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SUFISM CAN HELP
COMBAT TERRORISM

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HIGH HATE CRIME IN US:
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NOV WPI INFLATION HITS
21-MONTH LOW OF 5.85%

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY DECEMBER 15, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

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MESSI, ARGENTINA
BEAT CROATIA 3-0
TO REACH FINAL
11 SPORT

Denied debate on Tawang clashes, Opp walks out

‘Not satisfied with Govt’s statement on India-China border issue’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

A united Opposition seems determined to take on the Modi Government on the India-China border issue. Not satisfied with the Government’s Tuesday’s statement in Parliament, the Opposition members staged walkouts in both the Houses on Wednesday after accusing the Government of not allowing a discussion on the sensitive issue.

After the presiding officers of both the Houses refused to grant them permission for debate on the issue, the Opposition MPs led by Congress chief and Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha M Mallikarjun Kharge staged a walkout in the Upper House.

In the Lok Sabha, former Congress chief and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi led the walkout by Congress and Trinamool Congress MPs.

Kharge said the Opposition parties wanted a debate to get full information on the Chinese aggression and encroachment on Indian territory and that they stand by the Army and the country.

Members of Bharat Tibet Sahyog Manch protest against China's incursion attempt in Tawang, in New Delhi on Wednesday
Ranjia Dimri | Pioneer

Leaders expressed caution that while talking on Chinese transgressions issue there should not be any utterances that could lower the morale of the Armed forces.

Besides this, the leaders discussed important issues to be raised and formulated their joint future strategy in both Houses of Parliament.

The Opposition leaders would be meeting in Parliament again on Thursday and will further plan on their strategy.

Before the resumption of the days’ session, barring the Trinamool Congress, 17 Opposition leaders met in the chamber of Congress president in Parliament House where they decided to corner the

BJP-led NDA Government on the border disputes and questioned the insensitivity of Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to debate, discuss or even have the courtesy to respond to queries of the Opposition members.

All Opposition parties moved adjournment notices in both Houses of Parliament, demanding an urgent discussion on the issue.

Leaders of the Congress, RJD, DMK, CPI, CPI(M), AAP, Samajwadi Party, JD(U), NCP, Shiv Sena, Kerala Congress, National Conference, AIUDF, RLD, MDMK, VCK and KCM were present in the meeting.

Party sources said TMC’s Sudeep Bandyopadhyay was supposed to go for the

Opposition meeting, but could not attend due to his indisposition. TMC leaders had conveyed to other Opposition leaders that they will be on board on the decision taken at the Opposition meeting.

The Oppositions hardened its stand day after Defence Minister Rajnath Singh told Parliament that Chinese troops tried to “unilaterally” change the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Yangtse area of Arunachal Pradesh’s Tawang sector last week but the Indian Army compelled them to retreat by its “firm and resolute” response. Singh said there were “no fatalities” or serious injuries to the Indian soldiers and that the clash led to injuries to a few personnel on both sides.

The Opposition leaders were, however, not allowed to seek any clarifications from the Minister on the issue and hence they were upset for not allowing them an opportunity to seek clarifications even as the chairman said the issue was sensitive.

When the House resumed for the day amidst protests by Opposition in Rajya Sabha, Deputy Chairman Harivansh, said there was no notice before the Chair and a debate cannot be allowed on the issue hence forcing Opposition MPs to shout slogans and then a walk-out.

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Hooch kills 21 in ‘dry’ Bihar, BJP slams Nitish liquor rule

Uproar in House as BJP targets Govt over sale of illicit liquor, Nitish hits back

PATNA/NEW DELHI ■
PNS/AGENCIES

Hooch tragedy rocked Bihar again claiming at least 20 lives in Saran district and triggering a massive uproar in the State Assembly where a beligerent Opposition BJP targeted an equally aggressive Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

According to PTI, the tragedy took 21 lives. The police said some people consumed liquor till late on Tuesday at a local joint, and fell ill after returning home. According to reports, some of the victims complained of uneasiness, nausea, breathlessness, stomach pain and blurry vision.

While the BJP has sought to link the tragedy to failure of liquor ban policy in Bihar, the ruling JD(U) has claimed that even before the prohibition policy was introduced in Bihar in 2016, such incidents took place at regular intervals.

According to Santosh Kumar, the superintendent of police of Saran district, three persons each died in Isuapur and Mashrak police station areas. “We have sent the six bodies for post mortem. The report will ascertain the cause of death. Local villagers claim

Family members and relatives of people, who died after consuming allegedly spurious liquor mourn near their mortal remains, at Ishuapur police station area in Saran district on Wednesday
PTI

that the victims had consumed liquor,” he told PTI over phone.

“Six more persons who had fallen ill are undergoing treatment at hospitals. We are trying to record their statements,” he added.

Sale and consumption of alcohol was completely banned in Bihar by the Nitish Government in April, 2016, though its implementation has been patchy.

BJP MLAs created a ruckus inside the Assembly, where many of them entered the well raising slogans accusing the Government of failure to stop the sale of illicit liquor and demanding compensation to family members of those who lost their lives in Saran.

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Reconsider prohibition policy: Opp to Nitish

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bihar Hooch tragedy in Bihar triggered a political slugfest on Wednesday with BJP leaders, including Union Minister Giriraj Singh, on Wednesday asking Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to reconsider prohibition policy in the State, claiming that it has failed with illegal sale of spurious liquor causing frequent deaths.

The hooch tragedy also echoed in the Lok Sabha with members from the State

expressing concern over deaths due to illicit liquor.

Nitish on Wednesday lost his cool in the State Assembly when the BJP member questioned him on the prohibition and sought its reconsideration. Following this he got agitated saying that “all of you were earlier in favour of the prohibition. What has happened now?”

Bihar imposed complete prohibition in the State in April 2016, drawing its inspiration from Article 47.

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Normalcy at IGIA by next 7-10 days: Min

Entry gates unclogged; counters jam-packed; manpower increased

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The passenger movement at entry gates of Terminal 3 of Delhi’s Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport eased on Wednesday, but inside counters remained choc a bloc with passengers complaining of waiting at the airport for nearly 4 hours to catch their flights.

Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said the situation at the airport is expected to be normal by next 7-10 days. “All agencies have swung into action in the last 24-36 hours to mitigate congestion at all major airports.

Congestion at entry points and check-in counters at T3 has eased. Four additional X-ray machines have been added at the Security Hold Area; display boards showing wait time have come up. Deployment of CISF manpower has already kick-started, and will progressively increase in the next few days,” Scindia said.

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) has prepared a pool of more than 100 personnel to man additional security counters expected to be handed over to it for easing the ongoing congestion in Delhi and Mumbai. Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL), however, in a tweet, “Swift passenger movement at the security check area at Terminal 3, with an average waiting time of 7-8 minutes.”

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Girl attacked with acid on way to school in Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Two bike-borne youths carried out an acid attack on a 17-year-old schoolgirl in Dwarka in Delhi on Wednesday.

According to the police, the Class XII student was attacked at Verma Chowk, Rama Park (area of Police Station Mohan Garden), when she was on her way to the school, along with her sisters, on Tuesday morning.

Footage retrieved from a CCTV camera installed at the crime spot shows a pillion rider throwing acid at the girl. The minor girl has suffered 7 per cent to 8 per cent facial burns and her eyes have also been affected.

The police have arrested three people Sachin Arora, 20,

Harshit Aggarwal, alias Honey, 19, and Virender Singh, alias Sonu, 22.

Sonu works as a generator mechanic, said the police, adding that they procured the acid from e-commerce platform Flipkart.

Special Commissioner of Police Sagar Preet Hooda at a Press conference said accused Sachin was known to the victim and they were on friendly terms till September 2022. They fell out after September after which the accused planned the attack.

“Harshit was driving the motorcycle at the time of incident. In the morning, Virender took the scooter and mobile of Sachin to another location so as to create an alibi and mislead the investigation,” Hooda said. At about 8.45 am, the

police received a call from DDU Hospital under Dwarka district regarding the acid attack.

“Immediately (after the call from DDU Hospital) the police teams rushed to the hospital,” said Hooda.

The girl was later shifted to another hospital where she is under treatment. Waiting outside the burns ward, her father told reporters that her sister was with her at the time.

“My daughter left home at 7.30 am. As soon as she crossed the street, she was attacked. The incident happened within six to seven minutes of her leaving the house,” he said.

Asked whether she was being harassed or stalked, he said she had made no such complaint.

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20 women killed every day for dowry in India

UP, Bihar see half of total dowry deaths

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Twenty women are killed by dowry sharks every day in India. Between 2017 and 2021, a total of 35,493 dowry deaths took place in India as per the Union Home Ministry’s reply to Parliament on Wednesday, citing National Crime Records Bureau data.

Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest number (11,874) dowry deaths during the five years followed by Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Bengal and Rajasthan. UP and Bihar together accounted for nearly half (48 per cent) of the total dowry deaths in the country.

As many as 5,354 women

are killed for dowry in Bihar with above 1,000 deaths every year during 2017-2021. Uttar Pradesh’s average death count is 2,375 per year. Madhya Pradesh witnessed 2,859 dowry deaths in five years, followed by West Bengal 2,389 deaths and Rajasthan 2244 deaths.

As per the written reply given by MoS Home Ajay Kumar Mishra “Teni” to Congress MP KC Venugopal, as many as 1,653 dowry deaths took place in Odisha, followed by Haryana 1,235 deaths. During 2017 to 2021, 998 women were killed in Maharashtra and 934 in Karnataka. Telangana reported 933 dowry deaths during this period while as many as 623 women were killed in Andhra Pradesh.

In Assam, 847 dowry deaths happened during this

period. As many as 336 women were killed in Punjab, followed by Uttarakhand 317 deaths in five years. Delhi witnessed 639 dowry deaths in five years. States like Gujarat, Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Sikkim, Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya, and Manipur reported 0 to 50 cases per year from 2017 to 2021.

The unabated practice of dowry continues despite the anti-dowry law passed way back in 1961. The Dowry Prohibition Act prohibits the practice of accepting and giving dowry. But the law is seen as “toothless” because it provides for imprisonment of up to six months or fine which may extend to ₹5,000, or both. In case of dowry related death, CrPC provides for minimum of seven years of imprisonment and maximum life term.”

Raghuram Rajan joins Rahul’s yatra; BJP, Cong slug it out

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan on Wednesday joined the Congress’ Bharat Jodo Yatra currently traversing in Rajasthan. Sharing a picture of Rahul Gandhi and Rajan, the Congress shared a video on social media asserting that increasing number of people are standing up to unite the country against hatred.

The videos showed Rajan and the former Congress chief having a discussion while marching as the Congress’ yatra resumed from Bhadoti of Sawai Madhopur in the morning. Rajan’s participation, however, invited brickbats from the BJP.

Appointed as RBI Governor during the Congress-led UPA reign, Rajan has been a critic of some aspects of the BJP Government’s policies, including its handling of the economy.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with former RBI governor Raghuram Rajan during the party's Bharat Jodo Yatra in Sawai Madhopur district on Wednesday
PTI

While the BJP targeted Rajan, Congress leaders expressed happiness at the noted economist joining the yatra. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said, “A strong and sound economy is a combination of growth and

welfare. Our vision is to reclaim that India. We are glad that former RBI Governor & leading economist, Raghuram Rajan joined the Bharat Jodo Yatra in our endeavour to build an agenda for the future.”

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‘Besharam Rang’ draws MP HM’s ire: Rectify song or will ban Pathan

PNS ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Home Minister Narottam Mishra on Wednesday objected to actor Deepika Padukone’s costume in a song of Bollywood film “Pathaan” and also frowned upon the colour of the attire of Padukone and lead actor Shah Rukh Khan, calling for its “rectification”.

Mishra said if certain scenes in the song are not “corrected”, the Government will consider what to do about the screening of the movie in Madhya Pradesh.

He said the “green” and “saffron” colours of the attire of the actor (Khan) and the actress (Padukone) need to be “rectified” along with the lyrics of the song and also the title of the film.

“I feel the title of the song ‘Besharam Rang’ is also objectionable in its sense,” he told reporters in Indore.

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Messi evokes Maradona comparisons on final eve

AP ■ DOHA

The blue-and-white wall of Argentina fans launched into another rendition of their World Cup anthem as fulltime approached at Lusail Stadium. “Maradona,” they sang, “is cheering Lionel on” from heaven. The parallels between the two all-time greats of Argentine soccer, Diego Maradona and Lionel Messi, are becoming ever more striking in Qatar.

Just like the 1986 World Cup seemed to be a highlight reel for Maradona, Messi has made his mark on this tournament with a string of spectacular goals and assists, carrying Argentina’s class of 2022 into the final.

There have always been echoes of Maradona in Messi – his size, his dribbling skills, his quick feet, his wand of a left foot.

Add in the leadership and fighting qualities he has shown

A flag featuring Lionel Messi, left, and the late soccer great Maradona hangs amid Argentina soccer fans after they watched the team's World Cup semifinal win over Croatia, hosted by Qatar, on a screen set up in the Palermo neighborhood of Buenos Aires, Argentina, on Tuesday
AP

throughout the tournament and it really does feel like Messi is imbued with the spirit of Maradona as he closes in on soccer’s ultimate prize.

“Messi is playing the

Maradona role in the World Cup,” Jorge Valdano, who was in Argentina’s victorious World Cup squad in 1986, said in an interview to TyC Sports channel.

That was clear to see in Messi’s latest stirring performance as Argentina beat Croatia 3-0 on Tuesday to advance to the World Cup final for the sixth time.

And nothing encapsulated his magnificence more than his assist for the third goal, scored by Julian Alvarez.

Receiving the ball on the touchline just inside Croatia’s half, Messi lifted the ball over the challenge of Josko Gvardiol and sprinted down the right flank. Gvardiol chased him, constantly grabbing the jersey of the Argentina captain, and was then bewitched as Messi dropped his shoulder and swiveled the other way to turn and burst into the area. Then came the simple cross with his right foot that Alvarez swept home.

It was another moment of magic in a tournament that has been full of them by Messi.

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JD(U)-RJD merger will be suicidal: Kushwaha

PTI ■ PATNA

The Janata Dal (United) represents the aspirations of the underdogs in Bihar and a merger with current ally Rashtriya Janata Dal will be ‘suicidal’ for the party, a top leader said on Thursday.

JD(U) parliamentary board chief Upendra Kushwaha made the statement rejecting speculations of a merger which have been triggered by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar dropping hints of intending to pass on the mantle to his deputy Tejashwi Yadav, the RJD heir apparent.

“Nitish Kumar may have said something in a philosophical vein. Tejashwi Yadav has rightly refused to dwell on the same, identifying the 2024 Lok Sabha polls as our main agenda”, Kushwaha told reporters here.

“Talks about a merger are in the realm of speculation. It has not been discussed in the



party. And I don’t think the party will ever make such a suicidal move. It will be akin to strangling the aspirations of Bihar’s poor and voiceless, betraying their hopes of social justice”, said Kushwaha, who had returned to the JD(U) nearly two years ago, merging the RLSF which he had floated after breaking away in 2013.

He, however, acknowledged that an attempt was made by Kumar, shortly after the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, to merge not just RJD and JD(U), but also other breakaway groups of the Janata Dal like Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh and JD(S) in

Karnataka.

“But that did not work out”, pointed out Kushwaha, adding “We must not get distracted by pointless things. We must have our attention focused on 2024, like Arjuna’s unwavering gaze on the bird’s eye,” Kushwaha said.

Another senior JD(U) leader who ruled out a merger was Vijay Kumar Chaudhary, the minister for parliamentary affairs, who faced queries about the same from journalists outside the assembly.

“The chief minister has for long been saying that the future belongs to youngsters like Tejashwi. But do not jump to conclusions like a merger. That is not a possibility,” said Chaudhary.

Meanwhile, the BJP, which has been licking its wounds since losing power in August as a result of Kumar’s exit from NDA, sought to fish in troubled waters.

Stampede in Adhikari’s blanket distribution event in Asansol, 3 killed

‘Mismanagement by BJP leaders led to stampede’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

At least three persons died and several others were injured in a blanket distribution programme at Asansol where Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari was on Wednesday scheduled to distribute about 5,000 blankets to people from weaker sections. The top police and administrative brass called the incident unfortunate and blamed the local BJP leadership for mismanaging the programme.

Police said no permission was obtained from the administration. Latest reports said 3 persons had died and 8 were injured in the stampede.

The incident happened at

Ramakrishna danga are in the late afternoon as a large number of people assembled in a narrow place, sources said.

Sources said the incident happened after Adhikari left the area after distributing some blankets.

Later he said, he came to know about the incident an hour after leaving the spot adding he would not blame anyone for the mishap.

Political mudslinging ensued hours after the incident when the Trinamool Congress leadership referred to Adhikari’s December 14 deadline — for the TMC government — wondering whether this was the kind of deadline he referred to.

The BJP leadership hit back suggesting a sabotage theory. “Every thing was fine till almost the end when some people started making a mad rush ... It has to be seen who instigated the mad rush,” a senior Asansol leader said.

Muslim youth changes name to lure Dalit girl, rapes, forces abortions

PNS ■ BHOPAL

A dalit girl was sexually assaulted by a youth who forced her to abort thrice. The accused had introduced himself as Pandit and extorted money several times from the victim, according to a complaint lodged with the AJK police.

The accused identified as Shaan Pandit, alias Faizal Syed Abbas, had made friends with the victim by introducing himself as a Pandit (Brahmin). After this, took her to the hotel and raped her. The accused also made videos, exploited her for three years by threatening to upload videos on social media. He forced abortion three times.

According to the victim, the accused also pressurised her to change her religion. He used to take her for a walk wearing a burqa and when the accused raped her for the first

time, she was 16 years old.

The accused had also got a fake Aadhaar made in the name of Shaan. However, the Ajak police station has not registered a case under the Freedom of Religion Act. In this case, it has been registered under the sections of rape, threats, SC-ST Act and assault. Police have arrested the accused.

He threatened that if she reveals anything then he would show this video to her family members and upload it on social media.

Accused Faizal Syed Abbas had also got a fake Aadhaar made in the name of Shaan Pandit. Meanwhile, she became pregnant and abortion was done by Dr M Srivastava. After that, abortion was done twice by giving medicines himself.

The victim told that the parents and brother of Faizal Syed Abbas were also aware of the abortion.

Indian lecturer wins race discrimination case against UK university

London: An Indian lecturer has won a race discrimination case against the University of Portsmouth after an employment tribunal ruled that she was discriminated against when overlooked for a role as a “visible” member of the university’s ethnic minority staff.

Dr Kajal Sharma, who was appointed to a five-year fixed term secondment as Associate Head for Organisational Studies and Human Resources Management at the university starting January 2016, had the option to reapply to the post.

However, when she was overlooked for that position, she complained under the university’s grievance procedure in November 2020 that she had been discriminated against under the UK’s Equality Act 2010.

“The claimant (Sharma) was a visible member of the black and minority ethnic (BAME) staff. She speaks with a marked Indian accent,” notes the Employment Tribunal judgment dated November 29.

Delhi Govt forms waste mgmt to make city clean

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Wednesday formed a Committee comprising of Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) officials to undertake on-ground studies in various cities to study solid waste management, segregation, and sanitation models.

“The aim of this committee is to learn the best practices from throughout the country and the world and to implement them in the national Capital to improve sanitation within the city and make it garbage free,” a senior AAP leader, Saurabh Bhardwaj stated.

“From next Monday, committee members and MCD officials will go on field visits to study solid waste management, segregation, and sanitation models of various cities. A report will be prepared after these visits to enlist best practices that can be adopted by the MCD,” Bhardwaj said.

“The field visit team will also meet senior officials of the civic body of these cities and take lessons in waste management,” he said.”

Kejriwal Govt has no money to pay salaries to its staffers: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri on Wednesday alleged that salaries to DTC employees, civil defence marshals and home guards have not been released so far as the Arvind Kejriwal Government in Delhi has no money to pay salaries to its employees. Bidhuri said that the Delhi government have gone bankrupt as it is now not even able to pay salaries to the employees. Due to this, the DTC employees have threatened to block the roads from December 17.

“Why the salaries of these employees have not been released. Has the government spent the salary of these employees on any other head? Whether the Delhi government is facing a financial crisis?” he asked.

Comparing this situation with the AAP’s Punjab government, Bidhuri said that the similar condition of the AAP government in Punjab and even there the employees are not getting their salaries on time.

Real estate promoter fined ₹2.50 cr for violating RERA

Gurugram: The Haryana real estate regulatory authority (HREERA), Gurugram, has imposed a penalty of ₹2.50 crore on Brahma City Private Limited, a real estate promoter, for violating the provisions of the real estate (regulation and development) Act of 2016.

“For violating the provisions of the RERA Act the authority imposed a penalty of ₹2.50 crore on the promoter for not applying for registration of its ongoing project within time allowed and allowing sells of plots in violation of the provisions,” said the RERA orders.

While examining the documents during a hearing in November, the authority observed that the promoter sold as many as 219 plots without getting the project registered with the RERA.

The RERA order includes also a warning to the promoter not to violate the provisions of the RERA Act, directing the promoter to deposit the penalty within the timelines.

“The promoter is directed to deposit the penalty within one month from the date of issuance of this notice,” said the order.

‘Graft’ affected AAP prospects in MCD polls: Delhi BJP prez

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The corruption issue raised by the BJP against the Arvind Kejriwal Government had an impact in the MCD polls and the effect will magnify in two to three years when the Lok Sabha and Assembly polls are held, the party’s Delhi unit working president Virendra Sachdeva claimed Wednesday.

“(Prime Minister) Narendra Modi is the leader of everyone in the BJP and the rest of us are just workers,” he said, adding the party’s vote share will be boosted by increasing awareness among people about various benefits Delhi has received from the Central government’s initiatives.

Under Modi’s leadership, BJP leaders and workers will work towards ensuring that the party wins all seven parliamentary constituencies in Delhi and better its 52 per cent vote share of the last Lok Sabha polls in the next general elections, Sachdeva told reporters.

Class...

From Page 1

FIR No. 670/22 was registered under Section 326A (voluntarily causing grievous hurt by use of acid, etc.)/34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) at Mohan Garden police station, Hooda said.

Following the incident, women’s groups and others, including Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, raised questions on the availability of acid in markets despite a ban.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal asked how the accused could have gathered so much courage.

After the incident, National Commission for Women (NCW) and Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) have taken cognizance of the incident and issued notices to the Delhi Police.

“Police teams responded swiftly, and multiple teams of Operations unit, Dwarka district and PS Mohan Garden were constituted under the leadership of DCP/Dwarka M Harsha Vardhan, to identify and nab the accused persons. Based on information developed from witnesses and local sources, accused persons were identified and arrested within 12 hours of the incident,” Hooda said.

Messi...

From Page 1

“Personally,” Messi said, “I can say that I feel very happy in this whole World Cup. I am enjoying it a lot and luckily enough I can help my whole squad to make things happen.”

After the match, an Argentine reporter conducting a post-match interview with Messi broke off from asking questions and told him that, whatever happened in the final, he had succeeded in making a mark on every Argentine’s life and was bringing joy to the country. And for Messi, it is now about more than just winning soccer matches.

“It is no longer only the result but the road we have traveled,” he said. “Before in Argentina, it was valued to win or lose, but I think people now value other things.”

That may be so, but winning the World Cup would cement his legacy, allowing him to join Pele and Maradona in the pantheon of soccer’s greatest players. He might be there already, but being a World Cup winner would end the debate. Messi reiterated that this would most probably be his last dance at a World Cup - he will turn 39 during the 2026 tournament in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

And he’s been doing plenty of dancing, on the field after matches and in the locker room, as Argentina has rebounded with five wins following a shocking loss to Saudi Arabia.

BJP...

From Page 1

BJP’s Foreign Affairs Department head Vijay Chauthaiwale tweeted, “One former RBI Governor became head of Government and country lost ten precious years. Thanks to Modi, India will not repeat that mistake. RRR (Raghuram Rajan) can walk from Delhi to Chicago.”

The party’s IT department head Amit Malviya said, “Rajan, former RBI Governor, a Congress appointee, joining Rahul’s Bharat Jodo Yatra is not a surprise. He fancies himself

‘Besharam Rang’ draws MP HM’s ire: Rectify...

From Page 1

He also targeted Khan, saying while the actor visits the Vaishno Devi shrine but he brings women actors in his films in bikinis.

Mishra’s statement came after the song, “Besharam Rang”, featuring Padukone was released recently.

“In the song ‘Besharam Rang’ which is made with contaminated mentality, the actor and the actress are clad in green and saffron clothes in an objectionable manner,” he said.

Mishra further said Padukone’s costumes in the song are prima facie “highly objectionable” and it is clearly visible that this song was filmed out of a “contaminated mentality”.

“I would request to correct the scenes and her (Padukone’s) costumes (in the song), otherwise whether this film should be allowed in Madhya Pradesh or not will be a question to be considered,” Mishra told reporters at Janapav in Mhow tehsil in Indore district earlier in the day.

The senior BJP leader also targeted Khan over the portrayal of female actors in his movies.

“On the one hand he visits Mata Vaishno Devi shrine, which is a good thing, but on the other, he brings women actors in bikinis in his films. This is not good,” Mishra added.

as the next Manmohan Singh.

Just that his commentary on India’s economy should be discarded with disdain. It is coloured and opportunistic.” To mark 100 days of the Bharat Jodo Yatra, the Congress is also organising a concert in Jaipur on Friday with a live performance from singer Sunidhi Chauhan. AICC General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said the ‘Bharat Jodo Concert’ will be attended by Congress leaders including Rahul, who will also address a Press conference at Dausa on the day. Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu and State Congress MLAs will join the yatra on Friday.

Hooch kills...

From Page 1

The Chief Minister, to whom prohibition is a move inspired by Mahatma Gandhi and hence close to his heart, rose in his chair angrily and stood admonishing the BJP MLAs waving fingers at them.

The din caused Speaker Awadh Bihari Chaudhary to adjourn the proceedings for 15 minutes, within half an hour of commencement at 11 a.m. The unruly scenes continued when the House re-assembled.

BJP members demanded an apology from the Chief Minister, who was then not in his chair, and staged a walkout when the Zero Hour began.

Outside the House, Leader of Opposition Vijay Kumar Sinha told reporters, “The Chief Minister owes his current term in office to us (BJP) but he ditched us and joined those (RJD) he had been accusing of jungle raj. In their company he has picked up their ways, which is evident from the intimidating and insulting language he used against us on the floor of the House”.

Normalcy...

From Page 1

Giving a “smart travel tip”, the tweet by Delhi airport said, “For a smoother and faster security clearance, passenger shall carry only one hand baggage as their cabin luggage”.

However, the passengers were disgruntled about the baggage check problems. “If you have stuff to check in, add an extra hour,” said a passenger, who reached the airport at 1.30 am on Wednesday.

Shweta Bahl wrote on Twitter, “People are literally missing their flights and there is mass panic. Dear Authorities, Request for management and smoothening the process pls”.

Another passenger tweeted that he was waiting for almost three hours in the security line at T3.

Denied debate...

From Page 1

Kharge continued to speak but his mic was switched off. “We are for the country. We are with the Army,” he said.

As soon as the Question Hour ended in the Lok Sabha, Congress’ Leader of the House Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury demanded that a discussion on the “Indo-China border situation be held”, saying late Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had allowed

a discussion in Lok Sabha on the India-China war in 1962. “We have been demanding a discussion on India-China border situation. In 1962, when India-China war took place, Jawaharlal Nehru, in this House, had given 165 MPs chance to speak, and a decision was taken on what to do only after that,” Chowdhury said.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said a decision will be taken on it in the meeting of the Business Advisory Committee while Congress led by Sonia staged a walkout in the lower House and accused the Government of not allowing a discussion on the India-China border issue. Later, members of the TMC,

DMK, NCP and the NC among others walked out of the House during the Question Hour.

Former Union Minister and Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said giving out a “small statement” without any clarification is not democratic. “We have been saying for some time now that this is what Parliament is for, it is a forum for the Government to be accountable to the people of India on a matter like this where for five years Chinese have been nibbling at our LAC, starting with Doklam in 2017 and going on till what happened on December 9 in Tawang and the incidents in Galway, Depsang, Hot Springs and so on,” he said.

ATTACK PROVES HOW EASY IT IS TO GET ACID DESPITE A BAN ON IT IN DELHI

The acid attack on the schoolgirl in broad daylight in the national Capital has evoked strong condemnation and calls for stringent action against the accused. But the dastardly act has yet again proved how easy it is to procure the deadly chemical despite a ban on it in place in Delhi. One can only imagine the scenario across the country. It is no wonder then that from 2018 till August this year as many as 386 cases of acid attacks on women were registered in India. Sadly, only 62 people have been convicted so far. The Centre says that it “issues advisories to all States and Union Territories to review the rules and ensure that retail sales of acids and chemicals are strictly regulated in terms of the Poison Rules so that these are not used in crime. But figures tell a different story and they punch a hole in claims of all regulatory mechanisms being in place.



Delhi Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) **VK SAXENA** on Wednesday sought a detailed report on the west Delhi acid attack incident from the city Police Commissioner, including information on how the acid was procured despite a ban on its sale. “The L-G spoke to the Police Commissioner about

the unfortunate incident of acid attack that took place at Dwarka More today and sought a detailed report into the incident, including as to how the acid used was procured despite a ban in the city,” the Raj Niwas Delhi said in a series of tweets. “L-G has instructed for swift and thorough investigation so as to ensure exemplary punishment to the guilty. The L-G is also in touch with the hospital authorities and has urged them to ensure the best treatment. He has also assured all possible assistance to the victim and her family,” it added.



Delhi Chief Minister **DARVIND KEJRIWAL** on Wednesday demanded stringent punishment for those involved in throwing acid on a minor girl in west Delhi, and asserted that the Government is concerned about every child in the national Capital. In a tweet, Kejriwal said: “This can-

not be tolerated at all. How did the accused gather so much courage? The accused should be given the strictest punishment. The safety of every girl child in Delhi is important to us.”

BJP MP GAUTAM GAMBHIR on Wednesday said



the man who threw acid at a schoolgirl in Delhi’s Dwarka should be publicly executed by authorities. “Words can’t do any justice. We have to instill fear of immeasurable pain in these animals. Boy who threw acid at schoolgirl in Dwarka needs to be publicly executed by authorities,” a seemingly angry cricketer-turned-politician tweeted.

In the wake of an acid attack on Wednesday, Delhi Commission For Women (DCW) Chief **SWATI MALI WAL** said that despite a ban, the chemical is as easy to purchase as veg-



etables. In a video uploaded on Twitter, Maliwal said that the body may approach the court for stricter enforcement of the ban on over-the-counter sale of acid. “We have issued notice to the city police over the incident. The attackers should be arrested and given stringent punishment,” Maliwal said. “DCW has issued several notices, given

several recommendations, but acid sale continues. Just like vegetables are sold, anybody can buy acid and throw it on a girl. Why are Governments sleeping over it? When a girl is attacked with acid, her soul is scarred and her life is ruined,” she said. “We have issued several notices, several summons but still the acid sale continues. We will continue to fight against the sale of acid and will even approach court, if the situation demands so,” she added.

Am Aadmi Party national spokesperson **SAURABH BHARADWAJ** alleged that



after the arrival of Delhi L-G V K Saxena, crimes have gone up in Delhi. “L-G saab, you have Delhi Police with you and crimes are increasing every day. Instead of interfering in the work of the Delhi Government, you should concentrate on your work. After your arrival, crimes are increasing in Delhi,” he said in a tweet in Hindi.

My daughter never complained about any harassment: Father

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The father of the 17-year-old acid attack victim says he has no clue who could have done such a thing and insists his daughter never complained about any harassment. Minutes after she left her west Delhi home to go to school with her sister, the girl was attacked with acid by two masked bike-borne men.

Her sister rushed back home to inform her parents about the incident, while some shopkeepers helped her wash off the acid with milk.

Waiting outside the burns ward of Safdarjung Hospital where she is undergoing treatment, her father told reporters that her sister was with her at the time and they both were going to school.

“My daughter left home at

7.30 AM. As soon as she crossed the street, she was attacked. The incident happened within six to seven minutes of her leaving the house. My youngest daughter had gone along with her and then came running to us,” he told reporters here.

Asked whether she was being harassed or stalked, he said she never had any such complaint.

“She told me that they came and threw the acid and she could not see them. Doctors are examining her. If I had known about any such thing (harassment), I would have taken care and dropped her to school,” he said.

A doctor at the hospital said that the girl has suffered seven to eight per cent facial burns and her eyes have also been affected.

The victim’s father deals in

rubber stamps and is also a property dealer, while her mother is a homemaker. She is the eldest among three siblings, that include a 12-year-old sister and a seven-year-old brother.

Recalling the morning trauma, the girl’s mother said her younger daughter came running to her and asked for her father. “She could not explain and started crying, and asked her father to rush with her,” she said.

The girl’s uncle said the girl and her sister would walk to the Dwarka Mor Metro Station every morning. On Wednesday morning, the sisters were waiting for a friend to accompany them when the horror struck, he said.

“Suddenly, two men on motorcycle came there and threw acid on her. She rushed towards nearby shops for help.

One of the shopkeepers even poured some milk on her face. She was screaming for help and asked her younger sister to call their father,” he said.

After her younger sister rushed home and narrated the incident, their father rushed his daughter to a nearby hospital, from where she was referred to Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital and subsequently to the Safdarjung Hospital.

He learnt about the incident from his younger daughter. His wife, too called him to tell him that she needed to go to the hospital, the uncle said.

“Her parents have not eaten anything since morning. We never knew about any incident of harassment earlier. If there was anything, she would have definitely shared it with her father. He is very frank and she is very close to him,” he added.

Authorities must implement ban on the ground: Activist

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Acid attack survivor and activist Laxmi Agarwal on Wednesday said she will extend all possible assistance to the 17-year-old girl who was attacked with acid in West Delhi and urged authorities to strictly implement the ban on the corrosive substance. Agarwal, who herself survived an acid attack at the age of 15, had come to meet the victim at Safdarjung Hospital’s burn ICU but was stopped by authorities.

As outrage spread over the attack, women’s groups and others, including L-G Saxena, raised questions on the availability of acid in markets despite a ban and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal asked how the accused could have gathered so much courage.

“I want to help the victim with her treatment and provide her counselling. Our foundation will support the girl. She should be given good treatment. Most



of the time what happens is that when acid is thrown, it also affects the eyes. So priority remains that it does not affect the eyes in any way,” Agarwal told reporters.

The journey of Agarwal, from being a victim to an activist, was also portrayed in the 2020 film ‘Chhapaak’ with Deepika Padukone playing the titular role.

In the wake of increasing acid attacks, the Supreme Court had in 2013 banned over-the-counter sale of acid at retail outlets and ordered a compensation of Rs 3 lakh to be paid by the State Governments to each victim.

Women’s groups seek damages for victim

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The country’s apex women and child rights bodies have sought urgent action by authorities, including the early arrest of the accused by Delhi Police, in the acid attack incident in the national Capital on Wednesday. The National Commission for Women (NCW) has also taken up the matter with the Delhi State Legal Services Authority for compensation to the victim.

Two masked men on a bike flung acid on the 17-year-old victim, who was attacked minutes after she left her home for school and is battling serious injuries. NCW Chairperson Rekha Sharma has written to the Commissioner of Police, Delhi to personally intervene in the matter and to ensure the arrest of the accused at the earliest. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) questioned where the

accused had procured the acid-like substance, as the same is banned for sale. The NCPCR also sought action against the acid seller in the matter.

A four-member team was deputed by the NCW to visit the victim at the Safdarjung Hospital. The team also interacted with the victim’s father who informed them that the girl had not been examined by an eye doctor yet. The team raised the concern with the Medical Superintendent who assured that the eye examination would be undertaken at the earliest. He also informed that the victim has seven to eight per cent burns and that her condition is stable at present. “We’ve taken up the matter with Delhi Police and have also written to Delhi Police Commissioner regarding the incident and Delhi State Legal Service Authority for compensation,” said Lily Paul, Media Advisor at National Commission for Women.

AIIMS cyber attack tracked to China, Hong Kong

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The cyber attack on the servers of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) is suspected to have originated from locations in China and Hong Kong.

Further details have been sought which can be obtained from companies in China and Hong Kong. The Delhi Police has written to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which will in turn obtain the information through Interpol, they said.

“As of now, the server attack is suspected to have originated from a location in China and in Hong Kong,” an official source said.

The AIIMS Delhi has around 40 physical and 100 virtual servers. Five have shown signs of virus infection. Data in the five servers is learnt to have been retrieved. AIIMS, Delhi faced the cyber attack on November 23 which paralysed its servers. A case of extortion and cyber terrorism was regis-

tered by the Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations (IFSO) unit of the Delhi Police on November 25. Due to the 10-day-long cyber attack, AIIMS Delhi had to switch to manual management of emergency and other allied health services.

The internet services were blocked as per the recommendations of the investigating agencies. The AIIMS malware attack was investigated by National Investigation Agency (NIA), Indian Computer Emergency Response Team of MeITY, Delhi Cyber Crime Special Cell, Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre, Intelligence Bureau, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), National Forensic Sciences University and National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre, among others.

With the servers down, the hospital’s outpatient and inpatient digital services, including smart lab, billing, report generation and the appointment system, were affected.

12 held in Chinese lending app case

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

Twelve people linked to a Chinese digital lending app through which they duped several people and harassed them into repaying 10 to 20 times of the loan amount were arrested by the cyber cell of the Noida Police on Wednesday, an official said.

Through the app, the accused lent small amounts of Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000 to people but would then threaten to share their objectionable morphed images, pressuring them into repaying higher amounts, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Cyber Cell) Abhishek Verma said. The call centre was set up in Sector 63 of Noida and police seized Rs 1.50 lakh cash, 36 desktop computers, 15 laptops, eight smart phones, 135 SIM cards, among other items from the spot, he said.

According to police, those held have been identified as Punit Tuli, Mohd Afzal, Jitendra, Neeraj Lal, Shivam, Azeem, Aakash Srivastava, Sumit, Arun Singh, Siddharth Ojha, Rajnesh

Jha and Bharat.

Tuli, the mastermind of the gang, was associated with a Chinese national named Dave, and the app had its server in China, a police official privy to the probe said.

“The Noida Police had of late been receiving complaints of fraud through Chinese load apps. People claimed that their morphed photos and videos were being used to threaten them,” Verma told reporters.

“The cyber cell and the Noida Sector 63 police station worked on the cases and busted the call centre named Marvel Entertainment,” he said.

“We have arrested 12 people. They were in contact with a Chinese person and would run a web portal. They called up people who took loan from the app and any person who dilly-dallied in repaying the loan, these accused shared their morphed pictures and videos in a bid to extort money from them,” the officer said. This whole racket was run online and the police are in the process of further examining the details,” he said.

Woman found dead in Shalimar Bagh home; cash, jewellery missing

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 56-year-old woman was found dead at her residence in northwest Delhi’s Shalimar Bagh, police said on Wednesday. The deceased has been identified as Rajni Madan, a resident of east Shalimar Bagh.

Prima facie, no external injury or ligature mark was found on her body and entry into the flat was friendly, police said, adding that the post-mortem was conducted and report is awaited to ascertain the exact cause of death. A murder case has been registered, they said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northwest) Usha Rangnani said that around 10 PM on Tuesday, a PCR call was received at Shalimar Bagh police station. The caller informed that his flat was locked from outside and his mother’s phone was switched off.

When a police team reached the spot, they met the victim’s son Chetan Madan (25) and broke the lock of his flat with the help of neighbours and found his mother lying dead inside the house, the DCP said. Madan told police that he went to his office in the morning and when he returned around 10 PM he found his flat locked from outside. “When I went inside the house, it was ransacked and my mother was lying dead in one corner of the room. I think jewellery worth Rs 70 or 80 lakh is missing along with cash,” Madan told reporters. “According to his statement a case of murder under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code was registered at Shalimar Bagh police station and investigation was taken up. Teams have been formed to analyse CCTV footage,” the DCP said.

High-level meeting held to review G20 Summit preparations



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a high-level meeting held on Wednesday to review the preparations for the G-20 Summit involving all stakeholders, Delhi Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena stressed on the need for a “complete” makeover of the city that will host eight events of the summit, beginning March 1, 2023. The meeting was also scheduled to be attended by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal but he could not do so due to health reasons.

The L-G pointed out that there were just 108 days left until the first event in March and only 250 days left until the G-20 Summit in September, 2023. He called for a seamless coordination between various implementing agencies and work as a team. Any lapse in delivery will be taken “extremely seriously” with responsibilities being fixed and stringent action being taken, Raj Niwas said in a statement.

“Informing that he had personally undertaken many steps like ensuring beautification of the stretch of Road from IGI Airport Road to Dhaura Kuan over the last six months, Saxena stressed on the need for a complete makeover and refurbishing of the city, which will host eight events of the summit,” said Raj Niwas, in a statement.

According to the state-

ment, sanitation will be the other big area, involving cleaning and beautification of roads, fast tracking of work to flatten three landfill sites (garbage dumps) with an aim to complete flattening of one at Okhla before commencement of the summit events. Indian culture will be showcased with landscaping and facade designing and illumination of monuments and architectural landmarks of the city including Qutub Minar, Red Fort, Lodhi

Garden, Purana Quila, and Humayun’s tomb.

Apart from this, iconic markets in the city including Connaught Place, Chandni Chowk, Khan Market and Dilli Haat will be spruced up and overhauled. Visits of G-20 delegates to these markets and langars at places like Bangla Sahib and ISKCON temple will be organised on the sidelines of the summit events.

“The Chairman of NDMC Amit Yadav has given a presentation regarding the five set goals and targets which is to be achieved before the summit.

The first point is improving city’s infrastructure by revamping of roads, walkability, refurbishing signages, beautifying under side of flyovers, foolproof and permanent measures for preventing water-logging, owing to the fact that six out of eight events were scheduled to be held in the city, when the monsoons will yet be active.

10 L EXOTIC PLANTS TO ADD TO DELHI’S BEAUTY

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Over 10 lakh exotic potted plants will add to the beauty of the national capital as it gets ready to host the G20 Summit in September next year, forest department said on Wednesday.

The horticulture wings of the central and Delhi government departments, including the Delhi Development Department, New Delhi Municipal Council, Public Works Department and Municipal Corporation of Delhi, have been asked to decorate public spaces, roundabouts, major intersections, flyovers and vertical greens in the city with exotic flowering plants, a senior

forest department official said. “Different species of exotic plants will be used for this purpose across Delhi. The locations and targets for each department will be finalised by April next year,” the official said.

Another official said special attention will be given to the stretch between the Indira Gandhi International Airport and Lutens Delhi, India Gate area and Pragati Maidan, the main venue of the G20 Summit in Delhi. “Departments concerned have already been asked to float tenders for procurement of pots, plants and seedlings. Though there is no specific target yet, we are trying to use many flowering plants,” he said.

Delhi to have 2,000 public toilets for transgenders

SAURAV GUPTA ■ NEW DELHI

Soon, the national Capital will have as many as 2,000 special public toilets exclusively for the transgender community, a move aimed towards making the city more inclusive. The Arvind Kejriwal-led State Government is in the final stage of preparing a blueprint in this regard.

As per the policy, a dedicated toilet block for transgenders will be added, wherever possible, in the existing toilet amenities meant for men and women.

Sharing the details with The Pioneer, State Social Welfare Minister, Raaj Kumar Anand, said, “We are committed to providing safe spaces to

the transgender community and ensuring that they do not feel discriminated against. Keeping this in mind, we are in the midst of forming a policy under which the existing and under-construction public toilets will also have a third block for the transgender and disabled people besides that for males and females.”

“We will also make the construction of the third block in the public toilets mandatory in the Capital,” he said, reiterating that the party is committed to facilitating transgender’s equal status in society and quality of life in the city, which recently elected its first transgender municipal councillor Bobby Kinnar. Bobby won from Sultanpuri 43, a ward of



Sultanpur Majra Assembly constituency in the recently held municipal polls.

Talking about the number of toilets that will have a block for the third gender, a senior official of the Social Welfare Department said that currently there are 505 public toilets across Delhi. These will soon have a block for transgenders too.

“Currently there are nine toilets across the city including

one at the Department of Trade and Taxes, four at the Revenue Department, two at Kala Niketan Senior Bal Vidyalaya, and Delhi Subordinate Services Selection Board, etc, exclusively for the trans community,” he said.

“A total of 56 transgender lavatories are under construction, which will soon be opened for the third gender. But this is not the end. We will build more than 2000 toilets with these facilities,” he said.

In the next few years, the State Government will ensure that almost all the public toilets will have these facilities so that the members of the transgender community do not feel uncomfortable while using the services, the official said.

Speed up clothes supply to high-altitude troops: PAC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament on Wednesday said that there should not be any gap in supply of clothing, equipment, ration and provisioning of accommodation for soldiers engaged in safeguarding the country's borders under difficult weather conditions in high-altitude regions.

In its 55th report tabled in Lok Sabha, the PAC pointed out inordinate delays in procurement of winter clothing for soldiers in high-altitude areas as well as implementation of the project for improving their housing conditions.

The PAC also recommended urgent revamp of the approach towards procurement of high-altitude clothing, equipment, ration and housing facilities for the troops deployed in those regions. Temperatures in some of the forward locations including in Ladakh drop up to minus 40 degree celsius during harsh winter months.

The PAC's report on 'Provisioning, procurement and issue of High Altitude Clothing,



Equipment, Ration and Housing' noted that the audit found instances of delays stretching up to four years in procurement of clothing items from time to time. In this context, the committee headed by Congress's Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury also referred to the setting up of an empowered committee in 2007 with full financial powers for speedy procurement of clothing items for troops in high-altitude regions.

The panel also said that there was a need for separate allotment of financial resources for meeting requirements of the troops deployed in areas hav-

ing extreme weather conditions. "There were inordinate delays in receipt of contracted items from ordinance factories. Delayed procurement action and delayed receipt of contracted items as per audit observations led to acute shortage of essential clothing and equipment items and adversely affected timely issue of the same to the troops," the panel said.

"Health and hygiene of troops stationed at high-altitude areas was reportedly affected as a result of procedural delays, non-supply or supply of recycled or alternate items at the time of need," it said. The committee

also noted the "lack" of research and development by the defence laboratories and failure in indigenisation resulted in the prolonged and continued dependence on import.

"Special rations were to be given to the troops for alleviating certain physiological conditions that the troops face in high altitude inhospitable conditions," the report mentioned. "However, audit findings revealed that substitutes in lieu of scaled items were authorised in a given percentage on a cost-to-cost basis which affected the quantity of calorie intake of troops," it said.

The PAC said instances of "short issues" of rations to the troops due to deficiencies in internal control also came to light. Referring to the project for improving housing conditions for troops in high-altitude areas, the panel said the audit found that it was executed in an ad-hoc manner.

"Sanction of the competent authority was never taken and even the pilot project was sanctioned in phases. Despite incurring an expenditure of Rs 274 crore, the pilot project was not successful," it said.

Odisha stir: Will come down hard on lawyers disrupting proceedings: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Warning that it will come down 'very hard' on those who vandalised courts and disrupted proceedings in some districts of Odisha, the Supreme Court on Wednesday admonished the state police for its 'utter failure' to control the situation.

The top court said the demand for establishing a permanent bench of the state high court in western Odisha seems to have become a "prestige issue" and that there was no justification for having another bench of the high court in view of the widespread use of technology in the functioning of courts.

"There is no high hope of formation of bench, much less any hope now. Even if there was some remote possibility, that is lost now due to their conduct," a bench of Justices S K Kaul and A S Oka observed.

The apex court told the Director General of Police, Odisha, and Inspector General, Sambalpur, who both appeared before it through video-conference, that if the state police are unable to control the situation, the court will send paramilitary forces there to deal with it.

The bench said FIRs must be registered against those who indulged in violent protests and they be prosecuted. The Bar



Council of India (BCI) informed the bench that it has suspended 43 agitating advocates of the Sambalpur District Bar Association for their alleged involvement in vandalism.

"Why such people should be lawyers?" wondered the bench and warned "We are going to come down very hard and will be extremely harsh".

The IG, Sambalpur, told the bench a three-tier security system has been put in place around the district court and 15 platoons of police personnel were deployed after the last order of the apex court. Three criminal cases have been registered against the trouble makers, he said. "Three-tier system with 15 platoons is not good enough for you to control them from disrupting the court proceedings," the bench asked the IG, adding, "We have seen the video. You (police) were mollycod-

dling the lawyers. This is how you control the law and order?...If you cannot control it, we will get paramilitary forces there.<"It is utter failure of the police, according to me. If you want, we will give certificate to you," Justice Kaul said angrily.

The DGP told the court the situation was under control now. The bench asked whether normalcy has been restored and lawyers are appearing in the courts. The counsel appearing for the state of Odisha said very few lawyers are coming to courts and no protests have taken place outside the court premises in the last two days.

The bench was not impressed with a resolution passed by the central action committee of all bar associations of western Odisha regarding suspension of the agitation and said the committee will have to call off the strike unconditionally.

IN SHORT

MORE GIRLS THAN BOYS ADOPTED IN LAST 3 YRS

NEW DELHI: Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani informed the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday that more girls got adopted in the country in the last three years. In 2019-20, 1,400 boys and 1,938 girls were adopted. In 2020-21, 1,200 boys and 1,856 girls were adopted while in 2021-22, as against 1,293 boys, 1,690 girls were adopted.

NOTED CRIMINAL LAWYER MEMON JOINS TMC

NEW DELHI: Noted criminal lawyer and former NCP leader Majed Memon joined the Trinamool Congress here on Wednesday in the presence of party MPs Saugata Roy and Derek O'Brien. He was elected as a Rajya Sabha MP in 2014. He quit the NCP recently.

497 TERROR CASES REGISTERED BY NIA

NEW DELHI: The NIA has so far registered 497 cases of terrorism and judgment has been pronounced in 67 cases of which conviction has been obtained in 65 cases, MoS for Home Nityanand Rai informed the Rajya Sabha.

NCB SEIZED 637 KG HEROIN IN KERALA

NEW DELHI: NCB seized 637 kg of heroin worth Rs 1,274 crore from seaports in Kerala last year and arrested 11 foreigners in this connection, MoS Home Nityanand Rai in Rajya Sabha

9 KASHMIRI PANDITS KILLED IN THREE YEARS

NEW DELHI: The total number of Kashmiri Pandits killed in the Valley during the last three years (2020 -2022) are 9 including a person belonging to Kashmiri Rajput Community, MoS Home Nityanand Rai informed the Rajya Sabha

BILL OK'D TO RENAME ARBITRATION CENTRE

NEW DELHI: Parliament on Wednesday passed a bill to rename the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre as the India International Arbitration Centre. Rajya Sabha passed the Bill piloted by Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju. Lok Sabha had already passed the bill on August 2022.

ED ATTACHES ₹79 CR ASSETS OF HYD FIRM

NEW DELHI: The ED has provisionally attached immovable and movable assets worth Rs 78.63 crore including properties worth Rs 37.58 crore of a Hyderabad-based firm SA Builders & Developers and Rs 41.05 crore of a Bengaluru-based builder Neelanchal Technocrats Pvt. Ltd of Sallarpuria Group.

15 CASES OF DEROGATORY POSTS LODGED SINCE '19

NEW DELHI: The CBI has registered 15 cases on the allegations of derogatory posts on government and Constitutional functionalities since 2019, MoS Personnel Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday.

9 STATES NIX CONSENT GIVEN TO CBI FOR PROBES

NEW DELHI: Nine states, including Telangana and Meghalaya, have withdrawn general consent given to the CBI for probing certain offences, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday.

SC SEEKS GOVT VIEWS ON GAY WEDDINGS

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought a response from the Centre to two pleas seeking transfer to the apex court the petitions pending in the Delhi High Court seeking directions to recognise same-sex marriages.

SC REFUSES PLEAS IN BILKIS BANO CASE

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to entertain submissions seeking early setting up of a fresh bench to hear Bilkis Bano's plea challenging the remission of sentence of 11 convicts by the Gujarat government in her gangrape case.

FEMALES IN UG COURSES IN IITS SEES 20% RISE

NEW DELHI: Enrolment of female students in undergraduate courses of IITs has increased from 8 per cent in 2016 to 20 per cent in 2021, according to data from the Ministry of Education (MoE).

JUST 3.38% WOMEN IN CAPF, ASSAM RIFLES

NEW DELHI: The existing strength of women personnel in Central Armed Police Forces and Assam Rifles is 34,278 against the sanctioned strength of 10,12,568 i.e. 3.38%, MoS Home Nityanand Rai said.

ED arrests Mukhtar Ansari in money laundering case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday arrested jailed gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari in a money laundering case after he was produced before a court in Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh at the behest of the agency.

Mukhtar is a five-time former MLA and has been undergoing judicial custody in a jail at Banda in Uttar Pradesh for the last few years in connection with criminal cases being probed by the State police. The ED had questioned the 59-year-old strongman in this case last year.

He was taken into custody by the ED under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) after he was produced on Wednesday before a local court in Prayagraj on the basis of a production warrant moved by the agency, officials said.

His MLA son Abbas Ansari was also arrested by the agency in November after questioning at its sub zonal office in Prayagraj. Later, the agency also arrested Mukhtar's brother-in-law Atif Raza.

The ED has also issued a Look Out Circular (LOC) against Mukhtar's wife Afsan Ansari as she has not appeared before it after issuance of summons.

The money laundering case against Mukhtar stems from multiple FIRs lodged by the Uttar Pradesh Police against him as also two more FIRs lodged against a private company Vikas Constructions (a partnership firm) that was run by his wife, two brother-in-laws (including Atif Raza) and others.

Mukhtar is facing ED scrutiny in connection with at least 49 criminal cases lodged against him including those on charges of land grabbing, murder and extortion. He is also facing trial in Uttar Pradesh in several cases, including attempt to murder and murder.

Earlier this year, the agency attached seven immovable assets of Mukhtar Ansari worth Rs 1.48 crore (registry value).

The agency in August had also searched the official residence of Mukhtar's elder broth-



er and BSP MP Afzal Ansari in Delhi and some locations in Ghazipur district, Mau and Lucknow.

The Ghazipur district administration had seized two plots of land, measuring 1.901 hectares and valued at over Rs

6 crore, that were purchased using alleged illegal earnings of Mukhtar, according to the police.

In July, the Uttar Pradesh Police attached Afzal Ansari's assets worth Rs 14.90 crore under the Gangster Act.

CBI to probe theft of evidence in case involving Andhra Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has taken over the probe into an alleged theft of case property (material evidence) from a local court in Nellore relating to a matter in which Andhra Pradesh Agriculture Minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy is the prime accused. The CBI took over the theft FIR registered by China Bazar Police station, Nellore against Syed Hayath and Shaik Kahaja Rasool on the directions of the Andhra Pradesh High.

A bench of the High Court headed by Chief Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra and Justice D V S Somayajulu had handed over the case to the CBI with directions to conduct a proper investigation and submit the charge sheet at the earliest.

The bench passed the order while disposing of a suo motu (taken up on its own) public interest litigation petition, based on a report filed by the Principal District Judge, Nellore. The then Agriculture Minister Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy of the TDP had filed a criminal case of forgery

and fabricating documents besides criminal defamation against YSRC's Govardhan Reddy, then an MLA from Sarvepalli Assembly constituency. The local police had filed the charge sheet before the court and trial had to begin in May. Five days after Govardhan Reddy was sworn-in as a minister, the thieves broke into the court of fourth additional judicial magistrate of first class in Nellore on the intervening night of April 13-14.

They decamped with a bag containing crucial evidence related to the case including laptop, mobile phones and several documents related to the criminal case of 2016 filed against Govardhan Reddy and three others by Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy.

The bag was later found dumped in a culvert but the crucial documents and other material evidence were missing.

The principal district judge, who had conducted a preliminary inquiry in April, reported to the High Court that the four police personnel on guard failed in their duty.

HC tells IRDAI to get health insurances to cover divyangs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has directed the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) to ensure the products are designed and introduced on an early date for persons with disabilities so as to enable them to obtain health insurance coverage.

A bench of Justice Prathiba M. Singh has directed the IRDAI and the insurance companies to submit a status report before March 17, 2023, the next date of hearing. The court also observed

that the persons with disabilities would be entitled to health insurance coverage and products may have to be designed for them. A plea was moved by Saurabh Shukla who is suffering from multiple health ailments, including tetraplegia due to an injury suffered in 2012. Shukla, who uses a wheelchair and has limited use of his arms, had approached two insurance companies, Max Bupa Health Insurance Company Ltd and Oriental Health Insurance Company Ltd but was refused any health insurance policy by

both of them. Oriental Insurance Company Ltd counsel submitted that Shukla's request for health insurance was denied due to his medical history. But the court said: "There should be no discrimination, as healthcare is concerned, against the persons with disabilities. Right to life includes the right to health and even healthcare."

The court also allowed Shukla to once again approach these two companies. By the next date of hearing, a proposal shall be ready, his case shall be considered.

Inflation will fall further, Sitharaman tells LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday exuded confidence that inflation would further decline and the government is on track to meet its budgetary target for deficit and said that there is no fear of stagflation in India.

Replying to the debate on first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants 2022-23 in Lok Sabha, the Finance Minister said inflation has come down

and it is now in the tolerable band of the RBI. Inflation has been declining since April 2022 and it is declining further, she said. As per the law, Monetary Policy Committee headed by RBI Governor has been given task of maintaining inflation at 4 per cent with the upper tolerance limit of 6 per cent and the lower tolerance limit of 2 per cent, she said. "We will bring it down further," she quipped saying the issue is being raised by Congress during whose regime

inflation was in double digit. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his group of Ministers are constantly watching and making interventions and taking measures to keep inflation under check to ensure that the poor do not have to bear the extra financial burden, she added. Several supply-side measures have been taken by the government to address inflation, including reduction in excise duty by Rs 8 per litre on petrol and Rs 6 per litre on diesel on May 21, 2022.

BJP parliamentary party meet felicitates Modi on thumping victory in Gujarat

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP parliamentary party meeting on Wednesday felicitated Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the record breaking victory in Gujarat. Modi, in turn, lauded state BJP unit and its president C R Paatil for the party's success and retaining power for the seventh consecutive term. In his address to the party leaders, the Prime Minister pointed out that the Gujarat elections showed that victory was possible if the organization was strong and well-oiled.

He walked to the meeting amidst constant claps from BJP leaders and members and was garlanded by BJP President J P Nadda. Among others, BJP leaders Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh were also present in the meeting.

Modi heaped praise on the state unit and its president Paatil, saying the victory is owed to the BJP's organisational strength and its workers, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi told reporters after the meeting.

Modi lauded the BJP's Gujarat unit as an example of how electoral victory is possible if the party organisation is strong. His high praise for Paatil, his close confidant, underlines the latter's rising stock within the party following its win in 156



seats in the polls to the 182-member assembly.

Modi also praised the party's national president J P Nadda.

Paatil, who has also been in-charge of the Prime Minister's home constituency Varanasi, is

MNREGA workers across India await ₹4,448 cr in wages

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) workers across India are still waiting for almost Rs 4,447.72 crore in pending wage payments with West Bengal reporting the highest liability at Rs 2,744 crore followed by Kerala (Rs 456 crore) and Tamil Nadu (Rs 210 crore), according to the government's reply to a question in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

The pending liabilities for materials under the central rural job scheme as on November 30, 2022 were as high as Rs 3,207.43 crore with Andhra Pradesh topping the list at Rs 653 crore followed by Karnataka (Rs 540

crore) and West Bengal (Rs 457 crore), said Union Minister of State for Rural Development, Niranjan Jyoti in a written reply.

Maharashtra, Odisha, Bihar, Rajasthan, Kerala, Telangana and Madhya Pradesh too reported pending liabilities in three digits at Rs 175 crore, Rs 112.26 crore, Rs 184 crore, 184.61 crore, 101 crore, Rs 174.71 crore and Rs 304.83 crore respectively, as per the Government data.

While the Centre has been blaming the States for failing to clear the dues, the experts in the rural sector feel that unpaid dues have been a persistent problem with NREGS.

"The funds released by the Union government get delayed because enough funds haven't



State/UT	Wage liabilities (Rs. in cr)
Arunachal Pradesh	7.84
Assam	196.11
Haryana	8.80
Jharkhand	162.52
Karnataka	45.08
Kerala	456.20
Ladakh	4.72
Madhya Pradesh	83.32
Mizoram	42.89
Nagaland	183.55
Rajasthan	108.80
Tamil Nadu	210.74
Telangana	139.77
Uttar Pradesh	52.48
Puducherry	0.34
West Bengal	2744.76
TOTAL	4,447.92

been allocated for the programme," Rajendran Narayanan, assistant professor at Azim Premji University and cofounder of LibTech India, a study group focused on improving rural public services delivery, has been quoted by a news website.

Experts feel that pending liabilities can have severe negative impact on the economy given that more than 321 million workers in total are associated with the rural job security programme.

In the 2022-23 budget, a total of Rs 73,000 crore was allocated for MGNREGS. This is 25 percent less than the Rs 98,000 crore allocated the previous year, as per revised estimates.

Probe Lalan’s custodial death but keep away from CBI sleuths, HC orders CID

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a major reprieve for the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the Bagtui custodial death case the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday permitted State Criminal Investigation Department to investigate the matter but restrained it from taking any coercive step against the central agency officials.

This, after the CBI told the court that how State police had registered FIRs against several of its officials including the DIG, SP and even S Bhattacharya an investigating officer who had been investigating the high profile cow smuggling case.

In its order the High Court allowed the CID to conduct the investigation but restrained it from taking any strong step against the CBI officials.

The Court also doubted the contents of the complaint lodged by Reshma Biwi the wife of Lalan Sheikh — the prime accused in the Bagtui mass murder case who died an unnatural death on Monday evening — and directed the CID to make her a party in the case.

The CBI contended that the inclusion of DIG, SP and Bhattacharya’s



Family members of Lalan Sheikh crying with his body outside the camp office of CBI, in Birbhum on Wednesday

names underscored the malafide intention of the State police which was apparently trying to disrupt the investigation of cattle smuggling case that has seen TMC strongman and party national executive member Anubrata Mondal going to jail.

The Court also asked the CID to conduct video recording of the entire investigation procedure. Besides, it also asked the investigators not to submit the final report without its permission. Lalan Sheikh the prime accused in the Bagtui mass murder case was on

Monday evening found hanging in the bathroom of a guest house which had been converted into a make shift CBI camp. The Central agency had arrested him a week ago from his hideout in neighbouring Jharkhand where he fled soon after the March 21 carnage when least 10 people were charred to death after one section of the ruling Trinamool Congress workers set on fire three houses in Bagtui village in Birbhum district. The houses belonged to the members of the rival group.

The mass murder took place hours after a local panchayat deputy pradhan Bhadu Sheikh was bombed to death.

Lalan Sheikh a close aide of Bhadu with the members of his gang reportedly carried out the brutal mass murder while now jailed TMC block president Anarul allegedly forcing the police to remain away till the victims were dead.

The Bagtui murders hit national headlines with the High Court suo motu ordering a CBI investigation into the case. With politics getting highly criminalised in Bengal over the past several years Birbhum district has earned the notoriety of the leader in bomb-and-gun culture.

Maha, K’taka to wait for SC’s verdict on border row: Shah

Both sides agree to shun violence, protests till then, says HM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Maharashtra and Karnataka on Wednesday decided to wait for the Supreme Court’s verdict on the border issue and form a committee of three Ministers each from both States to settle the dispute amicably. This was announced by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in the presence of Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde and Basavaraj Bommai after more than two hour long meeting with them.

“The meeting was very cordial and both sides decided to shun violence and protests on the border issue. Both sides decided to wait for the final outcome of the ongoing case in Supreme Court in this regard. There will be a committee of three Ministers each from Karnataka and Maharashtra to talk and settle on the border disputes related issues,” said Shah detailing the talks with the both States Chief Ministers headed delegations on disputes in Belgam border. He also sought support from all parties



Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and the State Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis during a meeting at Parliament Library, in New Delhi, Wednesday

in Maharashtra and Karnataka to maintain calm in the region.

The Home Minister also said that both States will appoint an IPS level officer to settle the issues bordering areas and trade and vehicle movements will never affected in future. He also said that there were certain “Fake Twitter handles” engineered the recent violence in the Belgam area. “FIRs will be registered on

these fake Twitter handles for creating tensions in the area,” said Shah.

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis and Karnataka Home Minister Araga Jnanendra were also in the meeting held at Parliament in the evening.

MPs from both States and top officials also attended the meeting chaired by the Union Home Minister.

Rahul may fight 2024 poll from Amethi: Cong

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

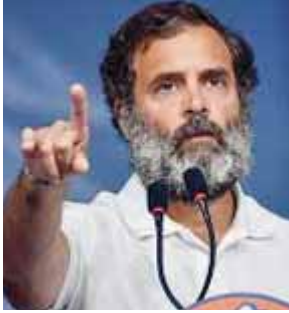
Rahul Gandhi is likely to contest the 2024 Lok Sabha election again from Amethi with which the Nehru-Gandhi family has old ties, senior Congress leader Ajay Rai claimed on Wednesday.

Rai, the regional head of the party in UP, also said that it was his appeal to the people of Amethi to send Rahul Gandhi to Delhi by electing him as an MP again with a huge margin.

“The Gandhi-Nehru family has old relations with Amethi... no one can weaken it. Rahul Gandhi will contest from Amethi in 2024,” Rai told reporters in Amethi on Wednesday.

There has been no word from the party so far on the former Congress president fighting the next parliamentary election from Amethi again.

Rahul Gandhi, who had won the Amethi parliamentary seat three times in a row, was defeated by Bharatiya Janata Party leader and Union minister Smriti Irani in the 2019 election. He is currently representing Kerala’s Wayanad constituency in the Lok Sabha.



Rahul Gandhi’s parents Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi had won from Amethi in the past.

Speaking about the ongoing ‘Bharat Jodo Yatra’ led by Rahul Gandhi, Rai, who had unsuccessfully contested Lok Sabha election from Varanasi in 2014 and in 2019, said that the yatra was currently passing through Rajasthan and would enter Uttar Pradesh on January 3 or 4 next year.

But before that, the UP Congress is taking out regional yatras on the lines of Bharat Jodo Yatra at various places, he said, adding that for this, the state had been divided into six regions and a president had been appointed for each region.

On December 11, the regional yatra started from

Prayagraj under Rai’s leadership and reached Amethi on Wednesday via Kaushambi and Pratappgarh. In Amethi district, the regional yatra that passed through Lodi Baba and Qazi Patti areas on Wednesday, would cover a distance of 25 km, Rai said. District Congress president Pradeep Singhal, former MLC Deepak Singh among others were seen in attendance.

After Amethi, the regional yatra will reach Sultanpur and proceed to Jaunpur, Mirzapur, Chandauli, Bhadohi, Sonbhadra and finally end in Varanasi on December 22.

Rai also said that tension was prevailing everywhere under the BJP government.

“Traders are running away leaving shops. Rahulji had called GST (goods and services tax) Gabbar Singh tax, today he has been proved right. There is fear among the traders about GST. The traders who have been supporting the BJP since long are being harassed,” Rai said.

“The chief minister says that action should be taken against ‘thieves’... it means that the businessmen have become ‘thieves’ today,” Rai added.

SP hits out at Yogi Govt for not declaring SAP for sugarcane

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Hitting out at the Bharatiya Janata Party Government, national president of Samajwadi Party and former chief minister Akhilesh Yadav said that the crushing of sugarcane had started in the new season but till now the government had not announced the state advisory price (SAP) for sugarcane.

“Injustice, inflation and corruption in the BJP government have made it difficult for the people to survive. The farmers are facing the heat as they are forced to commit suicide because they are not able to clear the loans they had taken from private money lenders.

The policies of the BJP government are anti-farmer and in favour of capitalists and big business houses,” Yadav said in a statement issued here on Wednesday.

He said that the crushing of sugarcane had started in the new season but the BJP government was yet to declare the SAP. Besides, he said, the farmers had not been paid their arrears for the last season as well.

Maya attacks UP Govt over GST raids on traders

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati on Wednesday attacked the Government over the goods and services (GST) raids on traders.

Targeting the government over the raids, Mayawati blamed the wrong policies and working style of the government for it.

“The business class is suffering today. Fed up with the raids in the GST survey, they have been forced to protest by closing the market. The government should take immediate steps for redressal. The business class has been forced to agitate due to grief,” Mayawati tweeted on Wednesday.

Mayawati further tweeted that people were suffering a lot in this difficult time of poverty and unemployment. “Purchasing power has decreased significantly. Yet the poor working class is forced to pay an expensive rate of GST on items of daily use,” she claimed.

Earlier, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav also attacked the Government over the GST raids.

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Within days of the Government of Kerala disclosing through select media houses that Governor Arif Mohammed Khan is in the habit of spending most of his time touring Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and New Delhi, his Goa counterpart P S Sreedharan Pillai has said Governors should not breach the Lakshman Rekha.

It was revealed through select media houses that Governor Arif Mohammed Khan was away on tour outside Kerala for 223 days during the



past two years. He also spent 87 days outside the State during the last six months. In 2022 the Kerala Governor had toured for 142 days.

Sreedharan Pillai, former president of Kerala BJP and a prolific writer of books (till date he has published 182 books) is known for his distinct stand on



many issues and candid views. While addressing a book exhibition held at Kochi in his honour Sreedharan Pillai said that he too was busy touring as a Governor. “I used the last 15 months to travel across villages in Goa and had toured 461 villages in the State,” said Governor Pillai.



Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao with Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy and others at the inauguration of the Bharat Rashtra Samithi office, in New Delhi on Wednesday

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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 G D Traders/ Amit Kumar/ Asha Kumar/ Sumit Kumar/ A/c No. 125705000933/ 125755000015	43, Om Sai Santpura Govindpuri Modi Nagar Uttar Pradesh 201204/ December 08, 2022	July 13, 2022/ Rs. 47,61,249.23/-	Modi Nagar, Uttar Pradesh

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(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 15, 2022
Place: Modi Nagar

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

BSES

BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, New Delhi

TENDER NOTICE

Date: 15.12.2022

Sealed tenders under Two Bid System (Unpriced & Priced) are invited for following job from all bidders.

NIT No.	Brief Tender Description	Estimated Cost (₹)	Cost of EMD (₹)	Due Date & Time of Submission	Date & Time of Opening
CMC/BR/22-23/RB/PR/RJ/1077	SUPPLY OF ONAN COOLED 1000 KVA REDUCED DIMENSION OIL TYPE DISTRIBUTION TRANSFORMER IN BRPL	15 Crores	15,00,000	06.01.2023 15:00 HRS	06.01.2023 15:30 HRS
CMC/BR/22-23/RB/PR/RJ/1078	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF MOTORIZED RMU ALONG WITH FRU IN BRPL	105 Crores	1,05,30,000	06.01.2023 15:00 HRS	06.01.2023 15:45 HRS
CMC/BR/22-23/RB/PR/RJ/1079	RATE CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF AIR CIRCUIT BREAKERS OF RATINGS 400A, 1250A, 2000A AND 3200A IN BRPL	23 Crores	23,00,000	06.01.2023 15:00 HRS	06.01.2023 16:00 HRS
CMC/BR/22-23/RB/PR/RJ/1080	SUPPLY OF 33KV/11 & 66/11, 31.5 MVA POWER TRANSFORMER IN BRPL	49 Crores	49,00,000	06.01.2023 15:00 HRS	06.01.2023 16:15 HRS
CMC/BR/22-23/RB/PR/RJ/1081	SUPPLY OF ONAN COOLED 1600 KVA OIL TYPE DISTRIBUTION TRANSFORMER IN BRPL	32 Crores	32,00,000	06.01.2023 15:00 HRS	06.01.2023 16:30 HRS

Cost of each Tender Document: ₹ 1180/-

For any query call on 011-49107235 or e-mail on Brpl.Eauction@reliaanceada.com

For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requirements, Terms & conditions, purchase/submission of tender documents etc. please visit our website www.bssedelhi.com

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It is also informed to all of you that this banned kite string may also prove to be fatal if it touches the power line. Many such fatal incidents have already taken place in the past years. Both buying and selling of this banned kite string is an offense under law and can be punishable with fine or imprisonment of both if caught.

Therefore, the general public and all the villagers are requested not to let their children or relatives fly kites near these high-tension power lines. **POWERGRID will not be liable for any accident or loss of life or property related to this.**

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Killer prohibition

In a hooch mishap, 15 people die in Bihar but CM Nitish Kumar persists with the policy of liquor ban

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar is angry—not because over 15 people died after consuming country-made liquor at Doyla village in the Saran district on Tuesday evening. He lost his cool in the state Assembly when the Opposition questioned the prohibition that his Government imposed. The hooch mishap triggered pandemonium in the Assembly with the Bharatiya Janata Party slamming the state Government for the complete failure of prohibition and the ally Congress demanding a review of liquor ban. An incensed Kumar shouted at Leader of the Opposition Vijay Kumar Sinha, “Arey, tum bol rahe ho... (Oh, now you are speaking...)” It is a curious situation in Bihar: prohibition is a big failure, but few have the courage to say that lest they be dubbed as the supporters of drinking or, worse, the stooges of the liquor lobby. Over a dozen people had died in Nalanda, Kumar’s home district, in January this year. There have been other tragedies too. The Chief Minister banned liquor in 2016, but the National Family Health Survey showed that Biharis consume more alcohol than Maharashtrians. As per the National Family Health Survey 2019-20, as many as 15.5 per cent men (above 15 years of age) had drinks in Bihar. Which means that corruption is rampant in the state; a lot of people in the system are fattening because of the strict rules.

At the heart of the problem, however, is not the implementation but the very nature of the policy of prohibition. Alcohol is not good for health, pocket, and often family life; but there are many such things—junk food for example—which are bad for health. It is not the job of governments to ban anything it deems bad or immoral, especially in our country where there is a huge governance deficit. Our political masters need to be reminded that the basic functions of government are administration, maintenance of law and order, management of the economy, national defence, and foreign affairs; everything else is an add-on. Unfortunately, most politicians are focused on add-ons, from freebies to pride peddling. Nitish Kumar privileges moral policing over policing. For example, Bihar had the dubious distinction of most crimes related to land disputes and had the second most murder cases among all states in 2021, as per the National Crime Records Bureau data. Instead of striving for improvement in the law and order situation, Kumar has taken upon himself to morally uplift the people of Bihar. He casts aspersions on those who express concern over the chaos occasioned by prohibition. So, he yelled at the BJP MLAs, “*Sharabi ho gaye ho tum...* (You have become drunkards).” Quite apart from the ad hominem element in such remarks, there is also the abuse of language: everyone who consumes alcohol is not a *sharabi* (drunkard). There is also the tribe of social drinkers. But nobody can confront him vigorously: the BJP has *sanskari* compulsions; the Congress is an ally. The result: people suffer.



A wall covered up with hoardings of the 28th Kolkata International Film Festival, in Kolkata

PTI

Govt needs money

The central government is in dire need of money for subsidies. Its borrowings could lead to price rise

Despite the tall claims by the government that the economy is on the recovery path, the indications are pointing in the opposite direction. The industrial production is down 26 per cent and the fiscal deficit is likely to go up, the economy is not all that healthy as it is made out to be. The government has sought additional rupees lakh-plus crore as supplementary demands for grants for 2022-23. This amount, according to the government will be used to meet the higher subsidy bill. This extra money that is over and above the budgetary allocation is required to fund subsidies like fertilizers, food and LPG. Rs1.09 lakh crore would be required to meet the fertilizer and urea subsidies; more than Rs 80,000 crore for the Department of Food and Public Distribution, three-fourth of which is earmarked for the ‘Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana’, and Rs 22,000 crore to be paid to oil marketing companies to make good their losses in LPG cylinder sales. For the national rural employment guarantee scheme, an additional outlay of Rs 16,400 crore has been sought. It is thus obvious that the govt has run out of money. Despite the rise in tax collections and other revenue it is short of funds to meet its requirements. Interestingly enough, Prime Minister Modi is himself a biggest critic of subsidies. He has time and again spoken about it, and said how bad it is for the economy. He has called the govt providing free electricity and water supply as “revadis”.

A BJP campaign before recently held elections targeted the Aam Aadmi Party for giving subsidies in Delhi, criticizing the ‘revadi culture’ promoted by the AAP govt. But what applies to AAP govt in Delhi, also applies to the BJP govt at the centre. It cannot be an election plank and conveniently forgotten thereafter. This additional borrowing by the government to fund nonproductive heads is going to add to the pressure on the fiscal management and we are in for higher fiscal deficit which would reflect in higher inflation rate. According to the conservative estimates the fiscal deficit is likely to exceed the budget target (6.4% of GDP) by around Rs 80,000 crore to Rs 1 lakh crore. The BJP govt at the centre would do well to follow the Prime Minister Modi rather than Kejriwal when it comes to distributing ‘revadis’ and draining the already stressed economy.

Sufism can help combat terrorism

The tenets of Sufism can go a long way in dealing with the menace of terrorism. Its universal appeal has potential to heal and rejuvenate.

Terrorism still continues to be one of the most serious challenges confronting the mankind. India has been hit hard the most, particularly by cross border terrorism. It has already declared zero tolerance against it and vowed to eliminate it. During the last over five years India has made persistent efforts in the United Nations and outside of it to ensure united action against the scourge. The efforts have started to yield results. Counter terrorism committee of the United Nation Security Council in its special meeting held in India on 28th and 29th of October unanimously urged all member states of UN to ensure zero tolerance against terrorist activities and vowed to deal with menace more vigorously. In its declaration the Committee reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms constituted one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. It also urged all member states to deny access to terrorists to safe havens and bring to justice all persons supporting or planning terrorist attacks. The special meeting declared that terror financing is an important aspect of combating terrorism and it should be effectively curbed.

Apart from Naxalite and similar forms of terrorism which arise mostly from economic causes, terrorism confronting the whole world springs mostly from radicalisation and extremism attributed to Islamic ideologies. Ulemas’ could be catalysts in changing the radicalised mindset of those involved in fomenting terrorism through wrong interpretation of ideology. In my latest article on the topic titled “ISLAMIC RADICALISATION AND SUFI ISLAM” published on 8.10.2016, this writer observed that many Muslims, both young and old, rue the present state of affairs, particularly religious radicalism and fundamentalism. Their anguish is natural and understandable except that Muslims in general, barring some exceptions, do not come out or speak openly against ideological radicalism or norms and sentiments like Islamisation and pan-Islamism. Unlike many other religions they cannot question the revelations made in the holy Quran even though these are wrongly interpreted. Consequently Islamic extremism and terrorism have become a world problem. No alternative has come up so far which could rid the Islamic world of its ills and enable it on its own to live, adjust and co-exist with the rest of the world.

During thirties of last century Mustapha Kemal popularly known as Atatürk, father of Turkish nation, appeared to have found a way out. His liberal and progressive interpretation of Islam had opened doors for Turkey to become a full-fledged member of comity of European nations. His views and actions were acclaimed but these did not last long. Now for over three decades Turkey has been going back. Later during the present century hopes were rekindled by democratic elections in Tunisia during 2011 followed by elections in some other Muslim countries. The development was termed as ‘Arab Spring’ but it too failed to bring about renaissance. It only indicated that Islamic



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“APART FROM NAXALITE AND SIMILAR FORMS OF TERRORISM WHICH ARISE MOSTLY FROM ECONOMIC CAUSES, TERRORISM CONFRONTING THE WHOLE WORLD SPRINGS MOSTLY FROM RADICALISATION AND EXTREMISM ATTRIBUTED TO ISLAMIC IDEOLOGIES.”

world is not yet ready or prepared for a change on progressive or liberal lines based on true meaning of Islam. Sufis being far less in number have not been able to influence much of the rest of the population with their liberal outlook. Of late some Muslim countries have started to adopt liberal attitudes particularly towards social and cultural issues on their own.

There has been a growing realisation that apart from actions against terrorism at governmental level, civil society too has to play a vital role in elimination of scourges like terrorism. Hope was created when a dialogue was held in New Delhi late last month between Indonesian and Indian delegations of Ulema and leaders of other faiths in which it was made clear that Ulemas have a vital role to play to counter radicalisation and extremism by propagating progressive ideas and thought. In his opening speech at the dialogue, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval said that we should focus on the real message of our religions which call for humanism, peace and understanding. He observed that fissures appeared among the Caliphs after the death of the

Prophet on the question of legitimate heir with each faction attempting to out do each other by exposing a more radical interpretation of Hadis. It is here that the Ulemas have a leading role to play in educating the people about the original tolerant and moderate principles of Islam, he said. He pointed out that holy Quran itself teaches that killing one person is like killing all humanity and saving one is akin to saving humanity and said that Islam ordains ‘Jihad Afzal’ that is Jihad against ones’ senses and ego. Mohammed Mahfud Coordinating Minister for political, legal and security affairs of Indonesia in his keynote address at the event said that such discussions give us the opportunity to learn from each other. Many a time we witness people who use their religion as a doctrine of absolute truth and readily blame others. We have to go out of this and improve. Religion, he added, should be a source of peace not the reason for discord, conflict or violence. It should be a unifying tool not a divisive instrument, he remarked.

(The writer is a journalist, former IIS officer and producer. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TAWANG TUG OF WAR

Sir — This is not the first time that the area in Arunachal Pradesh has seen a face-off between the Indian and Chinese troops. Since the boundary is undefined, Indian and Chinese troops often face off while patrolling the area. In October 2021, a similar incident had taken place when some Chinese soldiers of a large patrol team were detained for a few hours by the Indian Army as they engaged in a minor face-off near Yangtse. In the last few years, the Army has significantly upgraded firepower and infrastructure along the LAC in the Tawang sector and a similar effort is under way in the rest of Arunachal Pradesh (RALP). This includes road infrastructure, bridges, tunnels, habitat and other storage facilities, aviation facilities and upgradation of communications and surveillance, especially in the Upper Dibang Valley region. After Galwan, Yangtse is now Tawang. A few soldiers sustained injuries during the skirmish and are said to be recuperating at a hospital in Guwahati. The infiltration move by the Chinese army is foiled every time and we are ready for a face off as we have a strong force of army personnels posted to prevent such infiltration in the future as well. It was a resounding reply to the back stabbing Chinese forces. A year after Galwan clash, China beefing up positions along LAC

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

STOP FREEBIES

Sir — The continuity of freebies is a major drawback as parties keep on coming up with lucrative offers to lure more votes and thus minimize the risk of losing in the elections. This affects some immature voters as they are blinded by such offers and are unable to judge the prospective leader. Over the years political parties have been promoting the freebie culture in the name of welfare schemes. These election goodies have taken center stage in the election process and some voters make biased decisions based on the greater benefits offered rather than the

Morocco’s incredible run



Morocco’s incredible run in the FIFA 2022 world cup has inspired an outpouring of patriotism and support in the Arab countries. In the quarterfinals, while the odds remained stacked heavily against Morocco, Regragui’s side created yet another European

record by defeating Portugal 1-0, totally disregarding Fernando Santos team’s annihilation of Switzerland with 6-1 in the round of 16. Morocco’s tactical discipline in defence, speed on the counterattack and a dash of goal-keeping flair have all contributed to its stellar show in this world cup. Perhaps, it is a sort of game’s blueprint strictly followed by the Moroccan players. Irrespective of whichever way the result goes for Morocco in the semi-final against the mighty France, the Atlas Lions have already shown that the gap between big and small teams in international football is fast narrowing down.

account for both large commercial projects and individual residents. The ETT system allows for the relocation of large/old trees that are ecologically significant and are at least 8 feet tall.

Trials already showed an over 80% survival rate will be there after shifting of trees in the country. According to experts, shifting trees is critical for our health and survival. Just as human blood cannot be produced anywhere other than the human body, the level of oxygen in the air can only be maintained if large trees surround us. As a result, shifting trees rather than felling them is beneficial to our health and survival. A sapling takes at least two and up to ten years after planting to produce a significant amount of oxygen. As a result, saving old trees is the best option. Depending on the size of the tree, the number of trees to be shifted, and the distance between the uprooting and translocation sites, the cost of shifting trees can range between five to fifty thousand rupees. The ecological value of the tree will always be much more than the shifting cost.

Vijaykumar HK | Raichur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

I want to give a message to the party that what was done is not that much necessary, what needs to be done is more necessary."



Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi



Iranian activist/filmmaker — Mahnaz Mohammadi

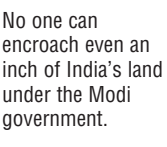


"Before watching English films, watch Indian films. Watch Hindi cinema and Bengali cinema. Some of my greatest inspirations have come from Hindi cinema. Some of those who I respect very much are from Hindi cinema."

Actor — Kamal Haasan



It feels like it is that cricket is very much in denial. British cricketer — Azeem Rafiq




No one can encroach even an inch of India's land under the Modi government. Union Home Minister — Amit Shah

FIRST COLUMN

GOD IS NOT A BYSTANDER

God has given a lifeline to the suffering humanity




AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Lord Krishna assures in the Bhagavad-Geeta: “Neither there is a waste of effort here nor there is an opposite effect. Even a little of this karma-yoga protects one from great fear.” I have been reading the Geeta for decades. I had even memorised all its 700 verses but could never really understand how this was possible till I experienced it. What is our experience? That one achieves success at the end of a long journey. How is spiritual life so different?

Lord promises that even a little of this karma-yoga protects one from great fear. What does a good coach do when he spots some good talent? He becomes watchful to make sure that he is right. Once reasonably certain, he takes the boy under his charge. What does God do? Not very different except God already knows who all are going to traverse the spiritual path, because God knows our future. What does God do? He gets involved in the lives of such persons. Could I ever have imagined what all God has done for me from childhood? To begin with, all important decisions of my life have been taken by my Lord only. Not surprisingly, I wanted to do them differently.

Every small spiritual act must have been taken note of, otherwise I would have remained spiritually a big zero. Then, the Lord states that there is an opposite effect. Here I feel that God is mentioning opposition from my family members, especially my wife. Why? Because people are afraid that once someone gets started on the spiritual path, he is not going to be of much use to them. Contrarily, I got all the cooperation from my family members because God was involved in my life. In fact, my wife was the one who took me to a spiritual institution to become their member.



Like most people I had many fears; I still do but my experience over several decades tells me not to be so fearful. For example, I am fearful for my body, my family, business, etc. I tried everything to get over them, but nothing worked. Having met failures only, I gingerly turned to God. I started with chanting God's names. And God responded; He sent a spiritual person to guide me. This person has been with me for over two decades.

Encouraged, I continued. I added a large photo of Lord Krishna in my bedroom. Over the years I fell in love with it. The most telling instruction has been: Remain in My shelter; life will go on nicely. He repeated it after a period of six months. What is my experience? Life goes on. There are periods of punishment, which are due because of my earlier bad acts. These are followed by great periods of peace, happiness and success. God ensures that all my punishments are tolerable; they do not break me. I am being provided with ‘atma-bala’ (soul power), intellectual power, mental strength, physical strength and tolerance to go through ups and downs of life.

God is not a bystander by any stretch of imagination; He, being omnipresent, has become fully involved. God has become ‘kartā’ (doer) in my life and I am his ‘nimitta’ (instrument).

God has given a lifeline to the suffering humanity who are increasingly getting afflicted by mental illness. What is the biggest cause? Fear of course! Get started on the spiritual path and get gradually freed from debilitating fears. Once someone does what the Lord has asked us to do, we become His responsibility; we cannot be better placed.

(The author is a spiritual teacher)

India on a mission to revolutionise toilets



GUNJAN MEHTA

Toilets 2.0 campaign, launched by Government, supports drinking water supplies, sanitation systems, farming, industry



“

INDIA'S FIRST-EVER PINK TOILET WAS MADE IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL. IT WAS THEN INSTALLED IN MANY STATES. IN 2019, UNDER THE SWACHH BHARAT ABHIYAN, AN AIR-CONDITIONED PINK TOILET WAS INAUGURATED IN ALIGARH FOR WOMEN ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

”

When was the last time we used a public toilet while visiting a new city or tourist destination? It is often seen that people avoid using public toilets, because in most cases, these toilets are not completely clean and one is wary of unhygienic conditions. But one needs to give this a serious thought as to why public toilets do not seem usable despite regular cleaning. The sanitation workers ensure that they maintain the hygiene of these public toilets.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) launched the Toilets 2.0 campaign on November 19, on the occasion of World Toilet Day. Groundwater is the most abundant source of freshwater. It supports drinking water supplies, sanitation systems, farming, industry and ecosystems. Groundwater is vital for human survival. The World Toilet Day 2022 was observed with a global campaign ‘Making the invisible visible’, which primarily focused on the significance of groundwater conservation alongside cleanliness. This campaign explored how inadequate sanitation systems spread human waste into rivers, lakes and soil, polluting underground water resources. The central message of this day is that safely managed sanitation protects groundwater from human waste pollution.

Keeping in line with the World Toilet Day's focus for this year “the impact of the sanitation crisis on groundwater”, MoHUA organised a workshop that emphasised on used water management for less than one lakh population in an area of priority. It has been envisaged that 100 per cent of the urban bodies will be open defecation free and 50 per cent of urban bodies will reuse treated water. The workshop concluded with a definite roadmap to accelerate the implementation of used water management.

Citizen participation is essential in keeping public toilets clean. Keeping public toilets clean is a habit that must be inculcated through collective effort. A Jan Andolan is required for sustenance. In India, most public toilets are used by a large number of people, making regular hygiene compliance a persistent problem. To ensure hygiene in public toilets and reduce the risk of cross-contamination, we need to encourage people to change their behaviour. We need to make people aware of the current sanitation situation in India and educate them on how they can help improve the situation with a few simple steps.

If we go into detail, citizens can contribute in two ways: first, as locals, one can individually follow these simple steps, such as flushing the toilet after using it, cleaning the toilet seat before leaving, closing the toilet lid before flushing to keep germs out, not wetting the floors, not flushing anything other than toilet paper down the

toilet, and most importantly, properly disposing of sanitary waste as well.

If you as an individual follow these simple steps, the condition of public toilets will surely improve significantly. Secondly, citizens can work with social workers, volunteer organisations, and RWAs to raise public awareness about cleanliness in public restrooms. Collective effort of local bodies and citizens can surely churn out a good result. We need to instil a sense of responsibility in ourselves and encourage our fellow citizens to do the same. We need to ensure that it is our duty to leave a public restroom clean after use, and it is a gesture of respect to the person awaiting his/her turn.

Pink Toilets: They are more than just a shade of the paint. These toilets exclusively for women are more than just privacy. These toilets have sanitary pad vending machines that dispense pads at a subsidised rate of Rs 5 per pad and even for free in some cases. Additionally, the toilets are equipped with a breastfeeding room, changing room, and have disabled-friendly toilet seats and incinerators to dispose of sanitary napkins to prevent pollution.

So, all-in-all pink toilets aim to provide all-inclusive facilities for women's sanitation practices. India's first-ever pink toilet was made in the national capital. It was then installed in many states. In 2019, under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, an air-conditioned pink toilet was inaugurated in Aligarh for women on International

Women's Day.

Suvidha toilets: Mumbai's unique was an initiative which started with Public Private Partnership. Suvidha toilets in Mumbai have come up as a unique example, where public toilets are being used and maintained by the community only with their cooperation. Apart from toilets, people have an access to laundry, bathroom, and drinking water services by paying a nominal fee. Facility for washing hands and feet is available. Not just this, these toilets offer facilities of sanitary napkins, panic buttons, CCTV cameras, etc.. This is also a source of employment for the women of the community. Karnataka's Stree initiative: Karnataka's 'Stree' initiative has been highly appreciated. The Karnataka Transport Corporation has converted its scrapped buses into toilets equipped with facilities. These toilets make the long bus rides easier for women. The bus-turned-toilets are equipped with three Indian toilets and two western toilets, an incinerator and a sanitary pad vending machine, a baby changing facility, a wash basin, solar sensor lights with self-generated solar power, etc.

Sewage connections are also laid at the bus stop and notebooks are kept for user feedback.

The Toilets 2.0 campaign launched by MoHUA focuses on sustainable models of toilet use and functioning in India. It includes the cleaning and maintenance of public/community toilets by locals through five themes-1) People For Toilets 2) Partners for toilets,

3) Design challenge, 4) Rate your toilets, 5) Our thoughts.

Under 'People for Toilets', Urban Local Bodies are taking action to improve public toilets and community restrooms with public support. For the 'Partners for Toilets', potential partners will be motivated to adopt public and community toilets to improve their operation by providing one-time financial support and maintenance.

The 'Rate Your Toilets' theme will ask users to give their feedback on specific type of public toilets where sanitary conditions have been improved. Under the theme 'My Thoughts', citizens are being asked to share their opinions about the public toilets in their cities via a survey on MyGov.in. This feedback will then be forwarded to the cities' local authorities so that they can take appropriate measures to remedy the deficiencies within a certain period of time based on the user feedback.

The rich heritage of sanitation that has been created since the inception of Swachh Bharat Mission, encompass accessibility, safety, dignity, aspirational, and inclusivity. The collective experience, learning sense of responsibility, ownership and pride drawing from the extraordinary legacy is always reflected through Jan Andolan. Toilet 2.0 will lay the foundation for the toilets of tomorrow, a gateway to clean, hygienic public/community toilets with state-of-the-art features, designed keeping in mind the aspirations of the community and its citizens.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

I DON'T FEEL I NEED TO RESPOND. I DON'T TWEET. A LOT OF THAT STUFF IS JUST A CESSPOOL OF MISINFORMATION, — WHITE HOUSE CHIEF MEDICAL ADVISER ANTHONY FAUCI



DR ANTHONY FAUCI, SHOULD BE CRIMINALLY PROSECUTED FOR FUNDING RESEARCH THAT "KILLED MILLIONS OF PEOPLE" IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. — ENTREPRENEUR ELON MUSK



Poll verdicts give mixed signals for 2024 elections

The Congress has consolation in the Himachal victory, but real test will be to build the 2004 type of narrative

What next, now that the voters in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh have given their verdicts? Each of the main parties got some gains but also suffered some losses. The immediate challenge before them and the Opposition is to set right things before the final 2024 polls.

The BJP won a spectacular victory in Gujarat and is the only party other than the Communist Party of India (Marxist) to have won seven straight Assembly elections in Gujarat. The CPI(M) ruled West Bengal from 1977 to 2011. Being Narendra Modi's home state and a BJP bastion, Gujarat has held particular importance since Modi took over in 2014 as Prime Minister of the country. Stakes



KALYANI SHANKAR

were high as losing Gujarat would have been a loss of face for Modi, but the record win has added to his prestige.

Modi's main challenge now would be defeating the regional satraps. Congress has proved it will not disappear as the Prime Minister predicted a Congress-Mukt Bharat and the AAP has expanded. With these, the Opposition got some moral boost to face the upcoming Assembly polls in 2023 and the next Lok Sabha polls in 2024.

The BJP got a drubbing in Himachal and Delhi Municipal Corporation elections. For the party, Himachal's loss was disappointing, as the Prime Minister himself campaigned heavily. Undoubtedly, its calculations went

awry, but the BJP is a party not bogged down by defeats. Even panchayat elections are as important as a Parliament poll!

BJP president JP Nadda already called a meeting of all national- and state-level office bearers in Delhi on December 5 and 6. He discussed preparations for the 2024 Lok Sabha and 2023 assembly elections. The BJP is eying 350 plus seats in 2024 to improve its 2019 tally. The party's strength is due to its immense resources, well-knit workforce, and committed cadre. The RSS and the rest of the Sangh Parivar also work for the party to mobilize votes.

Congress is quite enthused at the unexpected bonanza in Himachal, although it

has been wiped out in Gujarat and Delhi. It had no concerted policy or strategic designs to win. Each candidate fought for themselves, with the Gandhis avoiding the campaign. Priyanka Gandhi, in charge of Himachal, did the bare minimum. Rahul Gandhi briefly campaigned in Gujarat and completely skipped Himachal. Sonia Gandhi did not campaign at all due to her ill health. It was their answer to the family's detractors for demanding a non-Gandhi party president.

Himachal's win has given some morale boost to the Congress workers demoralized by the successive defeats in 2014 and 2019. If it is defeated again in 2024, the party will be out of power for 15 years.

Thirdly, Congress must keep the remaining flock together though many senior leaders have already quit and joined other parties. Projecting the younger leaders and retaining the seniors should be its goal. Also, there is a need to develop second-rung leadership.

Congress must also build a new narrative, as it did in 2004 and coined the AAM ADM I slogan. People want to know what the party will do in the future rather than what it has done in THE PAST. The Bharat Jodo Yatra of Rahul Gandhi might help, but the momentum needs to be maintained until 2024.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal got a boost after winning five seats in Gujarat and getting the

national party tag. AAP is the only party ruling two states – Delhi and Punjab. Kejriwal wants to emerge as a challenger to Modi in the 2024 polls.

The AAP also wrested the prestigious Municipal Corporation of Delhi from the BJP. The by-election results should cheer up the Opposition. The ruling BJP in UP lost to Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) but wrested the Rampur Sadar seat. The Samajwadi Party retained the Mainpuri Lok Sabha seat. The BJP wrested the Kurhani constituency in Bihar from the Nitish Kumar-led alliance. The Congress had retained its two assembly seats in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan.

These give a positive message that the Opposition must

not give up. At least half a dozen powerful regional satraps firmly hold on to their voters. They want to keep the choice of the Prime Ministerial candidate open. It includes West Bengal (Mamata Banerjee), Telangana (K. Chandrashekar Rao), Tamil Nadu (MK Stalin), Bihar (Nitish Kumar), and Delhi (Arvind Kejriwal).

The secret of Modi's success is the divided Opposition. Bringing all the anti-BJP parties on one platform would go a long way. There are still 18 months to re-strategise and re-assess the electoral plans. It is up to Congress and the Opposition to prepare for that final battle in 2024 with the present advantage. The BJP, in any case, is poll ready.

‘Russian strikes thwarted, wreckage hits buildings’

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian authorities said they thwarted a Russian attack on Kyiv and the surrounding region Wednesday as their air defense system intercepted and destroyed 13 explosive-laden drones, although wreckage from some of them damaged five buildings. No casualties were reported.

The attempted strikes underlined how vulnerable Ukraine's capital remains to the regular Russian attacks that have devastated infrastructure and population centres in recent weeks, mostly in the country's east and south.

But they also highlighted Ukraine's claims of increasing efficiency in intercepting weapons — something that Patriot missiles from the U.S. May soon help boost.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in a brief video statement, said the “terrorists” fired 13 Iranian-made drones, and all were intercepted.

Such drones have been part of the firepower, along with rockets, missiles, shelling mortars and artillery, as Russia targets power stations, water facilities and other public utility sites.

The snow-covered capital remained largely calm after the

attack, which occurred around day-break. As the working day began, authorities sounded the all-clear.

The head of the Kyiv city administration, Serhii Popko, wrote on Telegram that the attempted strikes came in two waves.

Wreckage from the intercepted drones damaged an administrative building and four residential buildings, he said.

A blast left the three-story tax office building in the central Shevchenkyvskyi district with a gaping hole in the roof and blew out windows in parked cars and in a neighbouring building.

Clean-up crews were on site quickly to shovel away the rubble and roll out plastic sheeting to cover the blown-out windows in freezing temperatures.

One man, unfazed, pushed his son on a swing set on a nearby playground as the crews did their work.

Anton Rudikov's family was sleeping when they heard the sounds of an explosion nearby and smashing windows.

“The children were frightened; the windows flew out,” said Rudikov, who has daughters ages 13 and 18. “What else can I say?”

Local residents told Associated Press reporters they saw fragments from a drone which contained the



words “For Ryazan.”

The Kremlin claims Ukraine was responsible for an attack last week on a military base in the Ryazan region of western Russia.

Ukrainian authorities have trumpeted their ability to down Russian weapons. But strikes in some areas continue to cause deaths and havoc, particularly in areas close to the front

lines in the east and south.

In the southern city of Odesa, drone strikes temporarily shut off the power last week. Kyiv has suffered comparatively little damage.

During a previous round of Russian volleys on Dec. 5, more than 60 of 70 strikes were intercepted by air defense systems, including nine out of 10 targeting the capital and the surrounding region, Ukrainian officials have said.

U.S. Officials said Tuesday the United States was poised to approve sending a Patriot missile battery to Ukraine, agreeing to an urgent request from Ukrainian leaders desperate for more robust weapons to shoot down incoming Russian missiles.

Zelenskyy pressed Western leaders as recently as Monday to provide more advanced weapons to help his country in its war with Russia.

The Patriot would be the most advanced surface-to-air missile system the West has provided to Ukraine to help repel Russian aerial attacks since Russia invaded on Feb. 24.

U.S. Officials also said last week that Moscow has looked to Iran to resupply the Russian military with drones and surface-to-surface missiles.

The damage caused by Russian strikes has interrupted electricity, heating and water supplies to many Ukrainians as winter sets in.

The U.N. Migration agency said that more than 5 million people who were displaced within or outside

Ukraine since the Russian invasion started have returned home.

The International Organisation for Migration said a Nov. 25-Dec. 5 phone survey of 2,002 respondents in Ukraine also found that only 7% were considering leaving their current locations.

The head of Zelenskyy's office, Andriy Yermak, said Wednesday that 64 Ukrainian soldiers and a U.S. National living in Ukraine were released in the latest prisoner swap between Kyiv and Moscow.

In a Telegram post, he identified the “U.S. Citizen who helped our people” as Suedi Murekezi.

Separately, the International Atomic Energy Agency said that it has agreed with Ukraine to “establish a continuous presence of nuclear safety and security experts” at all of the country's nuclear power plants as part of efforts to prevent a nuclear accident during the conflict.

The U.N. Nuclear watchdog already has deployed a permanent expert mission to the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant.

The plant, Europe's biggest nuclear power station, has faced repeated shelling and is the biggest cause of concern.

There are three other plants in Ukrainian-held territory, as well as the decommissioned Chernobyl plant.

US poised to approve Patriot missile battery for Ukraine



AP ■ WASHINGTON

The US is poised to approve sending a Patriot missile battery to Ukraine, finally agreeing to an urgent request from Ukrainian leaders desperate for more robust weapons to shoot down incoming Russian missiles, U.S. officials said Tuesday.

The approval is likely to come later this week and could be announced as early as Thursday, said three officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the decision is not final and has not been made public. Two of the officials said the Patriot will come from Pentagon stocks and be moved from another country overseas.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pressed Western leaders as recently as Monday to provide more advanced weapons to help his country in its war with Russia. The Patriot would be the most advanced surface-to-air missile system the West has provided to Ukraine to help repel Russian aerial attacks.

During a video conference on Monday, Zelenskyy told host Germany and other leaders of the Group of Seven industrial powers that his country needed long-range missiles, modern tanks, artillery, missile batteries and other high-tech air defense systems to counter Russian attacks that have knocked out electricity and water supplies for millions of Ukrainians.

He acknowledged that, “Unfortunately, Russia still has an advantage in artillery and missiles.” And he said protecting Ukraine's energy facilities from Russian missiles and Iranian drones “will be the protection of the whole of Europe, since with these strikes Russia is provoking a humanitarian and migration catastrophe not only for Ukraine, but also for the entire EU.” White House and Pentagon leaders have said consistently that providing Ukraine with additional air defenses is a priority, and Patriot missiles have been under consideration for some time. Officials said that as the winter closed in and the Russian bombardment of civil-

ian infrastructure escalated, that consideration took on increased priority. Pentagon and State Department officials at briefings on Tuesday would not confirm the plan to provide Patriots to Ukraine, repeatedly saying they had nothing to announce.

U.S. officials had balked at providing the weapons to Ukraine because they could be considered an escalation that would trigger a response from Moscow. The Patriot also requires significant training and there were concerns that U.S. troops would have been required to operate it. Biden has flatly rejected sending any U.S. combat troops to Ukraine.

Asked about training, Brig. Gen. Patrick Ryder, the Pentagon press secretary, said that in general the U.S. takes those needs into consideration when providing complicated weapons systems to Ukraine, such as the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, known as HIMARS. Currently U.S. forces are training Ukrainian troops on a number of systems, including the HIMARS, in other

European countries, such as Germany.

The administration's potential approval of a Patriot battery was first reported by CNN.

According to officials, the U.S. plan would be to send one Patriot battery. A truck-mounted Patriot battery includes up to eight launchers, each of which can hold four missiles.

The entire system, which includes a phased array radar, a control station, computers and generators, typically requires about 90 soldiers to operate and maintain, however only three soldiers are needed to actually fire it, according to the Army.

Patriot missile systems and other similar sophisticated surface-to-air weapons are in major demand among U.S. allies, including eastern European nations worried that they could be Russia's next targets. The U.S. has a limited number of the systems, and has deployed them across the Middle East and Europe in recent years to help allies protect against the threat of incoming ballistic missiles from countries such as Iran.



A man pushes his daughter on a swing in front of a tax office building that was heavily damaged by a Russian attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Wednesday

(AP Photo)

Focus on war's ecological toll, NZ told

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Wednesday urged New Zealand to take a leading role in focusing on the environmental destruction his country is suffering as a result of Russia's invasion.

Zelenskyy delivered his message via video link to lawmakers who packed the debating chamber at 8 a.m. He became just the second foreign leader to address New Zealand's parliament, after Australia's Julia Gillard did so in 2011.

Zelenskyy said it was possible to rebuild a nation's economy and infrastructure, even though it may take many years.

“But you can't rebuild destroyed nature, just as you can't restore destroyed lives,” he said. Zelenskyy is pushing for a 10-point



peace plan that, as well as environmental protection, including items such as nuclear safety and justice. He has been asking various countries to take a lead on different points.

He said some of the environmental effects of the war included poisoned groundwater, ravaged forests, flooded coal mines and huge areas of Ukraine that remain con-

taminated from unexploded mines.

Zelenskyy thanked New Zealand for their contributions to Ukraine's war effort so far and offered a message of hope.

“Various dictators and aggressors, they always fail to realize the strength of the free world's governments,” he said.

New Zealand announced it was providing another 3 million New Zealand dollars (\$2 million) in humanitarian aid through the International Committee of the Red Cross, adding to the NZ\$8 million it had already provided.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern told Zelenskyy her country's support for Ukraine wasn't determined by geography or diplomatic ties.

“Our judgment was a simple one,” she said. “We asked ourselves the question, What if it was us?”

Pope urges ‘humble’ Christmas, with savings sent to Ukraine

AP ■ ROME

Pope Francis on Wednesday called for a “humble” Christmas this year, with savings from reduced spending on gifts donated to help the “suffering people of Ukraine.”

Francis called for “concrete gestures” of charity for Ukrainians this holiday season during his weekly general audience.

“It's nice to celebrate Christmas and have parties, but let's lower the level of Christmas spending a bit,” he said.

“Let's make a more humble Christmas, with more humble gifts, and let's send what we save to the people of Ukraine who need it.”

Francis has spoken out frequently about the “martyred” people of Ukraine ever since Russia invaded on February 24.

The Vatican has organised humanitarian deliveries over recent months, including a clothing drive this month to bring thermal wear to Ukrainians suffering the winter cold with reduced heating and electricity.

“They are hungry, they are cold, so many die for lack of doctors and nurses,” Francis said. “Let's not forget them.”



Christmas yes, in peace and with the Lord, yes. But with Ukrainians in the heart.”

Francis recently sparked a new diplomatic row with Moscow when he blamed most of the “cruelty” in Russia's war on Chechen and other minority fighters, who he said were not of “the Russian tradition.”

Russia's ambassador to the Holy See lodged a formal protest with the Holy See after the remarks, and Russian officials

said this week the Vatican hadn't yet apologised.

In another Christmas gesture, the Vatican said this week that Francis had sent letters to heads of state around the globe asking them to undertake a “gesture of clemency” for eligible prisoners.

Francis reasoned that doing so could show “an opening to the grace of the Lord in a time marked by tensions, injustices and conflicts.”

Suspected Russian FSB officer charged in US sanctions case



AP ■ NEW YORK

A suspected officer with Russia's Federal Security Service was among seven people charged by U.S. prosecutors Tuesday with smuggling sensitive electronic components to help Russia's military effort.

Prosecutors claimed the seven worked with two Moscow-based companies controlled by Russian intelligence services to acquire electronic components in the U.S. that have civilian uses, but can also be used to help make nuclear and hypersonic weapons and in quantum computing. The exporting of the technology involved is heavily regulated and occurred in violation of U.S. sanctions, according to a 16-count indictment unsealed Monday in Brooklyn.

Five Russian nationals were charged, including Vadim Konoshchenok, a suspected officer with Russia's Federal Security

Service, or FSB. He was arrested in Estonia last week and will undergo extradition proceedings to the United States, U.S. authorities said.

“The Department of Justice and our international partners will not tolerate criminal schemes to bolster the Russian military's war efforts,” Attorney General Merrick B. Garland said in a statement announcing the charges.

About 375 pounds of ammunition originating from the United States was found by Estonian authorities in a warehouse used by Konoshchenok, according to federal prosecutors.

The four other Russian nationals remain at large. Also arrested and charged were Alexey Brayman, a lawful U.S. resident living in Merrimack, New Hampshire, and Vadim Yermolenko, a U.S. citizen living in Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

Israel behind Syria strike, suggests Israeli military chief

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Israel's military chief of staff strongly suggested on Wednesday that Israel was behind a strike on a truck convoy in Syria last month, giving a rare glimpse of Israel's shadow war against Iran and its proxies across the region.

Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi said Israeli military and intelligence capabilities made it possible to strike specific targets that pose a threat. Without those capabilities, he said, a recent strike would not have been possible. “We could have not known a few weeks ago about the Syrian convoy passing from proxies like Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group or to destroy weapons caches. But such a specific reference to a particular strike is rare. As a policy, the military does not comment on suspected Israeli strikes beyond its borders or outside of the Gaza Strip.

The November strike Kochavi referred to hit tanker trucks carrying fuel and other trucks carrying weapons for the militias in Syria's eastern province of Deir el-Zour, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human



n't be killed.”

Israel's military chief of staff strongly suggested on Wednesday that Israel was behind a strike on a truck convoy in Syria last month, giving a rare glimpse of Israel's shadow war against Iran and its proxies across the region.

Rights, an opposition war monitor. It added that at least 14 people, most of them militiamen, were killed in the strike.

The strike, along the border with Iraq, targeted Iran-backed militiamen, Syrian opposition activists said at the time. Some of those killed in the attack were Iranian nationals, according to two paramilitary officers in Iraq.

At the time, Israel declined to comment on the strike.

Kochavi said Israel's actions in the region had “totally disrupted” Iran's desire to entrench itself militarily along Israel's border. He said they've prevented Iran from placing hundreds of surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles in Syria and Lebanon as well as tens of thousands of militiamen in the area, as well as the creation of a Syrian arm of Hezbollah.

Iran is a main backer of Syrian President Bashar Assad and has sent thousands of Iran-backed fighters to help Syrian troops during the country's 11-year civil war. Both Iran and Assad's government are also allied with Hezbollah, which has fought alongside Assad's forces in the war.

High hate crime in US: FBI report

But data missing

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Hate crimes in the US remained relatively high last year after a surge not seen in nearly two decades, according to a new FBI report.

But experts say it is actually an undercount because thousands of police departments, including some of the country's largest, didn't report their data.

Major cities like New York and Los Angeles, as well as large swaths of states including Florida and California, didn't send crime information to the FBI for 2021 due largely to changes in reporting requirements.

The agency normally puts out the most comprehensive picture of hate crime in the nation, so this year's report is concerning for advocates trying to address spikes in hate crimes that have heightened fears among marginalised groups and sparked calls to address the issue head on.

"Hate crimes tear at the fabric of our society and traumatise entire communities," said Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League, as he called on law enforcement to commit to hate-crime data collection.

"The failure by major states and cities across the country to report hate crime data essentially — and inexcusably — erases the lived experience of marginalised communities across the country."

The troubling trend continued this



year with a series of brutal, high-profile hate crimes, including a mass shooting at an LGBTQ nightclub in Colorado Springs and another that targeted Black people at a grocery store in Buffalo.

The nearly 7,300 hate crimes that were documented in the report are the third-highest total in the last decade and deeply alarming, Greenblatt said.

The majority of victims were targeted due to their race, followed by sexual orientation and religion. But while the FBI report pointed to a small decrease from 2020 to 2021, other research has found that last year actually saw a troubling increase in hate crimes.

The Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University-San Bernardino found a 21 per cent increase from 2020 to 2021 in an analysis

of 20 states, drawing from police data.

In cities with more than 1 million people, meanwhile, hate crimes surged 39 per cent, his research has found, with especially steep spikes in anti-Asian hate crime.

Large cities are key to hate-crime data because they tend to be more diverse and have more ways for people to tell authorities about hate crimes, which are historically underreported, he said. But many were missing from this year's FBI report.

"We're talking about, quite possibly, a record for 2021 that America just doesn't know," said Brian Levin, a professor of criminal justice and the centre's director.

"All data has limitations, but this data

is so incomplete as to leave out heavy swaths of places where the most terrorised communities live."

Less than two-thirds of the nearly 19,000 eligible law enforcement agencies reported hate crime data to the FBI for 2021, a steep decline compared to more than 80 per cent the year before.

That's because the federal agency switched to a new, more detailed reporting system.

Police departments, including those in the nation's largest cities, said they weren't able to make the transition to the new system in time.

Crime data collection from police departments has always been voluntary, and the bumpy transition also hampered violent crime data.

Federal authorities acknowledge the shortfall, but say the new system will eventually provide the country with a "richer and more complete picture of hate crimes nationwide," Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta said in a statement.

The Justice Department is doing a number of things to address the increase in hate crimes, including prioritising those investigations at field offices around the country, awarding millions in grant money to local police and adding new victim resources in more languages, she said.

"The Justice Department is committed to prioritising prevention, investigation and prosecution of hate crimes," she said.

"The FBI's 2021 Hate Crimes Statistics are a reminder of the need to continue our vigorous efforts to address this pervasive issue in America.

US military creates space unit in S Korea amid N Korea threats

AP ■ SEOUL

The US military formally launched a space force unit in South Korea on Wednesday, a move that will likely enable Washington to better monitor its rivals North Korea, China and Russia.

The activation of the U.S. Space Forces Korea at Osan Air Base near Seoul came after North Korea test-fired a barrage of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles designed to strike the U.S. Mainland and its allies South Korea and Japan in recent months.

"Just 48 miles north of us exists an existential threat; a threat that we must be prepared to deter, defend against, and — if required — defeat," Lt. Col. Joshua McCullion, chief of the new space unit, said during the activation ceremony at Osan. He apparently referred to North Korea, whose heavily fortified border with South Korea is just an hour's drive from Seoul, the South's capital.

The unit belongs to the U.S. Space Force, which was launched in December 2019 under then-President Donald Trump as the first new U.S. Military service in more than 70 years.



The Space Force was seen soberly as an affirmation of the need to more effectively organize for the defense of U.S. Interests in space — especially satellites used for civilian and military navigation, intelligence and communication. A previous Pentagon report said China and Russia had embarked on major efforts to develop technologies that could allow them to disrupt or destroy American and allied satellites in a crisis or conflict.

The U.S. Space Forces Korea is a subordinate of a bigger U.S. Space Force unit established within the Indo-Pacific command in Hawaii last month.

Jung Chang Wook, head of the Korea Defense Study Forum think tank in Seoul, said the U.S. Space Force was created to bring

together diverse surveillance assets including space-based satellites in one organization to manage and develop them in an effective, systemic manner. He said its unit in South Korea would work like a field unit while the other one in the Indo-Pacific Command would be its headquarters.

"The U.S. Space Forces Korea would maintain, operate and asses related equipment. Simply speaking, I would say the actual U.S. Space operations will be done at Osan Air Base," Jung said. He said the main role of the U.S. Space Forces Korea would be receiving, processing and analyzing tremendous amount of data and information transmitted by U.S. Satellites.



For peaceful resolution of Tamil issue, Lankan Prez holds all-party meeting

PTI ■ COLOMBO

An all-party meeting convened by President Ranil Wickremesinghe has discussed the 13th Amendment to Sri Lanka's Constitution as mooted by India to resolve the long-standing demand for political autonomy for the minority Tamils in the island nation, political leaders said on Wednesday.

The Tamil parties which participated in the meeting on Tuesday urged the government to hold the northern provincial council election.

"The 13A is already a part of the Constitution and it is a point that most parties agreed to," Tamil Progressive Alliance (TNA) leader Mano Ganesan told PTI.

Ganesan, who represents mostly the Western province-based Tamils of Indian origin, said President Wickremesinghe has asked him to forward proposals on the 13A issue on behalf of the hill country Tamil community or the Tamils of Indian origin.

India has been pressing Sri Lanka to implement the 13th Amendment which was brought in after the Indo-Sri Lankan agreement of 1987. The 13A provides for devolution of power to the Tamil community.

Ganesan said President Wickremesinghe, main opposition leader Sajith Premadasa and former president Mahinda Rajapaksa were all in agreement with implementing the 13A.

He urged the government to hold provincial council elections in the northern and eastern provinces so as to give people an

idea of self-governance with the full implementation of 13A.

C V Wigneswaran, former chief minister of the Northern province, said ensuring the councils to have already defined powers which have been denied to the provinces was discussed in the all-party meeting.

"We raised the issue of land grabbing by the state. They are taking over lands under government departments. This must stop and the land rights must be given to the provincial councils," Wigneswaran told PTI.

He said other issues concerning the Tamil minority and the release of political prisoners held under the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) were also discussed in the meeting.

President Wickremesinghe had called Tuesday's All Party Conference in a bid to arrive at a consensus on the Tamil minority's demand for political autonomy.

Wickremesinghe had said he was keen to announce a settlement of the issue by February 4 of next year, coinciding with Sri Lanka's 75th anniversary of Independence.

"We have very little time so we can't afford to go back and start all over again," Ganesan stressed.

Meanwhile, there were no immediate comments from pro-Sinhala majority nationalist parties on Tuesday's talks. All Sinhala parties were present in the meeting, Ganesan said, adding that only Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), the third largest majority community party, abstained from the parleys.

Only 91 women in 275-member Nepal Parliament: Election Commission

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

There are only 91 women lawmakers in the 275-member Nepal Parliament, the Election Commission said on Wednesday, lower than the 33 per cent reservation mandated for women by the Constitution.

Nepal went to the polls on November 20 to elect 275 representatives to the House of Representatives (HoR) and 550 members to the seven Provincial Assemblies.

Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba's Nepali Congress-led five-party coalition is two seats away from a simple majority after securing 136 seats in the HoR.

Out of 275 newly elected members in HoR, 184 are men and 91 are women, which constitutes only 31.10 per cent representation for women, the Election Commission said.

However, Nepal's Constitution mandates 33 per cent reservation for women in Parliament.

Women candidates fared slightly better in Provincial



Assemblies though, registering 36.36 per cent by clinching 200 out of the 550 seats.

The Election Commission will be submitting the final results to Nepal President Bidya Bhandari.

In the 275-member HoR, 165 are elected through direct voting, while the remaining 110 get elected through a proportional electoral system. A party or a coalition needs 138 seats to win a clear majority.

The Nepali Congress has emerged as the single largest party with 89 seats after the Election Commission allocated seats to all the political parties

under the proportional voting system.

The other partners of the ruling alliance have together secured 47 seats — CPN-Maoist Centre (32), CPN-Unified Socialist (10), Loktantrik Samajwadi Party (4) and Rashtriya Janamorchha one seat.

The C. K. Raut-led Janamat Party, which secured only one seat in the House of Representatives (HoR) under the first-past-the-post category, got 5 seats under the proportional representation (PR) category, which means that the party will have a total of six members in the House.

Ethiopians file lawsuit against Meta over hate speech in war

AP ■ NAIROBI

Two Ethiopians have filed a lawsuit against Facebook's parent company, Meta, over hate speech they say was allowed and even promoted on the social media platform amid heated rhetoric over their country's deadly Tigray conflict.

Former Amnesty International human rights researcher Fisseha Tekle is one petitioner in the case filed Wednesday and the other is the son of university professor Meareg Amare, who was killed weeks after posts on Facebook inciting violence against him.

The case was filed in neighbouring Kenya, home to the platform's content moderation operations related to Ethiopia. The lawsuit alleges that Meta hasn't hired enough content moderators there, that it uses an algorithm that prioritizes hate-



ful content and that it acts more slowly to crises in Africa than elsewhere in the world.

The lawsuit, also backed by Kenya-based legal organisation the Katiba Institute, seeks the creation of a USD 1.6 billion fund for victims of hate speech.

A Facebook spokesman, Ben Walters, told The Associated Press they could not comment on the lawsuit because they haven't received it.

He shared a general statement: "We have strict rules which outline what is and isn't allowed on Facebook and

Instagram. Hate speech and incitement to violence are against these rules and we invest heavily in teams and technology to help us find and remove this content." Facebook continues to develop its capabilities to catch violating content in Ethiopia's most widely spoken languages, it said.

Ethiopia's two-year Tigray conflict is thought to have killed hundreds of thousands of people. The warring sides signed a peace deal last month.

"This legal action is a significant step in holding Meta to account for its harmful business model," said Flavia Mwangovya of Amnesty International in a statement pointing out that the Facebook posts targeting its former researcher and the professor were not isolated cases.

The AP and more than a dozen other media outlets last year explored how Facebook

had failed to quickly and effectively moderate hate speech in cases around the world, including in Ethiopia. The reports were based on internal documents obtained by whistleblower Frances Haugen.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Public at large hereby informed that my clientess Smt. Chhaya Basak W/o Shri Nil Kamal Basak resident and absolute owner of Flat No. 15003, Tower No.18 block Durian Mahagun Mywoods, Plot No. GH-04 Sector-16C, Greater Noida West, Gautam Budh Nagar (UP), had executed a WILL dated 18.02.2022 in favour of his son Shri Saikat Basak which may be treated as cancelled, null and void. Revised WILL is under process.
Subhash Chandra Chakrabarty (Advocate)
Flat No. D-2041, Windsor Paradise II, Raj Nagar Extension, Ghaziabad 201017

PUBLIC NOTICE
Since Mrs. Meeta Rastogi seeking a home loan from of M/s ICICI BANK LTD. for the property i.e. Flat No. 1501 in Tower AB-1 on 14th Floor super area measuring 1430 sqyds along with car Parking Bay No. 731 situated at group Housing Project Known as Mapso Casa Bella, Sector 82-83, Village Sikhopur Tensil and District Gurgaon, Haryana. Herein after referred to as the "said property"; and Mrs. Meeta Rastogi has made us to understand that previous owners (i.e. Mr. Hitesh Mahajan and Mrs. Reeta Mahajan has lost or misplaced earlier Allotment letter and BBA Agreement of the said property having LR No 1039375/2022 somewhere, which are not traceable or cannot be found. Now, I would like to announce to general public that any person who is having any right, title, or interest against that property/share of documents may come to our Delhi Office within seven days and render their claim with documentary valid evidence. If any, else the same would be treated as undclaimed and un rebutted and moved forth accordingly.
M/S PASS & ASSOCIATES LLP
A-233, F.F., Shivalki, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi-110017, Mob: 9991116066

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General public that Mrs. Sushila Devi is owner of A Commercial Shop No. 6, (Ground Floor) Kharsara No. 594 MI, Area measuring 18.50 Sq. yards, i.e. 15.46 Sq. Mtrs. Situated in Neel Kamal Apartment, Rakesh Mang, Nasserpur, Paragana Loni, Ghaziabad Tensil, Dist. vide Registered Sale Deed dated 4.05.2018 registration No. 3750 with Sub Registrar I GHaziabad. All persons are hereby informed that Mohd. Zakir, Vaik, Parveen Begum has approached Fullerton India Home Finance Company Limited to take a Loan and they have lost Registered Sale deed dated 20.04.2024 in respect of said property executed by Rahul Kumar in favor of Ramnagar duly registered at sub-registrar office BBA/ABAD vide documents No. 2193, volume no. 5852, book no. 1, pages no. 229/238, dated on 20.04.2024. Mohd. Zakir Malik, Parveen Begum has informed the Delhi Police No. 1077542/2022 about the loss of the above-mentioned sale deed. If anybody has any charge/interference in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 7 days of the present.
Mrs. Praseon Lata, Advocate
SG Associates (Law Firm)
Unit No. 7, Basement, Plot No C 78
Sector 2, Noida, UP 201301
E-Mail: sgassociatespl@gmail.com
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Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
(Regd. Office: PSEB Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001)
Corporate Identity Number U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website: www.pspcl.in Phone No. 01881-275289 E-Mail:- SE-hq-egstsp-ropar@pspcil.in
E-Tender Enq. No. 7342/P-3/EMP-12147 Dated: 13-12-2022
Dy. Chief Engineer/Headquarter (Procurement Cell-3) GGSSTP, Roopnagar invites E-tender ID No. 2022_POWER_83554_1 for Procurement of complete Tube Bundle for Lubri Oil Heat Exchanger of BFPs of stage II & III at GGSSTP, Roopnagar. For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 13-12-2022/0530 PM onwards.
Note: Corrigendum & amendments, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>
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RTP-99/22

Temporary Cancellation/Re-Scheduling /Short Termination/Short Origination/Diversion of trains due to Yard Remolding work at Patel Nagar in Delhi Area
It is notified for the information of the general public that due to yard remolding work at Patel Nagar in Delhi Area, some of the trains shall remain temporarily cancelled/ rescheduled / diverted/regulated/short terminated/short originate. For detail of these trains, please visit our website www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in/<https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in/RailMadad> Helpline no. 139 or NTES App or scan below QR code.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

China won't report asymptomatic Covid cases

AP ■ BEIJING

China said Wednesday it would stop reporting asymptomatic COVID-19 cases since they've become "impossible" to track with mass testing no longer required, another step in the country's uncertain exit from some of the world's strictest antiviral policies.

China last week announced its most significant easing yet of antiviral measures and has begun to see what appears to be a rapid increase in new infections, raising concerns that its health system could become overwhelmed as those in other countries did during early COVID waves.

So far, though, many of those newly sick are staying home and there has been little evidence of a surge in patient num-



bers. But it's difficult to get a clear picture of the virus's spread, and the new reporting rules could make that even harder. Some hospitals have reportedly struggled to remain staffed because of rising infections among their employees.

A notice on the National Health Commission's website on Wednesday said it stopped publishing daily figures on COVID-19 cases where no symptoms are

detected since it was "impossible to accurately grasp the actual number of asymptomatic infected persons," which have generally accounted for the vast majority of new infections.

The only numbers they're reporting are confirmed cases detected in public testing facilities where symptoms are displayed. Many people also test at home — and any positive results there would also not be captured.

China's government-supplied figures have not been independently verified and questions have been raised about whether the ruling Communist Party has sought to minimize numbers of cases and deaths.

While many governments have long focused on only the more serious cases, the latest move is part of a sea change for

China, which has maintained a "zero COVID" policy that seeks to stamp out all virus transmission.

That included frequent mass testing campaigns, and it used to mean that anyone who tested positive was isolated in a government facility, even if they had no symptoms.

While many greeted the relaxing of the rules with relief, the major and rapid shift has also caused some concern — after years during which the Chinese government talked about the virus as a major threat.

Nov WPI inflation hits 21-month low of 5.85%

FM says Govt will work to further bring down inflation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The wholesale price-based inflation fell to a 21-month low of 5.85 per cent in November as prices of food, fuel and manufactured items softened.

The WPI (wholesale price index) based inflation has been on a declining trend since May and came down to single digit in October at 8.39 per cent.

Experts said a high base of last year and some easing in food prices also worked in favour of the November 2022 wholesale price index coming in at its lowest level since February 2021 when it was 4.83 per cent.

“Decline in the rate of inflation in November 2022 is primarily contributed by fall in prices of food articles, basic metals, textiles, chemicals & chemical products and paper & paper products as compared to the corresponding month of the previous year,” the commerce and industry ministry said on Wednesday.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman told Parliament that the government will work



for the common man to further bring down inflation.

Inflation management or control... Prime Minister Modi and his group of ministers and officers are taking periodic interventions and measures as a result of which we find the results coming in,” Sitharaman said while replying to supplementary demands for grants for 2022-23 fiscal in the Lok Sabha.

Inflation in food articles in November was 1.07 per cent against 8.33 per cent in the previous month. Inflation in vegetables was (-)20.08 per cent during the month compared to 17.61 per cent in October.

Bank of Baroda in a research note said WPI inflation continued to moderate in November with the base effect

working in favour of lower numbers.

Within food, prices of fruits, vegetables, especially tomato and potato, dragged down the prices. However, there is an uptick in prices of wheat, pulses and milk products.

“With Russian federation re-joining the Black Sea Grain initiative, wheat prices are expected to see some volatility in the coming months. Core WPI softened to two-year low of 3.5 per cent in November. Going ahead, we expect further easing in WPI inflation,” Bank of Baroda said in a note.

As per WPI data, in the ‘fuel and power’ basket, inflation was 17.35 per cent, while in manufactured products, it was 3.59 per cent in November.

Markets settle higher for 2nd day on +ve inflation numbers

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended with gains on Wednesday, extending their previous day rally amid lower level of inflation on domestic front and better-than-expected inflation readings from the US.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 144.61 points or 0.23 per cent to settle at 62,677.91. During the day, it jumped 301.81 points or 0.48 per cent to 62,835.11.

The broader NSE Nifty advanced 52.30 points or 0.28 per cent to end at 18,660.30.

“Nifty rose for the second consecutive session, in line with most Asian markets that were up. Sharp fall in WPI inflation for November also helped sentiments,” said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

Stocks rose Wednesday in Asia after a rally on Wall Street spurred by news that inflation in the US cooled more than expected last month, Jasani added.

From the Sensex pack, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, NTPC, IndusInd Bank, State Bank of India, Power Grid, HCL Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services and Larsen & Toubro were the major winners.

Nestle, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Asian Paints, Hindustan



Unilever and UltraTech Cement were among the laggards.

“Better-than-expected inflation readings from major global economies, combined with increased appetite for IT stocks, aided the domestic market’s bullishness. US CPI inflation easing to 7.1 per cent in November will lower the chances of the Fed being hawkish. Though the Fed is largely expected to raise rates by 50 basis points, their comments on future inflation and rate actions would dominate market movements,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.68 per cent and midcap index advanced 0.59 per cent.

Among sectors, metal jumped 1.55 per cent, realty (1.44 per cent), IT (0.89 per cent), industrials (0.81 per cent), commodities (0.80 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.55 per cent).

Govt allows non-resident taxpayers to manually file Form 10F till March 31 for claiming TDS benefit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The income tax department has allowed non-resident taxpayers not having PAN to file Form 10F manually till March 31, 2023, a move which would ease their compliance burden and enable them to claim lower TDS rate.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had in July made it mandatory for non-resident taxpayers to file Form 10F electronically to claim benefit of lower Tax Deducted at Source (TDS).

However, taxpayers faced problems in electronic filing of the form as the income tax portal did not allow a taxpayer who does not have a Permanent Account Number (PAN) to file Form 10F.



In a notification, the CBDT said to mitigate genuine hardship to such taxpayers, it has been decided that such category of non-resident taxpayers who are not having PAN and not required to have PAN as per relevant provisions of the I-T Act would be exempted from mandatory electronic filing of

Form 10F till March 31, 2023.

“It is reiterated that such category of taxpayers may make statutory compliance of filing Form 10F till March 31, 2023 in manual form as was being done prior to issuance of the (July) notification,” the CBDT said in a notification dated December 12.

Nangia Andersen LLP M&A Tax Partner Sandeep Jhunjhunwala said sans the notified transactions requiring quoting of PAN, non-residents can transact with Indian parties without the aversion of a higher 20 per cent withholding tax rate if prescribed details such as name, e-mail id, address, contact number, TIN and a valid tax residency certificate (TRC) are furnished to resident Indian payer.

Rupee rises 15 paise to close at 82.45 against US dollar



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee gained 15 paise to settle at 82.45 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, as a positive trend in domestic equities and easing inflationary pressures strengthened investor sentiment.

Besides, a weak greenback against its major rivals overseas and softening crude oil prices supported the domestic unit, forex traders said.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened flat at 82.60 against the greenback and witnessed an intraday high of 82.40 and a low of 82.71.

It finally ended at 82.45 against the American currency, registering a rise of 15 paise over its previous close of 82.60.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback’s strength against a basket of six currencies, declined 0.28 per cent to 103.69.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 144.61 points or 0.23 per cent higher at 62,677.91, while the broader NSE Nifty

advanced 52.30 points or 0.28 per cent to 18,660.30.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, slipped 0.26 per cent to \$80.47 per barrel.

The US inflation for November was recorded at 7.1 per cent annually against an annual gain of 7.7 per cent in October, triggering hopes that the US Federal Reserve might be less hawkish in raising interest rates.

The Fed is widely expected to raise its benchmark rate by 0.50 percentage points on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, retail inflation in India dipped below the RBI’s upper tolerance level of 6 per cent for the first time in 11 months in November as softening prices of food items brought relief, but the central bank may wait for more data before pausing hikes in interest rates.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) turned net buyers in capital markets on Tuesday as they bought shares worth ₹619.92 crore, according to exchange data.

Bengal invites more investment in cement sector

PTI ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Commerce and Industry Minister Shashi Panja on Wednesday invited more investment in manufacturing, including cement, into the State.

The industry has responded positively and at least two companies expressed keenness to invest in the state in the coming years.

At an interactive session on cement organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce, Panja said that that state can be a destination for cement companies, given the growing demand in the east and the availability of coal in abundance in this region.

Cement companies have been struggling with coal shortage that has pushed their cost significantly in the last few quarters.

The West Bengal government is trying to develop the Deocha Pachami coal block in Birbhum district.

Firm to empower street vendors raises ₹5 crore

New Delhi: Kart4U, a tech-driven startup that aims to empower the street cart vendors of India by phygittising them for their systematic growth, has raised Rs 5 crore from Startup Stairs, a seed-stage accelerator dedicated to developing the skills ecosystem in India.

Startup Stairs announced 15 startups as the winners of their ‘Growth Acceleration Program with 4i’ under the aegis of NSDC supported by Startup India.

HDFC Bank inks pact with LEAF for enabling financial access to farmers

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Private sector lender HDFC Bank on Wednesday said it has partnered with integrated full-stack agriculture technology solutions provider Lawrenceedale Agro Processing India (LEAF) to support the farming community in three southern states.

As per the memorandum of understanding that has been signed, the bank would extend its specialised services and facilities to farmers, agri-producers and other rural communities.

Following the MoU, HDFC Bank would work with LEAF Farmers Network in the operational areas under LEAF in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

“This agreement is signed to expand the financial accessibility and inclusivity of farmers and the scope of Farmer



Producer Organisation ecosystem,” a press release said.

With this deal, four lakh farmers across the three states stand to benefit.

HDFC Bank senior executive vice president and Head, Rural Banking, Anil Bhavnani exchanged documents with LEAF founder and CEO Palat Vijayaraghavan on the occasion.

“Our partnership with LEAF will create great outcomes. It will improve and provide financial access and inclusion to the entire rural ecosystem, drive impact and create shared success,” Bhavnani said.

NSE cautions investors against assured return scheme offered by an individual

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) on Wednesday asked investors not to subscribe to any scheme with assured returns offered by an individual named Jay Prakash.

The advisory comes after the NSE found that the individual was collecting funds from the public and was providing guaranteed returns on investment. He was also offering to handle trading accounts of investors by asking them to share their user ID and password.

The bourse pointed out that the person is not registered either as a member or authorized person of any registered member of the NSE.

Cautioning the investors, the NSE asked them not to subscribe to any such scheme or product offered by any individual offering assured returns in the stock market as the same is prohibited by law, according to the statement.



Further, investors have been asked not to share their trading credentials such as user ID and password with anyone.

“Participation in such prohibited schemes is at investors’ own risk, cost and consequences as such schemes are neither approved nor endorsed by the exchange,” the NSE said.

For any kind of disputes relating to such prohibited schemes, mechanisms such as benefits of investor protection under exchange’s jurisdiction, exchange dispute resolution mechanism and investor grievance redressal mechanism administered by exchange, would not be available to investors, it added.

Elin Electronics’ IPO to kick off on December 20

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The initial share-sale of electronics manufacturing services company Elin Electronics will open for public subscription on December 20.

The three-day initial public offering (IPO) will conclude on December 22, according to the red herring prospectus (RHP). The company has cut the public issue size to ₹475 crore from ₹760 crore planned earlier. Now, the IPO comprises fresh issue of shares aggregating up to ₹175 crore and an offer-for-sale of up to ₹300 crore by promoters and other selling shareholders.

Proceeds from the fresh issue will be used to repay debt, fund capital expenditure for upgradation and expansion of existing plants in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh and Verna, Goa and for general corporate purposes. Delhi-based Elin is a manufacturer of end-to-end product solutions for major brands, and a leading fractional horsepower motors manufacturer in the country.

Edible oils import up 34% to 15.29 lakh tonne in Nov; crude palm oil shipment at record high

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India’s edible oil imports rose 34 per cent in November to 15.29 lakh tonne on sharp jump in import of crude palm and refined palm oils, according to industry body SEA.

The Solvent Extractors’ Association of India (SEA) on Wednesday released the data of imports of total vegetable oils

comprising edible oil and non-edible oil for November, the first month of 2022-23 oil marketing year.

As per the data, imports of vegetable oils rose 32 per cent in November 2022 to 15,45,540 tonne from 11,73,747 tonne in the same month last year.

Out of total vegetable oil imports, SEA said shipments of edible oils increased to 15,28,760 tonne in November

this year from 11,38,823 tonne in the same month of 2021.

Import of non-edible oils fell 52 per cent in November 2022 to 16,780 tonne from 34,924 tonne in the year-ago period. Further, in edible oils category, SEA said imports of crude palm oil (CPO) were highest in a single month.

India imported a record 9,31,180 tonne of CPO in November 2022 as against

4,77,160 tonne in the year-ago period. The previous high for CPO import was 8,78,137 tonne in October 2015, it added.

Import of RBD (refined) palmolein increased to 2,02,248 tonne in November from 58,267 tonne in the same month last year. Sunflower oil imports also increased to 1,57,709 tonne from 1,25,024 tonnes.

KFin Tech IPO to open on Dec 19, sets IPO price band at ₹347-366/share

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Financial services platform KFin Technologies on Wednesday said it has fixed a price band of ₹347-366 a share for its ₹1,500-crore initial share sale, which will open for public subscription on December 19.

The three-day initial public offering will conclude on December 21, and the bidding for anchor investors will take place on December 16, the company said in a statement.

The IPO will be a pure offer-for-sale (OFS) of up to ₹1,500 crore by its existing promoter General Atlantic Singapore Fund Pte Ltd. The company will not receive any proceeds from the offer, as all of it will go to the promoter.

At present, the promoter and promoter group hold a 74.37 per cent stake in the company.

KFin Technologies is majority-owned by funds managed by private equity investor General Atlantic. Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited also

owns a 9.98 per cent stake in KFinTech which it acquired in 2021.

The company said that 75 per cent of the issue size has been reserved for qualified institutional investors, 15 per cent for non-institutional investors and the remaining 10 per cent for retail investors.

Investors can bid for a minimum of 40 shares and in multiples thereof.

KFinTech is an investor and issuer solutions provider, serving asset managers such as mutual funds, alternative

investment funds (AIFs), wealth managers, pension funds and corporate issuers, as well as international clients in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong.

It is the country’s largest investor solutions provider to Indian mutual funds based on the number of asset management company (AMC) clients serviced as of September 2022.

The firm provides services to 24 out of 41 AMCs in India, representing 59 per cent market share.

The firm provides services to 24 out of 41 AMCs in India, representing 59 per cent market share.

Fintech Zype raises ₹146 crore

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Fintech startup Zype on Wednesday said it has raised ₹146 crore in a funding round led by city-based private equity fund Xponentia Capital.

Zype, which is focused on upping credit accessibility to millennials and help them develop sustainable financial habits, will deploy the funds for the technology platform, expanding team and customer acquisition, as per a statement.

Its Founder and Chief Executive Yogi Sadana said the company intends to offer credit products and interactive money management tools to its target segment.

CAD seeing swelling to 37-qtr high of 4.4% of GDP in Q2

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Falling exports and high crude prices are set to push up current account deficit (CAD) in the second quarter to a 37-quarter high of 4.4 per cent of GDP at \$36 billion as against \$9.7 billion or 1.3 per cent in the year-ago period, estimates a report.

As a percentage of GDP, the previous high was in the first quarter of 2013-14 when CAD had scaled to 4.7 per cent, but in absolute terms the previous high was in the third quarter of 2012-13 when it touched \$31.8 billion.

In the first quarter of this fiscal the deficit was \$23.9 billion or 2.8 per cent, according



to an assessment by India Ratings.

Global headwinds facing merchandise exports had the shipments contracting by close to 20 per cent in October 2022, first time since February 2021 and the agency expects merchandise exports to slip to an eight-quarter low of \$88.2 billion in 3QFY23 which would be 17.4 per cent lower than 3QFY22.

On the other side, falling commodity prices will help the country lower its import bill in the third quarter (Q3), even though crude prices were still 19.9 per cent in October-November. And the agency expects merchandise imports to decelerate to a three-quarter low of \$171.9 billion in Q3, but will still be up 2.9 percent on-year.

Overall, merchandise trade deficit will rise to a fresh high of \$83.7 billion in Q3, which is 38.9 per cent higher than 3QFY22, according to its estimate. The agency expects the rupee to average 81.8 against the USD, up 9.1 per cent in Q3, further putting pressure on CAD.

Gold gains ₹318; silver climbs ₹682

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rose by ₹318 to ₹54,913 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid strong global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal closed at ₹54,595 per 10 grams.

Silver also climbed ₹682 to ₹69,176 per kg.

“The gold price was steady in the Asian trading session after prices surged to a more than five-month high in the previous session on the back of softer-than-expected US consumer inflation,” said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities.



In the international market, gold was trading in green at \$1,808.2 per ounce while silver was up at \$23.70 per ounce.

“After the release of the CPI data, the dollar index dropped more than 1 per cent to a nearly six-month low; whereas benchmark U.S. Treasury 10Y yield also slipped.

NTPC to raise ₹500 cr via NCDs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-run power giant NTPC will raise ₹500 crore through the issuance of non-convertible debentures on a private placement on Friday.

“NTPC has decided to issue unsecured non-convertible debentures of ₹500 crore on December 16, 2022, through private placement at a coupon of 7.44 per cent per annum with a door to door maturity of 10 years 3 months 30 days on April 15, 2033,” a BSE filing stated.

The proceeds will be utilized for, inter alia, funding of capital expenditure, refinancing of existing loans and other general corporate purposes, it stated.



The debentures are proposed to be listed on BSE. Debenture Trust Deed will be duly executed as per the requirements of and within the period of time prescribed under the Companies Act and rules specified therein.

These debentures are being issued under the recommendation of board resolution dated July 29, 2022 and subsequent approval obtained through shareholders’ resolution dated August 30, 2022.

INDIA POST 278/6 ON DAY 1 OF 1ST TEST

PTI ■ CHATTOGRAM

Cheteshwar Pujara injected a fresh lease of life into his uncertain international future with a dogged 90 while Shreyas Iyer enjoyed a reprieve to remain unbeaten on 82 in India's underwhelming opening day score of 278/6 against Bangladesh in the first Test.

Pujara missed out on a Test hundred as he was bowled neck and crop by a beauty from left-arm spinner Taijul Islam (3/84) but not before seeing India out of danger with a 149-run fifth-wicket stand with Iyer.

Mehidy Hasan Miraz (2/71) dismissed Axar Patel off the last delivery of the day to wrest the initiative back for the hosts who would like to restrict India around a total of 300 runs on a track that wasn't bad for batting.

Credit should also be given to Rishabh Pant (46 off 45 balls) whose counter-attacking knock was of immense value as he was the first one to hold the opposition by the scruff of its neck after skipper KL Rahul (22), Shubman Gill (20) and Virat Kohli (1) were dismissed cheaply within the first 90 minutes of play.

Till Pant was at the crease, it seemed like he was batting on a different track.

Honours were shared on the opening day with Islam emerging as the hero for Bangladesh and showing he has the potential to come out of the shadows of his more illustrious skipper Shakib Al Hasan.

He bowled a couple of classical left-arm spinner's deliveries to get rid of Kohli in the first hour and Pujara in the final half hour to negate the advantage that India had gained after the fall of three wickets.

In case of Kohli, he tossed it up and bowled a fuller length as the batter went on the back-foot. The ball turned enough to hit him on the back-pad.

If Kohli ended up being plumb in front on the back-foot, Pujara presented a dead defence on the front-foot and saw the ball beat the outside edge of his bat to hit the off-stick.

Iyer, for one, was lucky when he was beaten through the gate by Ebadot Hossain and the ball hit the stumps with the bail being



disturbed from its groove but didn't fall.

While Pujara had 11 fours to his credit, Iyer has 10 hits to the fence so far. But overall, the batting performance left a lot to be desired.

It was Pant who showed the much-needed aggression, hitting six fours and two sixes in his knock as he along with Pujara (42 not out) added 64 runs after India were reduced to 48 for 3 in the 20th over.

India expectedly opted to bat but squandered the opportunity by allowing the Bangladesh bowlers to dominate the proceedings.

The aggressive approach that Rahul spoke about ahead of the game was missing in the first session.

Spin was introduced as early as in the sixth over and Rahul greeted his counterpart Shakib Al Hasan with a cut through the point region.

Gill too showed intent with a cut and pull off pacer Hossain in the following over as India reached 30 for no loss in seven overs.

However, the boundaries dried up thereafter as Bangladesh bowlers stuck to stump-to-stump line and stifled the Indians.

Gill perished to a poor shot, an avoidable sweep, while Rahul played away from his body off pacer Khaled Ahmed only to drag it back on to the stumps.

The top-order batters could have used their feet more against the spinners but preferred to stay back in the crease.

The much-needed attacking approach was displayed once again by Pant who put the pressure back on Islam by smashing him for a couple of fours and a six over wide long-on.

Pant welcomed offie Miraz with a square cut while Islam conceded two boundaries in the last over of the morning session.

Pujara should have been dismissed very early in the second session but Nurul Hasan couldn't hold on to the rare opportunity in the 27th over off Hossain.

Pant continued to look for quick runs and hammered Miraz and Hossain for two more boundaries. The keeper-batter also clobbered Miraz over deep midwicket for a maximum but the spinner had the last laugh as he cleaned him up next ball in the 32nd over.

Kohli moves to eighth in ODI rankings



PTI ■ DUBAI

Star India batter Virat Kohli has smoved up two ranks to the eighth position, while young opener Ishan Kishan rocketed 117 spots to 37th place in the latest ICC rankings released on Wednesday.

Kohli has been rewarded for scoring his first ODI hundred in more than three years in a match against Bangladesh recently, while Kishan made huge gains following his fastest ODI double-century in the same match. The former India captain had

scored a 91-ball 113 in the third and final ODI against Bangladesh in Chattogram on Saturday. It was his first hundred in the 50-over format since August, 2019.

Left-handed opener Kishan, on the other hand, had slammed a record-breaking 210 off 131 balls.

Shreyas Iyer too advanced from 20th to 15th in the batting chart following his score of 82 in the second match of the series in Dhaka.

Among bowlers, Indian pacer Mohammad Siraj gained four places to 22nd in the ODI ranking for India,

while Bangladesh spin allrounder Shakib al Hasan was up one place to eighth.

Bangladesh's Mehidy Hasan Miraz has moved up three places to third in the all-rounders' list.

In the Test rankings, Aussie batter Marnus Labuschagne consolidated his position at the top with a career-best 937 rating points after compiling his third three-figure knock in the two-match series against the West Indies.

He achieved the rare feat of scoring a double-century and a century in the same Test during the first match in Perth last week.

The 28-year-old now has a lead of 62 rating points over second-placed Steve Smith and is tied with Kohli for the 11th-best rating points ever in the list led by Australia great Don Bradman, who went as high as 961 rating points.

Smith is second in that list with 947 rating points, while Ricky Ponting (fifth with 942) is the third Australian in the top 10.

Travis Head is back in the top 10 after his Player of the Match effort of 175 and 38 not out helped record a 419-run win over the West Indies to consolidate his team's top position in the WTC points table.

Head has gained six slots to reach seventh position, in the process overtaking the India pair of Rohit Sharma (10th) and Virat Kohli (12th) among others.

MANIPUR 16-YEAR-OLD BECOMES FOURTH INDIAN TO TAKE NINE WICKETS ON DEBUT

PTI ■ GANGTOK

Sixteen-year-old Manipur medium pacer Pheiroijam Singh on Wednesday became the fourth Indian to grab nine wickets on first-class debut in their Ranji Trophy plate group match against Sikkim at Rangpo near here.

The teenager who returned with figures of 22-5-69-9 to join an elite list that has Vasant Ranjane (9/35, 1956-57), Amarjith Singh (9/45, 1971-72) and Sanjay Yadav (9/52, 2019-20), all of whom have claimed nine wickets on their first-class debut.

Manipur bowled out Sikkim for 220.

It was the 10th best in the first-class cricket history and the fourth best by an Indian on debut.

It was a one-way traffic for Pheiroijam who triggered the collapse on the second day as Sikkim continued to lose wickets from being 58 for no loss overnight.

He nearly became the first Indian to take all 10 wickets on first-class debut but it was Rex Rajkumar who dismissed Anwesh Sharma (39) to fold Sikkim's innings in 73.1 overs. Pheiroijam, albeit, played a role in the dismissal -- by taking the catch of Sharma.

Englishman Albert Moss (10/38 in 1889-90) and Fitz Hinds (10/36; 1900-01) are the only two in the history of cricket to bowl all 10 wickets in an innings on first-class debut.

Sikkim however had the upper hand and took a slender first innings lead and reduced Manipur to 59/4 at stumps on day two. Overall, Manipur lead by just 25 runs with six wickets intact.



Flintoff airlifted to hospital after car crash during BBC show

PTI ■ LONDON

Former England captain Andrew Flintoff has been airlifted to a hospital after suffering a horror car crash in Surrey while filming an episode for BBC's TV Show.

The 45-year-old was filming for 'Top Gear' in icy conditions at Dunsfold Park Aerodrome in Surrey on Tuesday when the accident happened.

"Freddie (Flintoff) was injured in an accident at the Top Gear test track this morning -

with crew medics attending the scene immediately," the BBC said in a statement. "He has been taken to hospital for further treatment and we will confirm more details in due course."

According to 'The Sun', Flintoff's injuries are not "life-threatening" and he was "driving on the track as normal" and was not going at a high speed.

"All the usual health and safety measures were in place for filming too," a source was quoted as saying by 'The Sun'.

"Freddie was taken to hospital by air ambulance shortly afterwards.

"Filming has been postponed for now and all anyone cares about is Freddie recovering." His co-star Chris Harris was also at the 'Top Gear' test track.

Three years back, Flintoff had survived a 125mph crash during the shooting of another episode of Top Gear.

Flintoff, who retired from international cricket in 2009, has played 79 Tests and 141 limited-overs internationals for England.

Indian batting collapses as Australia win by 21 runs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian batting collapsed like a pack of cards under pressure as Australian women showed clinical precision to record a comfortable 21-run victory in the third T20 International here on Wednesday. Australia now lead five-match series 2-1.

Chasing a target of 173, India were in cruise control mode at 106 for 2, riding on some cavalier hitting from Shafali Verma (52 off 41 balls) and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (37 off 27 balls). The duo had added 73 in just 8.4 overs and 67 off 40 odd balls looked eminently gettable.

But, once Shafali was holed out at mid-wicket boundary, there was a slump as India lost four wickets for the addition of 17 runs in less than three overs as the match turned decisively in favour of Southern Stars. India were finally restricted to 151 for 7 in 20 overs. Richa Ghosh (1) and Harmanpreet, the two other big-hitters apart from Shafali, were also dismissed while going for big hits and almost all the Australian bowlers reduced the pace on their deliveries to make it difficult for strokeplay.

Darcie Brown (2/19), Meghan Schutt (1/23 in 4 overs), spinner Ashleigh Gardner (2/21) were exceptional on the day.

Deepti Sharma (25 not out off 17 balls), not exactly known for her power-hitting, would have never been able to consistently hit those big shots as it became a comfortable win for Alyssa Healy's women.

Earlier, Australia recovered from early jolts and rode on flamboyant Ellyse Perry's 75 off 47 balls to post 172 for 8 after batting first. Invited to bat, Australia made a disastrous start as captain Alyssa Healy and Tahliha McGrath got out in the first and sec-



ond overs respectively.

Renuka Thakur had opener Healy LBW for just 1 while Anjali Sarvani got rid of one-down McGrath, also for one, as Australia were five for 2 in the second over.

But Perry and then Grace Harris (41 runs off 18 balls) played pivotal roles to take Australia to a competitive total.

From 79 for 3 at halfway stage, Australia added 93 runs in the back-end.

For India, Renuka Singh, Anjali Sarvani, Deepti Sharma and Devika Vaidya took two wickets apiece.

Opener Beth Mooney (30) and Ellyse Perry (75 off 47 balls) resurrected the Australia innings with a 64-run partnership for the third wicket in seven overs. Perry had another quickfire 55-run stand for the fifth wickets with Grace Harris (41 runs off 18 balls) that took Australia to a good score.

The Indian bowlers got wickets at the regular intervals but also conceded runs on a goof batting track at the Brabourne Stadium. Australia were 43 for 2 at the end of Powerplay but Mooney and Perry scored at a brisk pace to take their side to 68 for 2 at the end of eighth over.

Vaidya then provided India the breakthrough in the ninth over as she cut short Mooney's promising innings.

Perry, who had hit Deepti Sharma for a six, was still going great guns as she hit Vaidya for a six over the bowler's head in the 11th over.

But two balls later, Vaidya took revenge but in the form of Ashleigh Gardner () with Richa Ghosh taking a fine catch. India were in the ascendency for a brief period of two overs but conceded 14 runs in the 14th over with Perry and Harris hitting sixes.

Like father, like son: Tendulkar Jr emulates father to score century on first class debut

PTI ■ ROHTAK

Emulating his legendary father Sachin Tendulkar, Arjun on Wednesday slammed a century on first-class debut on the second day of Goa's Group C Ranji Trophy match against Rajasthan here.

The feat came exactly 34 years after Sachin, then 15, began his journey to greatness with an unbeaten 100 against Gujarat at the Wankhede Stadium.

Late Lala Amarnath and one of his three sons Surinder had made hundreds on their Test debuts, making them the only father-son duo to achieve the feat in the 145-year history of traditional international format.

Batting at No. 7, Tendulkar junior, who had moved to Goa from Mumbai earlier this season in search of more playing opportunities, hit two sixes and 16 fours in his knock of 120 from 207 deliveries.

Along with No. 3 Suyash Prabhudessai (212; 416 balls, 29x4), Tendulkar junior put together 221 runs for the sixth wicket to take Goa to a mammoth 493/8 at close on day two. Primarily, a left-arm fast



medium, Arjun had come out to bat at the fag end of the opening day n Tuesday after the departure of wicketkeeper-batter Eknath Kerkar with Goa precariously placed at 201 for 5.

Vidarbha take control of Ranji Trophy match against Railways in Group D

Leg-spinner Karn Sharma's sensational eight-wicket haul on day one was not backed by the Railways batters as they conceded a 52-run first innings lead to Vidarbha after getting bundled out for 161 on the second day of their Ranji Trophy Group D match here on Wednesday.

Resuming the day on 22 for 1 in reply to Vidarbha's 213, Railways batters fell to the guile

of spinners — left-arm orthodox Aditya Sarwate (5/53) and offie Akshay Wakhare (5/60), who both came up with five-wicket hauls.

Only opener B Vivek Singh (81) could give some sort of resistance to the Vidarbha spin duo. Seven Railways batters, including captain Sharma (2) himself, were out in single-digit scores. Three of them were out on nought.

The 35-year-old Sharma, who had played one Test in 2014, had ripped apart the Vidarbha batting line-up with figures of 8/38 on Tuesday.

Vidarbha reached 161 for 2 at stumps on the second day to extend the lead to 213 and take control of the match.

Captain Faiz Fazal, who

had made 112 in the first innings, was batting on 82 when stumps were drawn.

Raghav Dhawan puts Himachal in command vs Haryana

Raghav Dhawan completed his maiden first-class century as Himachal Pradesh declared their first innings at a massive 487 for four on day two of their Ranji Trophy Group A match against Haryana here on Wednesday.

The 35-year-old Dhawan, unbeaten on 86 on the opening day, ended up scoring 182 runs as Himachal piled on the misery of Haryana, who were bundled out for just 46 runs on Tuesday.

Haryana were 72 for 1 at stumps in their second innings and they trail their opponents by 369 runs at the Chaudhary Bansi Lal Stadium.

With two full days of play left, Himachal would be fancying their chances of a bonus point should they score an innings win.

The hero of the day, however, was Dhawan whose workman-like 182 and his mammoth 219-run opening stand with Prashant Chopra (137) laid the platform for the huge score.