500 compounds, including polyphenols, amino acids, caffeine and others, that can react with chlorine to form DBPs, some of which have been linked in epidemiological studies with cancer and adverse birth outcomes. In addition, DBPs can form from reactions with compounds in the tap water itself.

Researchers brewed the teas and then measured the compounds using gas chromatography-mass spectrometry.



CANNABIS MAY IMPACT SPERM COUNT

An intense but short-term exposure to cannabis vapor lowered sperm counts and slowed sperm movement, or motility, not only in the directly exposed male mice but also in their sons, according to a new study.

The findings show that cannabis can impede male reproductive function. The current study uses more controlled circumstances than human studies, which often have to rely on surveys, and is the first known reproductive study to use vaporised whole cannabis in mice, which is the more common form humans use. Previous animal studies used other administration methods such as injections of THC, the main psychoactive component of cannabis.

"This is a warning flag. You may take cannabis for some kind of momentary stress, but it could affect your offspring," said Hayashi, an associate professor in WSU's School of Molecular Biosciences.



NEW INJECTABLE HYDROGEL REPAIRS WOUNDS

Combining knowledge of chemistry, physics, biology, and engineering, scientists from McGill University develop a biomaterial tough enough to repair the heart, muscles, and vocal cords, representing a major advance in regenerative medicine.

"People recovering from heart damage often face a long and tricky journey. Healing is challenging because of the constant movement tissues must withstand as the heart beats. The same is true for vocal cords. Until now, there was no injectable material strong enough for the job," says Guangyu Bao, a PhD candidate at McGill University.

The team developed a new injectable hydrogel for wound repair. Once injected into the body, the biomaterial forms a stable, porous structure allowing live cells to grow or pass through to repair the injured organs.



ASHWIN TURNS IT ON AS INDIA AIM FOR FOUR DAY FINISH

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's middle-order worries going into South Africa series remained but that didn't deter Ravichandran Ashwin from turning the heat on as his three quick blows left New Zealand tottering at 140 for five in pursuit of an impossible 540 on day three of the second Test.

While Daryl Mitchell (60 off 92 balls) and Henry Nicholls (36 batting) added 73 runs for the fourth wicket, there is no denying that India in all likelihood will finish it early on the fourth day with Ashwin (3/27) looking menacing after every passing over.

What will hurt New Zealand team most in this defeat is the fact that this is the game where one of its own -- Ajaz Patel, equalled the world record and grabbed a match-haul of 14 wickets, something that no one has ever done against India in Test cricket.

The tall Mitchell at least tried to use his reach to counter Ashwin and also attack Jayant Yadav and Axar Patel but looked more like the last man standing, trying to delay the inevitable before a rush of blood saw him being holed at deep extra cover. Tom Blundell had a suicidal runout going for a non-existent single.

But it was Ashwin, who again got the new ball and immediately got into the act by removing skipper Tom Latham with an angular delivery while Will Young gave bat



'I DON'T THINK KOHLI HAS A TECHNICAL PROBLEM" I JUST THINK HE HAS TO WAIT PATIENTLY. IF THERE IS A PATTERN IN THE WAY HE IS GETTING DISMISSED, WHEN HE IS OUT THERE IN THE MIDDLE IF HE IS STRUGGLING TO TIME THE BALL, IF HE IS STRUGGLING TO GET ON TOP OF THE BALL, THEN IT'S A PROBLEM. I DON'T THINK HE HAS THAT PROBLEM. —VVS LAXMAN

pad to forward short leg and Ross Taylor, who has been a walking wicket, failed miserably in his attempt to slog sweep the wily off-spinner.

There was one over where Ashwin literally toyed with left-handed Nicholls who couldn't gauge which one would turn away like a classical off-break and the one that will straighten or come in with the angle.

But there will be some issues that would need coach Rahul Dravid's urgent attention.

For India, even in what could be a facile victory, the wobbly middle-order would keep them worried going into the South Africa series.

Ajinkya Rahane failed in the first Test and had to be dropped on pretext of a hamstring niggle. Cheteshwar Pujara had three bad innings and one where he looked better but that was after the pressure was released by the bowlers.

Skipper Virat Kohli, whose primary aim of not enforcing follow-on was to get some batting time under his belt, also didn't look confident during a scratchy innings of 36 off 84 balls.

Former India batter said Virat Kohli doesn't have a technical deficiency or any mental issue that is stopping him from getting to a 3-figure score and that the India captain has to be patient to end the long drought for a hundred in international cricket.

VVS Laxman said the 3-figure score will come Virat Kohli's way soon and once it does, Kohli will be back to scoring big runs for India. The former batter's comments come after Virat Kohli was dismissed for 36 on Day 3 of the 2nd Test against New Zealand in Mumbai.

India declared their second innings at 276 for 7 after Axar hit four sixes and three fours in his 41 off 26 balls to prop up the innings towards the end.

Their confidence already shattered, the New Zealand bowlers conceded as many as 25 fours and 11 sixes in the 70 overs they bowled in the second innings. In fact, all

Indian batters save Wriddhiman Saha hit at least one six.

Kohli's idea of batting again was partially successful because Pujara did look good during his 47 and Mayank Agarwal (62, 108 balls) did his cause no harm by smashing another half-century to top up his first innings score of 150.

The duo added 107 runs for the opening stand to add insult to New Zealand's injuries and it was compounded by another 82 runs that Shubman Gill (47) added with Kohli.

Save a six that he hit off opposition's weakest link, Will Somerville, Kohli for the better part of his 84 balls didn't look convincing before playing on to a friendly left-arm spin from Rachin Ravindra, who also had three wickets.

Agarwal was looking good for his second hundred of the game but in his bid to hit another six off Patel he could not reach to the pitch of the delivery and Will Young comfortably took the catch at long-off.

For Pujara this was the best chance to get a fifty and increase his confidence before the tour of South Africa.

He survived a strong DRS appeal but then one delivery that was pitched slightly fuller and turned, got his outside edge and went to Taylor's safe hands in the slips.

Sindhu settles for silver in BWF World Tour Finals

PTI ■ BALI

Indian badminton ace P V Sindhu settled for a silver medal at the BWF World Tour Finals after going down meekly against Korean teen sensation An Seyoung in the summit clash, here on Sunday.

Sindhu, the reigning world champion and two-time Olympic medallist, could neither match the pace nor breach the defence of the world number six Korean, losing 16-21 12-21 in the 40-minute lopsided clash.

It was Sindhu's third successive loss -- all straight games -- to the Korean in as many meetings.

With this victory, An Seyoung became the first ever

South Korean woman to win the season-ending title.

It was also her third straight title in Bali, following wins at the Indonesia Masters and Indonesia Open in the last two weeks.

Making her third final appearance in the year-end tournament, world number seven Sindhu looked a pale shadow of the player who had claimed the title in 2018 to become the only Indian to achieve the feat.

"It was a good game. An Seyoung is a good player so I don't think it was going to be easy. I was prepared for a good match," Sindhu said after the title clash.

"From the beginning I should not have given her lead because in the end I came back covering



few points. It is a bit sad but lot to learn.

"It has been a good three weeks in Bali. So lot of positives

to take from here and it's time to go back, recover and get prepared for the world championships," added the 26-year-old.

Up against the 19-year-old Korean, Sindhu once again looked short of ideas. She couldn't mount her attacking game or make use of the full court.

An Seyoung looked more polished at the nets and rode on her good quality of strokes. She produced some sensational full stretch diving saves with her swift movement to blunt Sindhu's game plan.

The Indian had a forgettable start and was left to fight a tough battle after lagging 0-4.

Sindhu played a good rally to log her first points with a cross court return. She tried to narrow the gap by engaging her rival in rallies but An Seyoung was quick on her feet and showed better

anticipation to always keep her nose ahead.

The Korean doubled the lead to 16-8 after resumption. Sindhu tried to make up the deficit with a few good points but the Korean managed to collect eight game points. Sindhu saved four game points by putting pressure on her opponent's backhand, while the Korean also sent one long.

An Seyoung, however, sealed the opening game with a body return.

"During the rally, the shot which I wanted to attack, I was making mistakes. It was going side outs and points which I had to take were going to net. It is part of the game and it happens at times," said Sindhu.



India's fringe players look to make impact in final unofficial Test

PTI ■ BLOEMFONTEIN

The third unofficial Test between India A and South Africa A beginning here on Monday will give the fringe players another opportunity to make their case for national selection ahead of the senior team South Africa's tour later this month.

A squad of at least 20 is likely to be picked for the South Africa tour comprising three Tests and three ODIs beginning December 26.

Hanuma Vihari, who was controversially dropped for the New Zealand series at home, is expected to come back into the side. He looked good in the drawn second unofficial Test scoring couple of fifties.

Abhimanyu Easwaran, who could be picked as a back up batter in the top-order, has been in sublime touch on the tour.

He scored a hundred in the series opener and followed it up with a fifty in the second innings of the game held earlier this week.

Prithvi Shaw has not made most of his chances in South Africa, not helping his case for selection.

After a tough outing in the series opener, the pacers were impressive in the second game with the young Ishan Porel standing out with a match haul of six wickets. Navdeep Saini too was amongst the wickets, taking five in total.

Leg-spinner Rahul Chahar has not done much in the series but he is likely to be picked in ODI squad.

Mitchell says he took cue from Mayank to counter Indian spinners

PTI ■ MUMBAI

New Zealand batter Daryl Mitchell on Sunday said he took cue from India opener Mayank Agarwal to counter the home side's spinners on day three of the second Test here.

Mitchell (60 off 92 balls) shared 73 runs for the fourth wicket with Henry Nicholls (36 batting) to provide much needed resistance in New Zealand's improbable chase of 540.

"Set the template from Mayank's batting, the way he put pressure on our spinners," Mitchell said after the day's play.

"Disappointing to not still be out there and kick on, but nice to get a partnership going."

Mitchell admitted that his team is obviously in a tough situation in the Test.

"They (Indian bowlers) are constantly throwing things at you and you're trying to counter that. You have to keep trying to win the small battles."

"Tough situation we're in, but it was just



about trying to go out and do what we can. Obviously it is very challenging."

Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin took three quick wickets to leave New Zealand tottering at 140 for five at stumps.

Talking about the Wankhede pitch, he said, "It's a pretty challenging surface, there's definitely balls turning there with your name on it. It's just about trying to put pressure back on the bowlers. That's the beauty of Test cricket."

JK Tyre Novice Cup & Anish in JK Tyre presents Royal Enfield Continental GT Cup

PNS ■ COIMBATORE

The weather gods played hide & seek in the penultimate round of the 24th JK Tyre-FMSCI National Racing Championship here in Coimbatore.

Heavy rains halted the session for a couple of hours on Saturday but then the wet track condition made the races in the LGB Formula 4 & JK Tyre Novice Cup category even more exciting.

As the drivers & riders got geared up to take to the track to prove their mettle came the rain and halted the proceedings for over an hour.

But the race officials were determined to complete the race for the cars. It continued to rain but the Formula LGB4 drivers, the experienced of the lot, were given the task to handle the condition.

The race was run under the safety car and yellow flag for the first four laps but Arya Singh of Dark Don Racing did a much better job to bring home his first race win.

Rain limits play on day 2 of Bang v Pak test

AP ■ DHAKA

The majority of play on day two of the second cricket test between Bangladesh and Pakistan was washed out due to persistent rain on Sunday.

Just 6.2 overs from a possible 98 were possible as Pakistan resumed the day on 161-2 and reached 188-2 before the umpires called it a day.

Skipper Babar Azam was batting on 71 with Azhar Ali on 52 at stumps.

Rain and bad light also interrupted the game on day one, allowing just two sessions.

As the game started after the lunch session on Sunday, Babar resumed with a boundary through fine leg off pacer Khaled Ahmed, showing his intention to score quick runs.



Azhar also hit a boundary in the second ball he faced off pacer Ebadot Hossain.

He then struck two consecutive fours in Ebadot's next over to reach his 34th test fifty off 126 balls just before rain forced the postponement. Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam, who didn't bowl on day two, remains Bangladesh's biggest threat with match figures of 2-49.

Pakistan won the first test by eight wickets and leads the two-match series 1-0.

India lose to France to finish 4th in Jr Hockey WC

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Title hopes already shattered, defending champions India even failed to finish on the podium as they lost 1-3 to France in the bronze-medal play-off match of the FIH Junior Hockey World Cup here on Sunday. France skipper Timothee Clement slammed a hat-trick. Clement converted three penalty corners for France in the 26th, 34th and

47th minutes while India's lone goal was struck by Sudeep Chirmako in the 42nd minute.

It was the second consecutive flop show from the Indians after their superlative performance against Belgium in the quarterfinals.

The third-fourth place match was a chance for India to avenge their 4-5 defeat against France in their tournament opener, but it was not to be as the European side contin-



ued to dominate the hosts with a superb performance.

France were by far the better side on the pitch as they controlled the proceedings after a sedate first quarter and earned as many as 14 penalty corners as against India's just three. India started on a bright note and exerted pressure on France defence in the first quarter, which resulted in a penalty corner as early as in the first minute of the game, but

the hosts failed to utilise the chance. The Indians continued to press hard and came close to securing the lead in the 12th minute when Arajjeet Singh Hundal's shot from top of the circle hit the post.

France got their footing into the match at the fag end of the first quarter when they secured three penalty corners in succession but the Indian defence did just enough to keep their rivals at bay.

Germany bow out of Davis Cup with "dead rubber" doubles win

AP ■ MADRID

Germany bowed out of the Davis Cup with a win in the doubles rubber of their semi-final in Madrid against Russia. Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz fought back to beat Aslan Karatsev and Karen Khachanov 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, but it was scant consolation as singles victories for Andrey Rublev



and Daniil Medvedev had earlier given Russia an unassailable 2-0 lead in the best-of-three tie.

Barcelona loses to Betis 1-0 before critical Bayern trip

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona lost its first match Bunder Xavi Hernández when it fell to Real Betis 1-0 at home just before its critical trip to Bayern Munich.

Striker Juanmi Jiménez finished off a well-orchestrated counterattack to take Betis' winner in the 79th minute at Camp Nou on Saturday night.

Barcelona had won twice and drawn once since Xavi took over as coach from Ronald Koeman. The defeat left the team in seventh place and in danger of falling even further behind leader Real Madrid, which played at Real Sociedad later.

Barcelona visits Bayern on Wednesday needing a win to ensure its place in the Champions League round of 16. Bayern, which is

already qualified as the group winner, beat Barcelona 3-0 in their first meeting this season.

If it loses, Barcelona would need Benfica to not beat Dynamo Kyiv to avoid elimination.

Before kickoff, Barcelona player Alexia Putellas presented the 65,000-plus fans her Ballón d'Or for the world's best women's player.

Barcelona lost teen talent Gavi Páez in the 34th when he needed to be carted off after apparently feeling dizzy following the powerful impact of a ball to his head.

Manuel Pellegrini's Betis rose into third place, right behind crosstown rival Sevilla, which beat Villarreal 1-0 thanks to a goal from Lucas Ocampos.

Sevilla and Villareal also have key Champions League matches this week. Sevilla must win at Salzburg



to move on, while Villarreal plays Atalanta needing a draw to advance.

MADRID WINS AT SOCIEDAD

When Karim Benzema went

down injured, Vinicius Júnior and the rarely used Luka Jovic stepped up to secure Real Madrid a 2-0 win at Real Sociedad and strengthen its hold of the Spanish league lead.

The young attacking players struck goals early in the second half in San Sebastián to give Madrid its eighth consecutive win across all competitions and leave it eight points clear of nearest chaser Sevilla.

Madrid's victory came after Atlético Madrid and Barcelona were upset at home, leaving them further adrift.

"We knew that this was going to be a tough game at a difficult ground, but we played a great game from the very start," Madrid midfielder leader Luka Modric said.

"It was a complete game and these are three huge points."

Atlético Madrid trailed by 10 points in fourth place after the defending champion was stunned by Mallorca 2-1 in the capital.

Barcelona was a whopping 16 points behind in seventh place following a 1-0 loss to Real Betis, its first defeat since Xavi Hernández took over as coach.

Manuel Pellegrini's Betis rose into third place, right behind crosstown rival Sevilla, which beat Villarreal 1-0 thanks to a goal from Lucas Ocampos.

Jovic never found his spot on Madrid following his 60 million euros transfer from Eintracht Frankfurt in the summer of 2019. He scored two goals in a season-and-a-half before he was loaned back to Frankfurt.

MAN CITY GOES TOP OF EPL

Defending champion Manchester City is on top of the English Premier League for the first time this season.

And if Pep Guardiola's team keeps playing like this, it could be difficult to knock City off its perch — even in a tight title race that saw three different teams lead the standings during Saturday.

On a day when previous leader Chelsea faltered, City displayed total dominance in a 3-1 win at Watford that showed off the kind of fluid passing game that helped Guardiola's team win three of the last four league titles.

Bernardo Silva scored twice after Raheem Sterling's early opener as City proved once again that it can do perfectly fine without a recognized striker in the lineup. It was a fifth straight league win for City, which is one point ahead of Liverpool and two in front of Chelsea after 15 rounds.