

**OPINION 6**  
ENFORCING EQUALITY  
BARELY GIVES HOPE

**WORLD 8**  
CHINA REFUTES ZEYA'S JOB  
AS US ENVOY FOR TIBET

**AVENUES 10**  
DIGITIZATION IN  
INSURANCE SECTOR

NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 22, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3

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## Omicron sneaking up on you

As cases soar to over 200, Centre writes to States to step up efforts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid concerns that from just two infections three weeks ago, the number of cases of Covid-19 fast-spreading strain Omicron has zoomed past the 200-mark in India, an alarmed Centre on Tuesday wrote to all State Governments regarding preventive measures, including local level containment and stepping up health services in different parts of the country.

Union Health Ministry officials said at least two people in Odisha have tested positive for the Omicron variant of Covid-19, the first case of the latest version of coronavirus in the State. Bhubaneswar-based Institute of Life Sciences (ILS) too confirmed the existence of the variant in the two patients after conducting the genome sequencing on 12 samples.

Out of 200 Omicron cases, 77 patients have recovered or migrated. Maharashtra and Delhi have the highest number of Omicron cases, at 54 each, followed by Telangana (20) and Karnataka (19).

Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan, in his letter, shared a few targeted actions that need to be implemented by the States to curb any possible outbreak.



Health workers during door to door Covid-19 inoculation drive at Tosamaidan in Budgam district on Monday PTI

"At the district level, there should be a constant review of emerging data regarding the population affected by Covid-19, geographical spread, hospital infrastructure and its utilisation, manpower, notifying containment zones, enforcement of perimeter of containment, etc," wrote Bhushan.

"This evidence should be the basis for effective decision making at the district level itself. Such a strategy ensures that infection is contained at the local level itself before it spreads to other parts of the State," he added.

Echoing recent WHO warning that the Omicron is spreading faster than Delta, the senior health official said that based on current scientific evidence, the new variant is at least 3 times more transmissible than the Delta virus. Besides, the Delta variant is still present in different parts of the country. Hence, even greater foresight, data analysis, dynamic decision making and strict and prompt containment action is required at the local and district level. The decision-making at the State/UT and district level must be very prompt and focused, said the Union Health Secretary.

The Ministry left on the States to take the containment measures saying that it can be based on the local situation and population characteristics such as density etc. "... and keeping in mind the higher transmissibility of Omicron, States/UTs can take containment measures and restrictions even before these thresholds are reached," said Bhushan.

Some of the strategic areas of intervention focusing on containment, test, track, surveillance, clinical management, vaccination and Covid appropriate behaviour need to be taken up, the official said in the letter.

The Centre also asked the States to ensure cent per cent vaccine coverage of the left out first and second dose eligible beneficiaries in an accelerated manner. With 137 crore doses administered so far, 88 per cent of the country's population have received one dose of the vaccine, while 58 per cent have been fully vaccinated.

"Special focus should be given to those districts where the first and second dose coverage is less than the national average. The door-to-door vaccination campaign need to be strengthened," he said.

Giving a full dose of Moderna's vaccine as a booster shot also provides more antibody protection against Omicron than the currently authorised half-strength injection, according to the announced results.

Our booster can increase neutralising antibodies by 37 times, claims Moderna

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The US vaccine manufacturer Moderna has said that a booster dose of its Covid-19 vaccine should offer protection against the rapidly spreading Omicron variant. It said that lab tests showed the half-dose booster shot increased by 37 times the level of so-called neutralising antibodies able to fight omicron.

It also said that the current version of the vaccine would continue to be Moderna's "first line of defence against Omicron."

"We'll be able to rely on this vaccine to address the near-term surge of Omicron cases," Stephen Hoge, president of Moderna, said on a conference call on Monday to a news agency.

However, he said tests showed that after only two doses, protection against Omicron was "substantially lower" than against the initial strain of Covid.

Hoge added, "We're cautiously optimistic given the data presented here... that the authorized booster dose of 50 microgram should provide good protection, we would hope, against the Omicron variant."

Continued on Page 2

The lab study measured the levels of Omicron-neutralising antibodies in blood samples from 40 people who had low levels of these antibodies before getting the booster.

The current recommendation is to give 100 micrograms of the Moderna jab as a first and second dose for protection from Covid-19, followed by a 50-microgram booster.

Antibodies were measured 29 days after booster participants got the third jabs, with half getting a 50 microgram dose and another half getting 100 micrograms.

Moderna says preliminary data show antibody response to Omicron at the 50 microgram dose increased 37-fold, but when the dose was doubled, antibody levels rose 83-fold.

Moderna CEO Stephane Bancel called the results "reassuring" adding that the company continued to develop an Omicron-specific jab.

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Gupkar alliance to protest against delimitation draft

Will raise voice,  
hold 'peaceful  
protest on Jan 1,  
say J&K leaders

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU



Members of People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration Farooq Abdullah, Mehbooba Mufti, MY Tarigami and others at a meeting in Jammu Pioneer photo

"divisive and unacceptable".

Earlier, several Kashmir-based political parties had outrightly rejected the proposal while accusing the commission of allowing the "political agenda of the BJP to dictate its recommendations".

"We want peace and do not want any confrontation with any institution or Government. However, we will raise our voice for the defence of legitimate rights of the people in a peaceful manner and have decided to hold a peaceful demonstration in Srinagar on January 1, 2022, to register their token protest against the move."

The decision was taken after holding deliberations for over one hour at the residence of Dr Farooq Abdullah in Bhatinda area of Jammu.

PDP chief and former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, CPI(M) leader Mohd Yusuf Tarigami, Awami National Conference leader Muzaffar Ahmad Shah and NC MP Justice (Retd) Hasnain Masoodi and Dr Mehmood Beig from the PDP attended the meeting.

After the meeting, the PAGD leaders jointly addressed a press conference and described the draft proposal as

Continued on Page 2

### CAPSULE

#### 3 DIE IN IOC REFINERY IN BENGAL, 44 INJURED

Haldia: At least three people were killed and 44 others suffered injuries in an Indian Oil Corporation refinery in West Bengal's Haldia. The IOC, in a statement, said the incident occurred at a unit of the refinery during shutdown related works.

#### 20 ANTI-INDIA YOUTUBE CHANNELS BLOCKED

New Delhi: The Information and Broadcasting Ministry on Tuesday said in a "closely coordinated" effort with intelligence agencies, it has ordered blocking of 20 YouTube channels and two websites as they were spreading anti-India propaganda and fake news.

#### MUHKIYA, DAUGHTER DIE IN BOMB ATTACK

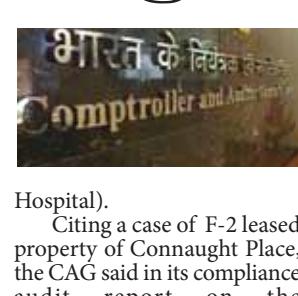
Pakur: A 'muhiya' (village head) and his minor daughter were killed, while his wife and son were seriously injured, after unidentified assailants hurled bombs at their car in Jharkhand's Pakur district, police said on Tuesday.

#### GOVT: NO MANUAL SCAVENGERS NOW

New Delhi: No person is currently engaged in manual scavenging but 158 persons have died while cleaning sewers or septic tanks in the last three years, the government said on Tuesday.

## CAG raps L&DO for not revising lease rent

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI



The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has come down heavily on the Land and Development Office (L&DO) attached with the Ministry Housing and Urban Affairs for not revising the rent of leased properties (Nazul lands) since its allotment.

Most of the properties are located on the prime land in the national Capital. The CAG also pulled up the L&DO for not having authentic figures of its leased properties.

Of the 29 properties seen by the CAG, ground rent was due for revision in 21 properties which includes 29, Aurangzeb Road, Bal Bharati School, Pusa Road, Kendriya Vidyalaya, Andrews Ganj, Indian National Trade Union Congress, Bhai Veer Singh Marg, F-2, Connaught Place, VIMHANS Hospital, Nehru Nagar, Taj Man Singh hotel, Sen Nursing Home, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, Le Meridien hotel, St Stephen's hospital, Tis Hazari (ground rent was not revised for two out of three plots allotted to St Stephen's

were fixed provisionally as the land rates were due for revision from April 1, 2000. After the revision of land rates in June 2017, the rates were revised to ₹929.70 lakh per acre in case of CITU and ₹447.30 lakh per acre in case of AITUC but the revised premium and ground rent were not intimated to the lessee which resulted in outstanding dues amounting to ₹2.63 crore up to March 2021. CITU and AITUC were allotted (February 2009 and May 2005 respectively) land measuring 504 square metres at Pushp Vihar and two plots having an area of 476 square metres each at DDU Marg at premium (land cost) of ₹88 lakh per acre and annual ground rent at the rate of 2.5 per cent of premium.

The ground rent was fixed at the rate of ₹330 per annum, however, the same has not been realised after January 1981. No demand letter has been issued to the lessee for payment of the ground rent after January 1981," the report said.

Taking the second case study, the CAG said CITU was paying ground rent as fixed at the time of allotment (ground rent for the period 2015-18 and 2019-21 was not paid) whereas AITUC did not pay any ground rent since allotment. The premium and ground rent

were fixed provisionally as the land rates were due for revision from April 1, 2000. After the revision of land rates in June 2017, the rates were revised to ₹929.70 lakh per acre in case of CITU and ₹447.30 lakh per acre in case of AITUC but the revised premium and ground rent were not intimated to the lessee which resulted in outstanding dues amounting to ₹2.63 crore up to March 2021. CITU and AITUC were allotted (February 2009 and May 2005 respectively) land measuring 504 square metres at Pushp Vihar and two plots having an area of 476 square metres each at DDU Marg at premium (land cost) of ₹88 lakh per acre and annual ground rent at the rate of 2.5 per cent of premium.

As per the report, the ground rent was revised belatedly in the case of Daily Milap building, Daily Tej building, Gulab Singh & Sons building at Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, Kayson Enterprises, Sardar Patel Marg, 17, Jor Bagh and Vidya Bhawan Girls Higher Secondary School, New Rajinder Nagar.

Continued on Page 2

**Yogi Govt has hacked Insta accounts of my kids: Priyanka**

PREETAM SRIVASTAVA ■ LUCKNOW

Close on the heels of allegations by Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav that his phone was tapped by the Bharatiya Janata Party Government, now Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday came out with similar charges.

She accused the Government claiming that her children's Instagram accounts were hacked. Slamming the Government, she questions "don't you have any work?"

The controversy over phone tapping started when former UP CM Akhilesh had claimed that the UP Government taps his phones and CM Yogi listens to his phone conversations.

Akhilesh, alleging phone tapping, had said, "All our phone calls are being heard. All the phones of the SP office are tapped. CM himself is listening to some recordings in the evening. If you (journalists) contact us, then understand that you are also being heard."

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Ruchi Soya Industries Limited is pleased to announce price reduction in its brands of packed refined edible oils and vanaspati.

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Brand Name	Pack Size	Old MRP	New MRP	Net reduction in price
Mahakosh Refined Soyabean Oil	1 Litre Pouch	182/-	152/-	30/- Per Litre
Mahakosh Kachi Ghani Mustard Oil	1 Litre Pouch	207/-	192/-	15/- Per Litre
Sunrich Refined Sunflower Oil	1 Litre Pouch	209/-	179/-	30/- Per Litre
Ruchi Gold Refined Palmolein Oil	1 Litre Pouch	170/-	141/-	29/- Per Litre
Ruchi No.1 Vanaspati	1 Litre Pouch	132/-	118/-	14/- Per Litre
Nutrela Refined Sunflower Oil	1 Litre Pouch	215/-	185/-	30/- Per Litre
Nutrela Refined Soyabean Oil	1 Litre Pouch	190/-	160/-	30/- Per Litre
Nutrela Kachi Ghani Mustard Oil	1 Litre Pouch	230/-	210/-	20/- Per Litre

side sources.

Haya, 47, fled to the UK in 2019 and sought custody of her two children through the British courts. The princess, who is the daughter of the late King Hussein of Jordan, said she was "terrified" of her husband, who is alleged to have ordered the forced return to the Gulf emirate of two of his daughters.

Sheikh Mohammed, 72, is also the vice president and prime minister of the United Arab Emirates and a major horse breeder. The founder of the successful Godolphin horse-racing stable, he is on friendly terms with Queen Elizabeth II.

Judge Philip Moor said the family needed "water-tight security," and that "absolutely uniquely," the main threat to them came from Sheikh Mohammed, rather than out-

depending on factors, including how long they live and whether they reconcile with their father. The settlement includes 11 million pounds a year to cover security costs for Princess Haya and the children while they are minors.

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Continued on Page 2

Bill to fix 21 yrs as uniform age of marriage introduced in LS, referred to Parl panel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Tuesday introduced in the Lok Sabha the Bill to fix 21 years as the uniform age of marriage for women and men. Soon after the introduction of the Bill, Smriti Irani, the Women and Child Development Minister, urged the Chair to refer it to a standing committee. In her brief introduction, the Minister termed the Bill a "decisive step" in the country's history.

The introduction of the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021, was opposed by some members

who contended that the move infringed upon several personal laws in violation of fundamental rights and demanded that it be referred to a Parliamentary panel for greater scrutiny.

# Maha Winter Session to begin today in Mumbai

TN RGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

For the first time in the history of Maharashtra Legislature, the winter session of both the Houses of the State Legislature will take place in Mumbai instead of Nagpur. No major business will be transacted during this brief session which will begin on Wednesday and end on December 28.

Talking to media persons on the eve of the start of the winter session of Maharashtra Legislature, Deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar said that the winter session was being convened in Mumbai instead of Nagpur, in view of the delicate health condition of the chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, who is recovering from the cer-

vical spine surgery that he underwent at HN Reliance Hospital here on November 12.

"Though the chief minister is doing well after his last month's surgery, he has advised by doctors not to travel out of Mumbai. Hence, we have decided to hold the winter session of the State Legislature in Mumbai instead of Nagpur," Ajitdada - as Ajit Pawar is known in the State political circles - said.

The budget and monsoon sessions are always held in Mumbai, while the winter sessions are held in Nagpur.

As per the Nagpur Pact that was signed in September 1953, the government has been mandated to hold the winter sessions in Nagpur, while the budget and monsoon sessions

are held in Mumbai. However, as an exception, there have been only three occasions --- in 1961, 1966, 1971 and 2018 - when the monsoon sessions were held in Nagpur.

Since the formation of the state in 1960, 56 legislature sessions have been held in Nagpur.

During the winter session of the Maharashtra Legislature beginning in Mumbai from December 22, a total of 26 bills - including Shakti Legislation will be tabled in the winter session of the legislature - will be taken up in both the Houses.

Apart from the bills, the issues like the Covid-19 situation in the state, examination paper leakage scam, State Transport employees' agitation and the controversy over the inflated electricity bills will

be figure in the winter session of the State Legislature.

Informed sources said that the Maharashtra government - which miffed off the inordinate delay in nominating 12 persons recommended by its as MLCS - is unlikely to withdraw in the suspension of 12 BJP MLAs, who were on July 21 2021 suspended from the Maharashtra Assembly on Monday for a period of one year "abusing" and "misbehaving" with the presiding officer inside and outside the House.

It may be recalled that on July 5 12 MLAs were suspended after they created a ruckus over the OBC reservations issue and alleged that Speaker-in-Chair Bhaskar Jadhav did not give them enough time to speak.

The BJP MLAs, who were suspended from the Assembly for a year were Parag Alavani, Ram Satpute, Sanjay Kute, Ashish Shelar, Abhimanyu Pawar, Girish Mahajan, Atul Bhatkalkar, Harish Pimpale, Jayakumar Rawal, Yogesh Saran, Narayan Kuche and Kirtikumar Bhangdiya.

The suspended BJP have challenged their suspension in the Supreme Court. Last week a SC bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and C T Ravikumar agreed to hear the batch of petitions and issued formal notices to the respondents, including the state of Maharashtra, seeking their responses on the pleas. On December 14, the apex court sought responses from the Maharashtra Legislative

Assembly and others on the pleas filed by 12 BJP MLAs, who have challenged their one-year suspension from the Assembly for allegedly misbehaving with the presiding officer.

Speaking on the issue, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said that the state government had not suspended 12 BJP as a political vendetta.

Ajitdada said that 12 BJP MLAs came to be suspended because of the derogatory language that they used against the chair. "The language used was un-parliamentary. The decision was not fit for tax for the Governor not clearing the names of the 12 members to the legislative council. This was not at all a political vendetta," he said.

# Kerala HC rejects plea challenging PM's picture

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

This is a publicity oriented litigation. Therefore, this is a fit case that is to be dismissed with a heavy cost," said Justice Kunhikrishnan.

The judge gave a piece of his mind to the petitioner, a State level master trainer at Jawaharlal Nehru Leadership Institute. "You work at an Institute named after a Prime Minister. Why don't you ask the university to take that down as well?" the judge had asked the petitioner in the course of the hearing to which the latter did not reply.

While issuing a certificate for Covid-19 vaccination, if the Prime Minister of India gave a message with his photograph that with the help of medicine and strict control, India will defeat Covid-19, what is wrong with it? When the counsel for the petitioner argued this case, I specifically asked him this question.

## Derek...

From Page 1

Before walking out, Derek had said, "Sir, please understand that we have all the regard for the Chair, we have all the regard for the rules, but the same thing you did on the farm laws you are doing today."

Ruling BJP members condemned the behaviour of the TMC leader and demanded his suspension. Leader of the House Piyush Goyal condemned Derek for throwing the rule book at the Rajya Sabha secretary general's table and said it was an insult to the entire country.

The TMC leader threw the rule book at the table where Rajya Sabha officials including the secretary-general sit, after Deputy Chairman Harivansh Narayan Singh did not allow a division of votes on a motion to send the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021 to a select committee. Derek, along with other Opposition members, staged a walkout from the House after their pleas for a division of votes on the motion was not allowed.

Derek and other Opposition members were protesting in the Well as the Chair did not allow a division of votes on the motion to send the Bill to a Select Committee. The Deputy Chairman said

the members should go back to their seats and then only would he allow division.

While Derek in his defence too to Twitter to mention he was suspended from the Rajya Sabha while protesting the "mockery of Parliament and bulldozing" of the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill by the BJP, and hoped that this Bill would be repealed soon in the same way the farm laws were taken back.

The last time I got suspended from RS was when Government was bulldozing farm laws. We all know what happened after that," tweeted Derek. "Today, suspended while protesting against BJP making a mockery of Parliament and Bulldozing Election Laws Bill, 2021. Hope this Bill too will be repealed soon," Derek said.

After the passage of the Bill through a voice vote, Goyal and senior BJP leader Bhupender Yadav spoke on the conduct of Derek in the House. "The way TMC leader Derek has thrown the rule book, this is not only the insult of the chair or the secretary general or the table or the House, it is an insult to the entire country," Goyal said. The act of the TMC leader would be criticised across the country, he added.

"They are doing this kind of politics in one State and if they pass on such bad traditions to the next generation, then I am afraid that there is a lot of danger to the democratic traditions of the country," the Union Minister said.

Yadav also criticised Derek and said throwing the rule book at the secretary general is against the decorum of the House. "This country has been witnessing drama for a long time... This is a shame on the democratic system of the country.... We are tied to the rule book," he said.

## Dubai ruler...

From Page 1

Haya

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# Capital logs 102 fresh Covid cases, 1 death

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Delhi reported 102 fresh Covid-19 cases and one death on Tuesday while the positivity rate stood at 0.20 per cent, according to data issued by the health department of the Delhi Government.

As per the health bulletin, a total of 51,544 tests -- 45,429 RT-PCR and 6115 rapid antigen -- were conducted a day ago.

Giving details of the new variant of the coronavirus, Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Tuesday said that there are a total 54 Omicron cases in Delhi out of which 34 are hospitalized in LNJP and 17 have been discharged after recovery.

"There are a total of four Genome Sequencing Labs in Delhi which are capable of

The number of cumulative cases of the disease rose to 14,42,390. Over 14.16 lakh patients have recovered so far. The death toll due to the coronavirus infection in Delhi stood at 25,102, according to the latest health bulletin.

On June 27, Delhi had logged 259 coronavirus cases with four deaths, according to the government data.

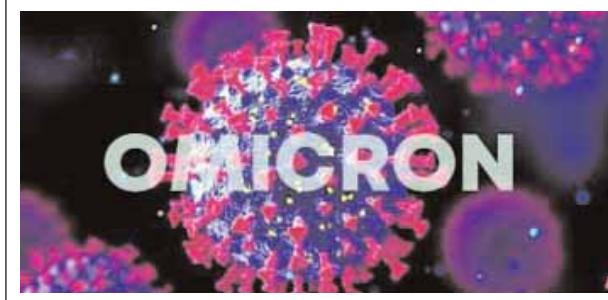
The rise in daily cases comes amid the Omicron scare in Delhi as the total number of patients infected with the latest variant of the coronavirus jumped by 12 on Friday to reach 22.

Three deaths due to Covid-19 have been recorded in December so far in Delhi. Seven Coronavirus deaths were reported in November, four in October and five in September.

testing Omicron cases. Two labs are from the central government and two are from the Delhi Government. Both the labs of Delhi Government have the capacity to do genome sequencing of more than 100 samples per day, he said.

The Health Minister urged people to follow the rules made to stop the spread of Coronavirus. He appealed people to wear masks and follow social distancing for safety in public places.

## 34 new Omicron cases reported



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi reported 34 new cases of Omicron in Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital, out of which 17 patients have been discharged and the rest of the patients are admitted to other hospitals, informed Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain on Tuesday.

"Out of the Omicron patients who have come to LNJP, 3 cases have been reported, who have no travel history,

who did not go abroad," said the Health Minister in a statement. "The Delhi Government has decided that now all the Covid-19 cases that will come up, all of them will undergo genome sequencing. For this we have made adequate arrangements," he added.

Earlier in the day, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare had said that India has a total of 200 cases of the new Omicron variant of coronavirus so far.

## Saliva-based Covid testing kit launched

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With the fear of a third wave of Covid-19 looming large, a saliva based home testing kit approved by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) that can detect all types of coronavirus strains including Omicron, Delta and other variants was launched on Tuesday.

Launching the kit, Rangnath Upadhyay, General Manager of Angstrom Biotech Pvt. Ltd. said, "We have launched this kit to give people a safe, easy, and hassle-free option to test them for Covid-19. Many people who refrain from visiting diagnostic centers and pathologies because of the fear of high charges will now have an alternative."



"We have launched this kit to give people a safe, easy, and hassle-free option to test them for Covid-19. Many people who refrain from visiting diagnostic centers and pathologies because of the fear of high charges will now have an alternative"

visiting a crowded market," he added.

## 100% in G'gram given 2nd dose of Covid vaccine: Dept

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM



District Gurugram has come first in Haryana and in NCR in administering 100 per cent Covid-19 vaccine, the health officials informed on Tuesday.

According to the data of the Health Department, 100 per cent of the people have been given the second dose of the anti-coronavirus vaccine.

So far the department has administered 41,28,596 doses of the Covid-19 vaccine, of which 23,19,720 are first doses.

A total of 18,08,876 people have been given the second dose including, health workers, frontline workers, senior citizens, pregnant women and transgenders.

Faridabad ranks second in terms of vaccination, where more than 29 lakh doses of vaccine have been administered so far. Ambala is in third place in this list with over 17.27 lakh people being administered Covid-19 vaccine doses.

Karnal is in third place in this list, where a total of 17.25 lakh doses of vaccine have been administered so far. Charki Dadri district is at the bottom of this list, where more than 6 lakh doses of the anti-coronavirus vaccine have been

administered so far.

"Gurugram, where the floating population is a major issue, having 100 percent immunization in the district, is a new record in itself. Gurugram was the most affected in the state during the second wave epidemic, but the manner in which the district residents and the team of health department have contributed with determination to

break the vicious circle of corona and take the vaccination campaign to the pinnacle of perfection which will pave the way of inspiration for the big cities of the country and other districts of the State," District Civil Surgeon Dr Virendra Yadav said.

Yadav said that 100% vaccination is just a milestone. The vaccination process will continue for

now. Along with this, surveys will be conducted in different areas in the district, in which people who have remained untouched by vaccination will be vaccinated.

Collecting data of children's population in the district Yadav informed that data of children between 0 to 6 years and 06 years to 18 years of age is being collected for future vaccination. So that as soon as the vaccination process of children is started, it can be accelerated as soon as possible.

Deputy Civil Surgeon Dr MP Singh, the nodal officer for the vaccination campaign in the district, while giving information about the entire campaign, said that from January 16 this year, the campaign started with vaccinating health workers to reach 100% population.

"A total of 40,441 sessions of vaccination were conducted in the district to active this target. Which including door-to-door vaccination campaign and several other campaigns organized in malls, urban and rural areas," Singh said.

Apart from this, the Gurugram district on Tuesday recorded 23 fresh coronavirus cases. No death was also reported from the city. The district's Covid toll reached 927, officials said.

## 3 held for killing of private tutor over minor scuffle

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested three men for allegedly killing a private tutor and injuring his friend after a scuffle in northwest Delhi's Mangolpuri area. The accused have been identified as Mukesh (22), Raunak (19) and Rohit (23), all residents of Mangolpuri.

According to Parvinder Singh, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Outer district, police received information at 8.19 PM on December 14 about the fight and two injured persons had been taken to the Sanjay Gandhi Hospital.

"After reaching the hospital, it was found that Amardeep (20) was declared dead and Sagar (20) was undergoing treatment. Sagar is also a private tutor. Preliminary inquiry revealed that the duo was going to meet their friend when they had a fight with the accused over some issue. A case was registered and investigation was taken up," said the DCP.

"During investigation, police checked the CCTV footage of the area and identified the accused. Police arrested Rohit who disclosed that on that day, he returned from his work and joined Mukesh and Raunak at the market. While they were going to Mukesh's house for some work, the victims, who were coming from the opposite direction, collided with them and a minor scuffle ensued," said the DCP.

"Later, the victims brought two more of their friends and another scuffle broke out in which Raunak and Mukesh stabbed the victims. Police arrested Mukesh and Raunak from railway underpass in Mangolpuri," said the DCP.

They received the information about the death of the victim through newspapers and were hiding in a vacant shanty near railway lines. They were eating bread and milk since the day of the incident as they had only Rs 1,500 with them, police said.

## BJP only exploited corporation's staff, looted public funds, alleges AAP leader

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Attacking the BJP leaders for "overlooking" the interests of the common man, AAP senior leader Durgesh Pathak on Tuesday said that the BJP is embezzling Municipal Corporation's funds, forcing teachers to stage a sit-in for months to get salaries.

Pathak, who is also MCD in-charge, said that over 3,000 MCD teachers are protesting outside East MCD headquarters, demanding their salaries which have not been paid for the last four months. "The unwanted delay in releasing salaries has made life of teachers difficult as they are struggling to pay bills and even to buy ration for their children," he said.

The APP leader also slammed the tyranny of the BJP and said, "The BJP which has ruled the MCD for the last 15 years, has only exploited the corporation's employees and looted public funds. Despite conducting mega-sales of public assets at throwaway prices, they are not paying their employees. Today, over three thousand MCD teachers have gheraoed the East MCD headquarters demanding their salaries which have been pending for over four months now."

## Jain launches advanced life support ambulance service in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Health Minister Satyendar Jain inaugurated an advanced life support ambulance service which is equipped with modern facilities like incubators, monitors and oxygen therapy for newborn babies.

This facility can also be used as an operating theater in case of emergency.

Jain said, "This ambulance service will be available round the clock for the people of Delhi. It has the ability to work as a mini operation theater to save the lives of newborn babies and young children in Delhi in time. This ambulance will have special facilities for infant and newborn patients like an incubator, monitor and oxygen therapy." The Delhi Government is continuously working towards providing quality healthcare to the people of Delhi. The provision of this ambulance service would aid newborns and infants of the East Delhi area to access this new age healthcare facility timely.

## Rai: Delhi village development board approves 291 projects costing ₹399 crore

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government will spend ₹399 crore for the development of villages. Development Minister Gopal Rai on Tuesday said the village development board approved 291 projects

## City Govt is trying to paralyse civic agencies: SDMC Mayor

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia accused the BJP of corruption in civic bodies saying the Delhi Government paid ₹2,588 crore to the MCDs till December; South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) mayor Mukesh Suryan said that ₹1482.19 crore under plan head and ₹708.63 crore in non-plan head is due on the Delhi Government since 2016.

SDMC Mayor said that the Delhi Government is trying to paralyze MCDs with a motive to gain political mileage in upcoming MCD elections. He also challenged the Delhi Government to prove their allegations.

As per the recommendations of fifth Delhi Finance Commission (DFC), a grant of ₹878.10 crore was to be given to

the SDMC by the Delhi Government in the year 2021-22 under plan head but only ₹371.36 Crore released, he said.

Besides, under non-plan head, a grant of ₹ 405.28 Crore was to be released in 2021-22 but only 246.05 Crore has been released by the Government, he said, adding that as per the recommendations of third DFC, SDMC's outstanding from year 2012 to 2016 ₹ 427.69 Crore is due on the Delhi Government.

Standing Committee Chairman Col. (R.) B K Oberoi said that the three MCDs are facing financial crunch this time. "The Corporations are not in position to pay salaries to their officials and employees. Even projects related to development are being delayed. The Delhi Government is trying to paralyze us but we will keep demanding for the outstanding due on the Government," he said.

## City Govt developing country's most advanced Govt school hub in Capital: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Education Minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is developing the most advanced school in the national Capital.

Besides world-class infra, the government school will have an Olympic size swimming pool complex and an auditorium with a capacity of 1,000 people and 13 state-of-the-art labs and 4 libraries, 12 badminton courts as well as 4 multipurpose sports courts, all sports facilities to be available," the Minister said during his visit to Kadipur school hub in Burari.

Providing world-class education facilities to children studying in Delhi government schools is the first priority of Kejriwal Government. The new school building has been designed keeping in mind the overall development of the children, the entire school premises would be involved in the learning process of the children," he added.

This school hub, designed keeping in mind the specialization of STEM and Humanities, will have separate building blocks for both the specializations. A magnificent Olympic size swimming pool complex will also be built in the school hub.

Along with this, along with 240 classrooms, 13 labs equipped with all modern technologies and resources will be set up in which 8 labs will be for STEM specializations and 5 labs for Humanities Specialized

School. Along with this, 4 libraries will also be prepared here for primary and senior secondary classes. One auditorium with a capacity of 1,000 people will also be constructed in the school.

This world-class school will soon be built for the children living in and around Kadipur, in which all the world-class facilities related to sports will be present along with the education of children.

A grand auditorium with a seating capacity of 1000 people will also be constructed in the school hub. This auditorium will be equipped with all modern facilities and it can be used for various cultural activities in the school as well as for large conferences. Along with this, a multipurpose hall with a capacity of 250 people will also be prepared here.

Sisodia said that after the completion of this school, the children will bring laurels to India from all over the world after receiving quality education from here.

## Three held for robbing UP resident in Sonia Vihar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has arrested three men, including a rider of an application-based bike service, for allegedly robbing a passenger in northeast Delhi's Sonia Vihar area.

The accused have been identified as Shubham Mishra, Amit Chauhan and Arjun, all residents of Sonia Vihar area.

According to Sanjay Kumar Sain, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Northeast district, on Thursday, a PCR call regarding robbery was received at Sonia

Vihar police station from Unnao in Uttar Pradesh (UP).

"The caller informed that on Wednesday, his brother Ashish was robbed in Sonia Vihar. Ashish told police that on Wednesday, he reached old Delhi railway station to appear for an interview in Noida. He booked a ride on an app-based bike service and one rider

entered him," said the DCP.

"As he was not aware of the route, the rider took him along the Yamuna River. After a ride of around 45 minutes, he turned the motorcycle towards fields. Meanwhile, three per-

sons in an auto-rickshaw also reached there. They robbed him of his belongings and fled from the spot," said the DCP.

"During investigation, the bike app service was contacted to ascertain the identity of the rider along with details of the motorcycle. Later, police traced the owner of the motorcycle used in crime," said the DCP.

The owner of the motorcycle revealed that they are addicted to narcotic substance and work in a group, police said. One motorcycle, one knife, robbed mobile phone, earphone, etc. were recovered from their possession, police added.

Mishra, who is pursuing graduation from Delhi University, revealed that he, along with his associates, robbed the passenger. Later, Chauhan and Arjun were also arrested. Efforts are being made to arrest one more absconding associate, the DCP said.

The accused confessed to their crime and revealed that they are addicted to narcotic substance and work in a group, police said.

The court, which had ear-

lier pulled up the Delhi government for not complying with its direction to pull-the-plug on such cases, emphasised that closure was not a "mere formality" and the rehabilitation and care of children in conflict with law was at the core of the entire exercise. The court had directed that the process of age determination of a juvenile in conflict with law shall be completed within 15 days of filing of documents and ossification test by the investigating officer of the case. The matter would be heard next on January 21.

## How many delinquent juveniles landed in adult jails in 5 years, HC asks City Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday directed the Delhi Government to provide information on delinquent juveniles who landed in adult jails in the last five years and were subsequently sent to the child care institutions "to better understand the systemic flaws".

Issuing a slew of directions to "streamline the functioning of the juvenile justice delivery system", the High Court ordered the Delhi Government to fill the seven vacant posts of District Child Protection Officers within six weeks.

The HC asked the AAP-led Government to state when and how many juveniles were admitted to Tihar, Rohini and Mandoli jails and then transferred to the child care institutions as well as the offences allegedly committed by them. The bench headed by Justice Siddhartha Mridul, which was dealing with various issues pertaining to the interpretation and effective implementation of some provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act, sought the information.

To better understand the systemic flaws that lead to delinquent children/juveniles ending-up in adult jails, to begin with, we direct the Govt. Of NCT of Delhi to furnish to

this court, the number of children/juveniles, who were transferred from adult jails to juvenile justice homes/child care institutions in the last 05 years,

# Opp seeks MoS Teni sacking over Lakhimpur

Takes out a protest march; will not rest till Min sent to jail for his son role in killing farmers: Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

**M**ounting more pressure from the Modi Government, the Opposition leaders on Tuesday took out a protest march demanding that action be taken against Union Minister Ajay Mishra in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence case.

Leaders of several Opposition parties took out the march from Gandhi statue inside Parliament complex to Vijay Chowk demanding that the minister, whose son has been arrested in the Lakhimpur violence case, be immediately sacked. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said they will not rest till the Minister is sent to jail.

They also demanded that the suspension of their 12 MPs in Rajya Sabha be immediately revoked.

MPs of various parties raised slogans against the Government and held placards and banners demanding the immediate sacking of the Minister. Talking to reporters at Vijay Chowk, Rahul Gandhi said the entire Opposition was united in raising its demand for the sacking of Minister Mishra. Referring to the



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, along with other Opposition leaders, addresses the media after a protest march from Gandhi statue on Parliament premises to Vijay Chowk in New Delhi on Tuesday

SIT report on the violence, he said a report has come out that it was a conspiracy and not an isolated incident. "We will not spare him (Ajay Mishra) and continue our struggle till he is sent to jail," Rahul Gandhi said.

"The Prime Minister has

not done anything on this. Neither the Government nor the media is doing its job. The Prime Minister, on the one hand, apologises to farmers, but on the other hand, he keeps the minister who is involved in Lakhimpur Kheri incident in

his cabinet. We will not accept what is being done against farmers," Rahul Gandhi said.

Rahul also took on Prime Minister directly on Twitter on Tuesday and went on to taunt the Prime Minister with a "Thank you Modiji". He

remarked the word lynchings was practically unheard of before 2014 when the BJP came to power. "Before 2014, the word 'lynching' was practically unheard of. #ThankYouModiji," Rahul Gandhi's tweet said. The attack comes in the wake of lynchings in Amritsar and Kapurthala in Punjab where the Congress is in power.

Asked about the lynching jibe at the media briefing, the former Congress president said, "Sarkar ki dalai mat karo (Don't do mediation for the BJP)." Rahul, who appeared to lose his cool, responded after reporters asked him about the BJP's attack on his tweet.

Opposition leaders said they will continue to raise the demand even if many more of their MPs are suspended. Derek was suspended after the House passed a motion moved by Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs V Muraleedharan in this regard. The Winter Session is scheduled to end on December 23. Sasmit Patra, who was in the Chair, said the TMC MP had raised a point of order and the

deputy chairman duly responded to it. A little later, O'Brien flung the rule book furiously in the direction of the Chair, Patra observed. "The rule book would have hit the chair, or secretary general or officials sitting at the table," he said.

Earlier in the morning, leaders of several Opposition parties met in the chamber of Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and discussed their further strategy. Opposition parties have been protesting against the suspension of MPs, which they have termed as undemocratic and against the rules of the House.

Kharge and Congress MP Deepinder Singh Hooda also gave adjournment notices in the Rajya Sabha on the Lakhimpur matter. Congress MP Manickam Tagore gave a similar adjournment notice in the Lok Sabha on the Lakhimpur Kheri violence. Eight people, including four farmers, were killed in the Lakhimpur violence on October 3. The notices were, however, disallowed by Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu.

within the State. The second condition is to specify the proportion of reservation required to be provided local body-wise as per recommendations of the commission. The third test is the reservation should not exceed an aggregate of 50 per cent of the seats reserved in favour of SCs, STs and OBCs taken together.

The Centre said it is concerned about the matter and is examining the issue in its entirety taking into account the opinion of all stakeholders including the Ministry of Panchayati Raj and Parliamentary Affairs, the Department of Legal Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The Supreme Court has directed the State Election Commission (SEC) of Maharashtra to notify 20 per cent seats in the local body, which were reserved for the OBCs, as general category so that the poll process can be taken forward.

Also, the apex court on Friday directed the Madhya Pradesh State Election Commission (SEC) to stay the poll process on seats reserved for OBCs in the local body there and re-notify those seats for the general category.

Senior BJP leader Uma Bharti on Monday had claimed that panchayat polls in her party-ruled Madhya Pradesh without reservation for the OBCs will be an injustice to about 70 per cent of the State's population.

She urged State Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan to find a way out that these polls are not held without ensuring the participation of the OBCs.

## RESERVATION OF OBCs IN LOCAL BODY POLLS Centre considering moving review petition in Supreme Court

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

**T**he Centre has said it is considering moving a review petition before the Supreme Court to allow "political reservation" of OBCs in local bodies and municipal corporations till the States comply with the apex court's triple test criteria.

The development comes after the Supreme Court decided to strike down the recent 27 per cent reservation in favour of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in local bodies made by Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh Governments.

In this connection, States are being advised to follow the reservation policy as per provisions of the Constitution in the election to the local bodies after observing all the criteria set forth by the Supreme Court, the Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry said in a statement issued late Monday night.

The Ministry said it is also considering moving a review petition before the Supreme Court to allow "political reservation" of OBCs in the local bodies and municipal corporations till the states comply with the triple test criteria set forth by the top court. Political reservation is reservation of several seats in Parliament, State assemblies, urban and rural-level institutions for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes.

The triple test includes setting up a dedicated commission to conduct a contemporaneous rigorous empirical inquiry into the nature and implications of the backwardness as regards local bodies

## Aadhaar link with electoral roll will clean voters' list of multiple enrollment: Govt sources

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

**A**mid protests by Opposition parties against the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, the Government on Tuesday reiterated that these reforms are needed and the move would solve the "major problem" of multiple enrolment of the same person at different places and help in "cleaning" the voters list to a great extent.

Sources said the "Election Laws (Amendment) bill 2021" incorporates various electoral reforms which have

been discussed for a long time.

The assertion comes a day after the "Election Laws (Amendment) Bill 2021" to link electoral roll data with the Aadhaar ecosystem and bring other poll reforms was passed by the Lok Sabha after a brief debate and amid demand by the Opposition to refer it to a standing committee.

According to the sources, that registration in electoral roll is done based on an application by a person who is eligible to be registered as a voter. This bill has a provision whereby the new

applicant may voluntarily provide Aadhaar number along with the application for the purpose of identity.

"No application will be rejected on the grounds that Aadhaar number has not been provided," the sources added. Aadhaar linking with electoral roll will solve 'one of the major problems' in electoral database management which is multiple enrolment of the same person at different places," sources said.

This may be due to the frequent shifting of residence by electors and getting enrolled in the new place with-

out deleting the previous enrolment, the sources noted. Thus, the possibility of electors whose names appear in more than one electoral roll or at times more than once in the same electoral roll can be removed, they said.

The Government functionaries also said on the condition of anonymity that once Aadhaar linkage is achieved, the electoral roll data system will instantly alert the existence of previous registration whenever a person applies for new registration. "This will help in cleaning the electoral roll to a

great extent and facilitate elector registration in the location at which they are 'ordinarily resident'."

Besides linking electoral roll to Aadhaar, the bill also seeks to make the statutes gender neutral by substituting the term 'wife' with 'spouse' to allow husbands of service voters to cast their vote from the place where their wives are posted. It also seeks to provide four qualifying dates — January 1, April 1, July 1 and October 1 — in a year for registration of voters, instead of a single qualifying date — January 1.

## No evidence that existing vaccines don't work on Omicron: Govt in RS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

**T**here is no evidence to suggest that existing vaccines do not work on the Omicron variant of coronavirus, though some of the mutations reported on spike genes may decrease the efficacy of existing vaccines, the Government told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

"There is limited available data, and no peer-reviewed evidence, on vaccine efficacy or effectiveness to date for Omicron," Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said in a written reply.

He was responding to a

question on whether the vaccinations that are given in the country are effective to develop immunity for this variant.

"However, vaccine protection is also by antibodies as well as by cellular immunity, which is expected to be relatively better preserved. Hence vaccines are expected to still offer protection against severe disease and vaccination with the available vaccines remains crucial," he added.

Listing the steps taken by the Government after the news of the spread of Omicron variant of Covid-19 in various countries, Mandaviya said his ministry on the basis of risk



assessment reviewed the existing travel guidelines and revised rules for international arrivals were issued on November 28 which were further amended two days later.

According to the guidelines, regions or countries have been re-classified as "at-risk" based on the epidemiological situation of Covid-19 there and reporting of Omicron vari-

ants from these countries.

List of such "at-risk" regions or countries is dynamic in nature and has been updated from time to time.

All travellers coming from countries deemed "at-risk" will also mandatorily undergo Covid-19 testing on arrival through RT-PCR, followed by mandatory home quarantine for 7 days, Mandaviya said.

A repeat RT-PCR testing shall also be done on the eighth day of arrival in India to be monitored by State health authorities. Two per cent of travellers from 'non-at-risk' countries will be tested at ran-

dom for Covid-19.

Individuals tested positive shall be subjected to Whole Genomic Sequencing at identified INSACOG network laboratories to determine the presence of SARS-CoV-2 variants (including Omicron).

States and union territories have been asked to undertake several activities which include strict monitoring of international travellers in the community, contact tracing of positive individuals and follow up for 14 days, genome sequencing of positive samples through INSACOG Labs in a prompt manner, Mandaviya said.

nicating, instructing their officials and disposing of properties from inside the Tihar Jail in connivance with the prison staff.

The brothers are undergoing judicial custody since August, 2017 and are accused of allegedly siphoning money of home buyers.

The ED filed a criminal case under various sections of Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) early this year against the Unitech group and its promoters over allegations that the Chandra brothers illegally diverted over Rs 2,000 crore of depositors funds to Cyprus and the Cayman Islands.

Following this disclosure by the ED, the SC directed the authorities to shift the brothers to two separate prisons in Mumbai, Arthur Road Jail and Taloja Jail.

The agency has been investigating money laundering charges against the Chandras and their realty firm Unitech Ltd.

It told the top court in its report that both Sanjay and Ajay have rendered the entire judicial custody meaningless as they have been freely commu-

nicated, instructing their officials and disposing of properties from inside the Tihar Jail in connivance with the prison staff.

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In October, the agency had arrested Unitech founder Ramesh Chandra, Sanjay Chandra's wife Preeti Chandra and Rajesh Malik of the Carnoustie group. It has attached properties of the accused firm and its promoters worth over Rs 690 crore in this case till now under money laundering charges.

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# 4 aides of JeM ultra arrested in Kashmir

**Srinagar:** Four terrorist associates linked with proscribed terror outfit JeM were arrested in Jammu and Kashmir's Awantipora and arms and ammunition recovered from their possession, officials said on Tuesday.

Police said acting on specific input, Awantipora police, along with the army's 50 RR

and the CRPF, apprehended the four terrorist associates, identified as Zubair Gul, Adil Fayaz Ganji, Basit Ali, all residents of Samboora, and Shahid Nabi Pandith, resident of Konibal Pampore.

Incriminating materials, arms and ammunition including a pistol, and hand grenade were recovered from their pos-

session. "During the preliminary investigation, it was revealed that the arrested terrorist associates were in touch with JeM commanders and were involved in transportation of arms and ammunition," police said.

"Besides, they were providing shelter and other logistic support to the active terrorists operating in Samboora and Pampore areas of Awantipora." A case has been registered and further investigation has been taken up.

IANS

were hurt but the team of police and security forces promptly retaliated.

Sources say probably the terrorist got injured during the retaliation but managed to escape. Police sources said they are following on the vehicle-borne terrorist. Additional forces have reached the spot and an operation has been started to nab the attacker.

IANS

Police, CRPF party come under fire at Srinagar checkpoint

**Srinagar:** A joint party of the J&K Police and CRPF came under fire from terrorists at Soura in Srinagar district on Tuesday evening, officials said.

Police sources said the Superintendent of Police, Hazratbal, along with a CRPF team, were conducting checks at a 'naka' point in Soura when a terrorist fired upon them. Nobody

# Powerful IEDs detected in Meghalaya, defused

**Shillong:** Two powerful Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), weighing over 11 kg, a live grenade and other live ammunitions were recovered during separate anti-insurgency operations in Meghalaya, officials said on Tuesday.

Police said that the two IEDs were found in a bag placed under a culvert at Rechhang village in West Garo Hills district late on Monday night. Later, the security personnel defused them. One of the IEDs, weighing about 10 kg, was stored in a pressure cooker while another was assembled in a tin box.

In another incident, one live grenade and six 7.62 mm bullets were recovered by the Meghalaya police at Du'magitol village in the same West Garo Hills district on Tuesday night. The police registered separate cases and



launched a probe.

A police officer said they are yet to confirm whether any militant outfit or any other inimical group planted the IEDs or planned any attack.

IANS

# Five killed in Bihar road accidents

**Patna:** Four persons were killed and four others critically injured after a three-wheeler in which they were travelling was hit by a dumper in Bihar's Nalanda district on Tuesday.

The accident took place at Hargawa village around 3 p.m. after the dumper collided with the three-wheeler coming from the opposite direction.

All victims were on board the three-wheeler.

Shibli Nomani, the SDPO of Nalanda (Sadar) said four persons died on the spot. Local residents and police rescued four others trapped inside.

They were taken to Sadar hospital in Nalanda where the condition of the injured people are critical.

Following the accident, the driver of the dumper fled the spot. The agitated villagers set the vehicle on fire and blocked the state highway.

In another accident, a youth was killed after he was hit by a speeding bus on NH-139 at Naubatpur on Tuesday noon.

The victim has been identified as Manish Kumar who got married a week ago. He died on the spot.

IANS

## Police, CRPF party come under fire at Srinagar checkpoint

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was hurt but the team of police and security forces promptly retaliated.

Sources say probably the terrorist got injured during the retaliation but managed to escape. Police sources said they are following on the vehicle-borne terrorist. Additional forces have reached the spot and an operation has been started to nab the attacker.

IANS

Goans will not tolerate comparing local deity to a person: Goa CM lashes out at Trinamool

**Panaji:** Goans will not tolerate any comparison of a human being with the local deity Shantadurga, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said on Tuesday.

Sawant was referring to comparisons made by a local Trinamool Congress leader Kiran Kandolkar of West

Bengal Chief Minister and the party's founder to goddess Shantadurga, a local deity revered as an avatar of Goddess Durga.

"Do not compare anyone to our Goddesses just like that. I felt bad when it happened. How can you compare someone to a goddess? Devi Shanta

durga is devi Shanta durga. No one in Goa will accept (this comparison) such comments. Goans will not tolerate comparison of Devi Shantadurga to a person. It is not possible to tolerate this," Sawant said.

In October this year, Kandolkar who was then a working president of the Goa

Forward party had said: "Navaratrias are going on, this is the eight day. I feel that we will have to get Durga to Goa. The Durga in Goa is referred to as Shantadurga. She is calm. We will have to get the real Durga from Kolkata to Goa to destroy this bhasmasur-like government".

Kandolkar joined the All India Trinamool Congress last month.

Chief Minister Sawant also said that because of Banerjee's comparison with a goddess, some 'Gods' had decided to associate themselves with her, in an oblique reference to some local politicians joining her

party and the alliance between the West Bengal-based party and the Trinamool Congress.

"Some people may have even thought that she is a real goddess, which is why some Gods have decided to stick with her," Sawant said.

IANS

# Kerala HC rejects plea challenging PM's picture

## Slaps hefty fine on petitioner

**KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI**

**T**he Kerala High Court on Tuesday dismissed a petition moved by a person who claimed to be a RTI activist and motivational speaker seeking the removal of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's photograph from Covid-19 vaccination certificate. The petitioner had sought a declaration from the court that the photograph of

the Prime Minister on his COVID-19 Vaccination Certificate was a violation of fundamental rights.

Justice P V Kunhikrishnan, who dismissed the plea also slapped a fine of Rs 1,00,000/- on the petitioner for filing 'frivolous petition with ulterior motives'. "This is a frivolous petition filed with ulterior motives and I have a strong doubt that there is political agenda also to the petitioner. This is a publicity oriented litigation. Therefore, this is a fit case that is to be dismissed with a heavy cost," said Justice Kunhikrishnan.

The judge gave a piece of his mind to the petitioner, a

State level master trainer at Jawaharlal Nehru Leadership Institute. "You work at an Institute named after a Prime Minister. Why don't you ask the university to take that down as well?" the judge had asked the petitioner in the course of the hearing to which the latter did not reply.

While issuing a certificate for Covid-19 vaccination, if the Prime Minister of India gave a message with his photograph that with the help of medicine and strict control, India will defeat Covid-19, what is wrong with it? When the counsel for the petitioner argued this case, I specifically asked him this question. Counsel says that

the photograph of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India in his vaccination certificate is an intrusion to his privacy! What a fantastic argument! Is he not living in this country?

The Prime Minister of India is not a person who entered the parliament house by breaking the roof of the parliament building. He came to power because of the mandate of the people.

The Indian democracy is being praised by the world. The Prime Minister is elected because he has got people's mandate. Till the general election is over, the citizen can campaign based on their political view. Once the election is

over and the majority of people gave a mandate to a political party which leads to the election of Prime Minister, he is not the leader of that political party but he is a leader of the country. There can be grievances against the policies of the Government. There can be political differences with the views of the Prime Minister. But those views can be raised in a democratic manner.

A IOC statement later said that the accident occurred when shutdown work was in progress. "The primary cause seems to be a flash fire lead-

# 3 killed in IOC fire in Haldia

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA**

**A**t least three persons were killed and 44 people were injured when a fire broke out at the Indian Oil Corporation refinery plant at Haldia, police said.

Out of the 44 injured 37 were said to have been referred to better hospitals in Kolkata, police said adding out of the 37 people the condition of seven were critical as all of them had sustained burn injuries.

A IOC statement later said that the accident occurred when shutdown work was in progress. "The primary cause seems to be a flash fire lead-



ing to burn injuries to 44 persons ... and three persons have unfortunately succumbed to their injuries." IOC sources said adding however that the fire had been put out and normalcy restored.

## Gujarat cancels recruitment exam due to paper leak

**Gandhinagar:** After a lot of uproar, the Gujarat government on Tuesday cancelled the recently-held examination for the recruitment of head clerks following the leak of question papers ahead of the test.

Harsh Sanghvi, Minister of State (MoS) for Home, Gujarat government, said that the exams will now be held in March next year.

After Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) Gujarat youth wing chief Yuvraj Singh Jadeja alleged question paper leak, the state government had initially denied the allegation.

### M.P. HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

#### NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Madhya Pradesh Housing & Infrastructure Development Board (MPHIDB) hereby invites online proposals through e-tendering mode from reputed consultants for "Selection of Consultant for preparation of Feasibility Report, DPR, Architectural Services, Preparation of Tender document and bid process for construction and development of Various Projects, Facilities and other miscellaneous works at Katni under Re-densification Policy of GoMP". Selection process would be as per RFP terms and conditions. Online bids are invited from interested bidders as per following details.

Name of Work	Cost of Tender Document	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)
Selection of Consultant for preparation of Feasibility Report, DPR, Architectural Services, Preparation of Tender document and bid process for construction and development of Various Projects, Facilities and other miscellaneous works at Katni under Re-densification Policy of GoMP". (Estimated project cost is Rs. 38.71 Cr.)	Rs. 10,000/- (Ten Thousand only)	Rs. 1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lakh only)

1. The bid documents can be purchased online only at [www.mptenders.gov.in](http://www.mptenders.gov.in) as per schedule : 27.12.2021 at 10:30 A.M. to 15.01.2022 at 03:00 P.M. Interested bidders can view the detailed NIT on website [www.mphousing.in](http://www.mphousing.in) and <https://www.mptenders.gov.in>. 3. Key Dates are available on e-tender website.

4. Amendments to NIT if any would be published on website only, and not in newspapers.

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प्राप्ति फार सेल

इ-आफर दिनाक

21.01.2022 तक

अ. चिरहला कालानो एच.आइ.जी. भूखण्ड एवं कायालय रुम/दकान क्रय करन का सनहरा अवसर

क्र. सम्पत्ति का पकार एवं क्रमाक

उपलब्ध संख्या मध्येष्ठ का पकार (व.मो.) (पति सपत्ति)

अपसट भूखण्ड का पकार (व.मो.) (पति सपत्ति)

धराहर राशि उपलब्ध का पकार (व.मो.) (पति सपत्ति)

शल्क रुपय (पति सपत्ति) जो.एस.टो. सहित

अ. चिरहला कालानो 'बो' सकर रोवा

एच.आइ.जी. 02 196.72 स 191.40 67.62 स 10.15 स 1180/-

सपर डॉलर्स क्र. 4, 6 197.72 स 70.81 10.62

1. एच.आइ.जी. 01 88.81 - 16.03 3.20 1180/-

ब. घराना बस स्टण्ड रोवा

1. दकान क्र. 16, 17 02 15.16 15.16 11.36 स 2.27 स 1770/-

2. कायालय रुम 11 15.16 15.16 5.55 पति नग 1.11 1770/-

3. कायालय रुम बो-काल, 26, 31, 32, 33, 38, 39, 40, 41, 44, 45 10 15.18 15.18 5.62 पति नग 1.12 1770/-

4. बो-काल कायालय रुम क्र. 42, 43 02 15.95 15.95 5.93 1.19 1770/-

पति नग

(1) आवदन एवं धराहर राशि दिनाक 21.01.2022 तक आनलाइन/आर.टो.जो.एस. स जमा हागा (2) रजिस्टड मावाइल पर BID-ID पाल द्वारा (3) विड डालन के अंतिम तिथि 24.01.2022 साय 5.00 बज तक (4) आफर दिनाक 25.01.2022 का 03.00 बज खाली जावा (5) सम्पत्ति के ऋण हत वक्र/वित्तान संस्थान स विवाह संविधा उपलब्ध नागर :- आफर पस्त करन स पव सम्पत्ति का अवलाकन कर ल स्वय क कारणा स आफर निरस्त कर राशि वापिस मान्य परन



## Vote matters

The elections in two different corners of the world show that citizens are the final arbiters

**A** citizen who does not vote is no less than a citizen who votes; depending on circumstances. Democracy is not a straight-jacketed concept limited to people voting their representatives in and being happy ever after. It is a dynamic idea that mediates between citizens and their rights and needs to the latter's satisfaction. The mediation is done by a system of governance that can be voted in or out of power. Problems arise when the system gets top-heavy and replaces mediation with subjugation. Such a system takes people for granted and, at times, takes away the one thing that distinguishes a citizen from a subject: their vote. It can attempt to restrict the use of the vote or not allow some sections to vote or even nullify the vote. Pessimists would say that the system is autocratic or dictatorial. Optimists, on the other hand, would see a silver lining. They would think that despite the power it wields, the system seeks legitimacy from time to time and is under the misconception that it can force the citizens to give it the legitimacy it desperately needs. If votes did not matter, why would the system offer you sops for your votes? Why would an autocratic, even oppressive regime, regularly conduct elections? The citizens are the final arbiters. They can vote to punish a corrupt or authoritarian system. Or, they may refuse to vote to punish a corrupt or authoritarian system.

Two elections in two different corners of the world this week illustrate this point. Millions of people took to the streets in Santiago, Chile, after voting in a Leftist millennial to power, bringing down the curtains on the rule by a regime that believed in conservative nationalism made notorious by Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship decades ago. The people, subjected to humiliating inequalities, decided against having anything to do with what modern-day Pinochets stood for. Last year, a whopping 78 per cent Chileans had already voted for a new Constitution to replace the one from the Pinochet era. Around the same time, in far-off Hong Kong, the little island that seeks democracy and separation from mainland China, millions of people rejected an election orchestrated by the authorities to elect only pro-China loyalists. Beijing brought in legislation to cut down the number of elected representatives and introduced strict eligibility clauses to see that only 'patriots' contest. Less than a third of Hong Kong voters turned up to vote. Beijing's electoral changes were 'rejected' by the majority non-vote. It was democracy at work in both Chile and Hong Kong. The latest Global State of Democracy Report tells us that two-thirds of the world's population now lives in 'backsliding democracies or autocratic regimes'. Multi-party elections, however, continue to be held. Why? That only shows regimes use democracy if not as a value, then as a procedure. What is pertinent is democracy loses resilience not even when citizens are under attack, but when their vote is.

### PIC TALK



Light trails of passing vehicles at the AIIMS flyover, in New Delhi

## Punjab conundrum

Punjab goes into power play as leaders try to outrun each other just ahead of the polls

**T**he Assembly polls in Punjab are inching closer and the accompanying last-minute politics is on with intensity. Politics in India is an uncertain road. The BJP, for example, which was not anywhere in the race to Punjab Assembly earlier, has now created a buzz for itself after stitching up a coalition with the Punjab Lok Congress — Captain Amarinder Singh's new political outfit after exiting the Congress. How the BJP ends up in the polls remains to be seen but the Congress's Punjab prospects are visibly hurt; so are Navjot Singh Sidhu's who, in a veiled attack on Monday, called the Captain an "arrogant king" and accused him of obsequious behaviour towards

Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The Congress leadership is apparently at the receiving end of what seems a multi-front attack from the Captain and Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party. The Delhi Chief Minister has been consistently nagging the Congress, fueling his Punjab campaign with the promises of freebies. The State is under a barrage of political and personal attacks from the Opposition. Had the Congress — which was always viewed as leading the Opposition charge when out of power — denounced the current Government at the Centre with similar zest, they would still perhaps be leading from the front. The Congress has already suffered enough damage and retaining Punjab is not going to be easy. The BJP or the AAP have nothing much to lose in Punjab but the Congress has everything on the line. If Punjab — one of the only three States under its rule — slips away, the 'grand old party' would become a mere blip on the map of Indian politics. Therefore, the party's high command needs to start making wise choices, picking the right leaders and engaging more often with party stalwarts.

The AAP, with a sole MP in the Lok Sabha, is trying to rectify its past oversights and — having honed its electoral skills in the Capital — is going all out to woo the voters with the promises of good governance and doles, including for the nearly 50 per cent women's franchise. Basically, the current situation is: The Congress slipping from a position of strength, a resurgent AAP and the defensive-but-steadfast BJP, which has the open option of joining hands with the SAD after repealing the three controversial farm laws, which was the main demand of the Akali party. The political equation in the State really hangs in balance.



# Enforcing equality barely gives hope

A combination of democracy and socialism had been tried by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It did not end inequality but induced tax evasion

**T**he World Inequality Report, 2022, has been published. French political economist Thomas Piketty and his team have reportedly brought forth a goldmine of data in what they claim are several insights into this egregious problem. Christians are especially concerned with inequality and its corollary, namely poverty. The deprivation of poverty is indeed one of the worst curses on humanity and perhaps on animals, although a lot of it goes unnoticed. Or probably animals move away or migrate to greener, richer areas if they can. To move away is not always possible for humans who have to cross national boundaries.

Speaking as a believing Hindu, inequality is caused by the person's, or people's karma, whether in this life or an earlier one. Foreigners, especially from the West, while visiting India are horrified by the sight of poor localities and the shanties therein. If one goes to speak to the poor to ask them why they are so poor, the reply is likely to be 'what to do, Sir, (or Madam), my *karams* (karma) must have been bad, now I cannot change them.' In Christendom, the belief is that God created men equal but society has rendered them unequal. Bernard Shaw, the distinguished playwright, called the poor casualties of civilisation. He thus blamed society for the inequality, which in turn causes poverty.

Karl Marx was the product of his witnessing inequality resulting in acute poverty, which became more and more visible as industrialisation advanced. Poverty was not so visible in villages because it was scattered, although inequality was sharper in the rural areas. The difference between the lord and the serf in the standard of living was generally very acute. But ideologues like Marx had no facility to travel in the villages to study the economic life in the rural areas. Which partly explains why communism has not been considerate to poor peasants; its regimes dispossessed them and collectivised their minimal portions of land.



The communist leaderships have been obsessed by the proletariat and Marx's Communist Manifesto called for the workers of the world to unite; there was no mention of the peasants in this all-important call.

In any case, communism killed itself rather than prosperity, poverty or inequality. A clear conclusion one can draw is that the ideology failed and its practitioners met their demise primarily because the problem of inequality was insoluble. This is an indication that the theory of karma stands vindicated. Look at the large number of Christians, rather Jesuits, who have spent their lifetimes trying to teach in schools and cure the poor in hospitals but have not been able to crack the problem of poverty. Instead, they have succeeded only in converting millions of poor to the worship of Jesus Christ. They have not been able to solve any problem other than their utilisation of economic activity to create socio-political tensions.

If economic theory, political activity and socio-religious service has failed to knock the bottom out of inequality, what can? There is a family of two brothers who



THE REALITY OF KARMA ALLOWS GENUINE LIBERTY TO THE LIVING BEING BUT WITH ATTENDANT RESPONSIBILITY OF THE WISDOM OF CHOICE. HOWEVER, THERE IS NO SCOPE FOR AN ARTIFICIALLY ENFORCED EQUALITY WHOSE OUTCOMES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN VERY DEBILITATING

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### TIME FOR HINDUS TO SELF-INTROSPECT

Sir — The assertion "Hinduism is tolerance-personified" might be true if we consider the humanitarian, secular and all-embracing ethos of Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi. However, this statement is nothing but a joke if "mainstream political" Hinduism or Hindutva is taken into consideration. What was the religion of Nathuram Godse who killed the Father of our nation? What about the 2002 Gujarat pogrom? Which religious community had committed gangrapes and mass murder of innocent Muslims who had no relationship with the criminals of Godhra?

Not to forget the daily doses of hatred and violence inflicted upon the people of lower castes and Dalits that has continued since centuries. It is a matter of utmost disgrace to see how none other than the persons holding leading Constitutional posts, are shamelessly dividing the electorate and citizens between and scandalously baiting for Hindus, fomenting "Islamophobia" and taunting Rahul Gandhi's democratic right of choosing electoral constituencies for himself — as in Wayanad, "majority is in the minority." Instead of beating their own trumpet, it is high time "proud" Hindus indulged in a bit of introspection and accord highest priority to humanity by discarding the fangs and poisons of rabid Hindutva.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

#### A CASE AGAINST THE ANTI-CONVERSION BILL

Sir — There is unease among Christians and believers in India's religious pluralism over anti-Christian propaganda and anti-Christian violence in Karnataka. This unease is justified. With the right-wing groups and the Karnataka Government, Christians have a double whammy of attacks on churches and church-run institutions and the anti-conversion Bill. The Karnataka Government is more interested in bringing in the anti-conversion law than in taking action against those responsible for the wave of attacks on Christians. The rationalisation adduced for the attacks and the leniency shown to the attackers point to the tacit acquiescence of the State

#### Who would fill in for Ashwin?



Ravichandran Ashwin is one of the best right arm off-spinners India has ever produced. But does India have alternatives to fill in Ashwin's position after he retires in a few years? There has been an emergence of good left-arm orthodox in recent times but right arm off-spin is an area that needs to have a good look. Junior level is the place where every cricketer emerges and gets his basics right. But with the dom-

inance of T20 cricket, not many are willing to take up off-spin. Not many players are learning to flight the ball up which was once considered an art that made the batters play forward. But today, how many players do we see flighting the ball up? Not many to be honest.

With T20 cricket gaining dominance over other formats, the ground dimensions are reduced in order to make the game entertaining. Having a right and left-arm spin bowling in tandem makes a team more lethal. Batters have all the advantages they need — having good bats with wider edges, shorter boundaries, good batting pitches — but it's the bowler who's always at the receiving end. With legendary bowlers leaving the team, India needs to develop high caliber bowlers who can deliver when the chips are down. It's time we look at our options and see who is going to be India's next off-spinner after Ashwin.

CK Subramanian | Mumbai

Government in the attacks. The charge of forced conversion is leveled against Christians to justify the anti-conversion Bill. The fact that the Christian ranks are not swelling appreciably debunks the bogey of conversion. The anti-conversion Bill is part of the politics of Hindu revivalism; it is premised on the notion of domination of the country by a single religion. There is no need for a law that is amenable to prevent and punish conversions by way of misrepresentation, force, fraud or allurements. It is significant that reconversion or return to the Hindu fold or *ghar wapsi* in the popular parlance under any circumstances is not an offence under the new law.

G David Milton | Maruthancode

#### WHAT NEXT AFTER THE ELECTORAL BILL?

Sir — The electoral reforms Bill that would allow linking of Aadhaar to a person's voter ID card was passed in the Lok Sabha on Monday and now in the Rajya Sabha as well amid the Opposition walk-out. The proposal seems good on paper as it can keep a check on the malpractice of duplicitous and rigging the elections to some extent. Many eligible voters are denied their voting right at the last minute due to faulty electoral rolls, which is a more serious violation of an individual's right than the issue of malpractice.

Free and fair elections cannot be possible if there is no level playing field for all contenders. The use of money and muscle has made a mockery of the election process. The electoral bonds system, that keeps people in the dark about fund donors, places the political parties at a safe distance from scrutiny for any *quid pro quo* dealings. Unless an atmosphere is created where a common man can confidently contest the elections, one cannot say the democratic process is healthy and evolved.

DVG Sankararao | Vizianagaram

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



PRAFULL GORADIA

brought about fraternity. There is tension, violence and killing in all the three parts. There is about as much liberty as anywhere in the world, although differences of opinions persist between the Opposition and the ruling party. India is a free country if a citizen is not a criminal, whether socially or as a result of his/her ideology.

However, liberty does include the freedom to perform as much good karma as one can. There is no lid on karma as there was an attempt on income in Nehru's India. If there cannot be a lid on karma, how can there be equality? Because not everyone can excel and be equal in the performance of good karma. If that be so, our last postulate, and that of our Constitution makers, collapses. No hope of equality! The reality of karma allows genuine liberty to the living being, but with attendant responsibility of the wisdom of choice. However, there is no scope for an artificially enforced equality whose outcomes have always been very debilitating.

The Scandinavian countries as well as Switzerland have gotten as near as abolishing poverty as presumably possible; but that is not equality. Those who wrote the Constitution of India did not come to grips with this subject. They wrote Liberty, Equality and Fraternity at its beginning. The country was divided but that has not

always been very debilitating.

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

**SOUND BITE**



Our safety is in our own hands and face masks are the best defence against COVID-19.

**Delhi Chief Minister**  
—Arvind Kejriwal

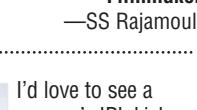


US President Joe Biden does not plan on locking the country down in response to a surge in COVID-19 cases.

**White House Press Secretary**  
—Jen Psaki



Thanks to Dil Raju Garu and the team of F3 for shifting the release date of their film.



I'd love to see a women's IPL kick off. It is certainly the next step in growing the game globally for women.

**NZ women's cricket captain**  
—Sophie Devine



Earlier, the mafia ruled the roost on the roads of UP. But CM Yogi Adityanath has put them in their right place.

**Prime Minister**  
—Narendra Modi



## FIRST COLUMN

### ENERGY: THE RISKS OF SUCCESS

Costs are going up for rival sources of energy and renewables retain their price advantage



Gwynne Dyer

The "new normal", said International Energy Agency spokesperson Heymi Bahar last May, may be a far faster expansion of renewable energy than expected, driven mainly by market forces. So fast, in fact, that it raises a different kind of risk (but he didn't mention that). The good news is big and undeniable. There has been a step-change in the growth of wind and solar power, which jumped by 45 per cent worldwide in 2020. The old pattern was that the global economy grew by around three per cent a year, and the demand for electricity grew a bit faster. Renewables grew at around the same rate, but their share was not rising at all. And it was only 15 per cent of total electricity generation, compared to 85 per cent for fossil fuels and nuclear. That's why the overall global emissions of carbon dioxide have not been shrinking. There was no hope of cutting emissions until non-fossil energy sources were being produced in volume to take



up the slack. Now that has all changed. Over the past decade the 'levelling' cost of renewable power has dropped by between around 60 per cent (wind) and 80 per cent (solar), making both of them cheaper than fossil fuels in most places. The trend has been visible for years, but now it is being reflected in actual hardware. The non-fossil share of electricity production, will be 29 per cent in 2021 and probably be 31 per cent next year. Solar accounts for more than half of that amount, and wind for most of the rest. And the IEA estimates that renewables will make up 95 per cent of new power capacity globally between now and 2026. So, if the share of renewables in total power generation is now growing at two per cent a year, what will it be in 2026? Forty per cent? And 50 per cent in 2030? That would be a genuine revolution. But costs are going up for rival sources of energy too, and so far, renewables are retaining their price advantage. So, the question remains valid: what would actually happen if fossil fuels go into an unexpectedly rapid decline, with around a third of their existing market vanishing by 2030 and most of the rest in the course of that decade?

The very good thing that would happen is an equally rapid decline in global carbon dioxide emissions, maybe even fast enough to enable us to stay below the +1.5°C threshold of warming through the 2030s. That would save some tens of millions of lives and a few trillion dollars in avoided fire, flood and storm damage. The less attractive result would be chaos in 'sunset' industries on which the Sun is going down much too fast: no time for retraining and gentle transitions, just collapse. One can see the parts of the car industry that didn't turn electric fast enough going down that route, together with the entire coal industry. The gas industry goes into rapid decline and the oil industry splits between the few very low-cost producers in the Gulf, who stay in business by cutting their prices radically, and the rest, who go to the wall. Then, around 2040, the remaining oil producers go broke as well. If you can't get some geopolitical clashes out of that scenario, you're not really trying, but it's still the most promising scenario I have seen for a long time. If we can actually replace the world's entire energy infrastructure in a single generation without even a major war or famine, I will gladly revise my views on the evolutionary fitness of the human race.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'The Shortest History of War'. The views expressed are personal.)

# Measures of social security for a wife

Under S/18 of the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956, a Hindu wife shall be entitled to be maintained by her husband during her lifetime

SHAMINDRA DEVENDER  
KADIAN SINGH ASWAL

The Supreme Court judgment in the case of Ganesh v. Sudhirkumar Srivastava and Ors. (2019) continues to cause apprehension about the right of a divorced woman to get alimony. Justices Indu Malhotra and UU. Lalit held that it "was certainly open to the wife to give up any claim so far as maintenance or permanent alimony or Stridhana but she could not have given up the rights which vest in the daughter (minor) insofar as maintenance and other issues are concerned." Many jurists feel strongly that the very proposition that it would be acceptable for a woman to waive the right to her own maintenance goes against settled law and public policy.

It would be pertinent to mention that the parties to the case were married as per Hindu rites and had a minor daughter born out of the wedlock. Due to irreconcilable differences, they agreed mutually and consented on certain terms for a divorce. The divorce agreement included, among other things, the withdrawal by the wife of criminal proceedings against the husband and the relinquishing her right to alimony and maintenance as well as the right to her daughter's maintenance. They got the divorce. However, the husband filed a Contempt Petition in the Bombay High Court as the criminal proceedings against him by the ex-wife were not withdrawn as per mutually agreed terms. The contempt petition having been dismissed by the High Court, the husband preferred an appeal to the Supreme Court. The apex court observed that if the parties had arrived at a settlement and decided to withdraw the cases filed by each of the parties against the other, the compromise ought to be effectuated in complete sense. The Supreme Court quashed the criminal proceedings but expressed reservation insofar as the divorce decree passed by the Family Court relinquishing the right of the minor child to get maintenance from the father even though the mother had agreed to relinquish the same. The Court observed that while it was certainly open to the wife to give up any claim so far as maintenance or permanent alimony or stridhana, she could not have given up the rights which vest in the daughter insofar as maintenance and other issues are concerned. Exercising the power under Article 142 of the Constitution, the apex court set-aside the said Clause of the Consent Terms.

The precise legal point and a matter of vital societal concern is that the approval given by the apex Court to the voluntary relinquishment of the statutory right to maintenance by a woman is in conflict with public policy and the principles well settled judicially. In Rajesh R. Nair vs Meera Babu, (2013), a division bench of the Kerala High Court held that an agreement, by which the wife waived her right to claim maintenance, would be a void agreement it being against public policy. Such an agreement would amount to ousting of jurisdiction of Magistrate and Family



IT IS CLEAR FROM VARIOUS JUDGMENTS AND PROVISIONS OF THE PERSONAL LAWS AND THE OVERARCHING CRPC THAT THERE CAN BE NO RELINQUISHMENT OF THE STATUTORY RIGHT TO MAINTENANCE IN THE FUTURE. A WOMAN MAY CHOOSE NOT TO TAKE ALIMONY OR MAINTENANCE FROM HER HUSBAND BUT THERE CAN BE NO RELINQUISHMENT OF THE STATUTORY RIGHT TO MAINTENANCE IN THE FUTURE

(Shamindra Kadian is a Delhi-based advocate and Devender Singh Aswal ex-Additional Secretary, Lok Sabha and a legal scholar. The views expressed are personal.)



Court to entertain maintenance claim, which cannot be permitted by law. The Bombay High Court in Ramchandra Laxman Kamble vs Shobha Ramchandra Kamble and Anr. (2016), while dealing with the right to maintenance under S/125 of the Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.P.C.), had held that even if the wife gave up or relinquished her right to claim maintenance, at any time in the future, it was opposed to public policy and therefore such an agreement, even if voluntarily entered into, would not be enforceable. Likewise, the Punjab and Haryana High Court in the matter of Ranjit Kaur vs Pavitar Singh (1992), held that the right of maintenance is a statutory right which the legislature has framed obliterating the cast or creed of the parties, and, therefore, distinct from the liability under any other law. If it is proved to the satisfaction of the Court that there is a refusal or neglect on the part of the husband to maintain his wife, children or parents, none of them can be deprived of the statutory protection of maintenance. Therefore, 'the statutory right of a wife to maintenance cannot be bartered, done away with or negated by the husband by setting up an agreement to the contrary. Such an agreement in addition to it being against public policy would also be against the clear intentment of this provision.'

The right to maintenance, a substantive measure of social security, is enshrined in various statutes. S/125 of the Cr.P.C. provides that "if

any person, having sufficient means, neglects or refuses to maintain... his wife, unable to maintain herself... a Magistrate of the first class may, upon proof of such neglect or refusal, order such person to make a monthly allowance for the maintenance of his wife. Further, 'if such person offers to maintain his wife on condition of her living with him, and she refuses to live with him, such Magistrate may consider any grounds of refusal stated by her, and may make an order notwithstanding such offer, if he is satisfied that there is just ground for so doing.' 'Wife' includes a woman who has been divorced by, or has obtained divorce from her husband and has not remarried." More so, the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.P.C.) is based on unexceptionable principle and makes no distinction between caste, creed or religion.

Under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, an order for maintenance, interim or temporary, may be made by the Court under S/ 24 and for monthly maintenance and alimony under S/ 25. Under S/18 of the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956, a Hindu wife shall be entitled to be maintained by her husband during her life time. Notably, a Hindu wife shall be entitled to live separately from her husband without forfeiting her claim to maintenance subject to laid down conditions under the law. Under S/20 of the Protection of Women from the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, the

Magistrate has the power to grant fair, adequate and reasonable maintenance or monetary relief to not just the wife but every woman who has been in a relationship in the nature of marriage and has been the victim of domestic violence. Under the Parsi Marriage Act, 1869 and the Special Marriage Act, 1954, a wife can seek maintenance from the husband on specified grounds.

The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 provides that the Muslim women be provided with fair and reasonable maintenance within the 'iddat' period by her former husband. But in the famous Shahnaz Bano vs. Babu Khan (1985), the Supreme Court held in their pathbreaking judgement that even in a case where the wife has surrendered her rights voluntarily, and if after waiving her right to maintenance, she becomes vagrant and destitute and is unable to maintain herself, then irrespective of her personal law, she would be entitled to avail statutory remedy for maintenance under S/125 of Cr.P.C.

It is abundantly, and unambiguously clear from various judgments and the provisions of the personal laws and the overarching Cr.P.C. that there can be no relinquishment of the statutory right to maintenance in the future. A woman may choose not to take alimony or maintenance from her husband but there can be no relinquishment of the statutory right to maintenance in the future.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

ALL OUR PHONES ARE BEING TAPPED AND OUR CONVERSATIONS RECORDED. THE CM HIMSELF IS LISTENING TO THE RECORDINGS.  
—SAMAJWADI PARTY CHIEF AKHILESH YADAV



PROBABLY AKHILESH DID SOMETHING SIMILAR WHEN HE WAS IN POWER. SO NOW HE IS ACCUSING OTHERS.  
—UP CHIEF MINISTER YOGI ADITYANATH

# We must learn to live with COVID-19

Some experts predict that there will be new mutations, new variants as the pandemic will be around for years like the flu and common cold

It has been two years since COVID-19 emerged in China and spread worldwide. Since then, the globe has faced upheavals. As we enter 2022, what does the crystal ball say about the pandemic? Will the new year see the end of the pandemic, or will it continue through the year? The short answer is the COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet and is likely to continue through 2022. With unpredictable outbreaks still occurring worldwide, it is difficult to predict the end of the pandemic.

If we assume that all pandemics must end, every pandemic in history has completed its cycle at some point, even without the advances in sciences we have today. The bubonic plague was never entirely eradicated and has



KALYANI SHANKAR

killed millions of people over the past 2,000 years. The 1918 Spanish flu lasted for around two years and infected 500 million people.

Despite early hopes, only about 40 percent of the population is fully vaccinated, and millions are skipping their second doses. The World Health Organization has evaluated more than 270 million people had been affected by COVID-19, while an estimated 57 per cent of the global population has received at least one dose of vaccine.

A few days ago, some experts predicted that many countries might become free of Covid-19 after suffering Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, and other variants in the past two years. The rapid spread of the highly-mutated Omicron variant,



identified in late November, undermines that hope. Some experts predict that there will be new mutations, new variants, as Covid-19 will be around for years like the flu and the common cold; there is no other option than to learn to live with it.

While coping with the covid forever might be daunting, experts predict it might become endemic sooner.

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates predicted last week: "I

am hopeful that the end is finally in sight. It might be foolish to make another prediction, but I think the acute phase of the pandemic will come to a close sometime in 2022."

Many countries have once again resorted to wearing masks, maintaining social distances, and banning large gatherings. Omicron is spreading fast.

An independent population health research centre at the University of Washington Medicine in the United States has predicted India's cumulative death toll will be nearly 2.9 million by March 1, 2022.

However, Vidyasagar, head of the National COVID-19 Supermodel Committee, has predicted: "Third wave is likely to arrive early next year in

India. It should be milder than the second wave due to a large-scale immunity present in the country now."

Though caught unaware during the second wave earlier this year, India has administered about 1.2 billion vaccines since. The government will likely complete its first round of vaccinations in 2022. India has also increased the production of vaccines and might even export to needy countries.

We have learned some lessons from the second wave. When the Indian government thought we had almost defeated Covid-19 and the then health minister Harshvardhan even said that it was dead, the second wave hit the country with such force. This second wave was mainly due to the compla-

cency that things were becoming okay. People threw caution and went about without a mask or keeping social distance. People crowded in public places like temples and parks. The poll rallies held in poll-bound states like West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry caused enough spread. We can escape the third wave if the people and politicians stick to the safety regulations.

The Indian government is getting ready to meet any eventuality and has stepped up the vaccine supply. The health sector has been allocated more funds in 2021 and it is likely to continue in the 2022 budget. The upcoming Assembly elections in UP, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Goa, and Gujarat are crucial for the BJP and Congress. The political parties should make sure that they address only virtual rallies and propagate their poll agenda through digital mode.

The future is unknowable. The good news is that India is better prepared to deal with Covid-19 today than two years ago because vaccine supplies have increased. The bottom line is that the virus will continue to affect our lives and livelihoods unless the global community collectively addresses inequitable access to vaccines. At the same time, governments must invest in preparedness, prevention, and health care. The public also has its duty to cooperate with the government and follow regulations so that the new variant does not spread fast.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

# China refutes Zeya's job as US envoy for Tibet

**Says will never recognise her role**

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Tuesday reacted angrily to the US move to appoint Indian-origin diplomat Uzra Zeya as America's Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, saying it will never recognise her designation as it amounted to interference in its internal affairs.

While designating Zeya as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that she has been tasked with promoting "substantive dialogue" between China and the Dalai Lama or his representatives in support of a negotiated agree-

ment on Tibet.

Responding to questions on Zeya's appointment, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing here that Tibetan affairs "are purely China's domestic affairs. They brook no foreign interference". "By designating a so-called special coordinator for Tibetan

issues the US is interfering in China's domestic affairs. China firmly rejects this. We never recognise this designation," he said. He asked US to take "concrete actions to abide by its commitment of recognising Tibet as part of China and not supporting Tibet independence and stop using Tibetan related issues to interfere in China's domestic affairs. China will continue to take all measures to firmly safeguard our sovereignty, security and development interests."

Responding to a follow-up question, he said, "I would like to stress that since peaceful liberation of Tibet 70 years ago Tibet has experienced social harmony, economic prosperity and religious and cultural development". "People there lead a happy life (and) there is no need for certain US individuals to worry and there is no room for their criticism."

If US politicians can't find anything better to do perhaps they should pay some attention to serious racial discrimination and human rights problems at home," he said. The US should appoint Special Coordinator,

not for Tibetan issues but to probe genocide of American Indians, human rights affairs of ethnic minorities and the "botched COVID-19 response" resulting in a heavy death toll, he said.

Zeya, who was once posted in New Delhi during her diplomatic career, had quit foreign service in 2018 in protest against policies of then-president Donald Trump. She is also Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights. As US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, Zeya will coordinate US government policies, programmes and projects concerning Tibetan issues, consistent with the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, as amended by Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020. "Specifically, she will promote substantive dialogue, without preconditions, between Government of People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Dalai Lama, his representatives, or democratically elected Tibetan leaders in support of a negotiated agreement on Tibet," according to the US Department of State.

An eyewitness said that angry Hindus, who were at temple, caught hold of miscreant and handed him over to police. Later, the Hindu residents of the area staged a protest outside police station, demanding government to provide security to Hindus.

## Hindu temple's statues destroyed in Pakistan's Karachi

PTI ■ KARACHI

The statues of deities at a Hindu temple in this Pakistani city have been destroyed, the police said on Tuesday, the latest incident of vandalism against the places of worship of the minority community in this country.

The incident took place at the Narayan Mandir in Karachi's old city of Naraipura on Monday evening, they said.

A man, identified as Muhammad Waleed Shabbir, has been arrested for damaging the statues of the deities, senior police officer official, Sarfaraz Nawaz, said.

"He was arrested on complaint of a Hindu man, Mukesh Kumar, who with his wife was at Narayan Mandir for prayers when they saw this man damaging the statues of Hindu deities with a hammer," he said.

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An eyewitness said that angry Hindus, who were at temple, caught hold of miscreant and handed him over to police. Later, the Hindu residents of the area staged a protest outside police station, demanding government to provide security to Hindus.

They also raised slogans and protested that they were feeling insecure in the area after the incident.

The area is mostly inhabited by poor and low-income Hindu families who have been living in Naraipura for decades. The police and Pakistani Rangers reached the spot and cordoned off the area.

Sindh's Minister for Minority Affairs Gyanchand Israni said that a case should be registered. He said that such incidents create unrest in the society. "We condemn such attacks," he said.

Another Hindu resident said that there were lots of Hindu families in area and they had never seen such an incident and there had never been any incident of Hindu-Muslim tension in area. "We are labourers and very poor people.

We do not harm anyone and always pray people will respect our worship places too," he said. The police official said that they were investigating motive behind incidents. The videos of broken holy statues were seen circulating on social media.

## Joe Biden to pledge 500M free COVID tests to counter omicron

AP ■ WASHINGTON

With the omicron variant on the march, President Joe Biden plans to announce 500 million free rapid tests for Americans, increased support for hospitals under strain and a redoubling of vaccination and boosting efforts.

In a speech scheduled for Tuesday afternoon, Biden is announcing major changes to his COVID-19 winter plan, his hand forced by the arrival of the fast-spreading omicron variant, whose properties are yet not fully understood by scientists.

The world is confronting prospect of a second straight holiday season with COVID-19 as families and friends begin to gather. Scientists don't yet know whether omicron causes more serious disease, but they do know that vaccination should offer strong protections against severe illness and death. The White House provided details on the proposals Biden will announce in his speech. A cornerstone of the plan is Biden's decision for the government to purchase 500 million coronavirus rapid tests and ship them free to Americans starting in January.

Virus fears widen as Omicron variant takes hold across US

BOSTON: The nation's second-largest city called off its New Year's Eve celebration Monday, and its smallest state re-imposed an indoor mask mandate as omicron variant leaped ahead of other variants to become dominant version of coronavirus in US.

The moves in Los Angeles and Rhode Island reflected widening fears of a potentially devastating winter COVID-19 surge. Much of concern is being driven by omicron, which federal health officials announced accounted for 73% of new infections last week, a nearly sixfold increase in only seven days.

In much of country, it's even higher. Omicron is responsible for an estimated 90% or more of new infections in New York area, the Southeast, the industrial Midwest and Pacific Northwest.

The national rate suggests that more than 650,000 omicron infections occurred in US last week. Since end of June, the delta variant had been main version causing US infections. As recently as the end of November, more than 99.5% of coronaviruses were delta, according to CDC data. AP

## US official to travel to Israel to discuss Iran nuclear programme

AL JAZEERA: United States national security adviser Jake Sullivan, will visit Israel this week for detailed discussions with Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett on Iran's nuclear programme, a senior Biden administration official has said.

The visit, which is expected to begin on Tuesday, comes as negotiations in Vienna over Iran returning to 2015 nuclear deal have shown modest gains, but remain far from a breakthrough.

"We will talk about where we see state of Iran's nuclear program and some of timelines," the official told reporters. "It will be a good opportunity to sit down face-to-face and talk about state of talks, the time-frame in which we are working and to re-emphasise that we don't have much time."

Sullivan will be accompanied by National Security Council's Middle East director Brett McGurk and other US officials, and will also meet Palestinian President Mohammed Abbas in Ramallah in occupied West Bank to discuss strengthening US relations with Palestinians, the official said. The Biden administration has made a

return to Iran nuclear deal, from which former President Donald Trump withdrew in 2018, its top priority. The accord saw Iran agreed to curb its nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief.

Since US withdrawal, Tehran has increasingly flouted restrictions, saying it is no longer beholden to agreement. The Western signatories of nuclear deal have repeatedly sought urgency due to Iran's nuclear advances.

Last week, a senior US official said Iran's breakout time to producing enough highly enriched uranium for one nuclear weapon is now "really short" and alarming. Iran has repeatedly denied that it seeks to develop a nuclear weapon. An eighth round of talks between Iran and other signatories of deal, with US participating indirectly, are set to resume next week. Reports have indicated that sides may be close to reaching a new joint draft, which incorporates elements from a text reached by end of the sixth round of negotiations in June and new proposals put forth by administration of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. AGENCIES

## Former intel chief confirms Israel's role in Soleimani killing

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel's former military intelligence chief says the country was involved in the American airstrike that killed Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in January 2020. It was the first public acknowledgement of Israel's role in the operation.

Soleimani headed the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's elite Quds Force and helped orchestrate Iran's involvement with paramilitary groups abroad. He was killed in a U.S. drone strike at the Baghdad airport in January 2020, an incident that threatened to pull the countries into full-blown conflict.

A week after the airstrike, NBC News reported that Israeli intelligence helped confirm the details of Soleimani's flight from Damascus to Baghdad. Earlier this year, a Yahoo News reported that Israel "had access to Soleimani's numbers" and gave that intelligence to the United States. But Maj. Gen. Tamir Heyman, the now-retired general who headed

military intelligence until October, appears to be the first official to confirm Israel's involvement. Heyman's comments were published in the November issue of a Hebrew-language magazine closely affiliated with Israel's intelligence services. The interview was held in late September, a couple weeks before his retirement from the military. The authors wrote that Heyman opened the interview by talking about the American airstrike that killed Soleimani, but in which Israeli intelligence played a part.

"Assassinating Soleimani was an achievement, since our main enemy, in my eyes, are the Iranians," Heyman told the magazine. He said there were "two significant and important assassinations during my term" as head of army intelligence.

The missile, dubbed the Babur Cruise Missile 1B, is domestically developed, said the military statement. An earlier version had the limited capacity to travel just 450 kilometers (280 miles).

## Pakistan tests home-grown missile with additional range

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's military test-fired a home-grown Babur cruise missile on Tuesday that has a range of more than 900 kilometers (560 miles), twice the distance of an earlier missile of the same model, a statement said.

The missile's extended range further enhances nuclear-armed Pakistan's military capability.

Pakistan and India, which also has a nuclear arsenal, have a volatile relationship, having fought three wars against each other.

The military buildup of both countries is closely watched by a nervous international community as India and Pakistan have come dangerously close to a fourth war at least twice over the last two decades.

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## China imposes sanctions on US officials over Xinjiang

AP ■ BEIJING

China announced sanctions on Tuesday on four members of the U.S. government's Commission on International Religious Freedom in retaliation for penalties imposed on Chinese officials over complaints of abuses in the country's northwestern Xinjiang region.

The tit-for-tat sanctions add to spiraling tension over Xinjiang. Washington has banned imports from the region that might be made with forced labor, while activists are calling for a boycott of February's Winter Olympics in Beijing. China has denied accusations of abuses and earlier retaliated by publicizing calls for boycotts of foreign shoe and clothing brands.

The chairwoman and three members of the U.S. panel are barred from visiting mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau, and any assets they have in the country will be frozen, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said. Zhao identified those targeted as chairwoman Nadine Maenza, deputy chairman Nurjy Turkel and members

## Democrats try to 'build back' after Manchin tanks \$2T bill

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Democrats are struggling to pick up the pieces after Sen. Joe Manchin effectively crushed President Joe Biden's big domestic policy bill. But they face serious questions whether the \$2 trillion initiative can be refashioned to win his crucial vote or the party will be saddled with a devastating defeat.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer vowed on Monday that the chamber would vote early in the new year on Biden's "Build Back Better Act" as it now stands so every senator "has the opportunity to make their position known on the Senate floor, not just on television." That was a biting reference to Manchin's sudden TV announcement from 2018 until early this year, and Erken Tuniyaz, who holds the position now and previously was deputy chairman.

The United States should withdraw the so-called sanctions and stop interfering in Xinjiang's affairs and China's internal affairs," Zhao said. "China will make further responses in accordance with the development of situation."

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I, Lavesh Seth intend to purchase First, Second Floor with Roof Rights of the property bearing No. A-35/13, DLF, Phase-I, Gurugram, Haryana. Any person have any claim of whatsoever regarding above mentioned property should intimate us within 15 Days from date of this publication.

I, Pooja Khatri intend to purchase Basement and Ground Floor of the property bearing No. A-35/13, DLF, Phase-I, Gurugram, Haryana. Any person have any claim of whatsoever regarding above mentioned property should intimate us within 15 Days from date of this publication.

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PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

[See proviso to rule 8(6)]

Notice for sale of immovable assets

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is", as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No. Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No. Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any Amount Outstanding Reserve Price Date and Time of Property Inspection Date & Time of Auction

(A) (B) (C) (D) (E) (F) (G)

1. Jitender Kumar Chhabra (Borrower)/ Ram Devi (Co Borrower) LBNOD00002116807 Flat No A-2002, Tower A, Springview Floors, Crescent Park Township, NH-24, Ghaziabad, Up Area: 1243 Sq. Fts

Rs. 59,39,736/- as on December 09, 2021

Rs. 41,80,000/- From 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM

January 28, 2022, From 01:00 PM to 02:00 PM

The online auction will be conducted on website ([URL Link- https://disposalhub.com](https://disposalhub.com)) of our auction agency M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited. The Mortgagors/noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till January 27, 2022 before 05:00 PM else these secured assets will be sold as per above schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh, Delhi-110005 and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before January 27, 2022 before 05:00 PM along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh, Delhi- 110005 on or before January 27, 2022 before 05:00 PM. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of "ICICI Bank Limited" payable at Delhi.

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited on 8126013708 or M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited on 9710229933/9810029926/01244233933

Please note that Marketing agencies 1. M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited. 2. Augeo Asset Management Pvt Ltd have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit [www.icicibank.com/n4p4s](http://www.icicibank.com/n4p4s)

Date: December 22, 2021 Place: Delhi/ N

# Markets stage a comeback on bargain-hunting

RIL, IT counters spurt

**Mumbai:** Market benchmarks clawed back some lost ground on Tuesday after two days of heavy declines as investors made a cautious return to energy, IT and finance stocks amid supportive global cues.

A sharp recovery in the rupee further fuelled the rebound, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex opened strong and rallied to 56,900, before paring some gains to close at 56,319.01, up 497 points or 0.89 per cent.

Similarly, the NSE Nifty advanced 156.65 points or 0.94 per cent to 16,770.85.

HCL Tech was the top performer in the Sensex pack, spurring 3.91 per cent, followed by Wipro, Tata Steel, Tech Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Titan and Sun Pharma.

On the other hand, PowerGird, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, SBI, M&M, Kotak

Bank and HDFC closed with losses of up to 1.50 per cent. The market breadth was in

favour of the bulls, with 23 advances compared to seven declines.

## Rupee spurs 31 paise to nearly 2-week high against USD, rises for 4th day

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rising for a fourth straight session, the rupee surged by 31 paise to close at a nearly two-week high of 75.59 against the US dollar on Tuesday as positive domestic equities and a weak American currency in the overseas markets boosted investor sentiment.

Risk sentiment recovered in global markets, helping riskier assets and emerging currencies post gains against the dollar, analysts said.

At the interbank forex market, the domestic unit opened strong at 75.74 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 75.41 and a

low of 75.74 during the day's trade. It finally ended at 75.59 a dollar, the highest closing level since December 8. In the previous session, the rupee had settled at 75.90 against the US dollar. Aided by low crude prices, the local unit has appreciated by almost 1 per cent or 73 paise in the four sessions to Tuesday.

Indian rupee continued its upward momentum for a fourth day in a row as dollar index retracted while risk sentiment recovers. The RBI was absent over the past few weeks, but yesterday's announcement of the auction of VRRL worth ₹2 lakh crore on Wednesday indicated policy normalisation.

The objectives of the policy include enablement of growth of public sector enterprises through infusion of private capital, technology and best practices, the

# No Cabinet decision on privatisation of two PSBs: FM

**New Delhi:** The Cabinet has not taken any decision on privatisation of two Public Sector Banks (PSBs), which the government had announced in Budget 2021-22, Parliament was informed on Tuesday. In the Union Budget for financial year 2021-22, the government had announced its intent to take up privatisation of two PSBs in the year and approval of a policy of strategic disinvestment of public sector enterprises.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. She was responding to a question on privatisation of two PSBs.

"Consideration of various issues related to disinvestment is entrusted to the Cabinet Committee designated for this purpose/Cabinet. Decision by the Cabinet Committee/Cabinet has not been taken in this regard," Sitharaman said further.



"The bill related to privatisation of PSBs has been listed for the ongoing winter session of Parliament which ends on December 23. PTI

## Parliament panel backs Govt proposal on penalty, jail term in Pesticide Management Bill

**New Delhi:** Amid concerns expressed by the industry bodies, a parliamentary panel on Tuesday said the proposed penalty and jail term for violation of the Pesticide Management Bill, 2020, are "essential" to ensure "deterrence", it said.

The panel further said it is aware that the country is facing huge challenges of fake and spurious pesticides that affect the farmers.

"It has been suggested to the committee that stringent penal provisions should be there to counter this," it added.

According to the panel, the agriculture ministry has also stated that the offences under this Bill are graded and only a third conviction attracts a higher penalty. Further, more serious offences like the sale of unlicensed or unregistered, banned pesticides attract a more stringent penalty. PTI

## It's good to honour passion in people to be fit: Suneil Shetty

New Delhi: It's good to honour the passion and drive in people to be healthy and fit, said Bollywood actor Suneil Shetty while the organiser of 2021 Transformation Challenge which was won by Dhyani Suman from Jaipur on Tuesday. The 2021 Transformation Challenge was held by world's largest community-first online health and fitness brands, Fittr. "I would like to congratulate Dhyani Suman and the top contenders to motivate & encourage people around her to be fit," said Fittr founder and CEO Jitendra Chouksey.

## Bid to transform into a full crypto exchange ecosystem'

MAHEX: Crypto exchange BitMEX on Tuesday announced the launch of its highly-awaited token, BMEX. New and existing BitMEX users are immediately eligible for exclusive BMEX airdrops; tokens will be awarded for trading and referral activity and will also be given to all new BitMEX users.

Alexander Höptner, CEO of BitMEX, said: "BitMEX has ambitious plans to transform into a full crypto exchange ecosystem in 2022, and the launch of BMEX marks a rebirth."

# Accelerated digitisation to drive 9-12 pc dollar revenue growth for domestic IT services firms: ICRA

**New Delhi:** Domestic IT services companies are expected to log a dollar revenue growth of 9-12 per cent in FY2022, driven by accelerated demand for digital technologies from enterprises globally and partly on account of low base of last year due to the COVID-19 impact, ratings agency ICRA said on Tuesday.

Industry growth is expected to moderate marginally to 6-9 per cent in FY2023, partly also on account of the base effect, ICRA said in a statement.

"In line with the growth trajectory witnessed over recent quarters, Indian IT services companies are expected to report healthy growth over the near term due to aforementioned favourable factors," ICRA Assistant Vice-President and Sector Head Deepak Jotwani said.

He added that this growth has been supported by uptick in all key verticals such as BFSI, telecom, manufacturing, retail and distribution. However, concerns have emanated from elevated attrition levels for the industry due to strong demand for digital technologies and lack of adequate skilled manpower to service the same.

Companies are reskilling employees to overcome this challenge. Moreover they have also been able to achieve higher

employee productivity through increased deployment of technology. Hiring by IT companies is at an all-time high buoyed by strong demand and net addition over past four quarters has been increasing exponentially, Jotwani noted.

ICRA said IT services companies remain focused on enhancing the share of fixed price contracts as it assures better revenue visibility and also allows for higher deployment of offshore resources where the salaries are 60-70 per cent lower, coupled with better utilisation of manpower across such projects and deployment of automation.

The benefits are shared with the client leading to mutual advantage.

The share of fixed price contracts has remained between 60-65 per cent in the past three years, ICRA said.

There was some increase in H2 FY2021, which has tapered to around 61 per cent levels in the second quarter of FY2022, given the higher share of new contracts and mix of contracts secured.

"ICRA has a stable outlook on the Indian IT services industry, led by minimal impact of the pandemic on revenues and profitability and steady earnings outlook over the near to medium term," Jotwani said. PTI

## Air India paid 'avoidable' ₹43.85 cr penalty for non-compliance with contractual timelines: CAG

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Air India shelled out an "avoidable" penalty of Rs 43.85 crore to Boeing for non-adherence with the contractually stipulated timelines under the agreement for an aircraft component service programme, according to CAG.

The penalty amount was paid in August last year for the July 2016 to December 2019 period.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has mentioned about the penalty in a report tabled in Parliament on Tuesday wherein it said that "avoidable payment of penalty

due to delay in return of removed components" was made by Air India.

In December 2015, the airline had entered into an agreement with Boeing for Rotatable Exchange Programme related to servicing of 787 aircraft component and the pact came into effect from July 2016.

As per the agreement, Air India was required to return the removed component along with the component information to Boeing within 10 calendar days after Boeing delivered the serviceable exchange component and in case of failure to do so, then delayed return fee is payable to the aircraft maker.

The national carrier defaulted on the concession- late return fees/ penalty for the period from July 2016 to

December 2019, following which Boeing served a letter, in July 2020, intimating suspension of the programme if payment was not received by July 31, 2020. Subsequently, Boeing served six months' notice of termination and withdrew the discounts offered earlier.

During the July 2016 to December 2019 period, CAG said there were several instances of delayed return of removed component by Air India over and above the stipulated time limit of 10 days. Citing audit analysis, CAG said that during the initial period (July 2016 to December 2017), there were 170 instances of delayed return and in 88 instances, the delay was more than 30 days with a maximum of 214 days.

The committee appreciate the government for incorporating such penal provisions, which will go a long way in ensuring safety and security to farmers/other end-users as well as the environment," the panel said in the report.

## No recommendation by GST Council to bring petroleum products under new tax regime

**New Delhi:** The GST Council has not recommended bringing petroleum products under the reformed taxation regime even as certain representations have been made to the government to include petrol and diesel in GST, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

Excise duty on petroleum products is calibrated time to time for generating resources for infrastructure and other developmental items of expenditure, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

The change in duties takes into account relevant factors such as international product prices, exchange rate, tax struc-

ture, inflation and keeping in view the prevailing fiscal situation, the minister said.

"Certain representations have been received to bring petrol and diesel under GST (goods and services tax). Article 279 A (5) of the Constitution prescribes that the Goods and Service Tax Council shall recommend the date on which the goods and services tax be levied on petroleum crude, high speed diesel, motor spirit (commonly known as petrol), natural gas and aviation turbine fuel (ATF)," the minister said.

Citing the CGST Act, the minister said inclusion of these products in GST will require recommendation of the GST

Council. "So far, the GST Council, in which the states are also represented, has not made any recommendation for inclusion of these goods under GST," Chaudhary said further.

He said the government keeps a close watch on the factors affecting the international fuel prices and makes interventions by way of calibrating excise duty rates on these products as and when required.

"Government has, with effect from, 4th November, 2021, reduced Central Excise Duty (including cesses) on petrol by Rs 5 per litre and on diesel by Rs 10 per litre to provide relief to the consumers," he added. PTI

## SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

**ICICI Bank** | Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

Whereas

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	M/s Mechsoft Engineers/ Manoj Kumar/ Riya Rani/ Rajnish Singh/ Avantika Kushwaha 629405042934	Commercial Space No. 405 A 4th Floor, Commercial Complex Known as Orbit Plaza Plot No. C- 2, Crossings Republic Dendahera, NH-24, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh- 201009/ December 17, 2021	August 21, 2021 RS. 28,49,848/-	Ghaziabad

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantor(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date : December 22, 2021  
Place : Ghaziabad

Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited

**Office of the Superintending Engineer**  
**1st Circle, Public Works Department, Almora**  
Phone/Fax: 05962-230295 Email: sepwdalm@rediffmail.com

Dated : 21/12/2021

## NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (E-Tendering)

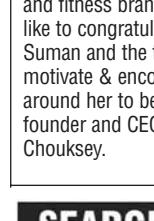
### E-TENDER NOTICE

The superintending Engineer, 1st Circle, PWD Almora Public Works Department, Almora invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) on behalf of Honourable Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from dated 22/12/2021 & onwards on website <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Cost of Tender Form	Earnest Money (Rupee in lakh)	Validity of Tender	Time of Completion	Contractor's Category of Registration for tendering
1	Construction of 18Mt. Span Single Lane Motor bridge at Km. 2 in Basgaon Darman Motor Road from Jyoti Basar - Khunti Motor Road Distt-Almora.	Rs. 5000 + 18% GST	3.22 Lakh	60 Days	15 Months	Category "B" & above (Bridge Works)
2	Improvement and Damrikan work in Chabisa- Bagwalipokhar Motor Road in Constituency Dwarahat Under State Sector in Distt-Almora (Length 6.20 Km.).	Rs. 5000 + 18% GST	6.75 Lakh	60 Days	18 Months	Category "A" & above (Road Works)
3	Road Safety Work on Almora-Bajnath-Gwalsam-Karnaprayag Motor Road (SH-11) as per recommendation of RSA under Central Road Infrastructure Fund.	Rs. 5000 + 18% GST	10.00 Lakh	60 Days	18 Months	Class A & Higher in Road work in Central Govt./ Any state Govt./ Any Govt. Undertaking and Eligibility of the Conditions prescribed for the Road Furniture, Reflective Sheetings and Road Marking as per Engineer in Chief Letter No. 380 / 02- युनिटो (सीपी) / 2017-2020 0 दिनांक 31/07/2020

For Raw Law Associates  
Advocates & Legal Consultants  
Gokul-1, A-602, Krishna Garden,  
Gulmohar Phase-2, Raj Nagar Extension,  
Ghaziabad, (U.P) 201017 Mob. No.: 9999719235

## SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



Mehek

General public is hereby informed that a girl namely Mehek, D/o: Sh. Sabir, R/o: B-2/120, Raghbir Nagar, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped since 12.12.2021 at about 04:00 am from her home. In this regard FIR No. 978/2021 dated 12.12.2021 has been registered at P.S. Khyala, New Delhi. The description of missing/kidnapped girl is as under:

Name: Mehek, Age: 14 Years, Height: 4'5", Built: Thin,

Face: Round, Complexion: Fair, Wearing: Black Colour Top & Jeans and Chappal in Feet.

If anyone have any information about this missing/ kidnapped girl please inform P.S. Khyala, New Delhi.

Web: <a href="

For several first-time insurance buyers in smaller cities and towns, insurance premiums may make for a bulk of their monthly savings, but the lack of physical copies of insurance may put their claims to risk, says PRASHANT SHAH



## PREVENT UNCERTAINITIES

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic has forced insurance companies to go digital. But that may not necessarily facilitate widening of the insurance net in the country with nearly 50 per cent of the population without any internet access till 2020. Incidentally, many insurance companies have completely stopped issuing physical certificates to the policy-holders, which has not only created a lack of trust amongst the insured but also heightened risk of cyberattacks, resulting in identity thefts and hacking and better understanding of the policy terms and conditions.

Currently, the insurance penetration in India is 4.2 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) as against the world average of 7.4 per cent. India's insurance density, which is calculated as the ratio of insurance premium to population, stood at \$78 in 2020, which is dismal lower than \$455 for China and \$383 for Thailand. In fact, the global average is \$809.

This reflects India's untapped potential for the insurance market. But, it takes trust for people to lock their savings in insurance products. Therefore, protecting the interest of insured becomes crucial. For several first-time insurance buyers in smaller cities and towns, insurance premiums may make for a bulk of

their monthly savings, but the lack of physical copies of insurance may put their claims to risk, with instances suggesting that the claims process largely remains paper-driven.

The lack of internet connectivity, especially in rural India, makes it challenging to take printouts of the policy documents. Even policyholders from metro cities feel safer holding a physical copy of the insurance certificate to prevent uncertainty around the claims process, a recent survey showed.

As per regulation 4 of Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Issuance of e-Insurance Policies) Regulations, 2016, an insurer has to issue both physical and electronic insurance certificates to policyholders.

However, in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, IRDAI as an interim measure allows insurers to issue only electronic policy documents and exempts them from the requirement of sending insurance policies in physical form till March 31, 2022, following two extensions.

Prioritising the interest of buyers, it becomes pertinent to restore the mandate of issuing both physical and electronic policy documents.

Concerns around claim settlement continue to haunt the insured. According to the industry data, as of

July, of the total reported claims of around ₹ 27,000 crore, claims worth ₹ 16,000 crore were settled, with settlement amounts ranging between 55 per cent and 65 per cent of the claim.

This makes it even more important to lay out the terms and conditions of the policy on paper. First, that makes it accessible for the insured. Second, hard copies also act as the proof for the future for parents or children in case of the demise of the policy holder. Third, only-digital copies are risky in times when cyber-attacks are common.

Moreover, in case the buyers' inbox crashes or get hacked, physical

copies come to the rescue.

An insurance policy is a contract between the insurance company and the insured individual and contains critical details of the insurance cover laying out the benefits, terms and conditions, the procedure to file for a claim if needed, and the contact details of the insurer. Therefore, physical copies make it easier for the buyers to read clauses, terms, and conditions more clearly. It is not possible to read the multitude of Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) online.

In the first COVID wave up to February 2021, insurers reported claims worth ₹ 13,000 crore, of which claims worth ₹ 7000 were settled. In the second wave, between February and July, of total health insurance claims of ₹ 14,000 crore, claims only worth ₹ 9,000 crore were settled.

Even as several insurance companies decided to 'Go Green' by either discarding the physical copies of insurance policies completely or making it optional, even before the pandemic, policyholders believe that the same insurance companies ask them for a physical copy while claiming the policy amount. The companies not only ask for the physical copy of the insurance policy but also other related documents.

A recent survey by The Bombay Master Printers Association (BMPA) showed that over 80 per cent of the

insurance buyers prefer a physical copy of their policy document.

Nearly eight in 10 survey participants felt that during the time of the claim or an emergency, a hard copy of the policy issued by the insurance company would be preferable.

Nearly 79 per cent of respondents felt that during a time of claim or an emergency (or to share the policy within your family members), a hard copy of the policy issued by the insurance company would be preferable.

Incidentally, 56 per cent of the survey participants fell in the age-group of 18-40 years, suggesting that even the younger policyholders prefer physical copies. Nearly 73 per cent of the survey participants believed that it was better to have a physical copy of the document for records, especially in case of life and health insurance.

In the first half of FY22, the life insurance industry recorded a growth rate of 5.8 per cent compared with 0.8 per cent in the same period last year. While the growth potential is huge, it is imperative for the insurance sector to make the policy-holders feel secure about their investment. That's the only way the insurance penetration and insurance density in the country can grow.

The writer is Chief Executive at Bombay Master Printers Association

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The writer is Chief Executive at Bombay Master Printers Association

**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
Real education should consist of drawing the goodness and the best out of our own students.  
— Cesar Chavez

**UG/PG AT INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ART AND DESIGN**

The Indian Institute of Art and Design (IIAD) in collaboration with Kingston School of Art, London offers undergraduate programmes in Fashion Design, Fashion Business Management, Communication Design and Interior Architecture & Design. It also offers postgraduate programmes in Fashion Design and Fashion Business Management.

The Institute offers these programmes through its creative studio-based education and strives to groom the next generation of designers and design thinkers at its state-of-the-art campus in New Delhi. To know more about the admission process and scholarships, visit our website.

**Website:** [www.iiad.edu.in](http://www.iiad.edu.in)

**Admission Process:** IIAD Entrance Test

**Exam Date:** 26th and 27th December 2021(Online), 26th December 2021 (Offline)

**Admission Helpline:** +91 98713 83633, +91 11 4138 0000

**Admissions OPEN**  
**BA/MA DESIGN AT APEEJAY STYA UNIVERSITY**

The School of Design & Visual Arts (SDVA) at Apeejay Stya University (ASU) is inviting applications for its Bachelor and MA in Design programmes, with durations of 4 and 2 years respectively. For both the programmes, specialisations are available in Fashion Design, Interior Design, Graphic Design and Animation & Multimedia.

**Next Design Aptitude Test (DAT) Date:** 27 January 2022

**Last date to apply for DAT:** 22 January 2022

**Admission Helpline Number:** 1800-103-7888

**Application forms** can be downloaded from the University website: [www.universityapeejay.edu](http://www.universityapeejay.edu)

## Sharda University celebrates 25th Foundation Day

**PNS ■ GREATER NOIDA**

The Sharda University celebrated its silver jubilee. About the journey of the Sharda group for the last 25 years was highlighted and a short film was screened.

On this occasion, PK Gupta, the chancellor of the University addressed all the office bearers, teachers, non-teaching employees and told them that each one of them has an important contribution to the journey that Sharda Group has reached today.

This institution has impacted the lives of 15 crore people across the globe. He mentioned that people of more than 80 countries are associated with the Sharda group in one way or the other. YK

Gupta, Pro-Chancellor of Sharda University, wished that with the hard work and trust of all the people associated with the institution, the Group would reach greater heights.

A coffee table book of Sharda University was also released by the dignitaries. The staff, officers, and teachers involved in the group's journey and working in the institute for more than 15 years were also felicitated on the stage as a mark of their loyalty and respect for the Group. Along with this, the people of the founding family and the invited dignitaries were also honored.

The group had organised a music night event for all the employees as part of the celebrations.

## Bouquet of insightful stories

Author Smita Das Jain's new book *A slice of Life* explores different human emotions and stories. The book is a fictional potpourri of extraordinary narratives of ordinary people who have more to their everyday lives beneath the surface, these stories reflect myriad hues of human behavior.

The author takes us into the book, "The book is about relationships, and I have taken inspiration from real life to write this book on human relationships. Truth is stranger than fiction, and the more you observe people and things around you, the more stories you will get to narrate. People have emotions and emotions drive people. *A Slice of Life* is a potpourri of human emotions divided into three main categories: Romance, Humor and Relationships. Love, joy, humor, anger, sadness, pride and quirksiness are some of the most prominent emotions that come to the fore from the stories."

Jain talks about her journey and how she ended up being an author. "I enrolled in Stanford Continuing Studies for their Creative Writing and Novel Writing courses in 2018, following my desire to learn something new. Subsequently, I started to draft fictional pieces regularly and circulate these write ups among my close friends to get their views.

One such short fiction, titled *The Lost Identity*, was appreciated a lot, and quite a few in my circle told me that this is worthy of being published. That was in late 2020. I researched about the best way to publish short fiction and got acquainted with the world of Kindle Direct Publishing. That is how my debut short fiction *The Lost Identity* got published in early 2021."

"*A Slice of Life- Every Person Has A Story* is not the end, my journey as an Author has just begun, and I look forward to it," she adds. The author also shares her favorite lines from the book, "They both gazed into each other's eyes. Even after all these years it was like love at first sight. 'It is better to be angry than heartbroken.' She had put one of her dreams on hold for another.

"A bouquet of insightful stories that leave you thinking long after you have read them." - Shobhaa De, Author of *Amritavati*, *Khosla Falls in Love* & *The Case of the Counterfeit Currency*



Today she was sure that she hadn't made a mistake. "Old ways do give way to new beginnings when the underlying reason happens to be beautiful!"

For those who are dreaming of becoming an author here are a few tips from the author herself. "Write something every day. Like any other craft, you hone your writing skills with practice. If you complete one story every week, you can't produce 52 bad stories in a year. And be patient."

Writing is a long process, and the job doesn't get finished after completing the first draft of your manuscript. Editing, Publishing and Marketing takes more time combined than completing the draft. Lack of patience will make your path more arduous."

## Crack it with confidence

The JEE Main 2022 exam will be conducted in four sessions in January, February, March and April. SAURABH KUMAR shares tips to prepare and ace it

With the recent announcement of the syllabus revision for JEE Advanced 2023, many aspirants have been under the dilemma of how to cope up with the preparation in the upcoming JEE examinations 2022. The syllabus for JEE Advanced 2023 is in sync with the New Education Policy 2020, and purely aims to reduce the student's pressure. One should also note that there will be no change in pattern or syllabus of JEE Main 2022, and aspirants need not worry about the same, and instead focus on their preparation and revision.

The syllabus revision would not make much difference in the preparation strategy, but aspirants may not feel the extra pressure. Since this will also give rise to an extra-competitive ambience, one should not lose their focus from the preparations.

The JEE Main exam will be conducted in four sessions in January, February, March and April, and all the aspirants must focus on betterment in all the sessions to secure a better percentile and ranking. The reaction from the students after the exam during last year's JEE Main showed that some found it to be tougher and lengthier, others found the difficulty levels at par with the previous year Main exam.

Thus, always attempt theoretical/fact based questions first and then questions which require calculation.

**Attempt online mock tests:**

Rigorous revision and attempting several mock tests will help them get thorough

with subjects and concept clarification and keep them well updated with the current trend and pattern of JEE Mains exam. Taking Mock Test and having a real time analysis have been found to be quite useful and students tend to learn from the



mistakes and hence avoid repeating them on the D-Day.

**Systemised revision plan:** Make a systematic plan for revision and follow it strictly in order to test your topic wise concept clarity. Systematic approach towards proper revision plan will help students get successful.

**Focus on managing time:** Plan your study by keeping in mind the available time left before exams. Make a habit of noting main points while studying that will help you later in quick revisions. Right strategy along with time management plays a pivotal role in deciding the exam results. So, practice enough to be quick to adapt to the level of the paper and act promptly.

**Follow a reputed source:** Start the preparations with NCERT books, since they form the basis for both the exams having a good conceptual base and simple to understand. Follow question banks from reputed source and solve them in a reputed manner

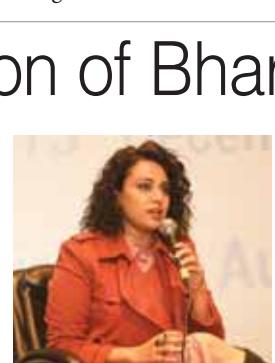
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The writer is Academics Director, Vidyamandir Classes

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**



rural issues and ideas for how the urban youth gets engaged in today's world.

At the Siri Fort Auditorium II, New Delhi, Swara shared her experiences from rural India and why it is important for young people today to engage with rural and marginalised communities.

The Bharat Youth Dialogues brings young people to the centre of creating a just and more equitable society.

Swara Bhaskar said, "When I landed in Kesla, I realized that the place where you are staying has got nothing to do with your capability. My greatest learning was awareness and empowerment. Your habitation has nothing to do with it: we are just taught to assume that we are staying in a city, so somehow are more capable than the person staying in rural parts of the country."

In India 2021, it is the young who are at the forefront of voicing issues, whether it's about climate change, social inequalities or mental health issues. The first edition of Bharat Youth Dialogues brought critically acclaimed actor Swara Bhaskar, who is deeply passionate about social issues that matter to India to a conversation that highlights

with subjects and concept clarification and keep them well updated with the current trend and pattern of JEE Mains exam. Taking Mock Test and having a real time analysis have been found to be quite useful and students tend to learn from the

**PNS ■ AMARAVATI**

# What NMC Gazette means

The National Medical Commission recently issued a notification regarding the new regulation for students wanting to study medicine abroad. This has left many confused on whether to pursue medical from foreign universities. VISHU TRIPATHI decodes the gazette

**E**very year thousands of medical students fly to another country to study MBBS. The main reason behind choosing a study destination is fee affordability and international working opportunities. After the notification issued by the National Medical Commission on November 18, 2021, many students are in confusion regarding this new regulation.

Studying MBBS abroad is like a boon to medical students who struggle to get MBBS admission in India. The seats are limited and not all students manage to get medical seats in the colleges in the country. That's why they choose to study MBBS outside the country. After new rules for foreign medical graduates, they are worried about their future.

#### KEY POINTS

In the 40-plus pages of the National Medical Commission Regulation, several rules are covered for abroad-going medical students. It includes the mandatory duration of MBBS or equivalent course, internship information, NExT Exam update, and other important rules that students will follow.

■ **54 Months Duration**  
Mandatory Slab: According to the NMC gazette 2021, only those

MBBS degrees will be valid in India that have 54 months course duration. Many foreign medical universities of Russia, Ukraine, China, and other nations fall under this criteria. On the other hand, the Philippines offers an MD course (equivalent to MBBS programme), and the course is 48 months.

■ **12 Months Mandatory Internship:** It is compulsory that students have to do a 12 months mandatory internship in India. It will help students to work according to the Indian healthcare system.

■ **English Medium Study:** MBBS degree of those medical universities will be valid in India that offer MBBS courses in English.

■ **National Exit Test:** It is compulsory for medical graduates. It was proposed that National Exit Test will be the common exit test for final year MBBS students. Now, after this notification, every medical student has to pass this test. It is the only condition to validate their medical degree in India. Also, after this NExT exam, they will get a medical practice degree.

■ **Not applicable to old students:** According to the NMC regulation, this gazette and its rule will apply to those students who will get admission after 18 November 2021. It means this rule won't affect those students who are already



**Before students apply for MBBS programme abroad it is advisable that they carefully read the technicalities of the new NMC gazette. Many videos are being uploaded on the internet with twisted facts and technicalities. It is better to do own homework to be safe**

studying in foreign medical universities. So, those students can go with their regular duration and can practice in India, when they will pass the medical licensing exam.

#### AFFECTED COUNTRIES

The most affected country by this law is the Philippines. Medical universities of the country offer 48 months MD courses and according to this law, their medical degree won't be valid. Earlier, students were allowed to pursue MD after completing their pre-medicine.

Now, students who had plans to study MBBS in the Philippines are eager to know the update regarding this. The Indian Embassy of Manila has made it clear that BS (the pre-med course) is not part of the MBBS programme.

Apart from this, Kyrgyzstan is another country that is affected by this rule but the Indian Embassy made clear that the MBBS degree of Kyrgyzstan is valid.

#### WHAT NEXT?

The big question is what should be the best decision for an Indian medical student after this rule. It is expected that small economy countries like the Philippines and other nations will increase their course duration. Most of the universities are autonomous so they

are allowed to extend the duration of the MD course.

Once they fall in the 54 months category then their degree will be valid in India. The Indian Embassy of Manila has got so many queries regarding this and they sent all the queries to the National Medical Commission for further updates.

On the other hand, several medical organisations including FMAI have opposed this rule. According to them, these rules are a road blocker for middle-class medical students. Altogether, it may be possible that the National Medical Commission will come up with an update regarding this, or will offer a mid-way to validate medical degrees.

#### ADVICE TO STUDENTS

Experienced education advisors of this field are worried due to this rule. There is a lot more confusion regarding this. Many videos are being uploaded on the Internet with twisting the facts and technicalities of the new NMC gazette. It is advised that before choosing any country to study MBBS abroad, you should study the gazette. It will help you to get a clear picture of this.

The writer is CEO & Founder, Affinity Education

# 'Future to turn into Artificial Intelligence'

There are plethora of real-world applications of AI systems today offering many opportunities in this field, says DR ABHILASHA GAUR

**A**rtificial intelligence leverages the computers and machines to mimic the problem-solving and decision-making capabilities of the human mind. There are numerous, real-world applications of AI systems today. Below are some of the most common examples:

**Speech recognition:** It is also known as automatic speech recognition (ASR), computer speech recognition, or speech-to-text, and it is a capability which uses natural language processing (NLP) to process human speech into a written format. Many mobile devices incorporate speech recognition into their systems to conduct voice search. This technology is evaluated on its accuracy rate—word error rate and speed. A number of factors can impact word error rate like pronunciation, accent, pitch, volume, and background noise.

**Customer service:** Online virtual agents are replacing human agents along the customer journey. They answer frequently asked questions like shipping, or provide personalised advice, cross-selling products or suggesting sizes for users, changing the way we think about customer engagement across websites and social media platforms.

The AI takes data and uses it to identify the best representative available to address the customer's needs. It then provides the rep with necessary background information before they interact with the customer. This saves time, manpower and helps customer address issues efficiently.

**Computer vision:** This AI technology enables computers and systems to derive meaningful information from digital images, videos and other visual inputs, and based on those inputs, it can take action. This ability to provide recommendations distinguishes it from image recognition tasks. Powered by convolutional neural networks, computer vision has applications within photo tagging in social media, radiology imaging in healthcare, and self-driving cars within the automotive industry. Computer vision needs lots of data. It runs analyses of data over and over until it discerns distinctions and ultimately recognises images. Real-world applications demonstrate how important computer vision is to endeavours in



Dr. Abhilasha Gaur  
COO, Electronic Sector Skill Council of India

business, entertainment, transportation, healthcare and everyday life.

**AI optimised hardware:** The upcoming AI-devices of the digital world are focused on being structured and are used to execute AI-oriented tasks specifically. They have improved graphics and central processing units that accelerated the next generation of application advancements. One avenue is to increase the performance and throughput of the systems to speed up training and to enable the training of more complex models. Graphics Processing Units are playing an important role to accelerate training and inference because of their high degree of parallelism and because they can be optimised for neural network operations.

**AI in agriculture:** Automation in agriculture is an emerging subject across the world. In recent time, Artificial Intelligence has been seeing a lot of direct application in farming. AI-powered solutions will not only enable farmers to do more with less, it will also improve quality and ensure faster go-to-market for crops. The AI is being used by the agriculture industry to help produce healthier crops, control pests, monitor soil and growing conditions, organise data for farmers, reduce effort, and improve a wide range of agriculture-related operations.

**N**owadays, the debate on the quality of data is ongoing. Recently, considerable disparities in the National Crime Records Bureau and the Transport and Research Wing records have been found. Not only this rather there has also been a significant anomaly in the data of the COVID epidemic. Our Government is proving to be sloppy in terms of accurate data generation and dissemination.

As a result, we cannot take the necessary steps on time. For example, the magnitude of the second wave of COVID in the country could have been controlled with accurate data. At the same

time, we could have organised our health system for better medical facilities for the COVID patients.

Today, the damage to life, property, and infrastructure is being effectively prevented by the advanced information of hurricanes and earthquakes. In addition, data enables timely details on the lack of housing or the need for supplementary nutrition support to old-aged people. Better data management can also curb corruption to a great extent.

Nations that are growing and moving on a large scale need an automatic and effective mechanism for policymaking. Policymaking in our country is often done through surveys

and consultations, but there is a big gap between data collection and policymaking due to our country's large population and diversity. For example, the fourth National Family Health Survey was published in 2015-16 after ten years. Even our last census was conducted in 2011, which has already been ten years old. Similarly, there is a significant gap in the socio-economic caste census. As a result, we make rules for the old situation, which is not suitable for

the present. There are challenges of better data management that can be effectively fixed by technology. It must be used in a planned manner for accurate data from the ground level. Our government is also striving for better data management and has taken several necessary steps.

The National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy 2012 has been an important step that has facilitated the

dissemination of non-sensitive data for scientific, economic, and social development programs and research and development activities.

In 2012 itself, data.gov.in domain was booked to provide a central repository of information to regular users. It has now become one of the pillars of the digital India mission. Past five-year plans have emphasized the need for continuous and accurate data collection procedures for various sectors like health, natural disasters, agriculture and social development.

Planned and effective use of technology is required to make the administration more

transparent. Data collection and collection should be done in digital format. The central repository of data should be enhanced and modernised. The data should be stored effectively and in a granular order to access data effectively. Integrated storage should be done by exchanging various departments and ministries. We need to focus on preparing the necessary human resources by promoting vital skill development programs. We are currently in the early stages of effective data management and have to go a long way ahead to effectively use data for better governance.

The writer is Prabhat Sinha is an IT Expert

**T**he University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, UK, invites applications for the Faculty of Science Masters Scholarship from international students 2022-23.

Scholarships of between £4,000-£5,000 are available to new international students joining a postgraduate taught masters degree. Scholarships will be awarded on a competitive basis to candidates who demonstrate excellent academic performance (current and/or previously) and any relevant extra-curricular or professional experience.

Scholarships will be awarded on a rolling basis. Awards may be allocated early in the application cycle and so making an early application for admission is advised.

**Eligibility:** Be a new, international fee-paying student holding an offer of admission for a full-time, taught masters degree in the Faculty of Science for the 2022/2023 academic year.

Be self-funded. Students who receive full scholarships, for example from a government office or embassy, will not be eligible.

For more information: <https://www.strath.ac.uk/study-with-us/scholarships/sciencescholarships/facultyofsciencemasters-scholar/>

**Application deadline:** The last date to apply for the scholarship is May 15, 2022.

ship is July 31, 2022.

**The Australian National University invites applications — up to 170 awards** — for students for session 2022-2023.

**Eligibility:** Must have completed their International Baccalaureate to be eligible for the specific IB scholarships category. Candidates must have received an offer of admission for a programme (UG & PG) to commence in Semester 1 2022 (excluding Graduate Certificates)

Is an international student, either currently residing inside or outside Australia.

**Supporting documents:** Prepare your academic records and proof of English language competency, provide official ID like birth certificate, citizenship documents, and passport.

**Admission requirements:** Whether you're applying for an undergraduate or graduate, coursework or research program, you must meet the entire entry requirement before beginning the application.

**Language requirement:** Students must provide evidence that their English language ability meets the minimum requirements for admission.

**How to apply:** There is no application as students are automatically considered based on meeting the eligibility criteria. Before starting the application, applicants need to take admission at ANU for a degree course.

**Application deadline:** The last date to apply for the scholarship is May 15, 2022.

#### MOBILE APP DEVELOPMENT AT ZSS TECHNOLOGIES

Location: Work From Home  
Stipend: ₹20,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/79ac63](http://internshala.com/i/79ac63)  
Deadline: December 29, 2021

#### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT (SALES) AT NOON ACADEMY

Location: Work From Home  
Stipend: ₹15,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/0d939a](http://internshala.com/i/0d939a)  
Deadline: December 29, 2021

#### HR AT GARNICHE

Location: Work From Home  
Stipend: ₹10,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/e3318a](http://internshala.com/i/e3318a)  
Deadline: January 19, 2022

#### DIGITAL MARKETING AT CALIFORNIA MEDICAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Location: Lucknow  
Stipend: ₹20,000-₹30,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/fcfdf39](http://internshala.com/i/fcfdf39)  
Deadline: December 29, 2021

#### WEB DEVELOPMENT AT GOPIK

Location: Bhubaneswar  
Stipend: ₹10,000-₹20,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/10028e](http://internshala.com/i/10028e)  
Deadline: December 29, 2021

#### ABA THERAPY AT COGNITIVE

Location: Ranchi, Patna  
Stipend: ₹10,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/1b8b21](http://internshala.com/i/1b8b21)  
Deadline: December 29, 2021

#### REACTJS AT IAPPUNES

Location: Chandigarh, Kharar, Mohali  
Stipend: ₹7,000-₹12,000 per month  
Link: [internshala.com/i/786fed](http://internshala.com/i/786fed)  
Deadline: December 29, 2021

## MIND IT

#### ONLINE PLATFORMS HELP IN MATH QUERIES

**A**head of Mathematics Day, Brainly delved into student's relationship with maths in the COVID-induced new normal. Here are the key highlights from the survey:

With a subject as tricky as mathematics, a near-immediate shut down of brick-and-mortar schools and a shift to remote learning can understandably baffle students.

According to latest survey, 67 per cent of the students find it tough

to solve maths problems without their teacher's support. Fortunately, with technologically advanced online learning tools, students have been able to cope with the rapid evolution in the

education paradigm.

In fact, three in four students (76 per cent) mentioned that they enjoy studying maths, indicating their comfort level with the current learning paradigm.

The online-assisted learning model has played a vital role in helping students keep up with their studies during the pandemic and continues to supplement offline lessons even as schools reopen.

Learning maths is much easier for students with innovative and interactive online learning platforms, as underscored by the Brainly survey. According to the findings, 74 per cent of students found platforms such as Brainly helpful in resolving their maths-related queries.

#### ADDRESSING GAP IN NEWAGE TECHNOLOGIES

**W**ith a focus on driving industry-specific learning for industry 4.0 and enhancing student skillset and employability, Rajkot-based Marwadi University, and Intel, has set up an Intel Intelligence System Lab at the campus. It's a multidisciplinary lab for Computer,

Information Technology, Information and Communication Technology, and Electrical engineering streams.

#### IIT DELHI, IIIT-DELHI JOIN HANDS

**T**he IIT Delhi and Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology (IIIT-Delhi) had signed an MoU to establish a collaborative platform for mutual benefit.

The aim is to initiate wide-ranging partnerships in

academics, research, product and process development and human resource development with socio-economic impact.

The MoU is expected to act as a catalyst for cross-functional research leading to significant outcomes of national interest.

#### WORKSHOP TO PROMOTE CAREERS IN SCIENCE & TECH

**T**he IIT Roorkee has organised a two days' workshop to motivate school children to pursue careers in the field of science and technology.

The workshop is organised under the aegis of Vigyan Pradarshani by the Department of Biosciences and Biomedical Engineering, IIT Roorkee to commemorate 75th year of Independence.

A total of 50 students of Motilal Nehru School of Sports, Rai, Haryana,

along with two teachers have participated in the workshop. The workshop started with welcome address by the head Dept of Biosciences and Bioengineering followed by lectures of faculties and the interaction of the children with IIT students at the campus.

# 2 ASHES TESTS, 2 LOSSES: Not much is going right for Eng



PTI ■ ADELAIDE

After lopsided losses in the first two Ashes tests, England captain Joe Root says he's frustrated by three components of his team's per-

formance. Unfortunately for Root, they're the three main ones in the game — batting, bowling and fielding.

"You have to be able to put the ball in the right areas for long enough," Root said after England's

275-run loss to Australia in Adelaide on Monday.

"You have to be able to score big runs, and if there's chances, you have to take them."

The Adelaide loss followed a nine-wicket defeat in the opening match in Brisbane. There, England only scored 147 in its first innings and Australia notched 425, leaving the visitors 278 runs in arrears going into their second innings.

"The frustration within our dressing room is that we have missed out or we're not quite executing those basic things well enough for the second game in a row," Root said. "And we need to respond very quickly."

The next match begins Sunday, the traditional Boxing Day test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, followed by matches in Sydney and Hobart in January. With Australia holding the Ashes, the visitors now need to win all three to regain the urn.

That won't happen if their fielding doesn't improve.

In the first two tests, England's total of dropped catches was in double figures and they've taken two wickets from no-balls.

Root said one positive was England's resistance on the final day, led by Jos Buttler.

Buttler got through 207 balls before backing into his stumps and was out for 26. Chris Woakes

To heat up the bowling, England could bring back rested paceman Mark Wood for Melbourne.

also had a good innings and scored 44.

Only one team has ever come from 2-0 down to win an Ashes series: Don Bradman's Australians in 1936-37.

Root is undeterred, despite England not having won a match in Australia since 2010-11, when it won the series 3-1. In two series since before this one, it's been 5-0 and 4-0 with a draw for the home side.

"We have to absolutely believe," Root said. "And have that same attitude that we went out today with. Because if we do that, I'm convinced we have got we need to win test matches out here."

Buttler's role is one of several that selectors will discuss before the MCG test. He is expected to retain his spot in England's team, but could lose the wicketkeeping role to Jonny Bairstow after Buttler dropped three catches in Adelaide.

Ollie Pope (5 and 4 in Adelaide) is also under pressure to keep his spot at No. 6, potentially creating room for Bairstow to come in.

Haseeb Hameed (6 and 0 in Adelaide) and Rory Burns are under threat at the top of the order, although Burns fought hard on the fourth night in Adelaide to put up 34 after scoring just 4 in England's first innings.

To heat up the bowling, England could bring back rested paceman Mark Wood for Melbourne.

## If you can't influence bowlers, what are you doing on field? Ponting questions Root's leadership

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting has slammed Joe Root for criticising England bowlers after his side's second consecutive defeat in the ongoing Ashes series, saying as the leader it is his responsibility to ensure the strategy is followed.

Ponting, who led Australia to two World Cup titles, said the onus is on Root to influence his bowlers.

"I nearly fell off my seat when I heard that. Whose job is it then to make them change? Why are you captain then?" Ponting was quoted as saying by 'Cricket.Com.Au'.

"If you can't influence your bowlers on what length to bowl, what are you doing on the field?"



Ponting, who led Australia to two World Cup titles, said the onus is on Root to influence his bowlers.

"Joe Root can come back and say whatever he likes but if you're captain, you've got to be able to sense when your bowlers aren't bowling where you want them to."

"And if they're not going to listen, you take them off, simple as that. Give someone else a chance that is going to do it for you. Or you have a really

strong conversation with them on the field to tell them what you need."

"That's what captaincy is all about," Ponting said.

Root had said England were making the same mistakes they did during their 0-4 series defeat in 2017-18. To which Ponting said as skipper one needs to be firm with the bowlers if they are not executing the captain's plan.

"Regardless of whether they have taken (more than) 1150 wickets between them - well, too bad."

"I need you to bowl differently here to how you bowl in England."

I need you to bowl differently to how you bowled four years ago, and if you're not willing to do it then I'll find someone that can - that should have been the conversation five overs into day one."

"If they had that (conversation) maybe the result could

have been different."

Ponting felt the only time England bowled fuller lengths was on day four when Ben Stokes was leading in the absence of Root, who was off the field due to a groin injury.

"The interesting thing for me is the only time they bowled full in the game was when Joe Root wasn't on the ground," he said.

"The start of day four when they had a meeting on the ground before play started, Ben Stokes took over the captaincy, and that was the only time in the game they pitched the ball up."

Ponting feels that there will be "some real selection drama" in the tourists' camp ahead of the Boxing Day Test.

"Every message that they've sent so far has seemed like a confused one. Even their bowling coach last night said that in hindsight 'we (might have) picked the wrong team'."

## Sports ministry released ₹6,801.30 crore under various sports development schemes in last 5 years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sports Minister Anurag Thakur on Tuesday said his ministry has released a sum of Rs 6,801.30 crore under various sports development schemes in the last five years.

Thakur, who took over from Kiren Rijiju as the Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports earlier this year, said that Rs 7,072.28 was allocated to the ministry.

"During the last five years, a sum of Rs 7,072.28 crore was allocated and a sum of Rs 6,801.30 crore was released under the various sports development schemes of this Ministry," Thakur informed in a written reply in Lok Sabha.

Sports is a state subject and thus the



Governments with the Centre supplementing their efforts.

However, the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports runs the following schemes for the development of sports in the country, including at the village level: (i) Kridh India Scheme; (ii) Assistance to National Sports Federations; (iii) Special Awards to Winners in International Sports Events and their Coaches; (iv) National Sports Awards; (v) Pension to Meritorious Sportspersons; (vi) Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Sports Welfare Fund; (vii) National Sports Development Fund; and (viii) Running Sports Training Centres through Sports Authority of India (SAI).

Funds are allocated scheme-wise, not State/UT-wise.

## India rises one place to 3rd in global doping list published by WADA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India continued to be among the top-ranked doping nations in the world as it was placed third in the anti-doping rule violations in 2019.

In the latest report published by the World Anti-Doping Agency, 152 (17 per cent of world total) anti-doping rule violations (ADRVs) were reported in India in 2019, with the maximum dope offenders coming from bodybuilding (57).

Among Olympics sports, weightlifting leads the way with 25 ADRV, followed by athletics (20) and wrestling (10). Boxing and judo have four ADRV each. Four cricketers were also found to have committed ADRV in 2019.

An ADRV is reported after a final decision has been rendered and a sanction (a reprimand or period of ineligibility) imposed against the athlete following the conclusion of disciplinary proceedings. A lightweight in global sport, India is only behind Russia (167) and Italy (157), while Brazil (78) is at fourth and Iran (70) fifth. Russia was banned from fielding its national team in Tokyo Olympics for not complying with international anti-doping rules.

The country has gained one place from the previous report of 2018 while it had gone down to seventh in the 2017, with 57 ADRV.

Haryana Steelers will take on Patna Pirates in their first match of the Pro Kabaddi League Season 8 on 23 December 2021.

The Haryana Steelers are all in readiness to begin their Pro Kabaddi League campaign as they will go up against Patna Pirates on Thursday.

The Pro Kabaddi, which is returning after two years, will be held in a secure bubble at the Sheraton Grand in Bengaluru.

## We are excited and fully prepared for Pro Kabaddi Season 8

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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## Srikanth will need to curb his errors to be more consistent in busy 2022, says Gopichand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chief national badminton coach Pullela Gopichand has lauded Kidambi Srikanth for winning historic silver medal at the world championships but said he will need to cut down on his errors in order to remain consistent through a busy 2022.

The 28-year-old from Guntur, a former world number one, on Sunday became the first Indian man to claim a silver medal at the prestigious tournament.

"Srikanth's game got sharper and sharper as the tournament went by. He was lacking in confidence when he started playing this year but some performances against players such as Lee Zii Jia and Kento Momota gave him some confidence," Gopichand told PTI.

"He got his form in time but he will need to curb his errors to be more consistent as he prepares for the big year ahead where there will be big ticket events like the Commonwealth Games, Asian Games."

The Andhra Pradesh-born shuttler managed to claim the coveted Commonwealth Games gold at Gold Coast in 2018 and also remained world



number one for a week in April, but then came the slide.

He had a stellar run in 2017, securing four super series titles in five finals. It was a rare feat achieved only by the likes of Lee Chong Wei, Lin Dan and Chen Long in a calendar year.

However, the year ended with Srikanth suffering a knee injury during the French Open in November, and he aggravated it at the national championships.

The Andhra Pradesh-born shuttler managed to claim the coveted Commonwealth Games gold at Gold Coast in 2018 and also remained world

number one for a week in April, but then came the slide.

The knee injury and other niggles, especially related to his ankle, affected his performance and he eventually missed out on the Tokyo Olympics after three qualifiers were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"With back to back tournaments, sometimes it becomes difficult for a player to recover from an injury."

Srikanth was troubled by his injuries as he rushed himself back from it with the Olympic qualification at stake," Gopichand, the 2001 All England champion, said.

## India rises one place to 3rd in global doping list published by WADA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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## Himachal stun UP by five wickets, storm into semifinals

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Himachal Pradesh rode on a stroke-filled 99 by Prashant Chopra as they stunned Uttar Pradesh by five wickets to storm into the semi-finals of the Vijay Hazare Trophy here on Tuesday.

First, despite a 76 by Rinku Singh, UP could only manage 207/9 as the Himachal bowlers, led by pacer Vinay Galetiya (3/19), ripped apart the opposition line-up.

Then, Chopra's sublime knock, and a quick-fire 58 by Nikhil Gangta saw Himachal chase down the total with 27 balls to spare.

Put into bat at the Sawai Mansingh stadium, UP were reeling at 39/4 as Galetiya (3/19) wreaked havoc on their top-order.

Pacer Siddharth Sharma got the first breakthrough when he trapped

opener Abhishek Goswami (17) in the 8th over.

Hamirpur-born Galetiya pegged back UP further by removing Aryan Juyal (9) and skipper Karan Sharma (0) in the 9th over. It became 39/4 as Galetiya dismissed Sameer Rizvi (5).

Akshdeep Nath (32) and Rinku, who came in at number six, resurrected the innings with a 64-wicket stand.

But when it looked like the duo would score big, Siddharth Sharma (2/27) dismissed Nath, as UP lost half their side with just 103 runs on the board.

Rinku hit six boundaries in his 102-ball knock, and along with Bhuvneshwar (46 off 52 balls), added 75 runs for the sixth wicket to give their bowlers something to defend.

Chasing 208, Himachal openers

Shubham Arora (19) and Chopra gave the side a sedate start and added 54 runs for the first wicket in 17.2 overs.

With no scoreboard pressure, the two openers cantered towards the target, hitting the odd boundaries.

TN crushes Karnataka to reach Vijay Hazare Trophy semi-finals

Tamil Nadu came up with a superb all-round performance to crush Karnataka by 151 runs to progress to the semifinals of the Vijay Hazare Trophy domestic 50-over tournament here on Tuesday.

Sent in to bat by Karnataka captain Manish Pandey, Tamil Nadu first amassed 354 for eight in 50 overs and then dismissed the opposition for 203 inside 40 overs for a massive victory with medium-pacer R Silambarasan picking up four wicks-

ets to hasten the slide.

Opening batter N Jagadeesan hammered 102 (101 balls, 9x4s, 1x6) and left-arm spinner R Sai

Kishore, pushed up the order to go after the bowling, smacked 61 (71 balls, 4x4s, 3x6s) before the burly M Shahrkh Khan bludgeoned an