DON'T PUT TROOPS IN

HARM'S WAY

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*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY DECEMBER 17, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

WORLD 9

CHINA SENDS SHIPS INTO PACIFIC

AMID JAPAN SECURITY MOVES

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Bilawal 'mentally bankrupt', India retorts after Modi jibe

MEA's response comes after Pak Min said, 'Osama dead, but butcher of Gujarat lives'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI**

India has taken strong exception to Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's offensive attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and called his remarks a "new low even for Pakistan" and Bilawal as "mentally bankrupt".

The terse response came after Bilawal Bhutto on Thursday said, "Osama bin Laden is dead, but the butcher of Gujarat lives." He was reacting to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar calling Pakistan the "epicentre of terrorism". Speaking at the United Nations, Bhuttoa also criticised the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak (RSS).

"These comments are a new low, even for Pakistan. The Foreign Minister of Pakistan has obviously forgotten this day in 1971, which was a direct result of the genocide unleashed by Pakistani rulers against ethnic Bengalis and Hindus. Pakistan does not seem to have changed much in the treatment of its minorities. It certainly lacks credentials to cast aspersions at India," said Ministry of External Affairs

Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi. Bagchi went on to say as recent conferences and events have demonstrated, counter terrorism remains high on the global agenda.

CAPSULE

ULTRA AT ARMY CAMP

Raiouri/Jammu: Two civilians

camp in J&K's Raiouri district

on Friday, leading to massive

that some "unidentified

the camp

protests and demands for a fair

probe. The Army said in a tweet

terrorists" had started firing at

DEATH TOLL IN BIHAR HOOCH RISES TO 65

Chapra hooch tragedy, due to the

consumption of spurious liquor, in

Bihar's Saran district rose to 65 on

Thursday, evoking an uproar inside

MAGNITUDE 3.4 QUAKE HITS KINNAUR DISTRICT

Shimla: A mild earthquake of

Pradesh's Kinnaur district on

Friday at 10.02 pm, officials

magnitude 3.4 shook Himachal

Friday. Most deaths reportedly

occurred over Wednesday and

and outside the Bihar Assembly

Patna: The death toll in the

were killed and another was injured in firing outside an army

CIVILIANS KILLED BY

"Pakistan's indisputable role in sponsoring, harbouring, and actively financing terrorist and terrorist organisations remains under the scanner. Pakistan Foreign Minister's uncivilised outburst seems to be a result of Pakistan's increasing inability to use terrorists and their proxies," the MEA

Spokesperson said. Cities like New York,

"Pakistan is a country that glorifies Osama bin Laden as a martyr, and shelters terrorists like Lakhvi, Hafiz Saeed Masood Azhar, Sajid Mir and Dawood Ibrahim. No other country can boast having 126 UN-designated terrorists and 27 UN-designated terrorist

We wish that Pakistan FM would have listened more sincerely yesterday at the UN Security Council to the testimony of Anjali Kulthe, a Mumbai nurse who saved the lives of 20 pregnant women from the bullets of the Pakistani

Mumbai, Pulwama, Pathankot and London are among the many that bear the scars of Pakistan-sponsored, supported and instigated terrorism. This violence has emanated from their Special Terrorist Zones and exported to all parts of the world. "Make in Pakistan" terrorism has to stop, he said.

entities!" Bagchi said.

terrorist Ajmal Kasab," he said. Continued on Page 2

'Regional parties

can't represent a

 $B^{\text{uoyed}} \ \text{by the success of} \\ B^{\text{harat Jodo Yatra, former}}$

Congress president Rahul

Gandhi on Friday said no one

should underestimate the Congress as it "is ideological-

ly driven" and is the "only party which can bring down

On the prospects of region-

al parties and the role of the

Congress and the Opposition,

Rahul stressed that only the

grand old party can bring down the BJP. He said none of

the regional parties can repre-

vision for India'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

the fascist BJP".



Pak epicentre of terrorism: Jaishankar

PNS/AGENCIES NEW DELHI/UNITED NATIONS

Describing Pakistan as the "epicentre" of terrorism,

External Affairs Minister S Iaishankar has asked the neighbouring country to clean up its act as the world is "not stupid."

Making this assertion in the United Nations, he also took a dig at Pakistani media person who asked on "how long South Asia is going to see terrorism disseminating from New Delhi, Kabul, and Pakistan".

"You know, you're asking the wrong Minister when you say how long will we do this? Because it is the Ministers of Pakistan who will tell you how long Pakistan intends to practice terrorism." Jaishankar said.

sent a vision for the country and that is what makes his

He further said the Congress must work with other

Opposition parties for the 2024

general election and party chief

Mallikarjun Kharge would evolve a strategy in this regard.

ence in Jaipur to mark the completion of 100th day of the 3,500 km Kanniyakumari to

Kashmir padyatra, Rahul also

alleged that China is preparing

for war and the Indian

Government is sleeping over it

and trying to ignore the threat.

accusing the BJP Government

of succumbing to pressure

from China and not taking on

Beijing after its frequent trans-

gressions at the border.

The Congress has been

Continued on Page 2

Addressing a press confer-

party different from others.

Only Cong can bring down

'fascist' BJP, asserts Rahul

world is not stupid, the world is not forgetful. And the world does increasingly call out countries and organisations and people who indulge in terror-

ism," Jaishankar said. "By taking that debate elsewhere, you are not going to hide it. You're not going to confuse anybody anymore. People have figured it out. So my advice is please clean up your act. Please try to be a good

neighbour.
"Please try and contribute to what the rest of the world is trying to do today, which is economic growth, and progress and development," Jaishankar said adding "I hope through your channel that message

He also recalled former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's blunt message to "At the end of the day, the

Islamabad that snakes in one's backyard will eventually bite

those who keep them.

The External Affairs made these remarks after chairing a signature event held under India's presidency of the Security Council on 'Global Counterterrorism Approach: Challenges and Way Forward.

Responding to a question by PTI on Pakistan Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar's recent statements about a "dossier" and allegations against India, he said, "I saw, I read the reports on what Minister Khar said. And I was reminded, more than a decade ago, my memory serves me right. Hillary Clinton was visiting Pakistan. And Hina Rabbani Khar was a Minister at that time.

Continued on Page 2

Teacher attacks Class 5 girl with

cutting scissors and threw her

The class teacher identified as Geeta Deshwal has been arrested. The injured girl identified as Vandana is currently undergoing treatment at the Hindu Rao Hospital and is stated to be out of danger. The inci-Nigam (Balika) Vidyalaya in central Delhi's Model Basti

Chauhan said. The Desh Bandhu Gupta road Police Station beat officer received the information at 11.15 am and rushed to the spot. A huge crowd gathered at the Prathmik Vidyalaya in central Delhi's Model Basti area

Detailed report on P3

PM calls for Ukraine talks India and Russia on Friday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral ties, including defence and security, during a telephonic conversation between Prime Minister

Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin. In the context of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Modi reiterated to Putin his call for dialogue and diplomacy as the only way forward, officials

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

They said Prime Minister Modi briefed the Russian president on India's ongoing Presidency of G-20 and high-

lighted its key priorities.
"Following up on their meeting in Samarkand on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organiation (SCO) summit, the two leaders reviewed several aspects of the bilateral relationship, including energy cooperation, trade and investments, defence and security cooperation, and other key areas," they said.

"The Prime Minister briefed President Putin on India's ongoing Presidency of

the G-20, highlighting its key priorities. He also looked forward to both countries He said the two leaders agreed to remain in regular working together during India's Chairship of the

The phone conversation came days after it emerged that

Modi will not be travelling to Russia for the annual India-Russia summit this year.

scissors, throws her off 1st floor

STAFF REPORTER NEW DELHI

A teacher in the MCD run primary school allegedly hit a class 5 student with paperoff the first floor on Friday.

opposite Filmistan.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Shweta Chauhan said the class teacher Geeta Deshwal hit Vandana with a small pair of scissors and threw her from the first-floor classroom.

"A case of attempt to mur-der under section 307 of the Indian Penal Code is being registered on the statement of the eyewitness. The student has been admitted to Hindu Rao Hospital. All necessary tests, including CT scan, have been done. The child is safe and sta-ble and responding well,"

following the incident.

Panel finds flaws in Delhi jail mgmt

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)," the official added.

The three-member commit-The three-included by Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena to look into the violations of jail rules by AAP Minister Satyendar Jain and conman Sukesh Chandrashekhar has found gaps and loopholes in the administration and manage-

ment of prisons in Delhi. Sukesh in his statement to a committee has reiterated his charge of paying money to Jain for protection in jail and Raiva Sabha

As per a report submitted the committee, Chandrashekhar reiterated his charge of giving ₹60 crore to Jain — ₹50 crore for securing a Rajya Sabha seat from AAP and ₹10 crore as "protection money." He has claimed to have paid ₹12.50 crore to the then Director General (Prison), Sandeep Goel, it said.

The committee, comprising the Principal Secretary (Home), Principal Secretary (Law), and Secretary (Vigilance) of GNCTD, submitted its report to the LG in the last week of November.

It was formed following a court order after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) filed a complaint against the jail administration for providing special and preferential treatment to Jain in Tihar jail. Purported videos of Jain getting a massage and eating food inside jail also went viral.

The committee also suggested remedial measures such

as the installation of CCTV cameras and monitoring systems inside jail officials' offices, said officials. The committee recorded Sukesh's statement on November 14, 2022 and November 15, 2022 at Mandoli Iail wherein he said the amount of ₹50 crore was paid in cash to Jain at the farm house of Delhi's Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot in Asola Mines in four installments and CM Arvind Kejriwal was fully in the loop as far as these financial transactions were concerned, and Kejriwal along

the dinner party hosted by Sukesh at Hotel Hyatt Regency, once the full delivery of ₹50 crore was completed in 2017. "I have paid total amount of ₹60 crore which was bifurcated as ₹50 crore towards the party postings in South Zone and nomination to Rajya Sabha and the said fund was paid in cash by me and my Secretary Gopinath who accompanied me in 2016, at a farm, which

belongs to Gehlot, at Asola, Delhi," said Sukesh. "The amount was paid in three to four different installments within a span of three to four days in the farm of Gehlot and the amount received by Jain and Gehlot at the Asola farm, and after every delivery, I have confirmed from the phone of Jain to Kejriwal. Thereafter, in 2019, another ₹10 crore was paid to Jain as protection money for jail matter, thus totaling ₹60 crore,"

Sukesh told the Committee. Continued on Page 2

SC releases power theft convict, says liberty sacrosanct

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered release of a person convicted for 18 years for nine cases for electricity theft and observed that right to personal liberty is a "precious and an inalienable right".

Releasing the person who had already been in prison for more than three years, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud said, attending to grievances, violations, the SC performs its "plain constitutional duty, obligation and function; no more and no less".

The observation came two days after Law Minister Kiren Rijiju said the Supreme Court

should not be hearing "bail applications and frivolous PILs" when pendency of cases is so "What are we here for if we do not listen to our conscience?" said the bench, also comprising Justice PS Narasimha while ordering the immediate release of the person from Hapur in UP, convicted for 18 years in nine minor cases of theft of electrical equip-ment of the electricity department. No case is small for the Supreme Court, the bench said.

The top court set aside an Allahabad High Court order and directed that Iqram's jail term of two years each in nine cases would run concurrently

instead of successively.

Continued on Page 2

Twitter suspends a/cs of journalists covering Musk,

and his company PTI ■ NEW YORK

Twitter has abruptly suspended the accounts of several high-profile journal-ists who cover the social media platform and Elon Musk, who acquired the company in October.

The accounts of Ryan Mac of The New York Times, Donie O'Sullivan of CNN, Drew Harwell of The Washington Post, Matt Binder of Mashable, Micah Lee of The Intercept, Steve Herman of Voice of America, and independent journalists Aaron Rupar, Keith Olbermann as well as Tony Webster had all been suspend-

CNN reported. Detailed report on P9



As Lionel Messi approaches his second and likely last World Cup final, the stakes could hardly be higher.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with Himachal Pradesh CM Sukhvinder Singh

Sukhu during the Bharat Jodo Yatra, in Dausa, in Rajasthan on Friday

The same goes for Argentina after more than 30 years of disappointment since it last won soccer's ultimate prize. For Messi, victory against France at Lusail Stadium on Sunday is a chance to finally get his hands on the one major trophy that has eluded him in his storied career. In doing so, he would push

ahead of Čristiano Ronaldo, who has also never won a World Cup, in the long-running rivalry between the two greatest players of their gener-

While 37-year-old Ronaldo ed as of Thursday evening, exited the tournament at the quarterfinals stage, benched



Students graduating from the General Las Heras elementary school, where Lionel Messi also attended school, pose for a group photo wearing their graduation hats by a mural of Messi, on the last day of school in Rosario, Argentina

by Portugal and in tears in the likely recognition that his last chance had passed, Messi is summoning some of his finest moments in an Argentina shirt to inspire his country's run to the final.

"Each time we see him play, he makes us and the players feel something special... There's something about him that people like, not only Argentines. We feel lucky and privileged to have him wear our shirt," Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said.

Messi's place alongside Diego Maradona as one of Argentina's two most iconic soccer stars has been secure for some time now. But he is yet to emulate Maradona's greatest achievement by leading his national team to a World Cup

Continued on Page 2

Prophet row: 11 charged for pharmacist's murder

Amravati-based man was killed for support to Nupur Sharma

TN RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday filed a charge-sheet against 11 accused in connection with the sensational murder of Amravati-based pharmacist Umesh Pralhadrao Kolhe in

The central agency filed its charge-sheet against the eleven accused in the Special NIA court here. In September this year, the court had granted the central agency 90 days' extension to the NIA to file the charge-sheet in the court.
The accused named by the

NIA in the charge-sheet include: Mubashir Ahmed, Abdul Tauseef Shaikh, Mohammed Shoeb, Shahrukh Khan, Atik Rashid, Yusuf Khan, Irfan Khan, Abdul Arbaz, Mustiq Ahmed, Shakeel Sheikh and Shamim Ahmed.

Acting on a complaint lodged with the local police by Kolhe's son Sanket, the NIA has



booked the accused in the case under Section 16, 18 and 20 of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and Section 34, 153 (A), 153 (B), 120 (B) and 302 IPC.

Pharmacist Kolhe was murdered brutally by a group of miscreants for allegedly sharing a social media post endorsing the former Bharatiya Janata Party leader Nupur Sharma's controversial remarks on Prophet Mohammed

The incident took place between 10 pm and 10.30 pm on June 21, 2022 when Kolhe was on his way home after closing his shop -- Amit Medical Store'. Sanket (27) and his wife Vaishnavi were accompanying him on another scooter.

Two motorcycle-borne assailants waylaid Kolhe. One of them stabbed him on the left

sion and a licence from the

concerned authority. As it ham-

pers the development plan of

the particular locations. Any

unauthorised colony will not be

tolerated. After a legal process

demolition drive will be con-

ducted here" said Amit Madholia, DTP (enforcement).

these colonies, 16 notices have

also been issued to 16 illegal

cafes which have built-in Garat

Pur Bas village in Gurugram

"To stop mushrooming

illegal colonies in Gurugram,

the department time-to-time

conducts awareness campaigns

among people to not invest

their hard-earned amount in

such illegal colonies. We also

wrote letters to the registrar's

office not to execute any con-

venience or sell deed in such

locations and also recom-

mends FIR against people

involved in illegal activities,"

past more than four months 60

demolition drives have been

executed by the DTCP in and

surrounding areas of

several demolitions drive and

warned people not to involve

in illegal activities and don't

trust people who are offering

lucrative investment plans in

such illegal colonies,"

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice to hereby inform to general public that my clients Sh. Tarkeshwar Prasad S/o Late

Nageshwar Prasad and Smt. Urmila Prasad, W/o Shri Tarkeshwar Prasad, both resident

of house bearing no. 2127A, Block

E, Palam Vihar, Gurugram

122017, have severed all the

relationship with their daughter

in law namely Smt. T. Tonsing

rasad, and grandchildren namely,

Mr. Rohan Malsawm Prasad and

Ms. Diya Prasad due to their

continuous bad and demeaning

behaviour towards my clients. My Clients debars/disown them from

all their movable and immovable

assets with immediate effect. If

any person deals with them in any

manner whatsoever concerning

my clients, then, they shall be

doing that at their own risk and

(SHARIQUE HUSSAIN)

ADVOCATE

"Every month we plan

He informed that in the

Madholia said.

Gurugram.

Madholia added.

The officer said apart from

In his complaint, Sanket told the police: "We were moving from Prabhat Chowk and our scooters had reached the Mahila College New High School's gate. Two men on a motorcycle suddenly came in front of my father's scooter and stopped him. One of them stabbed him on the left side of his neck with a knife"

My father fell and was bleeding. I stopped my scooter and started shouting for help. Another man came and the three fled the spot on the motorcycle. With help from passers-by, I rushed my father to nearby Axon Hospital where he died during treatment," Sanket had stated in his com-

The investigations have revealed that Kolhe had circu-

porting BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma, Police Vikram Sali said that prima facie Umesh Kolhe's murder was an off-shoot of a social media post supporting Nupur Sharma, who had made con-

Prophet in a television debate. Kolhe inadvertently posted the message in a whatsapp group where there are Muslims who were also his customers. One of the arrested accused reportedly said that Kolhe's post was an insult to the Prophet and hence he must die.

troversial comments on the

In its FIR registered in the case, NIA stated: "The said incident of a cold-blooded murder of deceased Umesh Kolhe was an act of larger conspiracy of a group of accused persons and others who have conspired among themselves to strike terror amongst a section of people of India and with their assertions attempted to promote enmity on the grounds of religion and thereby commit a terrorist act on June 21 between 10.00 pm-1030 pm".

Kolhe's murder was akin to that of the killing of tailor Kanhaiyalal Teli who was hacked to death by some miscreants in Udaipur on June 28.

It's Modi's new India, not Nehru's India of 1962: BJP

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hitting back at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his remarks that "India is ignoring the threat of war from China," the BJP on Friday said he is trying to spread confusion and demoralise soldiers and added that it is not Jawaharlal Nehru's India of 1962 but is

Modi's new India. "This is Modi's India, this is new India. Now if anyone raises an eye against the country he gets a befitting reply," BJP spokesperson Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore asserted.

Addressing the press on the sidelines of his Bharat Jodo Yatra earlier in the day, Gandhi alleged that China is preparing for war and the Indian government is sleeping over it and trying to ignore the threat.

Hitting back, Rathore said, 'Rahul Gandhi feels there should be proximity with China. Now he has developed so much proximity that he knows what China will do."

"During his yatra, Rahul Gandhi has make comments about Indian security and border areas to spread confusion ('bhram') in the country and demoralise Indian soldiers. This is not India of his great

grandfather Nehru, who lost 37,242 square km to China while sleeping," he told a press conference here, referring to the 1962 war between India and China.

He further said Gandhi should not make irresponsible remarks about national security in a bid to "re-launch" himself.

After Rahul Gandhi's great andfather lost land to China, Rathore said, "now he feels there should be proximity with China and he has developed so much proximity with China that he knows what China will

Referring to the Sonia Gandhi-headed Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Rathore alleged, It was on the payrolls of the Communist Party of China. Congress party signed an agreement with the Communist Party of China."

Rathore, a former Union minister, claimed there were a large number of Chinese transgressions during the Congressled UPA Government at the Centre.

Whereas there has been a three-time increase in spending on border infrastructure since the Narendra Modi Gvernment assumed office in 2014, he said.

Resolve people's water, sewer plaints on priority basis: DJB to officials

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Jal Board (DJB) Vice Chairman Saurabh Bhardwaj on Friday directed the officials to resolve the complaints of the people related to water and sewer on priority basis and to speed up the work of the sewer project.

According to the state-ment released by the DJB, "In the meeting chaired by the Bhardwaj, the MLA's from different constituency raised the issue of complaints received by the people related to the water bills, taking the cognizance in the matter, Bhardwaj sought answers from the concerned authorities

The officials told Bhardwaj that in many places meter readers of private companies are negligent in the work of meter reading. DJB VC also issued notices to the officials against such private companies and directed them to take strict action against them.

"Another key issue that was discussed in the meeting was the Water action plan for the summers 2023; the MLA's expressed the possibility of increase in the demand of water in the coming season. Regarding this the DJB VC directed the officials to take necessary steps to improve and augment the water supply on

"Standing next to her,

Hillary Clinton actually said

that if you have... Snakes in

your backyard, you can't expect

them to bite only your neigh-

bours. Eventually, they will

bite the people who keep them

He said the world today

the issue. Along with this, the officers were instructed to prepare an action plan according to the possible increasing demand of water in the coming times," it said.

"The final point which was discussed was the work of the sewer network, Bhardwaj directed to issue notices to the companies involved in the sewer line project whose work is progressing slowly and who have not been able to complete the work within the stipulated time," it said.

"Expressing strong displeasure over the slow pace of project works, Bhardwaj directed to complete the works related to laying of sewer lines within the stipulated time frame and also warned that the tenders of the companies which do not complete the project within the stipulated time will be canceled and strict legal action will be taken against the statement them,

During the DJB meeting several MLA's from different constituencies including Nangloi Assembly Raghuvendra Shokeen, Timarpur Assembly Dilip Pandey, Matiala Assembly Gulab Singh, Devli Assembly Prakash Jarwal, and top officials of the board were also pre-

a lot of us have brain fog as a

result. But I assure you the

world has not forgotten where

has their fingerprints over a lot

of activities in the region and

something which they should

remind themselves of before

indulging in the kind of fan-

tasies which they do," he added.

"So I would say that it's

This week, Pakistan shared

"dossier" of India's alleged

involvement in a blast outside

Mumbai attack mastermind

Hafiz Saeed's residence in

beyond the region."

Pak epicentre of...

Notices to 16 who developed illegal colonies in G'gram

PARVESH SHARMA

¬he department of town and country planning (DTCP) recently issued 16 notices to different people developing illegal colonies in Sohna, Bhondsi, Rithoj, Pataudi, Farrukhnagar and Sultanpur in Gurugram. The illegal colonies have

been built on several acres of agricultural land surrounding Farrukhnagar, Bhondsi, Pataudi and Sohna. The landowners did not

seek official permission or obtained a licence before planning and developing the The department has also

identified individual houses have been built illegally in Following this, a show

cause notice was issued to the owners asking them on whose permission they had constructed the colonies.

"It is illegal to develop a colony without prior permis-



NOTICE

To be informed that I have changed my name Urmila Meena to Urmila Devi Meena in all future purpose Urmila Devi Meena D/o Kanwari Lal Meea R/o Aashirwad Gram post Dhand Tehsil Amer Jaipur Rajasthan 302028



CHANGE OF NAME

I, Sharik S/o Bundu R/o H.No-225-B, Khureji Khas Delhi-51, have changed my name to Shariq for all purpose.

PD(90220)A

I, hitherto known as James John S/o Shri John R/o 874/1, Upper Ground Floor, H.No.-102, Tower No.-04, Divine Apartment, Sant Nagar, Burari, Delhi - 110084, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as JAMES for all future purposes.

PD(90221)A

Panel finds flaws in Delhi...

From Page 1

While testifying before the Inquiry Committee, Sukesh said he had all the WhatsApp chats between him and Jain confirming the amount, delivery time and the delivery location, and he would provide all these evidence as and when required by the investigating agencies. Sukesh has revealed that every time he got the amounts delivered to Jain and Gahlot at his Farm House at Asola, Delhi, he also wanted to convey the same to Kejriwal.

"Due to same, I was allowed to speak to Kejriwal after every delivery from the phone of Jain and he also met Keiriwal, Sukesh said.

Sukesh went on record to say that he was introduced to Delhi Deputy CM Manish Sisodia by Jain and had therehim through several conversations on phone. He also stated that he had informed the same to the Enforcement Directorate and CBI officials. In order to establish the veracity of Sukesh's

claims, the Inquiry Committee also met the ED and CBI officials investigating the case. The Committee, finding the allegations "grave" and "serious" in nature, and citing lack of where with all to further verify, has recommended a detailed investigation by a specialised agency. Sukesh replied as under, "I

don't remember the phone numbers but I have screenshots of the WhatsApp chats as mentioned by me about the related parties. The amounts to DG (Prisons) were paid by me to his staff such as driver and other prison staff namely Sanjay, Warden and Assti-Supdt Dharam Singh Meena. As mentioned by me the locations payment in respect of DG (Prisons) was at only two locations as directed by him which Civil Lines and Haldirams Sweet Shop at Model Town. At present I am not having the vehicle/car number but the description of the car is of white Suzuki Ciaz."

SC releases power theft convict...

From Page 1

It was irked that neither the trial court nor the High Court took note of the "miscarriage of justice" and set things right.

"The right to personal liberty is a precious and an inalienable right recognised by the Constitution. In attending to such grievances, the Supreme Court performs the plain constitutional duty, obligation and function; no more and no less," the bench said. "If the courts were not to

do so, a serious miscarriage of justice of the nature which has emerged in the present case would be allowed to persist and the voice of citizens whose liberty has been abrogated would not receive any attention. The history of the apex court would indicate that it is in the seemingly small routine matters involving grievances of citizens that issues of imporand constitutional terms emerge, said the bench headed

"The intervention by this court to protect the liberty of

sound constitutional principles embodied in Article 136 (special powers to grant relief under the Constitution)," the CJI said. "If we do not act in matters of personal liberty and grant relief, then what are we doing here...We will be acting in breach of Article 136 () if we do not act in the matter of personal liberty."

hear to the cry of such petitioners" and the judges burn the midnight oil for such cases and see that there are more such matters, it observed, adding that the top court is the "protector of fundamental right to life and personal liberty inherent in every citizen".

Iqram was put to trial in the nine FIRs relating to incidents involving the theft of electrical equipment of the Uttar Pradesh electricity department. He moved a plea Hapur trial court, which, in separate verdicts, awarded two years jail term in each case besides fines in 2020. The trial court had said the sentences would run concurrently.

an entire 90 minutes anymore.

with key moments.

World Cups.

Instead, he decides matches

was in his younger years, but he

has been more influential than

at any of his previous four

complete his personal collec-tion of trophies, having won

four Champions League titles

and seven Ballon d'Or awards

for the best player in the world,

Argentina is looking to end its

He isn't as dynamic as he

While Messi is aiming to

citizens is hence founded on

in the backyard. But as you know, Pakistan is not great at taking good advice. You see The apex court exists "to what's happening there," Jaishankar recalled. sees them (Pakistan) as the epicentre of terrorism. "Now I know we've been through twoand-a-half years of Covid and

Only Cong...

rrom Page 1 The Opposition party has

been saying that the Prime Minister should take on China and address the border issues with it strongly by looking "eye to eye". The Congress has also been seeking a discussion in Parliament on the border issue and Chinese transgressions at the border. Noting that no one should

underestimate the Congress, Rahul said lakhs and crores of party workers are its strength and "if we utilise our workers well, we will be able to ensure a massive victory of the Congress in Rajasthan in next elections".

"A lot of people have this fantasy that the Congress party is finished. But I can say that the Congress party can never be finished and mark my words the BJP is going to be taken down by the Congress party," he said talking to the media.

Asked about the response to the Bharat Jodo Yatra so far, he said it has been overwhelming in Rajasthan and the Hindi speaking belt. "We saw that it is not just the party workers, but the general public also loves the Congress a lot...Critics felt the Bharat Jodo Yatra will fail in Rajasthan due to factionalism, but it has been a huge success here and the response has been overwhelming," the former Congress president said.

Asked about the exodus of leaders from the Congress in the recent past, he said the Congress had in fact won the Himachal Pradesh assembly elections lately. "If certain people want to leave the Congress party, if some lack the courage to take on the BJP, they are welcome to leave the party. We don't want them. We want those who believe in the

Congress party and don't believe in fascism," he said, alleging the BJP is fascist.

Lahore on June 23 last year.

He also alleged that China has taken away 2,000 square kilometres of Indian territory, killed 20 Indian soldiers and is Arunachal Pradesh". "I can see the threat of China very clearly. I have been clear on this for the last two-three years, but the government is trying to hide it and ignore it. This threat can neither be hidden nor ignored. Going by their full offensive preparation that is going on in Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh, the Indian government is asleep," Rahul Gandhi

"The government does not want to hear this but their (China's) preparation is on. The preparation is for war. It is not for incursion, but for war. If you look at their weapon pattern, what they are doing -they are preparing for war. Our government hides this and is not able to accept it," the former Congress chief said. He said this is happening because the Narendra Modi Government does event-based work and does not work strate-

He said despite the ruling BJP organisational and money power, the Congress fought against it and won the Himachal Pradesh polls, and if AAP was not put up as a "proxy to target the Congress" in Gujarat, the grand old party could have defeated the saffron party there as well. Rahul said the Congress is

competing with a vision that the BJP is proposing for the country. "The space for the Congress party will always be there and the people who believe in the Congress party will always be there. It is a question of getting them excited, getting them motivated and getting them to believe in what they stand for, which the (Bharat Jodo) yatra has been very very good at doing," he

Messi

From Page 1

Maradona did that in Mexico in 1986 and Messi has lived with the expectation of repeating the feat since he emerged as a prodigy at Barcelona nearly 20 years ago.

There have been numerous false hopes during that time. There was the potential "dream team" of Maradona as coach and Messi as star player in South Africa in 2010. But

Minister was more interested

in whitewashing Pakistan's

Minister's frustration would

be better directed towards the

masterminds of terrorist enter-

prises in his own country,

who have made terrorism a

part of their State policy.

Pakistan needs to change its

own mindset or remain a

Foreign

role," he said.

Pakistan

quarterfinals after being beaten 4-0 by Germany.

In 2014, with Messi approaching his peak years, Argentina reached the final in Again it faced Germany.

Again Messi was on the losing side, beaten 1-0 through extra At the age of 35, he knew this was probably his last shot

at the World Cup and he has risen to the occasion as the tournament's co-leading scorer with France forward Kylian Mbappé with five goals.

Perhaps more notable have been his assists, such as the disguised pass for Nahuel Molina's goal against the Netherlands in the quarterfinals. Then there was his mes-

merising run, turning Croatia defender Joško Gvardiol inside out, before setting up Julián Álvarez for Argentina's third in the semis.

"It's at least something I can talk (about) with my kids one day that I guarded this great, great player," Gvardiol said Thursday.

Those assists have been indicative of the fact that Messi can no longer do it on his own. The emergence of Alvarez, with four goals, has been vital

Messi doesn't dominate for

long wait for a third World Cup. It won the tournament for the first time when hosting in 1978 and then again eight to Argentina's progress. years later thanks to Maradona.

tors of Bhutto were responsible for the terrorism in Kashmir, Punjab, Afghanistan, Balochistan and Karachi. "So one knows who the butchers are. India is a law-abiding citizen where the constitution works. Prime Minister Modi has been given a clean chit by the Supreme Court," she

Broadcasting Minister Anurag

"World has seen Pakistan's actions and intentions. They have been giving shelter to terrorists for a long time. The Prime Minister has taken strict actions against terrorism. The US killed Osama Bin Laden in Pakistan and India did a surgical strike in Pakistan," Γhakur added.

Argentina went out in the **Bilawal** pariah, Bagchi said. failed. What can you expect Information from those who have a terror mindset?" "I think Bhutto Union Ministers and the BJP also condemned the com-**'mentally** ments, calling Bilawal "menshould start recounting the tally bankrupt and irresponacts of terrorism in his own sible". "The language used by country where the agencies bankrupt... the Foreign Minister of and his own ancestry have cre-Pakistan shows that not only ated terrorism and the netdoes he represent a bankrupt work of terrorists across the country, he is also mentally country and are responsible bankrupt," said Minister of From Page 1 for the terrorism which they "Clearly, the Foreign State for External Affairs

Meenakshi Lekhi said. "Responsibility does not come from one's post, responsibility is a part of one's character. Many people talk responsibly without any post and many talk irresponsibly despite holding posts," the Minister said. "He is the representative of

a failed State and is himself

failed, so Pakistan is also

are facing" she said. Lekhi also said the ances-

Thakur called the comments 'shameful". "Maybe they (Pakistan) still feels the pain of 1971. His grandfather (Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, former Pakistan President) wept when they lost," Thakur said adding Pakisan's soil has been used to groom, shield and protect terrorism. Their nefarious plans have been exposed to the

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Teacher held for throwing student from first floor of school building

MCD orders probe, suspends teacher; civic body to bear cost of Class 5 girl's treatment

STAFF REPORTER **NEW DELHI**

teacher in a MCD-run Aprimary school allegedly hit a class 5 student with papercutting scissors and then threw her off the first floor on Friday.

The class teacher, identified as Geeta Rani Deshwal (26), who first hit the girl with a small craft scissor and then threw her from the first floor of the building, has been arrested. Papers, books and bags lay scattered in the classroom as students ran out of it out of fear, as the teacher allegedly even threatened to harm some of them, police

The injured girl, identified as Vandana, is currently under-

Rao Hospital and is stated to be out of danger. The incident took place at the Nagar Nigam (Balika) Vidyalaya in central Delhi's Model Basti opposite

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central) Shweta Chauhan said, "A case of attempt to murder under Section 307 of the Indian Penal Code is being registered on the statement of the eyewitness. The student has been admitted to Hindu Rao Hospital. All necessary tests including CT scan, has been done. The child is safe and stable and respond-

The beat officer of Police Station Desh Bandhu Gupta Road received the information

going treatment at the Hindu at 11:15 AM and reached the spot immediately. A huge crowd gathered at the school following the incident. The police reached the spot and brought the situation under control. Later, parents of many students gathered outside the school and lodged a protest.

Meanwhile, the MCD sus-

pended the teacher, hours after the incident and an investigation has been initiated. In a statement, the MCD said all the tests and scan reports of the girl are "normal, and the child is safe, stable and responding "The child has been referred to the Safdarjung Hospital for further management. MCD will bear all expenditure of the treatment of

"The teacher, Geeta Rani Deshwal (appointed in 2019) has been detained by the police. MCD has also suspended the teacher with immediate effect. Further investigation in the matter is being done and a departmental inquiry will be conducted expeditiously," the civic body

The victim's mother burst into tears and was inconsolable when she got to know that her child had been thrown off the first floor of the school build-Another woman who consoled the victim's mother said, "This teacher should be punished severely for her act. Just because we come from a poor background does not mean our children can be



harmed." Some of the classmates of the victim also alleged that the teacher threatened to harm them.

A parent of another student of class 5 in the same

school alleged that the "head master did not even speak" to the parents about the incident and questioned the education system of MCD schools. He also accused this teacher of



dents of the class as well, and alleged that "none of the higher authorities have come to school for inspection till date".

is educating children, by beating and harming them with scissors. Do we send our children to school for this. Who will take responsibility for

BJP protests at Pak High Commission

Party workers burn Bilawal Bhutto's effigy and demand apology for remarks against Modi

STAFF REPORTER ■

Hundreds of Delhi BJP workers on Friday staged a fierce protest at the Pakistan High Commission against the country's Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto's derogatory statement regarding Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting. They also burned Bhutto's effigy and demanded an apology for his

The protesters held BJP flags and placards saying "Pakistan stay in your limits and apologise" and "Pakistan hosh mein aao (Wake up Pakistan).'

"By comparing Prime Minister Narendra Modi with terrorist Osama Bin Laden, Bhutto has not only insulted him but this is an insult to the people of the nation and they will never forgive Pakistan's Foreign Minister," said Delhi BJP working president, Virendra Sachdeva, while addressing the protest.

"Bhutto should have thought before making this statement that his maternal grandfather, former Prime Minister of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had, too, apologised to India for the misdeeds of his country 50 years ago. Pakistan's Foreign Minister will have to apologize to Modi and the people of the national Capital," Sachdeva said.

'The statement of Bhutto has come to the fore on December 16, exactly 52 years after the day when the Pakistan Army surrendered to India and it seems that the leaders of Pakistan do not even take lessons from their history," he

Leader of the Opposition in the Delhi Assembly, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said that Bhutto has tried to please the President of China with his cheap statement as it is Pakistan's last economic support. "But after this statement Pakistan stands out as a villain in front of the whole world," he added.

Lashing out at Bhutto for his personal remark against thrown out of the United



Modi, a party leader said, "We condemn Bhutto's remarks. How could he use such a language against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He should always remember that his grandfather begged India for forgiveness.

Nations for attacking the Indian leader. They harbour terrorists," said another party Another leader, Tahir Khan

said Bhutto should not have used such words for Indian

"We won't tolerate such insensible statement against

our leader. Pakistan should apologise," said Khan.

The Delhi Police detained several BJP party workers following the protest, including Sachdeva and Bidhuri. They were taken to the Mandir Marg police station and released post a warning after about two hours.

Govt can't breach pledge of ex-gratia for Covid death: HC

STAFF REPORTER

Stating that the Government ought not to resile from the clear announcement made for ex-gratia payment, the Delhi High Court has asked the authorities to take a decision on payment of Rs 1 crore compensation to the family of a city police constable who died due to Covid.

Justice Prathiba M Singh, while dealing with a petition by the wife of the deceased, said there was a "clear communication" by the authorities as well as press clippings, which leave no manner of doubt that the ex-gratia amount of Rs 1 crore was announced for the deceased by the Delhi

The petitioner's husband passed away on May 5, 2020 when she was expecting a child. The deceased, a young Delhi Police Constable, was posted at Deep Chand Bandhu Hospital to ensure adherence to Covid-19 lockdown measures. The court said that the present

case was "hard" and required an empathetic consideration and the payment of compensation cannot be delayed any

The Delhi Government submitted that as per a Cabinet decision of March 2020, a decision in this regard can be taken by the Minister of Health through the Minister of Revenue with the approval of the Chief Minister and thus prayed that the matter may be sent for their consideration.

"Accordingly, let the matter be placed before the aforementioned Group of Ministers as per the Cabinet decision dated March 13, 2020," said the

court in a recent order.

"The respondents ought not to resile from the clear announcement made for exgratia payment. In view of the aforementioned facts and circumstances, the compensation due to the petitioner can no longer be delayed," the court stated.

The court directed that the decision of the authorities shall be placed on record by January 15. The petitioner said that orders issued by the Delhi Government during the pandemic required Delhi Police personnel to be posted for Covid duty across the city and therefore it cannot be argued by the respondents that the deceased was not on Covid

In the petition, the deceased constable's wife has submitted that she ran from pillar to post to secure the compensation promised by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a tweet on May 7, 2020 after the death of her husband who was the sole breadwinner of the

First hearing impaired advocate enrolled at Bar wants to work for divyangs' rights

STAFF REPORTER

Caudamini Pethe — the first enrolled with the Bar Council of Delhi — wants to work for the rights of people like her and help them gain access to education, healthcare and justice. The 45-year-old woman

lawyer would be arguing her matters in courts through the medium of an Indian Sign Language (ISL) interpreter and seeks to be an inspiration for the hearing impaired youth to join the legal profession and contribute to the cause of their community.
Pethe, who suffered hear-

ing loss after being infected with meningitis at the age of nine and subsequently taking strong medicines, feels that words like 'disability' and 'impairment' have negative connotations

"My aim is to use my law



cause of deaf rights. To make it possible for the deaf community in India to gain access in every aspect of life, be it education, health care, or career and most importantly get access to justice," she said.

"I also want to spread more awareness, and empower the deaf by equipping them with the knowledge of their legal rights and become capable of ensuring that these rights are fulfilled. I want to inspire more deaf youth to join the legal procause of the deaf," Pethe, who communicated with PTI through WhatsApp messages,

Senior advocate K K Manan, chairman of the Bar Council of Delhi, said "We have given the licence to her to practice, which is rarely given in such a situation. But we would like to settle her so that she can stand on her own feet. So that she can do things on her own. She can earn a livelihood for herself and her family."

The Delhi Police has arrest-

1 ed three men for allegedly

running illegal call centres and

defrauding senior citizens

based in the US on the pretext

of providing them with tech-

nology support against "mal-

functioning" of their comput-

man's relative for money STAFF REPORTER ■

A³¹-year-old man and his partner were arrested for old woman and decamping with cash and jewellery worth more than Rs 1 crore in northwest Delhi's Shalimar Bagh. The arrested persons have been identified as Madhur Kundra (31) and his partner Amarjot Kaur Sandhu (28) were arrested from a hotel in Punjab's Amritsar.

According to police, both the accused wanted to marry each other and settle abroad Since Kundra, who was a relative of deceased identified as Rajni, knew that the woman was wealthy and decided to rob her. On December 13, after finding Rajni unconscious, she was shifted to the hospital where she was declared brought dead.

Ravindra Yadav, Special Commissoner of Police



Two lovers held for killing

(Crime) said on the basis of local enquiry and technical support, one of the suspects was identified. A team immediately rushed to Amritsar, raided a hotel and apprehended Kundra and Sandhu, he said.

During interrogation, police found out that Kundra was the son of the sister-inlaw of the deceased. He is married and has a seven-yearold child. He is an MBA from Meerut and presently is a medical products distributor, he said.

The co-accused, who is a nurse at a hospital in Amritsar got married in January 2021. police said.

Soon after marriage, her husband left her and shifted to Dubai. During the period, she came in contact with Kundra and both fell in love,

"Both the accused planned to marry each other and shift abroad. But they needed money to the execute their plan. Ás Kundra was a relative of the deceased, he also had good relations with Rajni's son

"On November 27, Chetan visited him and during their conversation, Kundra learnt that Rajni was a wealthy woman. To execute his plan, Kundra stole the keys of Rajni's house from Chetan's bag," the senior police officer said. On December 13, they reached her house, smothered her to death with a pillow and took off with jewellery and cash," he said. The robbed jewellery and Rs. 14,40,400 lakhs cash has been recovered,

elections, officials say no plans to hold polls anytime soon STAFF REPORTER ■

Uncertainty over DUSU

NFW DFI HI

Uover Delhi University Students Union (DUSU) elections this academic session with officials saying that there are no plans to hold polls any-

The student body's election was last conducted in 2019. Polls were not held in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19.

"We are in a dilemma about when to hold these elections. There is no plan as of now. We have admissions and exams going on," Delhi University proctor Rajni Abbi said.

"We cannot hold them in January. We were thinking of conducting the election in February, but that is also not possible. We are not sure when to hold them. Currently, our priority is admission," she said.



have completed their studies. DUSU is the main representative body of students from most colleges and faculties. Apart from this, each college has its own students' union,

whose elections are held annu-DUSU's elections are held via direct voting of the students of the varsity and member

Colleges. They are usually held in August -September on a

AAP Councillors cleaning every part of city: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Newly-elected AAP Municipal Councillors are "cleaning every nook and corner of Delhi" along with sanitation workers, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Friday and asserted that all Councillors should get involved in sanitation activities. In a tweet in Hindi, he also shared a post by a councillor from his party who had taken to Twitter to share an image of a spot in her ward. before and after its cleaning.

AAP had emerged victorious in the high-stakes civic polls held on December 4, winning 134 of the 250 wards and ending the 15-year rule of the BJP in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and reducing the Congress to just

"For a few days, such pictures are being received from



many areas. The newly elected councillors of 'AAP' are cleaning every nook and corner of Delhi along with the sanitation workers. These employees were earlier called bad. They are doing such a good job today. All councillors should get involved in cleaning their area like this, Keiriwal tweeted

Sanitation was one of the major poll planks of the Aam Aadmi Party in the keenlywatched municipal elections, the results of which were declared on December 7.

after the civic polls will be convened on January 6, sources said on Thursday.

The accused, identified as Jatin Lamba, Harshad Madaan and Vikas Gupta, were held in Delhi after police conducted overnight raids, whereas their counterpart Jayant Bhatia was arrested by Canadian Law Enforcement Agency from Toronto and Kulwinder Singh was arrested by the FBI, USA from New Jersey, they said.

Police said Jatin Lamba with his brother Gagan Lamba was running a company from Ganesh Nagar, New Delhi camouflaging as a tech support The first municipal House company and used to run call

centres that targeted US citi-Deputy Commissioner of

3 held for running illegal call centres, defrauding US citizens Police (IFSO, Special Cell) Prashant K Gautam said Gupta has been involved in the scam as a calling agent to provide tech support to fix the technical glitch in the computer of the

> Madaan, the DCP said, used to mobilize the cheated funds to the account of the alleged company on commission basis as he had arranged bank accounts in a fraudulently-created companies WebMaster and Webleaders in United States to collect the amount from victims in US and then transfer the same through wire to the account of alleged company in Delhi.

> According to police, the matter came to light after the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) approached the Delhi Police through Interpol Wing of the CBI with details of cyber criminals who had been operating full-fledged call centres from Delhi and adjoining areas to defraud senior citizens of the US on the pretext of providing

them tech support against mal-

functioning of their computers. According to the informa-

tion shared by the US, there are more than 20,000 victims who have fallen prey to such schemes of crime devised and executed by the criminals based in India, causing revenue loss of more than USD 10 million to America between 2012 and 2020, police said.

Explaining the modus operandi, the officer said that in a scam of tech support, popups were sent to a large number of targeted senior citizens who are not tech-savvy. They would be alerted to a Microsoft issue or some type of fraudulent activity that must be addressed immediately by calling a designated telephone number on the pop-up advertisement.

On contacting the designated number, the target was convinced to pay a certain amount for fixing the so-called technical glitch by taking over the control of the computer through voluntarily-shared code of any RDP (Remote Desktop Programme) like AnyDesk, LogMeIn etc.

'Generally, it is a fake technical issue in the computer of victim but they are convinced to pay certain sum of amount through cheque, money order or PayPal etc. In some instances, they re-victimise the same person to pay again and again. These types of threat vectors targeting US senior citizens were found to be originated from Canada or India,"

the DCP said. "During course of investigation, two laptops and three mobile phones were taken into possession from the accused. Forensic scrutiny of Harshad Madaan's laptop led to the recovery of the statement of commission received by him from M/s PC Support and Care (alleged company) for facilitating the transfer of cheated amount from the victims to the account of PC Support and Care Pvt. Ltd., which was incorporated on

August 17, 2012 having its

registered address at Ramesh

Nagar, Delhi with two directors Jatin Lamba and Gagan Lamba," the officer said.

Police said a company identified as Techspine Technologies Pvt. Ltd. Was also found to be incorporated with ROC- Delhi and Ĥaryana by Vikas Gupta with Aditya Gupta as its directors.

"During his interrogation, Vikas Gupta stated that the alleged company was created to run a call centre from Faridabad to cheat the US citizens, but it could not take off and he ended up as a calling agent on behalf of M/s PC Support and Care," Gautam

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Border areas stable, forces in control: Lt-Gen Kalita

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

As India has taken all steps to thwart any attempt by China to change the status quo at the border in Arunachal Pradesh following a bid on December nine there, Eastern Command chief Lt General R P Kalita on Friday said border areas along the country's northern frontier are "stable" and the Indian Armed forces remain "firmly in control."

Kalita's assertion in Kolkata comes a week after Indian and Chinese soldiers clashed at the border area of Yangtze, Tawang. Responsible for security at the Line of Control(LAC)in eastern sector, Kalita said there are different perceptions of the LAC by the Indian Army and China's People's Liberation Army at several points. He also said eight of these areas are acknowledged by both sides.

Kalita said the PLA transgressed in one of these areas in the Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh, which was "very firmly contested" by Indian forces

"Presently, would like to assure everybody that the border areas along the northern frontier are stable and we are firmly in control," he said.

Maintaining that there were some minor injuries suffered by soldiers of both sides in December nine clash, Kalita said local commanders were able to resolve the issue by carrying out negotiations resorting to existing protocols.

"It led to some amount of physical violence, but it was contained at the local level resorting to existing bilateral mechanisms and protocols,' the Eastern Army commander said. This was followed by flag meeting at the delegation level at Bum la(mountain pass), wherein the issue was resolved further, he added.

To a question whether there was any incursion by China or any land in Arunachal was being held by India's northern neighbour, the Army commander said "the short answer is no."

Kalita was speaking to

ceremony at Fort William, the Eastern Command headquarters, on the 51st Vijay Diwas marking the victory over Pakistan by Indian armed forces and Mukti Bahini leading to the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971.

Assuring that the armed forces are prepared for all eventualities and all contingencies, he the border areas have seen huge focus on infrastructure development. The projects include building new roads, railway tracks, airports and communication lines, he said adding it is definitely going to enhance the Indian Armed forces' operational capabilities.

Kalita said there has been no fresh issue with regard to infrastructure development at Doklam in the Sikkim sector, which was witness to a 73-day standoff between the armies of India and China in 2017. He said that if any such issue arises, it is resolved at the local level

This observation came in the backdrop of reports that GEN RP KALITA, UYSM, A GOC-in-C, EASTERN COM

China has built ropeways and road in its territory near the trijunction of Doklam.

"There has been no fresh development as far as Doklam is concerned with regard to infrastructure development,'

Meanwhile, the command level IAF exercise is on in the eastern sector since Thursday, officials said adding it was scheduled in advance and is not

Din in RS over China's incursion bid

PNS NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha for the third consecutive day on Friday witnessed a din over the latest incursion bid by China into Arunachal Pradesh with the main Opposition Congress demanding a debate on the issue. The House was adjourned for a short while in the morning session after some members rushed into the Well of the House.

Congress and other Opposition parties have been trying to raise the issue since December 13, after reports ppeared of clashes between Indian and Chinese soldiers in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh. In the initial days, they staged walkouts but have since Thursday, forced

On Friday, Congress MPs ressed for acceptance of their notices under rule 267 that sought to set aside the business of the day to take up a debate

on the issue but the chair did not permit it.

They initially shouted slogans and disrupted issues of public importance being raised by other MPs through zerohour submissions but later, trooped into the Well of the House, forcing Deputy Chairman Harivansh to adjourn proceedings for 25

When the House met for the day, Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge said his party and other opposition parties have been trying to raise a very serious issue of national security. Discussions being sought by opposition

parties are not being allowed he added.

Harivansh said allegations should not be levelled against the chair. He also cited last week's ruling of Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar expressing inability to accept notices under rule 267 in the absence of such pleas not specifying the particular rule that was being sought to be set aside.

Eight notices under rule 267 were received on Friday but barring one by Raghav Chadha(AAP), none specified the rule that was being sought to be set aside for taking up a discussion, he said, adding that the notices were under con-

India holds two joint exercises with Singapore, Nepal forces

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

India has held two joint exercises with Singapore and Nepal respectively in the last few days. While the air force of the two countries took part in the Singapore drill, the Indian army is practicing drills in jungle warfare with Nepal. After a two-year hiatus

due to the pandemic, the air forces of Singapore and India held their annual Joint Military Training (JMT) which aims at strengthening the professional bonds between them and allowing them to hone their operational skills.

The Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) and the Indian Air Force (IAF) successfully completed the 11th edition of the JMT at the Kalaikunda Air Force Station in India from November 3 to December 14, according to a Singapore Defence Ministry press release.

The RSAF deployed 14 F-16C/D fighter aircraft to train



alongside the IAF's SU-30MKI, Jaguar, LCA Tejas, and MiG-29 fighter aircraft, according to the press release issued during the

Since its inception in 2008, the JMT has been conducted under the ambit of the Air Force Bilateral Agreement, which was signed in 2007.

The Singapore and Indian armies have also held the 12th Edition of Exercise Agni Warrior, a bilateral exercise that commenced on 13 November 2022 and was concluded at Field Firing Ranges, Devlali (Maharashtra) on November 30.

India and Nepal on Friday

began the 16th edition of the joint military training exercise to share theoretical and practical experiences in jungle warfare related to counter-terrorism military skills as well as disaster management.

A team from the Indian Army arrived in Nepal on Wednesday to participate in the "Surya Kiran" military training exercises taking place at Saljhandi in the Rupandehi district of Lumbini Zone near the Nepal-India border. The 'Surya Kiran' exercise is conducted annually in Nepal and India. The 15th edition of the joint exercise was held in Pithoragarh, India.

Cong blames Rijiju for orchestrating tussle with judiciary in LS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Congress MP Manish Tewari on Friday raised questions over Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju's recent remarks on the Supreme Court and asked if the Government is trying to "orchestrate" a confrontation with the judiciary.

Speaking in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, Rijiju said if the Supreme Court takes up all bail applications and "frivolous PILs", it will cause a lot of extra burden. He said this after introducing the New Delhi International Arbitration Centre (Amendment) Bill, 2022 in the Upper House of Parliament.

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha,

related to the current develop-

ments in the Arunachal

including the Rafale, Sukhoi-

30MKI fighter aircraft under

the umbrella of an Advanced

Warning and Control System

(AWACS) aircraft participated

in the consolidated training

exercise in the area of respon-

sibility of Eastern Air

Command, they said.

Over 40 fighter aircraft

adesh sector.

Tewari said Rijiju's remarks raised a very fundamental question - whether this Government believes in liberty. "The law minister of the country recently gave a statement, saying the Supreme Court should not hear frivolous PILs and bail applications. He further went on to say that Supreme Court judges take too many vacations and then questioned the process of appointments to the higher judiciary," the Congress leader

Latching on to Rijiju's remarks, he asked, "Does this Government believe in Article 21 (protection of life and personal liberty)? Is this Government trying to orchestrate a confrontation with the

Scrapping of fellowship scheme an anti-minority move by Centre: Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

→Kodikkunnil Suresh on Friday termed the scrapping of the Maulana Azad National Fellowship (MANF) scheme as an "anti-minority" move by Narendra Government and said the decision will make higher education inaccessible to underprivileged students belonging to the minority communities. Raising the issue in Lok Sabha during Zero Hour, the Congress member also said the discontinuation of the felowship scheme will have a pan-India adverse impact on the higher education of students belonging to Muslim, Buddhist, Jain, Christian, Parsi 'The move is an insult to



and their memories of sacrifice," he charged. So far, students from these six notified minority communities received financial assistance for pursuing higher education under the scheme which covers all the institutions recognised by the University Grants Commission, he said. With the discontinuation

of the scheme,"...The higher education will become inaccessible to underprivileged students from the six notified Maulana Azad. It also disregards all the freedom fighters Suresh added. The MANF

scheme for the minority community students pursuing higher education has been scrapped while the Government's pre-matric scholarship for them will no longer apply to students from Class 1 to Class 8.

In a written reply to a question recently in the Lok Sabha, Minority Affairs Minister Smriti Irani said the Government provided fellowships for higher education through various schemes, including the MANF, implemented by different Ministries or departments. All these schemes, except the Maulana Azad National Fellowship, are open for candidates of all communities, including minorities, but the data of fellowship distributed among minority students is included only under the Maulana Azad National Fellowship scheme,

CBI registers 3 more FIRs against fugitive diamantaire Choksi

The CBI has registered three ■ fresh FIRs against fugitive diamantaire Mehul Choksi and three entities linked to him--Nakshatra Brands Limited, Gitanjali Gems Limited and Gili India Ltd.--for defrauding a consortium of banks of over Rs 6, 747.97 crore.

The agency registered the cases on the basis of complaints from Vijay Kumar Wadhwa, Deputy General Manager of the zonal office of the Punjab National Bank in Mumbai, against Nakshatra Brands Ltd and Gitanjali Gems Ltd, Mehul Choksi, who is the managing director of Gitanjali Gems Ltd and a guarantor for Nakshatra Brands Ltd, Dhanesh Vrajlal Sheth, director of Nakshatra Brands Ltd, and several others, including public servants, for causing wrongful loss of nearly Rs 6,748 crores to three separate consortium of banks.

In the first complaint relating to Nakshatra Brands



Limited, it was alleged that the jewellery brand is a subsidiary of Gitanjali Gems Ltd and that the firm is dominantly controlled and managed by Mehul Choksi who was in active connivance with the accused persons named in the FIR.

The jewellery brand and other accused persons, including Choksi, were party to a criminal conspiracy to cheat a consortium of nine member banks led by Punjab National Bank of Rs 807.72 crores between January 21, 2010 to April 1, 2010. In the second complaint,

against Gitanjali Gems Limited, Mehul Choksi, Dhanesh Vrajial Sheth and others, it has been alleged that the jewellery brand along with the accused persons, and cheated a consortium of 28 member banks led by ICICI Bank Limited of Rs 5,564.54 crores between April 1, 2010 to January 31, 2018.

In both these complaints,

the jewellery brands and the accused named in the FIR have been accused of involvement in fudging of accounts, siphoning of funds and utilising the sanctioned credit limits for bogus trade transactions. The consortium of member

banks classified the accounts of both Nakshatra Brands Ltd and Gitanjali Gems Ltd as nonperforming assets and reported them as fraud to the Reserve Bank of India.

Choksi is wanted since January 2018 when he, along with his nephew Niray Modi. was booked for cheating Punjab National Bank of over Rs 13,000 crores. Since then, multiple other FIRs have been registered against Choksi for bank frauds and cheating a number of con-

CBI books 6 for visa fraud at French Embassy

PNS NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered a case ■ against six private persons including two, earlier working in the Visa Department of the French Embassy, New Delhi and others on allegations of visa fraud in the French Embassy here.

The agency also conducted searches at six locations including at Delhi, Patiala, Gurdaspur and Jammu at the premises of the accused and recovered incriminating documents/articles including laptop, mobile phones and suspicious passports.

It was alleged that the two accused working in the visa department of Embassy of France, New Delhi, conspired with others and perpetrated a visa fraud during the period from January 1 to May 6 this year, the CBI said in a state-



"It was further alleged that in pursuance to the said criminal conspiracy, applicants from Punjab and Jammu submitted fake and forged letters purportedly written by a private company based at Bengaluru to the Consulate General of France, Bengaluru for issuing Entry Visas, for their joining private companies in Port-Le-Havre, France," it said.

On being approached by the applicants the said two offi-cials in the visa department of the Embassy allegedly issued Entry Visas in favour of three other accused after taking bribes at the rate of Rs 50,000 per visa, without the knowledge and approval of the Head of Visa Department, Embassy

It was also alleged that after issuance of Entry Visa, the

said two officials displaced/destroyed the docusaid ments/files from the Visa Department. During the period of five

months, several files were allegedly handled by these accused which mostly pertain to individuals like young farmers or unemployed people from Punjab who had not earlier travelled abroad. It was further alleged that

during the period, the accused had perpetrated fraud of huge amounts in the Visa Department of the Embassy.

The accused booked in the case are Shubham Shokeen and Aarti Mandal, both working in the Visa Department of the French Embassy here besides Navjot Singh, Chetan Sharma, Satwinder Singh Purewal and Manpreet Singh.

ED seizes assets worth ₹178 cr of jewellery house under FEMA

PNS NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has seized movable and immovable properties worth Rs 177.8 crore of Shree Ganesh Jewellery House (I) Ltd. and its directors/ promoters under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). Shree Ganesh Jewellery House (I) Ltd and its directors exported jewellery items to Al Marhaba Trading FZE, UAE, Sparkle Jewellery LLC, UAE and Astha Jewellery LLC, UAE which were their associate companies under their control, the ED said in a statement. "The export proceeds worth amounting to Rs 7,297 crore were deliberately not realized and intentionally



parked outside India by Shree Ganesh Jewellery House (I) Ltd.and its Directors and promoters in contravention of provisions of FEMA, 1999," it said. The seizure of assets of equal amounts has been made under FEMA The ED is also investigat-

ing a case against the jewellery House. under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act.

10,416 confirmed cases, 40 deaths due to measles in India till Dec 12: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI

 M_{dren}^{easles} is fast taking children in India in its grip with the Government on Friday stating that a total 10,416 laboratory-confirmed cases and 40 deaths due to it among kids have been reported till December 12 this year. The Government data on measles cases tabled in Parliament, however, differs from those reported by the USbased Centre for Disease Control Prevention based on the WHO data

The US agency's website shows that India with 11,000 cases tops the list of countries with global measles outbreak from May-October 2022. "WHO classifies all suspected measles cases reported from India as measles clinically compatible if a specimen was not col-



lected as per the algorithm for classification of suspected measles in the WHO VPD Surveillance Standards. Thus numbers might be different between what WHO reports and what India reports," the CDC has, however, clarified.

As per the written reply by Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar in the Lok Sabha on Friday, Maharashtra tops the list with 3,075 cases and 13 deaths followed by Jharkhand

with 2,683 cases and eight deaths. An upsurge in cases of measles has been reported during November 2022, she said, adding that central teams have been providing technical support to the measles hotspots States like Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Kerala.

Measles, a contagious virus, is almost entirely preventable through vaccination. Low coverage of Measles and Rubella Containing Vaccine (MRCV) among the eligible beneficiaries due to pandemic has left the unvaccinated kids prone to the contagious virus.

According to the officials, during the COVID-19 para demic, national routine MRCV1 coverage decreased from a peak of 95% in 2019 to 89% in 2021, and MCV2 coverage decreased from a peak of 84% (2019) to

multidrug-resistant TB cases ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI rently in use in India.

In a country like India, which has low treatment success rate for MDR/RR-TB cases and XDR-TB cases due to the high toxicity of existing treatment and difficulty in adhering to treatment prescribing several drugs, there's good news. The WHO has said that patients with multidrug-resistant TB or rifampicin-resistant TB may take a six-month, alloral regimen comprising the drugs bedaquiline, pretomanid, linezolid, and moxifloxacin (BPaLM), instead of

a treatment regimen lasting

nine months or longer, cur-

Those patients with mul-

WHO for shorter treatment for

tidrug-resistant TB or rifampicin-resistant TB who have developed resistance to scribe to the same six-month treatment regimen, but without moxifloxacin (BPaL).

The BPaL/BPaLM regimens are a shorter, all-oral, and highly effective treatment regimen for MDR/RR-TB and pre-XDR-TB cases, the WHO pointed out. It also added that nine-month, all-oral treatment regimens that include bedaquiline, fluoroquinolones, and linezolid are also preferred over treatment regi-

mens that run for more than 18 months in adults and children with multidrug-resistant TB or rifampicin-resistant TB who have not previously taken fluoroquinolones can sub- second-line TB treatments, and have no resistance to fluoroquinolone.

The WHO's drug-resistant tuberculosis treatment guideline is based on data from recent studies such as TB-PRACTECAL, a clinical trial led by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) that evaluated the BPaLM regimen; the ZeNix trial that evaluated the BPaL regimen; and with the national TB program in South

IN-BRIEF

PREZ ADDRESSES PROBATIONERS AT ISS

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu on Friday said more women at senior positions and in leadership roles will strengthen India's resolve for inclusive development. She was addressing the probationers of the Indian Statistical Service who had called on the President at Rashtrapati Bhavan here.

INS MORMUGAO TO BE COMMISSIONED INTO NAVY

New Delhi: Indigenously-built guided missile destroyer 'INS Mormugao' will be commissioned into the Indian Navy on Sunday. The warship is packed with a plethora of sophisticated sensors, modern radar and weapons systems such as surface-to-surface missiles and surface-to-air missiles. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is scheduled to commission the ship at the naval dockyard in

PETITION IN SC SEEKING SIT INTO BIHAR HOOCH TRAGEDY New Delhi: A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court, seeking an independent probe by a special investigation team (SIT) into a recent hooch

tragedy in Bihar, in which at least 30 people have lost their lives. The Saran hooch tragedy toll climbed to 30 on Friday, the highest since Bihar went dry more than six years ago. SHAH TO CHAIR EASTERN ZONAL COUNCIL MEET IN KOLKATA

New Delhi: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will chair a meeting of the Eastern Zonal Council in Kolkata on Saturday where issues like security along the inter-state borders, smuggling along the India-Bangladesh border, and connectivity will be discussed

SARAN HOOCH TRAGEDY

NHRC notice to Bihar Govt, police chief

65 people lost their lives after consuming illicit liquor in State

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $T^{he \ National \ Human \ Rights}_{Commission \ has} \ issued \\ notices \ to \ the \ Bihar \\ Government \ and \ the \ State's$ police chief over the Saran hooch tragedy in which, according to media reports, at least 65 people have lost their lives on Friday.

The sale and consumption of alcohol was completely banned in Bihar in April 2016, though its "implementation has been patchy," the NHRC observed in a statement.

The Saran hooch tragedy toll rose to 65 on Friday, the biggest since Bihar went dry more than six years ago, and it continued to cast a shadow on the State legislature where BJP members disrupted proceedings in both Houses before staging a Raj Bhavan march.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has "taken suo motu cognisance of the media reports that several people have died after allegedly consuming spurious liquor in Saran district of Bihar," it said.



observed that the contents of the media reports, if true, raise concern for human rights.

Apparently, the reported incident "indicates the failure of the State Government" on implementation of its policy of prohibition of sale and consumption of illicit or spurious liquor in the State, it said.

Accordingly, it has issued notices to the chief secretary and the director general of police of Bihar, seeking a detailed report, including the status of the FIR registered by the police, medical treatment of the victims who are hospitalised, and compensation, if any, granted to the aggrieved families, the statement said.

The commission would also like to know about the action taken against delinquent officers responsible for the tragedy. The response from the authorities is expected at the earliest but not later than four weeks from the issuance of

these orders, it added.

According to the media reports, carried on December 15, the deaths have been reported across three villages under Mashrakh, Ishuapur and Amnaur police stations of Marhaura sub-division in Chhapra area. The police suspect that the villagers might have purchased the liquor from a common shop in these adjoining areas, the statement

States not ruled by BJP get unfair treatment from media, says Nitish Kumar

A reference to Morbi bridge Collapse of Gujarat was on Friday made inside the Bihar Assembly by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar who alleged that States not ruled by BJP got an unfair portrayal in the unfair portrayal in the

The JD(U) leader, who is rooting for "Opposition unity" for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, was intervening after an MLA of the CPI(M), which supports the 'Mahagathbandhan' Government from outside, said that family members of those who have died in the Saran hooch tragedy should get some compensation.

Rejecting the suggestion with righteous disgust, the chief minister said that would amount to supporting the vice of drinking and would go against the spirit of the prohibition law.

Visibly upset at the ruckus created by BJP MLAs, who had walked out by the time he rose to speak, Kumar said "they have gone away. Had they stayed back, they would have got an earful".

"Such a huge bridge col-lapse incident took place. It came in the papers the next day and then all fell silent", said the Bihar CM, who has of late grown quite vocal against alleged media censorship by the

The allusion was to the collapse of a suspension walkway in Gujarat at the end of October which had killed more than 100 people.

"On the other hand the other incident that took place earlier..... It was talked about so much", said Kumar, in an obvious reference to the collapse of a flyover at Kolkata six years

A major political controversy erupted in West Bengal after Prime Minister Narendra Modi told a rally that the mishap was an "act of fraud" on part of the Mamata Banerjee government and "God's message" to the people of the state that they vote her out.

Two locals killed in firing near Rajouri Army camp

MOHIT KANDHARI JAMMU

Two civilians, reportedly working in a canteen inside an Army camp, were killed in a firing incident near Army TCP Alfa gate early Friday morning in the frontier district of Rajouri while another civiling when recipilated the second state of the second state o ian, who received bullet injuries in the stomach, was admitted in the local hospital by the police.

The firing incident sparked violent protests in the area as the deceased were local residents and were killed when they were approaching the Army gate to start another day at work.

Instead of gaining access inside the army camp the civilians were hit by bullets leading to instant death on the spot.

Several local residents, who reached the spot immediately after the firing incident took place, claimed the two civilians received bullet injuries on their upper torso and succumbed to their fatal injuries on the spot.

The deceased were identified as Surinder Kumar and Kamal Kishore, both residents of Falyana Ward No 15 Rajouri. However, the injured person has been identified as Anil Ranikhet Kumar Uttrakhand.

As the crowd swelled up in the area the army camp also

Family members and relatives mourn near the body of a local youth who was killed in alleged firing by the sentry of an Army camp, in Rajouri on Friday

witnessed stone pelting at regular intervals. Vehicular traffic on the Rajouri-Poonch National Highway was also disrupted for over seven hours.

While the local residents were holding protest demonstrations seeking high level inquiry into the circumstances leading to the killing of two civilians outside an army camp the Twitter handle of White Knight Corps in a tweet clarified, "in an early morning firing incident by unidentified terrorists at Rajouri near Military Hospital, there has been fatal casualty of two individuals. The Police, security forces and civil administration officials are on the site".

Meanwhile, as the day pro-

gressed tensions further flared up. The tweet of the Indian army also triggered a fresh

wave of protests in the area. Before the dharna was lifted senior officers of the district administration along with police officers rushed to the spot to pacify the angry residents. A separate written commitment was made by the top officers of the district police and Indian army in writing to pacify the agitating local residents.

The protesters were demanding written assurance from the authorities and commitment to provide adequate compensation and government jobs to the next of kin of the

Uddhav Sena, NCP, Cong to hold joint massive protest in Maha today

Guv's remarks against State icons Shivaji, Jyotiba, Savithribai Phule, unemployment on protest agenda

T N RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

The Eknath Shinde-led Shiv **I** Sena-BJP alliance Government will face a first major Opposition protest ever since it assumed office in June this year, when as many as 50 political parties, groups and organisations led by the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) con-stituents — Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress — take out a massive morcha here on Saturday.

Though a smaller protest had been organised by the MVA constituents in Pune on December 13, Saturday's is the first massive show of strength planned by the Opposition to Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari and BJP leaders against the State icons like Chhatrapati Shivaji, Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Savithribai Phule, the flight of industries to Gujarat and large-scale unemployment in the State.

Top leaders of various parties like former Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, former deputy chief minister and current Leader of Opposition Ajit Pawar and State Congress president Nana Patole will lead the 5 km-morcha which begin from Byculla and calumniate at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT) in south Mumbai.

Senior MVA leaders like Jayant Patil, Naseem Khan, Sanjay Raut, Dilip Walse-Patil, Bhai Jagtap, Dr. Raghunath Kuchik and leaders of various groups and organisations will participate in the morcha.

The MVA is anticipating a turn-out of three to four lakh people from various parts of Mumbai and elsewhere in the state. The participants will comprise workers and representatives from various trade unions, teachers, auto rickshaw unions, social groups



and people from various walks

After keeping Opposition in wait for a long time, the Mumbai police accorded permission to the Opposition on Thursday evening. The police have made elaborate arrangements for Among other things, the

Opposition – at its protest – Lodha and Uni will root for the recall of Raosaheb Danve.

Governor Koshyari for his utterances against Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Mahatma Ivotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule. They will also protest against the condescending remarks against the state icons by BJP Spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi and leaders Mungantiwar, Mangalprabhat Lodha and Union Minister

AIMIM seeks 5% quota for Maha Muslims, to take out march during Assembly session

PTI AURANGABAD

The Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM will take out a march during the upcoming winter session of the Maharashtra Legislature in Nagpur to demand five per cent reservation for Muslims in the State, a party leader said.

All India Majalis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) MP from Aurangabad and its State unit president Imtiaz Jaleel gave this information by tweeting a poster of the planned march.

"The AIMIM will take out a march on 21 December from Indora Ground in Nagpur to Vidhan Bhawan during the session of the Maharashtra leg-

Apart from seeking five per cent reservation to Muslims,



the AIMIM will also highlight the demand of removal of encroachments from the Waqf land, the tweet said.

Provision of ₹1,000 crore subsidy to Maulana Azad Minorities Financial Development Corporation Limited; awarding ownership of slum land to residents; financial assistance to hand-loom and power-loom workers are some other demands which the party will raise during the march, it added. The winter session of the legislature will be held in Nagpur, the second capital of Maharashtra, from

Kerala HC nixes plea for CBI probe into Thiruvananthapuram Mayor's note

The Kerala High Court on Friday dismissed a plea seeking a CBI probe or a judicial inquiry into a letter allegedwritten Thiruvananthapura m

Corporation Mayor Arya Rajendran regarding employing party cadres in the civic

Justice K Babu said the claims of the petitioner -- a former Councillor of the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation — regarding the impartiality of the investigating agency — the Crime Branch wing of the police — are without any solid foundation.

"The averments regarding

the impartiality of the investigating agency in the writ petition are without any solid foundation. The petitioner has material compelling transfer of investigation," the court said



and dismissed the plea. The court said the petitioner G S Sreekumar had

alternate remedies to redress his grievances. In the plea filed through

advocate K R Rajkumar, Sreekumar had also sought appointment of a commission, headed by a sitting judge not below the rank of a subordinate judge, to look into the allegations made by him against the Mayor in his plea.

The court rejected that plea as well by saying that according to the provisions of in the council hall was to cover Act of 1952, it was "crystal clear" that there was no legal or

statutory obligation upon the State government to appoint a Commission of Inquiry even if it was a matter of public impor-"As the statute imposed

no legal duty on the government to appoint a commission, the petitioner has no legal right to enforce its performance. As the petitioner has no right under the statute he has no locus standi to seek the relief as prayed for. The writ petition fails and it stands dismissed," the court said.

Later in the day, BJP councillors protested in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation by lying down on the Mayor's dais in the council hall and shouting slogans at Rajendran seeking her resignation. Rajendran told reporters that the day's protest suffered in view of the High

Yogi orders Animal Husbandry dept to improve 'Gaushalas'

PNS LUCKNOW

o ensure proper protec-I tion and maintenance of cows, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed the Animal Husbandry department to improve the condition of cow protection shelters on priority. In pursuance of the direc-

tives issued by the chief minister, the cow protection shelters in the state will have full arrangements for fodder, water, security and cleanliness and hygiene of the cattle.

Owing to the sustained efforts of the Yogi Adityanath government, arrangements have been made for the protection of cows in the cow shelters (gaushalas) in all the urban bodies of the state. Moreover, aged to take proper care of des-

To protect animals from the winter chill, Yogi has given clear instructions to the Animal Husbandry department to ensure availability of medicines and other means of treatment. Instructions have also been given to complete construction of cow shelters (gaushalas) by January 31, 2023, for them to be functional by March 31, 2023.

The data concerned is to be updated on a regular basis on the Gau Aashray portal.

In districts where the dis-

trict project monitoring unit has not been established. instructions have been given to do so immediately, in addition to making efforts to make the gaushalas self-dependent.

There are 11,13,035 destitute cattle in Uttar Pradesh. Of tection. Cow shelters have been built in 49 districts of the State.

AIIMS cyber attack: All data retrieved from unaffected backup server: Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

More than two weeks after the AIIMS cyber attack, Minister of State for Health Bharati Pravin Pawar informed the Lok Sabha on Friday that all the data has been retrieved from an unaffected backup server with most of its services being restored. Responding to a question, Pawar said no specific amount of ransom was demanded by the hackers though a message was discovered on the server that suggested it to be a cyber-An FIR has been registered

by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences with the Special Cell of Delhi Police, regarding the attack, the min-



ister said in her written reply. Five physical servers of AIIMS Delhi on which the e-Hospital application of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) was hosted, were affected. All the data for the e-Hospital has been retrieved from a backup server which was unaffected and restored on new servers.

"Most of the functions of e-Hospital applications like patient registration, appointment, admission, discharge etc have been restored after two weeks of the cyber-attack," Pawar said in the written reply.



The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to decide on the legal question of whether the Prakash Singh judgment

guidelines on appointment of DGPs are applicable to the appointment of Delhi Police Commissioner also. The apex court Bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud agreed on the request by lawyer Prashant Bhushan who filed a case regarding the appointment of Rakesh Asthana as the Delhi Police Commissioner last year.

Pointing out that Asthana had already retired in July 2022, Bhushan said that the crux of the petition was the violation of Prakash Singh judgment guidelines in the State



SC to hear plea challenging

that Delhi's Police Chief's selection never adhered to the guidelines on appointment of

As per the guidelines, a State Police Chief will be select-ed after UPSC selected three officers and sent to the Government. The officers considered by UPSC must be having six months service left and the State Government can choose the police head from the three persons recommended by UPSC. The DGP will have a fixed two year tenure as per the Prakash Singh

Asthana from the Gujarat cadre, who was serving as BSF Chief, was surprisingly appointed by the Union Home Ministry as Delhi Police Commissioner, when he was about to retire in two days. Normally AGMUT cadre officers were selected as Delhi Police Chief. The current police chief Sanjay Arora is from Tamil Nadu cadre and was ITBP Chief.

The Delhi High Court has ratified Asthana appointment as Delhi Police Commissioner in another petition filed few days after Bhushan approached the apex court. Earlier, apex court said that they would wait for the Delhi High Court's verdict. Bhushan's petition was listed many times from February and Asthana retired on July 31.

Hydroalcoholic gel to test loss of smell, eight symptoms of Covid

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

 $R^{
m esearchers}$ have developed a hydroalcoholic gel with a OR code that enables people to access a test that assesses their ability to identify the smell of the product and eight symptoms of Covid, instantly evaluating the risk of having the deadly respiratory disease. The results are published in the journal Scientific Reports.

The team from Spain's Universitat Rovira i Virgili, in conjunction with the Pere Virgili Health Research



method, which is based on artificial intelligence (AI) tech-

The AI model instantly determines which people have a low, medium or high risk of having the disease at that moment with a sensitivity of 97 per cent. The first prototype of this device has been installed at

the entrance to the Sant Joan University Hospital in Reus and the research results were published in the journal Scientific Reports. Citrus fruits and apples

are two of the first aromas that people with the SARSCoV-2 virus stop detecting. Also, a high temperature, a headache, a cough, discomfort and a sore throat are all signs of the coronavirus but also of a cold or flu. The AI system that has been patented is based on a hydroalcoholic gel to which a particular concentration of a citrus essence has been added.

Indigo urges flyers to reach IGIA 2.5 hrs before time As the situation improves at Delhi airport, the airline IndiGo has

amended its airport advisory and has asked travelers to arrive at the Delhi airport 2.5 hours in advance. Meanwhile, Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Friday shared an update following concerns over congestion and chaos at the Delhi airport saying the main reason behind the ease in congestion at Delhi airport Terminal 3 is the five X-ray machines installed at the security-check area in the last nine

IndiGo has amended its airport

advisory and has asked travelers to

week advised its passengers to arrive at least 3.5 hours in advance so as to not miss their flight. The airline also advised passengers to carry only one piece of hand baggage weighing not more than seven kgs and suggested using gate numbers 5 and 6 for entry at T3 as they are nearest to the IndiGo check-in

golndiGo.in

Scindia also shared a "major reason" arrive at the Delhi airport 2.5 hours in advance. The airline had earlier this behind the ease in congestion at the

Indira Gandhi International Airport's Terminal-3. "Within 9 days, @DelhiAirport has installed 5 x-ray machines at the security-check area, taking the total to 18 ATRS/x-ray machines — a major reason behind ease in congestion at T3," the minister said. His post comes a day after a high-level government meeting was chaired by Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Thursday to further discuss the matter

Delhi airport authorities also advised passengers to remove your jacket and belt and keep them with your handbag in one tray and keep electronic items (laptop, mobile) and watch in second tray to save time. The authorities also advised to keep your boarding pass

sengers waiting at the airport to check in their baggage and at security counters had sparked concerns. IndiGo and Air India had put out advisories earlier this week asking passengers to come over 3 hours before their flight time.
The government has taken a slew measures, taking note of the com-

Visuals of long queues with pas-

plaints that emerged on social media and otherwise. Additional deployment of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel and immigration officers is also among the steps that are being taken. The government has agreed to deploy 1400 CISF personnel to secure the expanding terminal areas of the Delhi Airport and also to meet the challenge of its growing passenger

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Stop petulance

Law Minister should ensure some kind of arrangement or compromise between executive and judiciary

aw Minister Kiren Rijiju seems to have developed a penchant for locking horns with the judiciary on the issue of collegium. On Thursday he told the Rajya Sabha that the issue will not be resolved until a "new system" on appointments is evolved. The Government's unease with collegium is well-known and hardly needs any reiteration. Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud has already agreed to reconsider the collegium system. A writ petition seeking the revival of the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) is expected to be listed in due course. This means that the two organs of State, the executive and the judiciary, can iron out their differences over the matter in a cordial manner. So, taking potshots at the judiciary all the time diminishes both the Government and the Supreme Court. But Rijiju is doing that only. He told the Upper House that there is a feeling among people of India that the long vacation which the courts obtain is not very convenient for justice-seek-



ers. But vacations are a convention which should not be trifled with at the drop of a hat in a democracy. A few days earlier too, he had slammed the collegium system, claiming that it is "opaque." Recently, Vice-President and Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar had also criticised the Supreme Court's 2015 decision invalidating the NJAC Act as a "severe compromise" of parliamentary sovereignty and disregard of the "mandate of the people." In short, Government functionaries are relentless in their criticism of the collegium system.

This relentlessness is not winning many supporters. Last month, senior Congress leader and former law minister M Veerappa Moily not only denounced

Rijiju over his remarks on the appointment of judges but also said the collegium system is "time-tested." It may be recalled that the NJAC got support from across the political spectrum when it came into being in 2014. Over half of states, including those ruled by the Congress and the Left, had ratified laws in favour of the NJAC. So what has happened in the last eight years that the parties opposed to the Bharatiya Janata Party have turned their back against the NJAC? The Government as well as the BJP must ponder over this question. The answer is obvious though: there is a huge trust deficit, not just between the Government and the Opposition but also between the Government and the judiciary. This is not a good sign for our democracy. At any rate, the biggest sufferers because of the executive-judiciary tussle are common people. Owing to the delays on judicial appointments, the already sluggish pace of justice dispensation is becoming even more so. Instead of firing salvos at the Supreme Court now and then, Law Minister Rijiju should ensure some kind of arrangement or compromise which is acceptable to both sides. After all, given-and-take is an integral part of democracy, whereas self-righteousness is the enemy of dialogue.



People visit the Nagaon Book Fair at Nehrubali, in Nagaon

Hasina faces people's ire

BNP protests against the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina are getting wide public support

here is unrest in Bangladesh and it is only growing with time. If the recent protests in Dhaka are any indication then Sheikh Hasina is in for the toughest times since she came to power in 2009. Bangladesh Nationalist Party's, the main opposition party in Bangladesh has been successfully mounting pressure on Hasina to guit and announce early elections. The week-long protests culminated in a mega protest in the capital city of Dhaka. The opposition party mobilised people to protest against price rises and demand the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The main demand of the BNP is to have early elections under a caretaker government. They maintain that free and fair elections would not be possible under Hasina's regime. Besides, BNP also wants withdrawals of cases against its leader Khaleda Zia and her son Tarique Rahman. To

mount pressure all seven BNP legislators have tendered their resignations from the parliament. Sheikh Hasina, the Awami League leader and the prime minister in power since 2009, has been accused of rigging the two elections which were boycotted by the opposition.

Besides, Hasina's lack of tolerance of the opposition and her highhandedness in crushing dissenters has been criticised by the human rights activists. In fact as many as 1,80,000 cases have been filed against the BNP members during her regime in last ten years. Human right observers estimate that around 3,000 of her opponents were killed by the authorities. The opposition leaders also accused the government of cracking down on its supporters to impede mass turnouts

in their recent rallies. To thwart the efforts of the opposition around 2,000 party activists and leaders of the BNP were arrested before the Dhaka rally. The BNP, general secretary Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, who is heading the party right now was also arrested a day before the rally. It is unfortunate that Hasina who had come to power with a lot of goodwill and promises turned her back on the very people who voted for her and almost turned into an autocrat. Let alone opponents, even the common people complain of being stifled and punished for speaking against the government. Meanwhile the economy which was growing rapidly has been mismanaged and inflation is making the life of the common man miserable. Even the essential items are getting unaffordable. So it is not for nothing that BNP is drawing so much support from the people and successfully punching holes in Hasina's development narrative.

Don't put troops in harm's way



Every military campaign is fraught with dangers. The Russian army finds it in a mess it cannot jiggle out of. We should think twice before any adventurism in POK.

ine months on into the conflict in Ukraine, with its reputation and capabilities in tatters, the Russian Armed Forces are just hanging on by the skin of their teeth, hoping that the winter will allow them a badly needed reprieve to reorganise. One cannot help but wonder as to how they found themselves in such dire circumstances, despite a decade of reforms and modernisation.

Clearly, much of the responsibility for the utter disaster that has ensued and the difficult predicament Russia finds itself in, must rest with Putin. However, it is utterly inconceivable that he acted without the advice, support and acquiescence of the military hierarchy. Though many of the missteps may be attributable to faulty intelligence assessments, the responsibility for the military's non-performance rests squarely on the senior hierarchy of the Russian Armed Forces. Their obvious incompetence, lack of leadership skills and professional acumen, and the corruption that has been laid bare are without parallel. Yet, they are the lucky ones, given that Stalin executed Generals for much less.

It is standard practice in all countries that selection of the military's top leadership is overseen and approved at the highest political level, as it should be. Where autocracies and totalitarian regimes differ from democracies is in the necessity for them to give primacy to ideology or loyalty to the Supreme Leader even at the cost of professionalism. This lack is bound to percolate to lower levels over time and while it ensures the leadership remains unchallenged in the normal course of events, its consequences in a conflict can be devastating as has been the case with the Russians.

This is why nations intent on maintaining professionally competent militaries ensure that politics and the military always remain at arm's length and follow selection criteria that are transparent and consistent. This used to be the case with us as well, but the military leadership against a process has unfortunately been completely ill-conceived initiaeroded over the past few years. tive that is the Agnipath

Best exemplified by the manner in which a retired officer was promoted and appointed Chief of Defence Staff with minor tweaking of rules, contrary to longstanding regulations on the subject.

Its impact can be seen from the manner in which an Army Commander allegedly attempted to curry favour with the powers that be, by parroting the Raksha Mantri's call for the recapture of POK. A proposal that would not only put our troops in harm's way, with no certainty of success and with little to commend it. Of course, it is quite possible that the Army Commander's offthe-cuff remarks may have been misinterpreted or misconstrued, as some very knowledgeable commentators aver, and should not be taken at face value. Be that as it may, there is

no denying the fact that our military leadership has shown little spine in standing up for long cherished traditions and customs that have served us well since Independence and even before. The fact that there has been absolutely no opposition publicly by our



CLEARLY, MUCH OF THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE UTTER DISASTER THAT HAS ENSUED AND THE DIFFICULT **PREDICAMENT RUSSIA FINDS** ITSELF IN, MUST

Scheme, conceived and pushed through by those with little knowledge or experience in the military, speaks volumes and damages their professional reputation and credibility.

Clearly, any scheme tai-

lored to make semi-trained "contract labour" the cutting edge of our forces will reduce it to an ill-trained discordant militia is not in doubt. They will, in the long run, dominate the ranks of the military and be no different from what passes for soldiers in the Russian Armed Forces! We cannot afford to be so obdurate as to not see what any comparison between the Russian and Ukrainian Armed Forces makes crystal clear, the immense value of high- quality manpower.

Similarly, in the altercation in Arunachal, where the Chinese attempted to use overwhelming force to occupy our Post on the Yangtse Plateau, using batons and riot gear suggests they were confident, and correctly so, that we would not open fire, whatever be the provocation, for fear of escalating matters. Interestingly, they had little hesitation in opening fire, aideit in the air, when under pressure. It suggests they have little respect for joint

agreements, signed to preserve peace and tranquillity along the LAC, which in any case have lost credibility following their aggressive actions in Eastern Ladakh. It is high time our military commanders stopped hedging and stood firm, allowing use of all means at our disposal to prevent casualties, especially in situations which cannot be consid-

ered to be mere patrol clashes.

We were able to turn tables on the attacking Chinese thanks to the alertness of our troops and the timely action taken to reinforce the post. All of this would have gone to naught if our troops had not been well- trained, disciplined, resolute, courageous and aggressive in their actions. To believe that at some future date Agniveers will act in a similar manner and win the day for us, appears to be foolish and farfetched, but then it seems there are those amongst us, who still believe in Santa

(The author, a military veteran, is a Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation Chennai. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ARGENTINA IN THE FINALS

Sir - Champions Argentina then Germany losing football matches was hard to believe. A champion is afraid to lose the title while others are afraid of winning. But in the sporting world unexpected things can be expected. The fans were very eager to see how these favourites would catch up and reach the finals. And yes Argentina did it! Nobody can forget South Africa chasing 434 or Javed Miandad's 6 in the last ball of the Sharjah cup. Be it football or music Ronaldo or crescendo-the audience likes when it builds up to the climax!

TS Karthik | Chennai

INDIAN CINEMA

Sir — While Indian cinema caters to the domestic audiences, it rarely finds itself into the international forums for lack of special effects, scripts and technical knowhow etc. The Bollywood is still in the throes of an existential crisis due to the onset of OTT platforms making significant gains, the Golden Globe nomination for SS. Rajamouli's RRR can boost India,s soft power to a certain extent. Bahubali, an action packed thriller that earlier gained worldwide recognition is symbolic of a welcome change that has the potential to transform India's

mainstream cinema. Cinema has the intrinsic ability to shape, change and expand the horizons of human soft skills, propagate newer ideas, perceptions, and communicate with a wider audiences in a globalised world. While two nominations for best non-English language film and best original song for Telugu song Nattu Nattu is a welcome sign, they certainly reflect a high level of technical expertise that can match the likes of its western counterparts. It has once again turned the spotlight on India. This fictional saga set in pre pre-independence era, it explores

Acid attack on teen in Delhi is shocking

REST WITH



ne gruesome acid attack on the school girl in broad daylight in the national capital is shocking . It is more shocking to know that from August 2018 to this year 386 cases of acid attacks on women were registered and only 62 people have been convicted. Questions should be raised over the availability of acids in mar-

kets despite a ban. It is known that the culprits have purchased the acid through Flipkart, then online shopping should be thoroughly checked by the government and restrictions should be instructed on online shopping. Despite its ban. acid is sold like vegetables in markets and anv-

body can buy acid and throw it on a girl. Central and state Government's should review the rules and ensure that retail and online sales of acids and chemicals should be strictly regulated. The gruesome attack on girl child warns us that not only in Delhi the safety of every girl child and women is important for the whole country. Since acid attacks are increasing in our country the government should strictly ban the corrosive substance and the attackers should be arrested and should be given

Zakir Hussain | Kazipet

British Empire. Even though it faces stiff competition from Korean romantic mystery film Decision to Leave, the German anti war drama All Quiet on the Western Front and the Argentinian historical drama, 1985, Belgian French Dutch Coming of age drama Close, it will still remain etched in golden letters in the hearts of millions in terms of global recognition of Indian cinema. Irrespective of the fact that it sails through or gets rejected in the global panorama, RRR, a pan India blockbuster is sure to provide incentive to other Indian filmmakers to try and experiment with something new and India,s foray into the bastion that is mostly controlled by Hollywood or western countries.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

100 DAYS OF BHARAT JODO YATRA

Sir — The 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' enters its 100th day and Congress watchers feel it has found some answers the party had friendship, and their fight against the

been looking for on the road to 2024. The Kanyakumari to Kashmir foot march has also courted many controversies in the last three months and led to several fiery exchanges between the Congress and the BJP including on Rahul Gandhi's evergrowing grey beard and his Burberry T-

With over 2,800 km under his belt, Gandhi has managed to catch the attention of his supporters as well as detractors and seen quite a few celebrities including from the tinsel town and academia walking alongside him from time to time. The Bharat Jodo Yatra could become a "game-changer" for the Congress in the long term as it is connected directly with the people through this mass movement.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneér@gmail.com

Why don't we stop our trade with China? Most of the goods imported from China are made in India. China will get a

lesson from this and employment will be created in India. Delhi CM





Defense "continues to closely watch developments along the line of actual control at the India-China

The Pentagon's spokesperson

Powerful Bollywood people sabotaged my career. I sat at home after deliver ing hits, nobody came to me with

films.



—Vivek Oberoi



Pakistan refused to take money from me after 2021 T20 WC win over India.

Pakistan cricketer Mohammad Rizwan



Infosys founder NR Naravana Murthy

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FIRST COLUMN

THE CHANGING FACE OF **INDIAN DIPLOMACY**

India will be deeper into G20 presidency next year



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

India is headed into a new year, with a host of opportunities and big ticket events, promising to firmly put this large democracy on a steering position of the geopolitical economy on a global

The next year could be the first in the decade which would be largely free of initial two years of pandemic restrictions and therefore roaring to go out and press the reset button. The war in Ukraine and its collateral impact on energy, fertiliser and food prices are dampeners but the next three months would be decisive. The winter temperatures till mid-March will largely test the grit of Ukraine and Russian soldiers and snow could turn the fortunes of war in either direction.

However, what will be more challenging is the impact gas shortage forced electricity and heating blackouts has on the larger European population. The larger and more powerful European nations have so far put up a brave face and are thick in the saddle with the US imposing sanctions on Russia, to force it to surrender. However, the sub-freezing winter temperatures, a public outcry against the government's decision during the crucial winter months, could very well turn the wheels.

Meanwhile, the Russian economy has also started feeling the economic impact of the global sanctions regime and may find it unsustainable to carry on for long. A face-saving exercise on both sides, a compromise formula, could be the much needed breather, the world is waiting for. That brings India right into the war, where after facing initial criticism, its plain speak "today's era is not that of war" has found salience in G20 Bali leaders' summit declaration earlier in the year. UK foreign secretary this week in his first address to the nation was seen applauding India's role in trying to broker peace in Europe.



India began the year on an uncertain note, as it was coming out of a deadly second wave, breaking the backs and morale of a

Meanwhile, India was also facing huge criticism, including veiled threats to be put in a limited sanctions regime, if it didn't stop buying hydrocarbons from Russia. The Indian policy makers, ministers, bureaucrats for the first time went into a huddle to prepare a counter narrative to the constant banter primarily from US and western nations. They carefully stitched a fact sheet and handed over a sort of tool kit to all eloquent group of policy makers to counter the accusations about fuelling the Russian aggression in Ukraine. Simultaneously, India chose to move away from its almost neutral stance to a one of firm and polite messaging to its old ally Russia regarding the military aggression in Ukraine, without upsetting its relations with any of its strategic allies and friends. This resulted in "today is not an era of war", a sharp commentary on the crisis, acceptable to almost all the G20 countries.

This is the agile policy making and diplomacy India needs as it pushes deeper into the G20 presidency next year. There will be contentious issues, conflicting interests, and frenemies to deal with in the approach towards the leaders' summit in New Delhi in 2023. India has done the groundwork since 2020, even though it was battling one of its kind exigencies, 2023 is the time to execute and leave a long lasting impact.

(The author is a foreign affairs commentator)

Dr Singh, please teach Cong some prudence



An open letter to the former PM urges him to dissuade the Congress away from the suicidal fiscal path

Respected Dr Singh,

ou have been hailed by the people for guiding India on the path of economic reforms when you were the Finance Minister under former late Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao. Former Prime Minister late Atal Bihari Vajpayee laid a sound foundation of the economic reforms by building a grand edifice of the economic architecture, which demonstrated that the economy can take care of the people, including the most vulnerable in the society. Late Vajpayee guided the Indian political class to form a consensus that there will be no going back on the economic reforms. It was well established that the reforms alone would take India to its deserving position in the global comity of the nations, as achieved recently when India pushed the UK behind to become the fourth largest economy in the

The political class, which accords top priority to the national interests, doesn't take short-cuts in politics. But Congress has launched the party on the path of self-destruction. Sadly, Congress is going ahead to kill the political consensus gained with sweats by the top leaders on the economic reforms. The political short-cuts are 'Revdis (freebies)'. Congress resorted to the Revdi politics to gain power in Himachal Pradesh. Former Deputy Chairperson of the Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia has called the political opportunism of promising 'Old Pension Scheme (OPS)' the greatest 'Revdi'. Ahluwalia has said that returning to OPS is most imprudent. Words of Ahluwalia are no longer being heard in the Congress, as the party is embracing the extremist among communists to grab the short-cuts to gain power in the states. It's well known that the implementa-

tion of OPS will wreck the finances of the state governments. States invariably are spending close to about 25.6 per cent of their own revenue. This is one-fourth of the own revenue of the state governments. If clubbed with expenses on salaries of the existing staff of the state governments, there will be hardly anything that states can do to take care of the interests of the next generation. This is indeed too dangerous for sane voices to keep mum.

Former Reserve Bank of India Governor Raghuram Rajan went on a walk with former president of Congress Rahul Gandhi in Rajasthan during the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra'. Ĺater, Gandhi conducted an interview with Rajan in which the former RBI governor also argued that the government should encourage private employment, as states cannot employ even one per cent of the working population on account of the financial constraints and also for sound economic

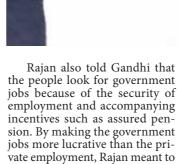


MONTEK SINGH **AHLUWALIA** HAS SAID THAT RETURNING TO **OPS IS MOST** IMPRUDENT. WORDS OF **AHLUWALIA** ARE NO LONGER BEING HEARD IN THE CONGRESS, AS THE PARTY IS **EMBRACING EXTREMIST AMONG COMMUNISTS**

(The author is Director,

Public Policy Research

Centre)



Four states would implement the OPS. The New Pension Scheme (was unveiled after discussion with the widest cross-section of stakeholders in 2004 by the Vajpayee government. The UPA for 10 years under your charge carried forward the NPS.

suggest to Gandhi that India may

discourage the private employers,

who actually have to create jobs by raising their existing capacities

by taking the benefits of the poli-

cies of the government.

The Centre and the state government boarded the NPS for the larger benefits of the employees, as they also became partners in creating a corpus for their retirement funds by contributing 10 per cent of their basic salary, while the government contributed 14 per cent. Professional fund managers, with best of the skills, are taking care of the interests of the contributors to the NPS, ensuring that they get the best of the returns.

This is the way the advanced economies function. India being the fourth largest economy, while the status of being the third the popular appeal is resorting to the extreme political short-cuts.

The Congress has gained

promising OPS. The pension liability of Himachal Pradesh already consumes 80 per cent of its own revenue. Similar is the case of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. These are the four states who have announced to adopt the OPS in place of NPS. These states will definitely divert the resources meant for asset creations for the implementa-tion of OPS. This will be akin to mortgaging the future for the present. The future generation will be doomed in these four states, as when they join the working population they may find restricted

Dr Singh, you must speak up, for keeping mum will be against the national interests. You must ask Congress to listen to the words of Ahluwalia that a return to OPS would be financially disastrous for the state governments. Ahluwalia, your colleague, has spoken loud and clear that the NPS, adopted by careful discussion and deliberations, if replaced by OPS would doom the state finances. It's for this reason that people like you must break the have been supporting good govbarrier of silence and record dissent and words of sanity to the

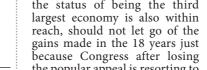
Congress leadership.

The finances of some of the states are in a mess, which has been revealed by the report of the Reserve Bank of India recently. The report listed the states which are at precarious positions on their fiscal health. Punjab recently sought an assistance of Rs one lakh crore from the Centre. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann came with a begging bowl to the Governing Council

meeting of the NITI Aayog to seek Rs one lakh crore, because the state finance is in a mess. Punjab has financially gone to such a sorry state of affairs because of an unmitigated policy of freebies. Similar is the story of West Bengal, Kerala and Bihar. If the states are not stopped from practicing freebies to buy votes, the future generation will be pushed to a darkened future. This is why Ahluwalia has called the return to OPS the biggest free-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has sought to counsel the states to adopt fiscal prudence. The Centre held a marathon session of deliberations in Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh with the state chief secretaries where full details were shared on the state of the affairs of the finances of the state governments. This has also been publicly articulated by PM Modi to ensure that there is a popular support to sound economic policies of the Centre and the state governments.

The people in the country ernance. The Modi government bagged back to back mandates, with increased strength, by bringing in tough economic reforms. Despite that the people supported the Modi government, because they know that the hard decisions were taken in the larger interests of the people. Now, the people are reaping benefits of those hard decisions. The Modi government doesn't take short-cuts. This calls for those who have occupied responsible positions, as you did for several years, to speak up.



power in Himachal Pradesh by

THIS IS THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE RSS AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE RSS. WHAT IS THE RSS? THE RSS TAKES INSPIRATION FROM HITLER'S 'SS'. —PAKISTAN FOREIGN MINISTER BILAWAL BHUTTO ZARDARI





PAKISTAN FM'S FRUSTRATION WOULD BE BETTER **DIRECTED TOWARDS THE MASTERMINDS OF TERRORISTS** ENTERPRISES IN HIS OWN COUNTRY.

-MEA SPOKESPERSON **ARINDAM BAGCHI**

Electric cars give us clean streets, make cities better

To promote continuous usage of EVs, the Government India provides rebates on taxes and subsidies on their purchase

→he world population is increasing day by day and so is the demand for various modes of transport, result ing in the increased demand for fuels such as petrol and diesel. Smoke emitted from these vehicles causes air pollution which kills many people each year. Electric vehicles (EVs) must be one of the future means of transportation.

Transport has become a fundamental requirement and use of electric vehicles will replace the traditional highly polluting petrol and diesel vehicles. Vehicular pollution emissions resulting in poor air quality increases respiratory ailments like asthma, escalate the risk of life-threatening conditions like lung cancer, contribute to strokes, heart and other respiratory diseases.



According to the World Health Organization (WHO), air pollution is one of the world's most urgent environmental hazards, causing more than three million pre-mature deaths annually and eventually burdening our health care system with substantial medical costs. Even animals and other living creatures on earth are also being affected because of this.

Global warming, growing demand for fuel and pollution are some of the reasons for promoting electric vehicles. It is believed that passenger vehicles are a major contributor to pollution, producing significant amounts of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxide and other harmful gases

Advancement of technology has and always will help for betterment of human life.



has been found that Volvo aims to produce faster and all electric powered cars by 2030 followed by General Motors aiming to stop selling new light trucks and gasoline powered cars by 2035. Across the world, the automakers and the government are promoting EVs to combat cli-

Vehicles running on petrol pollutants than petrol or diesel or diesel emit smoke which is one of the major causes for global warming. Using EVs will help reduce the same. The introduction of eco-friendly vehicles or green vehicles, will help make our cities cleaner, reduce carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions, reduce pollution and improve the livability of citizens.

Today, everyone is finding ways to curb polluting emissions that contribute to climate change. EVs guarantee a significant reduction in both wheels, but petrol or diesel cars running and maintenance can convert only 17 to 21 per costs. They are not only good cent of the energy stored in the for the environment but even fuel to the wheels, causing a for human life too. Research waste of around 80 per cent. has shown that fully electric vehicles have zero tailpipe emissions and are far much

better for the environment.

The major benefit of electric cars is the low running and maintenance costs.

Today, EVs are a whole Electric cars emit fewer air new technology which is grow- EVs, the Government of India

ing day by day and in the comcars and hence prove to be beting years will generate a lot of employment opportunities. Usage of EVs will also reduce the ter for the environment. There is no denying the fact that the availability of non-renewable dependency on petroleum export countries and import cost natural resources of energy/fuels is limited and that their continof fuels like petrol and diesel, thereby aiding in increased economic growth. Not only this, to uous usage is not only destroying our planet but having adverse effects on public health. reduce the impact of charging From the recent research, it electric vehicles, India is ambihas been found that electric tious to achieve about 40 per cent cumulative electric power vehicles can covert around 60 per cent of the electrical energy installed capacity from nonfossil fuel-based energy from the grid to power the

resources by the year 2030. The Government has started promoting the use of electronic vehicles. For a long time, many trains including metros have been running on electricity. E-bikes, E-rickshaws and Ecars are already in the market. To promote continuous usage of

Recently the Delhi Government launched 'Switch Delhi' campaign to promote use of electric vehicles. give us clean streets and make our cities a better place for

provides rebates on taxes and

subsidies on their purchase.

Put simply, electric cars pedestrians and cyclists. In over a year, with just one electric car on the road can save an average 1.5 million grams of CO2. A substantial infrastructure that is affordable, accessible and serves all consumer groups coupled with a strong financing ecosystem, policy incentives, and technological advancements is likely to set the EVs market for significant growth in the coming decade. Therefore, EVs are the way forward for Indian transport, and it's time we must switch to them.

(The author is a teacher at a reputed school in Delhi)

Russia launches another major missile attack on Ukraine

Russian forces launched at least 60 missile strikes across Ukraine on Friday, officials said, reporting explosions in at least four cities

At least two people were killed when a residential building was hit in central Ukraine, while electricity and water services were interrupted in the two largest cities, Kyiv and Kharkiv.

Thudding blasts and gunfire from air-defence systems echoed across the country as authorities on social media reported explosions and missile strikes in Kyiv, the capital, southern Kryvyi Rih, southeastern Zaporizhzhia and northeastern Kharkiv.

Air raid alarms sounded across the country, warning of a new barrage of the Russian strikes that have occurred intermittently since mid-October.

Ukrainian Air Force spokesman Yurii Inhat told Ukrainian TV that more than 60 missiles had been fired, but it wasn't immediately clear how many missiles the Ukrainian army managed to

Some officials reported success in downing some incoming projectiles.

Ihnat said Russian forces had fired cruise missiles from positions in the Black Sea, and used bomber aircraft as part of an effort to "massively distract the

attention of the anti-aircraft defence,

A day earlier, Russia's Foreign Ministry warned that if the United States delivers sophisticated Patriot air defence systems to Ukraine, such systems and any crews that accompany them would also be a legitimate target for the Russian

Washington rejected that threat. Analysts have said Russian strikes targeting energy infrastructure have been part of a new strategy to try to freeze Ukrainians into submission after recent battlefield losses by Russian

Officials and experts say that has only strengthened the resolve of Ukrainians to face up to Russia's invasion, while Moscow tries to buy time for a possible offensive in coming months ter the current battlefield stalemate.

In Kryvyi Rih in central Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's hometown, a Russian missile slammed into a residential building and destroyed its Two people were killed, and at

least five others were injured — including two children — and rushed to hospitals, said regional Gov. Valentyn

Some 18 missiles were fired into the southeastern city of Zaporizhzhia, the regional governor said.

Kharkiv Mayor Ihor Terekhov said



regional governor Oleh Syniehubov reported three strikes on the city's crit-

ical infrastructure. Kyrylo Tymoshenko, a top official in President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office, reported a strike on a residential build-

ing in Kryvyi Rih, warning on Telegram:
"There may be people under the rubble."
Emergency services were on site, he

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko reported explosions in at least four districts, urging residents to go to shelters.

The attack on the capital continues," he wrote on Telegram. Subway services in the capital were suspended, he said, as city residents flocked inside its tunnels deep underground to seek shelter.

Ukrzaliznytsia, the national railway operator, said power was out in a number of stations in the eastern and central Kharkiv, Kirovohrad, Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk regions, due to damage to the energy infrastructure.

But trains continued to run by switching from electric power to steamengine power, which had been readied

The previous such round of massive Russian air strikes across the country took place on December 5.

Ukrainian authorities have reported some successes in interce.

Either we will win Ukraine war or world would be destroyed: Putin's strategist

 $R^{ussia's}$ ongoing war with Ukraine will end by either Moscow winning it or destroying the whole world, Alexander Dugin, described by some as President Vladimir Putin's "brain", has warned.

Ukraine has accused Russia of planning a wide-ranging ground offensive early in the New Year, despite recent Russian military setbacks. The remarks by Dugin came after Russian forces retreated from the Ukrainian city of Kherson last month, which was dubbed a major setback for Moscow.

In an interview with Hindilanguage news channel TV9 Bharatvarsh, Dugin said, "So, the war is of multipolar world order against unipolar world order. It's nothing either about Russia, Ukraine, or Europe; it's not against the West and the rest; it's humanity against hegemony".

When asked about the outcome of the war, Dugin, a prominent Russian ultra-nationalist philosopher, said: "There are two possibilities. First, it will end when we (Russians) win. It's



not too easy though. And the second possibility is that this fight will end with the end of the world. Either we win, or the

world will be destroyed." "We won't accept any other solution at the end of the war except victory," he said recently on the sidelines of an event organised in remembrance of his

daughter, who according to him, died at the hands of "Ukrainian terrorists".

Russia and Ukraine are not currently engaged in talks to end the conflict, which has killed thousands of people, and displaced millions more since Russia invaded its neighbour on

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said this week Russia should start withdrawing from his country by Christmas as a step to end Europe's biggest conflict since World War II.

Russia has dismissed Zelenskyy's call for troop pullout and asked Kyiv to accept new terri-

which could set the stage for a

as President Vladimir Putin's

hesitancy and lack of a clear

new round of escalation.

Russia: US air defense systems could be targets in Ukraine

Russia's Foreign Ministry war-ned Thursday that if the U.S. Delivers sophisticated air defense systems to Ukraine, those systems and any crews that accompany them would be a "legitimate target" for the Russian military, a blunt threat that was quickly rejected by Washington. The exchange of statements reflected soaring Russia-U.S. Tensions amid the fighting in Ukraine, which is now in its 10th month.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said the U.S. Had "effectively become a party" to the war by providing Ukraine with weapons and training its troops. She added that if reports about U.S. Intentions to provide Kyiv with Patriot surface-to-air missile system prove true, it would be-"another provocative move by the U.S." and broaden its involvement in the hostilities, "entailing possible conse-

"Any weapons systems supplied to Ukraine, including the



ne stalemate sets stage

Patriot, along with the personnel servicing them, have been and will remain legitimate priority targets for the Russian armed forces," Zakharova declared. Asked about the Russian warning, Pentagon spokesman Air Force Gen. Pat Ryder responded that the U.S. Was "not going to allow comments from Russia to dictate the security assistance that we provide to Ukraine? "I find it ironic and very

telling that officials from a coun-

try that brutally attacked its neighbor - in an illegal and unprovoked invasion, through a campaign that is deliberately targeting and killing innocent civilians and destroying civilian infrastructure — that they would choose to use words like provocative' to describe defensive systems that are meant to save lives and protect civilians," Ryder said. U.S. Officials said Tuesday

that Washington was poised to

approve sending a Patriot mis-

sile battery to Ukraine, finally

agreeing to an urgent request from Ukrainian leaders desperate for more robust weapons to shoot down incoming Russian missiles that have crippled much of the country's vital infrastructure. An official announcement is expected soon. Operating and maintaining a Patriot battery requires as

many as 90 troops, and for months the U.S. Has been reluctant to provide the complex system because sending American forces into Ukraine to run the systems is a nonstarter for the administration of President Joe

Even without the presence of U.S. Service members to train Ukrainians on use of the system, concerns remain that deployment of the missiles could provoke Russia or risk that a fired projectile could hit inside Russia and further escalate the conflict.

Russia has repeatedly claimed that its forces struck Western-supplied weapons in Ukraine, but those statements have been impossible to independently verify.

US to expand combat training for Ukrainian troops

AP WASHINGTON

The Pentagon will expand Ukrainian forces, using the slower winter months to instruct larger units in more complex battle skills, the Defense Department and U.S. Officials said Thursday.

The U.S. Has already trained about 3,100 Ukrainian troops on how to use and maintain certain weapons and other equipment, including howitzers, armored vehicles and the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System, known as HIMARS. But senior military

Description



leaders for months have dis-

cussed expanding that training, stressing the need to improve the ability of Ukraine's companyand battalion-sized units to move and coordinate attacks across the battlefield. NORTHERN RAILWAY

16.01.2023 (11:00 hrs.)



troops each month and will begin "in the January timeframe." Ryder, the Pentagon's press secretary, added that it is not likely to require additional U.S. Forces to conduct the train-

According to U.S. Officials, the training will take place at the Grafenwoehr training area in Germany. And the aim is to use the winter months to hone the skills of the Ukrainian forces so they will be better prepared to counter any spike in Russian attacks or efforts to expand Russia's territorial gains.

Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder told Pentagon reporters Thursday that the U.S. Expects With the war in Ukraine grinding through its 10th to train about 500 Ukrainian month, both sides are locked in a stalemated battle of attrition,

> Many observers see the current deadlock as beneficial to Ukraine, allowing it to receive more state-of-the-art weapons from the West and prepare for new counteroffensives. In Russia, there is a growing sense of desperation among hard-liners about what they see

fighting is likely to intensify again shortly as the soil freezes. Many point to Russian-occupied areas in the south as the most likely place for the next Ukrainian attack.

'The ground needs to properly freeze before you can move vehicles with more freedom," Justin Crump, a former British tank commander who heads security consultancy Sibylline, told The Associated Press.

He noted that while it's harder to sustain military operations in colder weather, it will reopen opportunities for more maneuvering, and "as the winter goes on, both sides will have



a growing offensive capability". Crump argued the Ukrainian military could try to reclaim parts of the southern Zaporizhzhia region and push

toward the strategic port of

That would allow Ukraine to cut Russia's land corridor to Crimea, which it annexed in 2014. Mariupol fell to the Russians in May after a nearly three-month siege that left much

of it in ruins. Independent Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov also argued that the Zaporizhzhia region seems a likely target of the next Ukrainian offensive.

'The Ukrainian artillery and rocket systems have concentrated their strikes there," he said, adding that the military has targeted Russia's supply lines in the area like it did during a

counteroffensive in the neigh-

to a Russian pullback from the capital of the same name.

Russia, which has suffered humiliating military setbacks in recent months, has called up 300,000 reservists to compensate for its heavy battlefield losses.

Putin said last week that half of them were still being trained at firing ranges away from the

front lines. "Russia is trying to build up a better striking force rather than just throwing people into the front line," Crump said. "They think they can last the course and come back in greater numbers next year and do something

much more impressive then.

THE HARYANA STATE COOPERATIVE SUPPLY AND MARKETING FEDERATION LIMITED District Office- Hafed, Near ITI, Rania Road, Sirsa 125055 (Haryana) TEL: (01666)-240856

strategy.

E-Mail: dmhfdsrs@hry.nic.in NOTICE INVITING E-TENDERS SALE OF OLD PLANT AND MACHINERY OF GIN-

NERIES DING AND RATIA Hafed invites e-tenders from the original Sale of Old Plant and Machinery of Ginneries Ding and Ratia as per detail given below :-

Sr. No	Centre	Earnest money
1.	Ding	2,00,000 (Rs. Two Lacs)
2.	Ratia	2,00,000 (Rs. Two Lacs)
The	interested	d party/bidders may download ter

document containing details of scope of work, eligibility criteria, and other terms & conditions and submit their technical bid along with all supporting documents on the portal https://etenders.hry.nic.in. The date of downloading of tender document & bid submission is from 13.12.2022 at 17.00 Hrs to 27-12-2022 at 17:00 Hrs through e-Tender portal as mentioned above. The technical bid will be opened on 28-12-2022 at 10.00 Hrs and financial bid will be opened on 28-12-2022 at 14:30 Hrs and negotiation on the same day at Hafed District Office. Fatehabad. Hafed reserve the right to reject any/all tenders with-

out assigning any reason.

District Manager, Hafed, Sirsa

New EU sanctions target Russian military-industrial complex

AP ■ BRUSSELS

¬he European Union said ■ Friday its latest round of sanctions will hit Russia's military-industrial complex, as well as people and groups that are attacking Ukrainian civilians or kidnapping children. Valdis Dombrovskis, a

European Commission vicepresident, said the package will deal a blow to 168 "entities" companies or state organizations linked to the arms industry.

"This will ensure that key chemicals, nerve agents, nightvision and radio-navigation equipment, electronics and IT components that could be used by the Russian war machine cannot be freely traded," said the EU Council, which represents member states.

included in the list," it added in

"To avoid circumvention, some Russian-controlled entities targeting the economy and based in illegally annexed Crimea or Sevastopol are also against those who are instru-

mental in this brutal war."



a statement. The ninth package of EU punitive measures against Russia for its war in Ukraine was approved by EU leaders at a summit Thursday. It was formally adopted Friday by written procedure. "After food and hunger,

(Russia President Vladimir) Putin is now weaponizing the winter, by deliberately depriving millions of Ukrainians of water, electricity and heating," said Josep Borrell, the bloc's top diplomat. "We will continue

Slovak leader sets framework for snap vote after govt falls

AP BRATISLAVA (SLOVAKIA)

Clovakia's president formally I dismissed the country's government on Friday, a day after it lost a no-confidence vote in Parliament, and set the framework for holding an early election by mid-2023

President Zuzana Caputova gave Parliament a deadline by the end of January to amend the Constitution, which would make a snap election possible.

Caputova said the ballot should then take place in the first half of 2023. "I personally will do all I can

to contribute to the country's orderly transition to an early election," Caputova said.

Slovakia's coalition minority government led by Prime Minister Eduard Heger fell on Thursday after losing the noconfidence vote called by the opposition following months of political crisis.



they would prefer an early election as a way out of the crisis. A two-thirds parliamentary majority would be needed to make that happen. "In the case that a decision

about the early ballot is not made by the given term, I will take the (necessary) steps in line with the Constitution," Caputova said. That means she would select a new prime minister and swear in his or her government.

At the same time, Caputova asked Heger's Cabinet to stay in office with reduced powers as a caretaker government.



(RAILWAY BOARD) RAIL BHAWAN, RAISINA ROAD, NEW DELHI-110 001

E-TENDER NOTICE

Tender due on

Note: (1) The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procureme

system (IREPS) site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for participating in the E-tender system

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

INDIAN RAILWAYS

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (BHARAT SARKAR)

MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (RAIL MANTRALAYA)

(RAILWAY BOARD)

CORRIGENDUM NO.3 to Tender No. WTA-532

Sub: Tender No. WTA-532 due on 27.02.2023 for "Manufacturing curr

Maintenance of 100 nos. of New Generation Energy Efficient Vande Bharat

Trainsets with Concentrated Power System including upgradation of the

For the subject tender No. 532, MCF/Raebareli is nominated as Railway's

Manufacturing Unit instead of ICF/Chennal. Accordingly, some of the terms and

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RAILWAY STORES (RS)

MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS

conditions of the tender have been modified. The prospective Bidders are requ

Non Contact Wheel profile measurement system for electric

SMM/ETD/GZB acting for and on behalf of President against tender no. 44225155B. The details are as under

01 No.

Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen

(3) No manual offers are acceptable

No. 2022/RS(WTA)-149/TENDER/532

(2) For all terms and conditions please refer tender doc

No.: 16/44225155B/ETD/GZB Dated: 15.12.2022

Government Manufacturing Units & Trainset Depots"

e - https://ireps.gov.in for more details

3356/2022

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

China sends ships into Pacific amid Japan security moves



AP ■ BEIJING

squadron of Chinese Navy ships sailed through straits near Japan into the Western Pacific this week, while Beijing on Friday blasted Tokyo's adoption of a new national security strategy putting itself on a more offensive footing — largely as a result of the perceived threat from China.

The destroyers Lhasa and Kaifeng, and a replenishment ship, sailed through the Osumi Strait in southern Japan, while a Dongdiao-class surveillance ship with the hull number 796 sailed through the Miyako Strait south of Okinawa, all arriving in the Western Pacific by Thursday.

Japan's Defence Ministry said the craft were closely shadowed by Japanese ships and planes throughout.

The Communist Party newspaper Global Times on Friday cited unidentified experts saying the mission "sent a signal amid Japan's recent militaristic moves" that will display the People's Liberation Army's "capabilities in safeguarding China's national sovereignty, territorial integrity and development interests"

China routinely sends warships through straits between Japanese islands, even while it vehemently objects to the presence of foreign navy ships in the Taiwan Strait. All are classified as international waters.

Late last month, Russian and Chinese strategic bombers also flew over the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea during an eight-hour mission in a show of increasingly close defence ties between the two countries.

Facing challenges from North Korea, China and Russia, Japan on Friday adopt-

ed a national security strategy declaring plans to possess preemptive strike capability and cruise missiles within years.

The strategy named China "the biggest strategic challenge" to Japan's effort toward ensuring peace, safety and stability for itself and international society.

Japan's post-World War II policy pri-

oritized economic growth while keeping its security light by relying on American troops stationed in Japan under their bilateral security agreement. But experts say China's growing influence, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and fear of Taiwan emergency prompted many Japanese to support increased capability and spending.

China also says a group of tiny, uninhabited East China Sea islands controlled by Japan and Beijing regularly stokes resentment over Japan's brutal occupation of much of China more than 75 years ago.

apan plans to spend 5 trillion yen (USD 37 billion) to deploy foreign-developed standoff missiles as early as 2026, including Lockheed Martin's Tomahawk and Joint Airto-Surface Standoff Missile, while Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industry develops a surface-to-ship guided missile. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson

Wang Wenbin reiterated accusations Japan "ignoring facts, deviating from its commitment to China-Japan relations and the common understandings between the two countries, and groundlessly discrediting China". "Hyping up the so-called China threat to find an excuse for its military buildup is doomed to fail," Wang said at a daily

As regional threats rise, Japan eases defense-only strategy

In a major break from its strictly self-defence-only postwar principle, Japan adopted a national security strategy Friday declaring plans to possess preemptive strike capability and cruise missiles within years to give itself more offensive footing against threats from neighbouring China and North

With China, North Korea and Russia directly to its west and north, Japan "faces the severest and most complicated national security environment since the end of the war," the strategy said, referring to World War II. It named China as "the biggest strategic challenge" before North Korea and Russia — to Japan's effort toward ensur-

Possession of the strikeback capability is "indispensable" as deterrence to discourage enemy attacks, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told a news conference Friday, calling it "a major change to Japan's postwar secu-

ing the peace, safety and stabil-

ity for itself and the international

rity policy."

"When threats become reality, can the Self-Defense Force fully protect our country? Frankly speaking, the current (SDF capability) is insufficient,"

times that of the current five-Kishida said the new target sets the NATO standard for defense spending, a budget increase that has been his policy priority since taking office in

Under the strategy, Japan's

defense spending through 2027

will increase to about 2% of

Japan's GDP to total some 43

trillion yen (\$320 billion), 1.6-

October 2021. Because of its wartime past as an aggressor and national devastation after its defeat, Japan's postwar policy prioritized the economic growth while keeping its security light by relying on American troops sta-

tioned in Japan under their bilateral security agreement. Japan's defense buildup has long been considered a sensitive issue at home and in the region, especially for Asian victims of Japanese wartime atrocities.

But experts say China's growing influence, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and fear of Taiwan emergency prompted many Japanese to support increased capability and spending.

"Taiwan emergency and Japan emergency are inseparable," said Ken Jimbo, a defense expert at Keio University, noting that Japan's westernmost island of Yonaguni is only 110 kilometers (70 miles) away from



Landslide at Malaysia campground kills 18

AP ■ BATANG KALI

↑ thunderous crush of soil and debris killed 18 people at a campground in Malaysia on Friday, and rescuers dug through the dirt for another 15 who were feared buried in the landslide.

Two of the dead were found locked in an embrace, according to the state fire department

More than 90 people were sleeping on an organic farm when the soil tumbled from a road about 30 meters (100 feet) above the site and covered about I hectare (3 acres). Authorities told local media that the landowners did not have a license to run a campground. At least seven people were hospitalized and dozens more were rescued unharmed, said district police chief Suffian Abdullah.

Leong Jim Meng told the New Straits Times English-language daily that he and his family were awakened by a loud bang and felt the earth move at the campsite in Batang Kali, around 50 kilometers (30 miles) north of the capital of Kuala

My family and I were rapped as soil covered our tent. We managed to escape to a carpark area and heard a second landslide happening," the 57-year-old was quoted as saying. He said it was surprising because

monsoon rains in Malaysia, and the country's government development minister, Nga Kor Ming, said all campsites nationwide that are near rivers, waterfalls and hillsides would be closed for

Caribbean divided as Netherlands mulls slavery apology

AP PARAMARIBO

 $D^{\text{utch colonisers kidnapped men,}}_{\text{women and children and ensla-}}$ ved them on plantations growing sugar, coffee and other goods that built wealth at the price of misery.

On Monday, the Netherlands is expected to become one of the few nations to apologise for its role in slav-

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte plans to speak in the Netherlands as members of his Cabinet give speeches in seven former Caribbean colonies, including Suriname. Symbolism around crimes against

humanity is controversial everywhere, and debates over Monday's ceremonies are roiling Suriname and other Caribbean countries. In Suriname, activists and officials

say they have not been asked for input about the apology, and that's a reflection of a Dutch colonial attitude. What's really needed, they say, is compensation.

In 2013, the Caribbean trade bloc known as Caricom made a list of requests including that European governments formally apologise and create a repatriation program for those who wish to return to their homeland, which has not happened. "We are still feeling the effects of

that period, so some financial support would be welcome," said Orlando Daniel, a 46-year-old security guard and a descendant of slaves. Suriname is an ethnically diverse

country where roughly 60 per cent of its 630,000 inhabitants live below the poverty line and 22 per cent identify as Maroon — ancestors of slaves who escaped and established their own communities

The Dutch first became involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the late 1500s but did not become a major trader until the mid-1600s, when



they seized Portuguese fortresses along Africa's west coast and plantations in northeastern Brazil

Eventually, the Dutch West India Company became the largest trans-Atlantic slave trader, said Karwan Fatah-Black, an expert in Dutch colo

nial history and an assistant professor at Leiden University in the Netherlands. Hundreds of thousands of people were branded and forced to work in plantations in Suriname and other

Portugal became the first

European country to buy slaves in West Africa with help from the Catholic Church in the 1400s, followed mid-17th century to the mid-19th century.

In June, King Philippe of Belgium

Some experts argue that largescale sugar production in what is now Brazil then gave rise to the Atlantic slave trade that saw an estimated 12 million Africans transported to the Caribbean and the Americas over some 400 years, with at least 1 million dying en route.

Britain was among the first countries to ban the slave trade, in 1807. Dutch slavery continued until 1863.

If, as expected, the government issues a formal apology on Monday, it will put the Netherlands, which has a long history of progressive thinking and liberal laws, in the vanguard of nations and global institutions seeking to atone for their roles in histori-

In 2018, Denmark apologised to Ghana, which it colonised from the

expressed "deepest regrets" for abuses in Congo. In 1992, Pope John Paul II apologized for the church's role in Americans have had emotional-

charged fights over taking down statues of slaveholders in the South. A Dutch government-appointed

board issued a report last year saying that "today's institutional racism cannot be seen separately from centuries of slavery and colonialism.'

Politicians and civil-society organisations in Suriname say that July 1, 2023 would be a more appropriate date for the apology ceremony because it marks 160 years since the abolition of slavery in the country.
"Why the rush?" asked Barryl

Biekman, chair of the Netherlandsbased National Platform for Slavery

Twitter suspends accounts of several journalists covering Musk and his company



PTI NEW YORK

 $T^{witter\ has\ abruptly\ suspended\ the\ accounts\ of\ several\ high-profile\ journalists\ who}$ cover the social media platform and Elon Musk, who acquired the company in October.

The accounts of Ryan Mac of The New York Times, Donie O'Sullivan of CNN, Drew Harwell of The Washington Post, Matt Binder of Mashable, Micah Lee of The Intercept, Steve Herman of Voice of America, and independent journalists Aaron Rupar, Keith Olbermann as well as Tony Webster had all been suspended as of Thursday evening, CNN reported.

The journalists, however, found a backdoor way onto the platform through the website's audio function, and hours later of suspension faced off with Musk in a Twitter Space audio discussion before an audience of more than 30,000 listeners.

"You doxx, you get suspended. End of story. That's it," Musk said to one of the suspended journalists, explaining his latest policy to the group before he left minutes after having joined the discussion.

Musk was referring to Twitter's latest rule change about accounts that track private jets, including one owned by Musk

himself, which was put in place on Wednesday. The Twitter account for

Mastodon, a platform billed as a Twitter alternative, was also suspended early on Thursday Twitter accounts operated

by NBC News journalists were unable to tweet any links to Mastodon pages. Mastodon was, however, trending on Twitter.

According to NBC News, Musk said the suspensions stemmed from the platform's new rules banning private jet trackers, responding to a tweet from Mike Solana, a vice president of the venture capital firm Founders Fund, who noted that the suspended accounts had posted links to jet trackers on other websites.

"Criticising me all day long is totally fine, but doxxing my real-time location and endangering my family is not," he said another tweet. Doxxing refers to the prac-

tice of sharing someone's home address or other personal information online.

Musk tweeted that the accounts banned on Thursday posted "my exact real-time location, basically assassination coordinates, in (obvious) direct violation of Twitter terms of ser-

Musk later added that the suspensions would last seven

In early November, shortly after having taken control of Twitter, Musk tweeted that he would not ban the account that



US judge blocks Biden bid to end 'Remain in Mexico' policy

AP ■ AMARILLO (US)

federal judge on Thursday Atemporarily blocked the Biden administration from ending a Trump-era policy requiring asylum-seekers to wait in Mexico for hearings in US immigration court.

US District Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk in Texas stayed the termination until legal challenges by Texas and Missouri are settled but didn't order the policy reinstated. The impact on the programme wasn't immediate-"It's a common sense poli-

cy to prevent people from entering our country illegally," Texas Gov. Greg Abbott tweeted after the ruling. "Texas wins again, for The ruling could prove to be

Biden administration, which may appeal. An email requesting comment from the Department of

a temporary setback for the

Homeland Security wasn't immediately returned. Under President Donald

Trump, about 70,000 asylumseekers were forced to wait in Mexico for US hearings under the policy introduced in January 2019. President Joe Biden who said it "goes against everything we stand for as a nation of immigrants" — suspended the policy on his first day in office.

That sparked a long and tortured legal and administrative

10 dead, including 5 children, in France apartment fire **AP** ■ VAULX-EN-VELIN (FRANCE) car park opposite the building. town, which is 470 kilometers

en people, including five L children died as nighttime fire ravaged an eight-story apartment building Friday in one of the city of Lyon's poorest suburbs, French authorities said. The cause of the fatal blaze was being investigated. Fourteen people were inju-

red in the fire in the small suburban town of Vaulx-en-Velin four of them seriously, according to the prefecture for the Rhone region. Some 170 firefighters were mobilized after the fire broke out shortly after 3 a.M. The fire has been extinguished.

An Associated Press reporter at the scene saw several firetrucks and a security perimeter set up around the area, and residents and traumatized neighbors assembling in a

(Ulo 5 RULE 20 CPC)

Before Justice (Retd.) S.S. Saron, Arbitrator.

M/s Sal Tech Medicare Pvt. Ltd.

v/s. M/s Alchemist Realty Ltd. and another
Notice to: (1) M/s Alchemist Realty Ltd. &
(2) M/s Alchemist Ltd. through its
authorized signatory Mr. Charandeep
Singh Jolly s/o Shri Kuldeep Singh Jolly s/o
Nehru Place, New Delhi and SCO No.1213, Sector 9-D, Chandigarh. Whereas in
consequence of the failure of addressees
No.1 and 2 to appear despite sending
notices by registered and speed post; it is
addressed to you to appear before this
Tribunal in the above stated arbitration
case in person or through advocate at
H.No. 9, Sector 9-A, Chandigarh on
16.01.2023 at 2.30 p.m. failing which
adverse orders may be passed.
Signed this 13th day of December, 2022 at

Signed this 13th day of December, 2022 at Chandigarh.

CMC/BY/22-23/

Sd/- S.S.Saron Arbitrator

43,000 inhabitants, is among the most impoverished areas in the

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin called the deadly fire "a shock" said that he would travel in the coming hours to the Darmanin was traveling to Lyon on Friday to present the security plan for Sunday's final etween Argentina and France.

Darmanin will be accompanied on his visit by Housing Minister Olivier Klein.

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

PUBLIC NOTICE: Builder Cancellatio

This is to bring to your notice that SIRSENDU CHATTERJEE/ PALLABI CHATTERJEE (borrower/s) has availed Home loan facility vide facility agreement number LBGUR00003914354 located at FLAT NO 008, THE SERENAS, TOWER-1, SECTOR 36, GURGAON. The borrower/s has

FIRENAS, IUWER-1, SECTOR 36, GURGAON. The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement.

The Bank had informed the same to the borrower through letter dated December 15, 2022 informing that SIGNATURE GLOBAL has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication. Please take further notice that post cancellation of the allotment of the

said property ICICI Bank shall not be boundand/ orresponsible for any other allotment done by the builder.

For ICICI Bank Limited

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE Invitation of Tenders through E-Procur

Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi - 110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through eprocurement system for supply of the following items:-

S.N.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
01.	77225814	MANUFACTURING AND SUPPLY OF 6.2 MM THICK COMPOSITE GROOVED RUBBERSOLE PLATES	3298405 NOS	13.02.2023

NOTE-1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e.www.ireps.gov.in for de 2. No Manual offer will be entertained. 3350/22 SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NOTICE INVITING TENDER Date: 17.12.2022 Sealed bids are invited from interested bidders for following tenders Due Date & Time **Brief Description EMD** of opening (₹) of Submissio CMC/BY/22-23/ Registration/ Revalidation of Insurance Broker for RS/SvS/VK/55 Providing Services Related to Insurance for BYPI Request for Selection (RFS) of Bidders for 09.01.2023 16:00 HRS 09.01.2023 Empanelment of Private Charging Infrastructure RS/SV/56 Providers In The NCT of Delhi

Cost of each Tender Documents: ₹1,180/-For details in respect of Equipment/BOM/Services, Qualifying requ ftender documents, corrigendum etc. please visit our website <u>www.bsesdelhi.com</u> -->Tenders --> BSES YAMUNA POWER

Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning

of 11KV Dry Type Smart Package Sub-station of

1.6 MVA DT Rating (type 23)

Regd. Office: Shakti Kiran Building, Karkardooma, Delhi-110032 | Cin: U40109DL2001PLC111525 | Tel: 011-39997111

09.01.2023 16:30 HRS

09.01.2023 14:30 HRS

NORTHERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM

Ref. i) Tender Notice No. 63/2022-2023 dated. 15/12/2022 ii) Tender No. 03220006 Due on 26/12/2022 (S. No. 10) In reference to above tender qty. 6524 mtrs instead of 11580 mtrs has been done All other terms & conditions remain unchanged.

The corrigendum has been published on 3355/2022

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE PUBLIC NOTICE LOST OF DOCUMENTS

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform to all concern that Sh. Mahender Kumar S/o Sh. Madan Lal R/o D-61, New Kondli Delhi-95 who is the original allottee of Commercial Shop No. 18, Block C-31, Sector-12, Noida G.B. Nagar (U.P.) had sold the said Shop on General power of attorney basis to the following person(s). GPA was executed on in favour of Smt. Anita Rani W/o Sh. Raje Ram R/o 0-20, Sector-12, Noida G.B. Nagar (U.P.) which is registered Sub Registrar office Noida-I. The agreement to sell was not registered or not executed. So it is informed to all concern that the said Shop is going to be transferred in favour of Pradeep Bansal S/o Sh. Raje Ram R/o A-806, Purva Palm Beach, Hanumanthappa Layout, SAIACS CEO Centre, Kylasanahalli, Kothanur, Bangaluru (Karnataka). If any one has/have any objection he/she may file his/her objection along with the sufficient proof in the Commercial Department of the Noida Authority within 15 days from the date of publication of within 15 days from the date of publication of

original documents (DDA Allotment letter & Possession paper) of my house are missing. Asha Parashar W/O Om Parkash Parashar, Add-AD-61 A Shalimar Bagh New Delhi-110088. If anyone found the documents please contact to this below mobile number.

It has been informed that



E-Tender Enq. No. 420/P-1/EMP-W-12141 dated 14-12-22 Dy. Chief Engineer/ Headquarter (Procurement Cell-1) GGSSTP Roopnagar invites E-tender ID No.2022 POWER 93962 1 for the

9958688488,

8376955457

For detailed NIT & Tender Specification please refer to https://proc.punjab.gov.in from 15-12-2022/ 05:00 PM onwards. Note: Corrigendum & amendments, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in

work of Silt clearing from Ghanauli drain in plant area at GGSSTP

76155/12/1291/2022/19649

9654198900

OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE Sr. Divisional Engineer-I/Northern Railway, New Delhi for and on behalf of Preside of India invites e-tender on the prescribed form for the under noted work. Provision of boundary wall at Badli & Narela yard in the Name of work with section of SSE/W/SNP under ADEN/PNP to prevent ocation, cost of work trespassing and encroachment. Rs. 92,28,413.32/-Approx. Cost Rs. 184600 Earnest Money Earnest Money should be in the form of net banking or payment gateway only. Note: FDR or Demand Draft will not be accepted as EMD for tender invited on IREPS as per Railway Boards letter No. 2015/CE-I/CT/5/1 dated 31.08.2016. Completion Period

Date and Time of and opening of tender Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. Website particulars, published tender notice location etc. complete details of

www.ireps.gov.in Precast RCC/PSC works.

Upto 15.00 hrs on 10.01.2023 opening of e-tender at 15.00 hrs on 10.01.2023

tender can be seen and website where the tender form can be downloaded Similar nature of work

(NIT-55) Dated: 15.12.2022

NORTHERN RAILWAY

NOTE: All attachments must be self attested by the tenderers and the affidavit should be submitted in the new format attached with tender conditions as per Annexure-XXIV is compulsorily. No. 128-W/280/Tender Notice/22-23/W-I

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

there was no heavy rain in recent days, only light drizzles. It is currently the season for

a week to assess their safety.

Wheat sowing up 3% at 286.5 L ha this rabi season

Oilseeds area up 8%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Wheat acreage has increased 3 per cent so far in the ongoing rabi season at 286.5 lakh hectare mainly on higher sowing area in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the government data showed.

The area under coverage for wheat, which is the major crop in rabi (winter-sown) season, stood at 278.25 lakh hectare in the same period last

Sowing of rabi crops starts from October.

Higher area under wheat has been reported mainly from Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Karnataka. Acreage is down so far in Maharashtra and Haryana.

Increase in wheat sowing area may lead to higher production provided the weather remains conducive for growth of this crop. The domestic production of wheat fell to 106.84 million tonne in 2021-22 crop year (July-June) from 109.59 million tonne in the previous year due to heat wave in some of the producing states.

In May this year, the gov-ernment banned exports of



plies and control prices. Wheat procurement by state-owned FCI fell to 187.92 lakh tonne in 2022-23 marketing year from 434.44 lakh tonne due to fall in domestic output and aggressive purchase by private parties.

According to data as on December 16, paddy acreage has increased to 12.64 lakh hectare so far from 11.13 lakh

Pulses have been sown in 139.68 lakh hectare so far as against 134.01 lakh hectare, with area under gram rising to 97.9 lakh hectare from 94.97 lakh hectare.

coarse cereals has risen to

41.34 lakh hectare from 38.37

In non-foodgrain categoarea under coverage for oilseeds has increased to 97.94 lakh hectare from 90.51 lakh hectare. Mustard, the main oilseeds crop in rabi season, rose to 89.99 lakh hectare from 83.18 lakh hectare.

India imports about 60 per cent of its edible oils requirement. Therefore, the increase in mustard seeds acreage will boost domestic output of mus-

Total area sown to rabi crops has increased to 578.10 lakh hectare so far from 552.28 Area under coverage for lakh hectare in the corresponding period last year.

Markets skid for 2nd day as global rate hikes dampen sentiment

The BSE Sensex spiralled lower for the second straight session on Friday, in lockstep with other global markets after a host of central banks hiked interest rates and indicated more policy tightening to cool inflation even at the cost of economic growth.

A weakening rupee amid foreign fund outflows further

crimped risk appetite.
The 30-share BSE bench $mark\ tumbled\ 461.22\ points\ or$ 0.75 per cent to settle at

The broader NSE Nifty declined 145.90 points or 0.79 per cent to end at 18,269.

Dr Reddy's was the top laggard in the Sensex pack shedding 3.62 per cent, followed by M&M, Asian Paints, TCS, SBI, Titan, PowerGrid and Wipro.

Only four counters mustered gains -- HDFC Bank, HUL, Nestle India and Tata Steel, rising up to 0.49 per cent.

Central banks like the European Central Bank (ECB) and Bank of England (BoE) followed the US Federal Reserve in increasing policy rates as policymakers reaffirmed their commitment to curb price rise. Their hawkish commentary dashed hopes of interest rates nearing their peak, sending equities tumbling world-wide.

"Global markets extended their rout as the ECB



(European Central Bank) and BoE (Bank of England) followed the Fed in raising policy rates by half a per cent while maintaining a hawkish tone on

"The aggressiveness of central banks in combating inflation has raised concerns about the global economy's health. Despite attempts to recoup losses, lack of global support pushed the indices back into negative territory," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial

On a weekly basis, the Sensex declined 843.86 points or 1.36 per cent, while the Nifty shed 227.60 points or 1.23 per

"Markets are likely to remain in consolidative range due to lack of triggers in the near term. Also, lower participation from institutional investors due to upcoming year-end holidays would keep the markets lackluster," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd.

GST Council meet: Curbing tax evasion in pan masala, gutkha biz on agenda

The GST Council in its meeting on Saturday is expected to decide on a number of issues like decriminalisation of offences under the GST law, setting up appellate tribunals and mechanism to curb tax evasion in pan masala and gutkha businesses.

Besides, GST on online gaming and casinos may come up for deliberations as the Group of Ministers (GoM), chaired by Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, submitted its report on the issue to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday.

"Union Finance Minister Smt. @nsitharaman will chair the 48th GST Council meeting via VC from New Delhi tomorrow. The meeting will be attended by MoS Finance besides Finance Ministers of States & UTs & Senior officers from Union Government & States," the Finance Ministry tweeted

The Council would also consider a report of tax officers and give clarity on the rate applicability in certain goods and services.

With regard to decrimi-nalisation of offences, the law committee of the GST Council, comprising tax officers from the Centre and states, has suggested to the Council to increase the monetary threshold for launching prosecution for GST offences.

The law committee has



also suggested that the fee payable by taxpayer for compounding of GST offences be The GoM on GSTATs was set up in July under the chairlowered to 25 per cent of the manship of Haryana Deputy tax amount, from up to 150 per Chief Minister Dushyant cent currently, with a view to improving ease of doing busi-With regard to taxation of ness. It has suggested raising the threshold of launching online gaming, casinos and horse racing, the GoM, in its prosecution to ₹20 crore, from last meeting in November, had agreed on a 28 per cent GST on ₹5 crore at present. Launching of prosecution by taxmen these segments. means commencement of legal proceedings against the offend-

However, in absence of consensus on whether the tax should be levied on only the fees charged by the portal or the entire consideration, including the bet amount, received from participants, the GoM had decided to refer all suggestions to the GST Council for a final decision.

Currently, online gaming attracts 18 per cent GST. The tax is levied on gross gaming revenue, which is the fees charged by online gaming por-

RBI's central board reviews economic situation

The central board of the Reserve Bank on Friday reviewed the prevailing economic situation and challenges emanating from geopolitical developments.

The 599th meeting of the Central Board of Directors of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) took place in Kolkata under the chairmanship of Governor Shaktikanta Das, the RBI said in a statement.

"The board in its meeting reviewed the current economic situation, global and domeslitical developments, finance and trade," it said.

The board also discussed the activities of select central office departments and the draft report on the Trend and Progress of Banking in India,

RBI asks Razorpay, Cashfree to pause onboarding of new customers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India has asked Razorpay and Cashfree to temporarily stop the onboarding of new customers for their payment processing business, according to a source.

On the banking regulator's order, Razorpay said it is a temporary move and has no impact on Razorpay's existing business operations and current merchants. "RBI has issued an order

a few days back asking Razorpay and Cashfree to stop customer onboarding," a source

No immediate comments were received from Cashfree. When contacted,

principle approval from the RBI in July for a payment aggregator and payment gateway licence and the company is now required to share additional details with the RBI to aid in the final license process.

"As part of this process, the



porarily withhold onboarding new online merchants till such details are submitted. As a responsible corporate that operates under the ambit of RBI, Razorpay has abided by the regulatory requirement. that this directive of the RBI has no impact on Razorpay's existing business operations and current merchants," Razporpay spokesperson said.

RBI issues payment aggregator licence to entities involved in online payment

processing while payment gateway permit is meant for entities providing technology for payment processing.

The spokesperson said that Razorpay continues to onboard new businesses on other Razorpay services and Offline payments via Ezetap.

"Razorpay's operations are

fully compliant with all regulatory guidelines and the company continues to be in touch with RBI for the next steps," Razporpay spokesperson said.

'Apparel exports arrest fall, rise by 11.7% in November'

PTI NEW DELHI

Apparel exports in November rose by 11.7 per cent to about \$1.2 billion after declining for the last few months amid global challenges, export promotion body AEPC said on Friday.

Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) Chairman Naren Goenka said that exports of ready-made garments (RMG) from India witnessed a rough patch in the past few months since most of the traditional markets such as the UK, the EU and the US have been witnessing recession and global headwinds, leading to tries. Inflation and rising costs of raw material and freight, aggravated by the Russia-Ukraine war, added to the burden of exporters, he said.

"However, after a few months of slip, RMG exports have again turned positive sig-

industry to adjust to the prevailing challenges," Goenka

He also said that the target for apparel exports for 2022-23 is USD 17.6 billion against which "we have been able to achieve more than \$10 billion during April November 2022".

The council has flagged certain issues with the government, the resolution of which will help in increasing exports.

The major issues include early announcement of the production-linked incentive scheme for apparel, extension ATUFS (Amended Scheme), RoSCTL (Rebate of State and Central Levies and Taxes) disbursements through bank transfer, and one time relaxation on account of bankruptcy / insolvency / discounting / cancellation of export orders, it said.

Forex reserves swell by \$2.91 billion to \$564.06 bn as of Dec 9

PTI MUMBAI

ndia's forex reserves rose by LUSD 2.908 billion to \$ 564.06 billion for the week ended on December 9, according to the Reserve Bank data released on Friday.

er. The report of the GoM on

tax evasion by pan masala and gutkha companies is likely to be taken up for discussion in the

Council, sources said. With regard to setting up of Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunals (GSTATs), the GoM

has suggested that the tri-bunals should consist of two

judicial members, and one

technical member each from

the Centre and states, besides

a retired Supreme Court judge

In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had soared by USD 11 billion to \$561.16 billion. This is the fifth consecutive week of an increase in the reserves.

In October 2021, the country's foreign exchange kitty had reached an all-time high of \$ 645 billion. The reserves had been declining as the central defend the rupee amid pressures caused majorly by global developments.

Foreign currency assets (FCA), a major component of the overall reserves, increased by \$3.141 billion to \$ 500.125 billion during the week to

CPAI urges Govt, Sebi for resumption of trading

in 7 banned agricultural commodity contracts



December 9, according to the Weekly Statistical Supplement released by the RBI.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and exchange reserves.

Gold reserves decreased by USD 296 million to \$40.729 bil-

The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) jumped by \$61 million to \$18.106 billion, the

PNB Housing Fin opens 'Roshni' branches in various cities for affordable housing loans

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

PNB Housing Finance on Friday said it has opened 'Roshni' branches in various locations, including tier II and III cities, for deepening its customer base in the affordable hous-

Through its affordable home loan scheme Roshni, the city-based lender has also renewed its commitment towards the government's Housing for All mission, it added.

Under this initiative, PNB Housing Finance will offer retail loans to individuals in the range of ₹5 lakh to ₹30 lakh.

The company's Roshni branches inaugurated in Chennai, Coimbatore, Ghaziabad, Hyderabad, Indore/Ujjain, Lucknow, Mumbai, Nagpur, Pune, Rajkot and Varanasi will cater to customers in this segment.

house property, self-construction, home extension/renovation, plot purchase plus construction, loan against property, among others, PNB Housing Finance said in a release.

Borrowers can get loans for purchase of

Whether loan applicants are new to cred-



it, self-employed without formal income or salaried from a low-income group with household income as low as ₹10,000 to middle-income category, they all shall be considered, it

"With Roshni, we continue to augment our affordable housing portfolio. At PNB Housing Finance, we strive to stay closer to customers. Therefore, we are focused on building our presence across the country in tier 2 and 3 cities to address the growing needs of prospective homeowners," Girish Kousgi, MD and CEO of PNB Housing Finance, said

National achiever's award conferred on daughter of Bihar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian alert media house conferred upon Swadha Singh the national achiever's award for being the most inspiring social entrepreneur 2022. The award function was held at the constitution club New Delhi on 15 dec 2022.

She was also given the honorary doctorate of philosophy in social entrepreneurship for her exceptional contribution in promoting the socio economic development of the indigenous artisans and weavers of north eastern States

She, the daughter of late Ramdeo Singh, hails from Mosadpur village in Begusarai district of Bihar. She credits her



achievements to her husband Umesh kumar, who is a government of India officer and a resident of village Maranchi in Patna district.

Through her company Orgoeast, a community centric venture, she aims to provide a platform to indigenous weavers, artisans and farmers of north east India while revealing the incredible treasures of the region to the world, She feels that her endeavour will empower the local communities in multiple ways.



ulator Sebi to allow exchanges to resume trading in seven agricultural derivatives contracts, including crude palm oil and wheat, which were suspended for one year from December 2021. To curb inflation, the

Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) banned exchanges from launching new derivative contracts of Soyabean, mustard seeds, channa, wheat, paddy, moong and crude palm oil on December 20, 2021. These directions were applicable for one year.

In its letter to the Finance Ministry and Sebi on Monday, the association said the pro-



the Indian commodity market ecosystem and severely dent the perception regarding India's ease of doing business environment. During the last one year,

the price of some of these commodities has been below or around MSP and many studies concluded that the commodity prices are predominantly governed by supply and demand factors, and trading on exchanges has no impact on the price, ČPAI mentioned.

The association suggested that easily reversible options, such as increasing margin and

lowering open interest limits for commodity derivatives contracts may be resorted to in case significant volatility is observed in agri-commodity

In its letter, the association urged that "exchanges be allowed by SEBI to resume normal trading in all the commodity contracts as the period of one year elapses on December 19, 2022, and the conditions are amenable for their resumption".

Highlighting the importance of commodity derivatives, CPAI said that such derivatives contracts give important cues on price discovery and price risk management to entire value chain participants across farmers, processors, millers, agri-traders in physical markets and farmer producers' organisations.

Rupee falls 9 paise to settle at 82.85 against US dollar

PTI MUMBAI

The rupee dropped 9 paise to close at 82.85 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday amid heavy selling pressure in domestic equities and a strong greenback overseas. However, receding crude

oil prices capped the rupee's loss, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign

opened sharply lower at 82.84 against the greenback and witnessed a high of 82.73 and a low of 82.89.

exchange market, the rupee

It finally settled at 82.85 against the greenback, down 9 paise over its previous close of 82.76. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, rose 0.13 per

cent to 104.69.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, declined 2.29 per cent to USD 79.35 per In the domestic equity

market, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed 461.22 points or 0.75 per cent lower at 61,337.81. The broader NSE Nifty fell 145.90 points or 0.79 per cent to 18,269. got support from weaker rupee.

Gold gains ₹107; silver declines ₹120 23.07 per ounce.

old prices rose ₹107 to ₹54,222 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid gains in prices of precious metal in overseas markets, according to HDFC Securities.

yellow metal had settled at Rs 54,115 per 10 grams. Silver, however, declined ₹120 to ₹68,001 per kilogram. "Domestic market Gold price

In the previous trade, the



in the green zone in the Asian trading hours," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities.

In the international market, gold was trading in green USD 1,783.80 per ounce while silver was down at USD

"Gold price traded steady

after witnessing a fall and are set for a weekly loss, pressured by expectations of higher interest rates for a longer period by the US Federal Reserve. Focus today will be on the EU CPI, UK Retail sales, manufacturing and service PMI data from major economies," Navneet Damani, Senior VP Commodity Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

'Non-fossil sources to meet 62% of India's total energy demand by '30'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is expected to source about 62 per cent of its energy requirements from non-fossil sources by 2030, about 12 per cent more than the target, according to a senior power ministry official. India is already sourcing about 42 per cent of its energy requirements from non-fossils sectors, Additional Power Secretary Ajay Tiwari said at South Asia (BBIN) Power Summit organised by industry body Confederation of Indian Industry here on Friday. According to official data, the total installed electricity generating capacity in the country was 409 GW, including 166 GW of renewable generating capacity (including large hydro) as of October 31, 2022. "Going by the current pace and trajectory, India is likely to source about 62 per cent of its energy requirements from non-fossil sources by 2030," Tiwari said.

MESSI'S HOMETOWN IN ARGENTINA YEARNS FOR WORLD CUP VICTORY

Pernanda Quiroga still remembers how Lionel Messi played soccer in what were then dirt roads around their working class neighborhood in Rosario, Argentina's third-largest city.

"(Messi) was always kicking something, a ball, a bottle cap," said Quiroga, who at 35 is the same age as the captain of Argentina's national soccer team.

The memory I have of him because he lived right in front of my house, is going to buy sweet pastries at his grandmother's around the block and he was always kicking something.

Excitement for Sunday's World Cup final, when Argentina will face defending champion France in Qatar, is rising fast and anxiety is running particularly high in Messi's hometown as many are hoping this will be the year when Messi finally wins the one major trophy that has been missing from his illustrious career.

"Even though it pains us all, it's been said this is Leo's last World Cup, so we're all hoping he wins it, I think more for him than for the national team itself," Quiroga

"I think what weighs more this time around is that we want him to get it because he has generated so much love and respect.

After beating Croatia in the semifinals Tuesday, Messi said Sunday's match would likely be his last in a World Cup. The neighborhood popularly known

as La Bajada has turned into a sort of altar for Messi with murals and graffiti that praise the soccer star. "From another galaxy and from my

neighborhood," reads graffiti that is seemingly ubiquitous in the area. A large mural of Messi looking up at

the sky is painted on the side of his old house that still belongs to his family.

The little guy was very spicy. If he got mad, he grabbed the ball and took it away,' said Marcelo Almada, a 37-year-old construction worker who played soccer with Messi in the streets around the neighborhood where he still lives. "He didn't like to lose ... but he was a very good kid."

With the World Cup, "there has been an explosion in the neighborhood," where "we're all like brothers," he added, noting that after every Argentina victory people celebrate in the streets until the early hours of the morning.



Santos quits as Portugal coach

AP LISBON

Fernando Santos quit as coach of Portugal on Thursday following the team's shock World Cup quarterfinal loss to Morocco with colourful and controversial Jose Mourinho named as a leading candidate to take

The Portuguese football federation (FPF) said in a statement that an agreement was reached with the 68year-old Santos "to end the journey of great success that began in September 2014".

The FPF added that it "will now launch the process to choose the next national coach".

Daily sports newspaper Record claims that Mourinho is the federation's number one target to take over

ahead of qualifying for Euro 2024. They would even reportedly entertain a deal which would see Mourinho take charge of the national team on an interim basis to allow him to see out the season with club side Roma in Italy.

Asked about the national team job by journalists late Thursday afternoon when he arrived in southern Portugal for a training camp with Roma, Mourinho made no com-

Qualifying for Euro 2024 gets underway in March. Portuguese coaches Rui Jorge

(under-21s), Abel Ferreira (Palmeiras), Paulo Fonseca (Lille), Rui Vitoria (Egypt) and Jorge Jesus (Fenerbahce) are also among the potential candidates cited by local

Mourinho, 59, has yet to coach at international level but has an impressive record at some of Europe's heavyweight clubs.

He has managed Porto, Chelsea twice, Inter Milan, Real Madrid and Manchester United.

Mourinho won three Premier League titles with Chelsea, two Serie A crowns at Inter and a Liga triumph at Real.

He also coached Porto to 2004 Champions League victory and repeated the feat with Inter Milan in

In May this year, he led Roma to the Europa Conference League title, the club's first ever major European

That was his fifth European title and made him the first coach to win all current UEFA competitions.

Santos had been adamant that he would not be forced out of the Portuguese job he has held for eight years despite Saturday's 1-0 defeat to the history-making Moroccans in

He accepted, however, that not everyone agreed with his decisions during the World Cup which included dropping Cristiano Ronaldo to the bench in the later matches.

"I'm leaving with the feeling of enormous gratitude," he said in a video posted on the federation's

"When you lead a group, you have to make some difficult decisions. It's normal that not everyone is happy with the choices I made.'

into a place of pilgrimage, with fans from all over the world coming to visit Messi's old house and the small soccer field in the corner where he started to learn the skills that would eventually turn him into an all-

"I've been a fan of Barcelona and Messi since I was a little boy and ... my dream is to see Messi win (the World Cup)," said 23-year-old Niv Reznik, an Israeli who traveled to Argentina with a group of friends to watch the tournament in the homeland of the soccer star who played 17 seasons with Barcelona.

When Reznik and his friends got to Messi's house, one of them kneeled and waved his hands in ovation.

A few blocks away, another person who is hoping for a Messi victory is 55year-old Andrea Liliana Sosa, who was Messi's math and science teacher in fifth and sixth grade.

"He was a quiet and dutiful student, responsible with what he had to do for school and well loved by his classmates . especially during the breaks to play ball," Sosa said in one of the classrooms of the school that has chipped paint across many of its walls. "He was very focused on soccer. "(A victory Sunday) would be like the cherry that he's missing, so let's hope he makes it, but he has done enough already to be recognized and loved by everyone," she added.

School children are living the World Cup "with a beautiful passion" and want Argentina to win "for Messi," said Milena Fernández, a 13-year-old student who was standing in front of a large mural of the soccer star on the school's grounds.

Across the street from the school, another large mural of Messi adorns the side of a residential building that has also turned into a place of pilgrimage for fans. "We've even seen people praying

here," said 21-year-old Valentina Rota, who lives in the building. "There's a whole feeling of belonging because he was born around the corner,

he's one of us, he's a neighbor.' Messi, and the national team as a whole, have managed to raise the hope and optimism of Argentines in a country that has been stuck in economic doldrums for years with one of the world's highest inflations rates, closing in on almost 100% per year, and where close to

four of every 10 people live in poverty.

FIFA to 'revisit' plan to scrap four-team groups: Infantino

AP ■ DOHA

 $F^{\text{IFA looks set to revise plans}}$ to introduce three-team groups for the 2026 World Cup, world football chief Gianni Infantino said on Friday.

FIFA had previously indicated that the 2026 finals, which will expand to 48 teams from 32, would see countries divided into 16 groups of three during the first round.

Under that format, the top two teams in each group would advance to a 32-team knockout tournament. However, FIFA president

Infantino said the thrilling success of the existing first-round format at the Qatar World Cup -- where teams were divided into traditional groups of four -- had prompted a rethink.

Several groups in Qatar went down to the wire, with qualification hanging in the balance until the final whistle.

"The groups of four have been absolutely incredible until the last minute of the last match," Infantino told a press conference in Doha.

"We have to revisit or at least rediscuss the format, whether it's 16 groups of three or 12 groups of four. This is something that will be on the agenda in the next few weeks.'

Infantino added that the World Cup format for 2026

could be modelled along the lines of the European Championship, which has six groups of four, with the four best thirdplaced teams also advancing to the knockout rounds.

The 2026 World Cup is being co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. Infantino said the enlarged

competition would lead to a financial bonanza for FIFA. Revenues in the four-year cycle leading up to 2026 are projected to increase to \$11 billion -- up from \$7.5 billion in the

cycle ending in 2022. Asked to explain the huge projected increase in revenues Infantino cited the expanded number of teams, existing stadium infrastructure and the size

of the North American market. "We are bullish about the power of football," Infantino said. "We are convinced the impact of the game will be

and it will be incredible in North America. Three huge countries, 48 teams. "More games, revenues will

"It has been massive here

go up in terms of broadcasting, in terms of sponsorship, hospi-

"We will play in huge stadiums used for American football, 80-90,000 capacity. We are expecting 5.5 million fans travelling for these events.'

Busquets announces international retirement

Norld Cup winner Sergio Busquets announced his international retirement on Friday

"I would like to announce that after almost 15 years and 143 matches, the moment has arrived to bid farewell to the national team," wrote the 34year-old Barcelona stalwart on his social media platforms.

Busquets is the last member of the 2010 team to bow out of international football -- he was also part of the team that lifted the 2012 European title.



He was captain of the 2022 World Cup side that fell to a Morocco in the last-16.

Only his fellow 2010 team mates Iker Casillas (167) and Sergio Ramos (180) represented Spain more often than

"It has been an honour to represent my national team and help lift it higher, to being European and World champions. To have been captain and to have played so many matches with a certain level of success and always trying to do my best," Busquets wrote.

Morocco to host Club WC in Feb, expanded event to start in 2025

Morocco will host the next Club World Cup in Febru- Infantino said the new-look tournament would now go while the planned expanded version of the competition is now set to start in 2025.

The tournament will take place from February 1 to 11, 2023, Infantino told reporters at a press conference in Doha, as it returns to Morocco for the third time.

An expanded Club World Cup has long been a pet project of Infantino's. A 24-team event, featuring eight teams from Europe, had been due to take place in China in 2021 only to be put on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"We had agreed a few years

ago to have a new 24-team

men's Club World Cup. It should

Infantino said the new-look ary, FIFA president Gianni ahead starting in 2025 and

> have taken place in 2021 but was postponed because of Covid," the FIFA president said. "The new competition will take place in 2025 and will feature 32 teams, making it really like a World Cup," he

> added, without offering further details. Morocco hosted the Club

> World Cup in 2013 and again in 2014, while the most recent



edition was held in the United Arab Emirates in February, with Chelsea lifting the trophy.

The competition is set to continue in its existing format ons of the six continental federations along with the top team from the host nation.

Real Madrid, who won the 2014 Club World Cup in Morocco, will represent Europe after winning last season's UEFA Champions League.

Flamengo of Brazil, Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia, Wydad Casablanca of Morocco, Seattle Sounders from the United States and New Zealand's Auckland City are the other current continental champions.

OTHER SPORTS

Tiwary, Majumdar steer Bengal to six-wicket win over UP

PTI KOLKATA

Skipper Manoj Tiwary and Anustup Majumdar slammed twin fifties as Bengal trounced Uttar Pradesh by six wickets in a group A match of the Ranji Trophy here on

Tiwary slammed seven fours and a maximum in his 108-ball unbeaten 60-run knock, while Majumdar had 10 hits to the fence during his 170-ball 83 as Bengal knocked off the remaining 101 runs in 32.5 overs to complete a successful run chase

Bengal thus gathered all six

Resuming at 156 for 2, Bengal lost the wicket of Koushik Ghosh (69) in the third ball of the day with Ankit Rajpoot cleaning up the overnight

However, Majumdar continued from where he had left and along with Tiwary kept Bengal on track, adding 97 runs for the fourth wicket to take them on the brink of vic-

Majumdar was dismissed in the 72rd over off Rinku Singh with Akshdeep Nath taking the catch.

Shahbaz Ahmed and Tiwary then scored the remaining six runs

to take Bengal home. Bengal pacer Ishan Porel was adjudged the Player Of The Match for his seven-wicket haul.



GOA, RAJ PLAY DRAW

Povorim: Goa and Rajasthan split points in their Group C encounter after the match ended in a tame draw, with both sides managing to complete just one innings each in the four-day contest.

Replying to Goa's mammoth 547 for nine declared, built on a doublecentury from Suyash Prabhudessai (212) and a century from Arjun Tendulkar (120), Rajasthan virtually batted the entire third and fourth day for their 456 as the match mean-

stumps on day three when they reduced their opponents to 245 for six. But after two breakthroughs coming early on Friday, late-order batters Arafat Khan (80 not out) and Manav Sutar (48) dropped anchor and all hopes of enforcing a follow-

KERALA SECURE AWAY WIN

Ranchi: Domestic stalwart Jalaj Saxena returned with a match haul of nine wickets while debutant offspinner Vaisakh Chandran claimed a second innings five-for as Kerala beat Jharkhand by 85 runs in their Group C match. After the impressive figures of 5/75 in the first innings, the 36-year-old medium pacer returned with 4/56 in the second essay. It complemented Chandran's splendid show of 5/57 as Jharkhand folded for 237 in 61.2 in their tall chase of 323.

It was the 26-year-old off-spin-ner who ripped the Jharkhand topfive and reduced them to 102/5 inside 27 overs to derail their chase

In-form India batter Ishan Kishan, who scored a century in the first essay, opened the innings for Sharkhand in their big chase.

However, Chandran had his say and revelled on the fourth day wick-

dered aimlessly at the Goa Cricket
Association ground here on Friday.

There was hope for Goa at
There was hope for Goa at within the span of three deliveries.

Continuing his assault, Chandran cleaned up the other Jharkhand opener Nazim Siddiqui (17), and dismissed Saurabh Tiwary (37) and Utkarsh Singh (0) in four deliveries en route to his splendid figures of 17-

MAHARASHTRA CRUSH DELHI

Pune: Veteran pacer Ishant Sharma didn't bowl a single over in the second innings due to an "unspecified injury" as Delhi, with severely depleted bowling resources, crashed to a nine-wicket defeat against Maharashtra in a Group B match.
Ishant bowled 20 overs in the

first innings and didn't turn up for the second innings as Maharashtra batters Pavan Shah (87 not out) and Kaushal Tambe (64 not out) easily chased down the target of 178 in little under 46 overs.

This was after Himmat Singh's (84) another gutsy effort took Delhi's second innings score to 310 to bring them back in the game. However, Delhi's first innings

bowling hero Simarjeet Singh, who was forced to bowl 35 overs, could only bowl two overs in the second innings with a hamstring issue.

The other pacer Mayank Yadav also has sustained hamstring injury while bowling in the first innings.



Neeraj Chopra dislodges Bolt as world's most visible track and field athlete

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra has dislodged the iconic Usain Bolt as the "most visible" athlete in the world after winning a historic gold medal in the Tokyo Games, claimed a World Athletics study.

The 24-year-old Indian further enhanced his superstar status by winning a silver at the

world championships. Chopra led a star-studded field in terms of media coverage with 812 articles published in his name, followed by Jamaican sprint trio of Elaine Thompson-

Fraser-Pryce (698) and Shericka Jackson (679). The charismatic Bolt, also a Jamaican, was in the fifth spot

Herah (751), Shelley-Ann

with 574 articles in his name, according to the statistics released by World Athletics during President Sebastian Coe's year-end interaction with a select group of Asian journalists. The data was provided by

Germany-based media monitoring firm Unicepta. This is the first time that Bolt, who retired in 2017 and who still holds the world record in 100m and 200m, has not led the list.

GILL, PUJARA HUNDREDS PUT INDIA IN COMMAND

hubman Gill scored his maiden Test century while Cheteshwar Pujara final-Oly ended a four-year wait for his 19th hundred as India set Bangladesh a stiff victory target of 513 runs on the third day of the series-opener here Friday.

For the second day in succession, Bangladesh were completely outplayed as Kuldeep Yadav's career-best 5 for 40 helped India dismiss the hosts for a paltry 150 in just 55.5 overs.

With nearly three days at their disposal and a lead of 254, India captain KL Rahul decided against enforcing the follow-on as Gill (110) and Pujara (102 not out) took full advantage of a toothless Bangaldesh attack that also missed its lead pacer Ebadot Hossain due to a back-injury.

The moment Pujara exorcised the ghosts of the last four years with the completion of his fastest Test hundred, skipper Rahul declared the Indian second innings closed at 258 for 2.

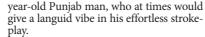
At stumps, Bangladesh were 42 for no loss on a track where a lot of balls are indeed keeping low but the pitch hasn't shown considerable wear and tear. The hosts still require 471 runs to win the match. However to bat for 180 overs over two days will be an improbable task for the Bangladesh batting line-up against the Indian bowling line-

Stand-in skipper Rahul, who holed out at the fine leg boundary off a well-laid short ball trap by Khaled Ahmed (1/52 in 13 overs), would rue that he missed a chance to get a big score under his belt.

However Gill, blessed with gift of

exquisite timing, pounced on a depleted Bangladesh attack, hitting 10 boundaries and three sixes — one off pacer Khaled and one each of Litton's part-time spin and Mehidy Hasan Miraz after reaching his three-figure mark. Gill's attacking batting also allowed Pujara to take his time at the beginning. He accelerated towards the back-end of the Indian innings as he had 13 boundaries to show for his efforts.

But there could be no debate about which innings would be rated higher in terms of aesthetics. It certainly would be 23-



He used the sweep to good effect against the off-spin of Miraz and the reverse sweep against left-arm spin of

He repeatedly came down the track to loft the spinners and disturb their length. He converted a lot of good length balls into halfvolleys while any width from pacers or deliveries drifting down the leg-side were also met with utter disdain. Gill however would consider himself

lucky as he was twice adjudged leg-before by the on-field umpires but DRS ruled it not out. Another time when Bangladesh went for review, the DRS didn't work.

Buoyed by his 90 in the first innings, Pujara was a picture of supreme confidence and this Bangladesh attack never had the wherewithal to dismiss him with literally no scoreboard pressure on India.

While his first fifty came off 87 balls, he raced to his next 50 in just 43 balls, answering anyone and everyone who keep on questioning his intent. If the first 50 runs had five fours, the second was laced with eight boundaries as he added 113 runs for the second wicket with Gill.

The relief was palpable when he hit Taijul Islam for a boundary and got a warm hug from Virat Kohli (19 not out) at the other end.

With a lot of deliveries starting to keep low, the spin troika of Ravichandran Ashwin, Kuldeep and Axar Patel will be eager to come out on fourth and fifth day to ensure full 12 World Test Championship points for the team. Najmul Hossain Shanto (25 batting) and Zakir Hasan (17 batting) have given an improved account of themselves in Bangladesh's second essay.

At the start of the day, Kuldeep completed his third five-wicket haul when Ebadot (17)'s 37-ball vigil ended. His faint tickle down the leg-side was smartly snapped by wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant.

It was Mehidy (25 batting), who fought doggedly and played the maximum number of balls (82) but had little support at other end before he became Patel's only victim of



It took a long time to come: Gill on maiden Test hundred

PTI CHATTOGRAM

rt was indeed a "special feelling" to score his maiden Test hundred but young Shubman Gill admitted that it took a long time (12 Tests) to achieve the coveted landmark.

Gill on Friday smashed 110 off 152 balls in India's second innings in the opening Test against Bangladesh to register his maiden Test ton.

Gill, playing his 12th Test, and Chesteshwar Pujara (102 not out off 130) powered India to 258 for 2 declared, setting Bangladesh a daunting victory target of 513.

At stumps on day three, Bangladesh were 42 for no los, still needing 471 runs for a win. "I personally thought it

cricket for nearly two years: Kuldeep

Never felt that I didn't play Test

(maiden Test century) took a long time to come for me. Today it was all about getting the difficult situation out of the way," Gill told broadcasters 'Sony Liv' after the end of day's

"(The century) Means a lot to me, my family and my friends who have supported me. Special moment for any player - getting the maiden century here means a lot to me," Gill said after achieving the feat in his 22nd Test innings.

Gill smashed 10 boundaries and three sixes during his entertaining knock.

Asked if he was nervous after reaching 90, he said: "There weren't any different thoughts (while batting in the 90s). For me, it was about

playing according to the field and then be able to score runs.' Gill said adopting an attacking approach was instinc-

tive. He said pacing the innings was key to success. "It was very instinctive (to hit a couple of boundaries and get to the milestone). When the bowler came round the wicket, there was gap between third man and point. I hadn't played there during

the whole innings.
"And once the field came in, I went over the fielders. When lunch happened, I was batting around 13. When I'd faced 100 balls, I was 70-odd, it's about pacing the innings. You got to know when to attack as a batter," the 23-year-

old right-hander said.

INDIAN WOMEN LOOK TO STAY ALIVE IN T20I SERIES

Hosts India will aim to do some serious course correction in their bowling department in their bid to stay alive in a do-or-die fourth Women's T20 International against Australia on Saturday.

Trailing 1-2, India will

need to eke out a win to stay alive in the five-match series, which is the most important one ahead of the T20 World Cup starting February 3 in South Africa.

head coach, he also took take care of the bowling department but since his departure, India have been without the services of a full-time bowling

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur also admitted after the third WT20I that her side is missing a designated bowling coach. Add to that a relatively inexperienced fast bowling attack, India have a problems aplenty to address.

Indian bowlers have conceded scores in excess of 170 in all three games. While they couldn't defend 172 in the opening match, they conceded 187 in the second game and 172 in the third.

Meghna Singh hasn't measured up well and Renuka Singh, who is spearheading the seam attack, also needs helpful conditions to make a



While the bowling has not been up to scratch, fielding coach Subhadeep Ghosh also has his task cut out as the catching and ground fielding has left a lot to be desired.

India also have a lot of work to do in the batting department.

Rotation of strike has been a huge issue. In Shafali Verma, Richa Ghosh and skipper Harmanpreet, India have three good power hitters while Smriti Mandhana can time the ball well, but they have not been rotating strike and the skipper pointed that out after defeat in

last game.
While the boundary count has increased, the Indian batters are consuming way too many dot balls every match.

The focus will also be on Jemimah Rodrigues, who has managed scores of 0, 4 and 16

in the three games. The middle order batter, who was one of the pillars of the Indian team that went all the way to the finals of the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, needs to the find

> Australia, on the other hand, will be eager to seal the series with a game to spare.

> While Alyssa Healy the skipper has been doing a good job, the wicketkeeper bater would want to change her starts into big scores and contribute more with the bat.

Opener Beth Mooney has been in scintillating form and is the leading run-getter in series. Mooney would be eager to continue in the same vein.

After the Super over loss to India, Australian bowlers, led by 19-year-old pacer Darcie Brown came back well to guide

their side to a win.

PTI ■ CHATTOGRAM He was initially "nervous" but once Kuldeep Yadav started to make the red ball rip, it didn't seem like as if he hadn't played Test cricket for nearly two Kuldeep, the left-arm wrist spinner, played a major role in India's dominance in the ongoing opening Test against

Having set an improbable it that way," a smiling and seem- any cricket post injury, then its mediapersons after his third five-wicket haul in Test cricket on Friday.

Kuldeep had a knee surgery in 2021 just before the second phase of IPL in the UAE and was out for a considerable period of

time before making a comeback. "If I wouldn't have played I have been continuously playing white-ball cricket and also played red-ball series against New Zealand (A series).

"I bowled long spells in that series. If you are with the team (national), then you don't feel that pressure," said the 28-yearold Kanpur man, who now has

While Kuldeep has played more white-ball cricket in past

31 wickets in his 8th Test.

8-10 months, switching the format has never been a problem for him as wrist spin doesn't depend on the surface a lot. "Due to my bowling style, I

don't have switch-over problems. Yes, when you are bowling in Tests, you need more control and you have to really earn your wicket as batters have long time to get set and measure you up,' said Kuldeep.
"The field positions change,

formations are different and for long periods is another chal-

As far as the current Test match is concerned, Kuldeep assessed that the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium track is a batting belter, having himself batted on the wicket for close to 20 overs during the Indian first innings.
"I believe the pitch is perfect

to bat on. It was really good to bat on even against spinners. Yes some balls are keeping low and the odd ball turning. Me and Ash bhai (R Ashwin) were initially looking at first innings score of 360 but as time passed, batting became easier so we looked at 400-run total."

Bowling in tandem with Ashwin and Axar Patel has been an "enjoyable experience" for Kuldeep as there is always relentless pressure from both ends which results in break-

About the position of the match, Kuldeep feels that with 180 overs left across two days, Indian team has enough time to

wrap it up.
"We are expecting more turn off the surface in the second innings compared to first

Pak lose opener Imam for 3rd Test

Pakistan's injury problems grew with opening batsman Imam-ul-Haq ruled out of the third and final Test against England starting in Karachi on Saturday. The 26-year-old aggravated a hamstring injury on Friday, making Pakistan's task of avoiding a first home 3-0 Test whitewash all the tougher.

Bangladesh as he recorded a

career-best 5 for 40 to deflate the

hosts for a lowly 150 in their first

dent that he along with

Ravichandran Ashwin and Axar

Patel will be able to give his team

a 1-0 lead in the two-match

hain par mujhe kabhi feel hi nahi

huwa (It might be nearly two

years (22 months) but I never felt

"Kahne ke liye toh do saal

Veteran batsman Azhar Ali is likely to replace Haq, having announced that this will be his last Test.

Bespectacled left-hander Haq batted at number five in the second Test in Multan, scoring 60, as Pakistan lost by 26 runs.

"Imam has a hamstring problem so he will not play tomorrow's match," said skipper Babar Azam on Friday.



Azam said injuries had cost Pakistan dearly in the series.

They lost pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi before the series with a knee injury and Haris Rauf damaged his quad muscle in the first Test in Rawalpindi. Another fast bowler, Naseem Shah, has failed to recover from a shoulder strain that forced him to miss the second Test, also ruling him out of the final match.

"We have played continuous cricket and there was no rest, so

many injuries," said Azam on the eve of the Karachi showdown

against a confident England.

'It's not that we are relaxed on fitness but we have to address fitness issues. If we are playing continuous cricket we have to plan that accordingly.

Azam hopes the Karachi pitch will help the spinners.

"The wicket looks dry and it's a typical Karachi pitch," he

"We will try to have a good result for us. We committed mistakes and matches were in our hands, so we must not repeat them." Pakistan are likely to hand a Test debut to fast bowler Mohammad Wasim Junior in place of Mohammad Ali, who went wicketless in the Multan



Azhar Ali to retire from international cricket

AP KARACHI

Veteran Pakistan opening batsman Azhar Ali will retire from international cricket after the third and final Test against England in Karachi starting Saturday.

The 37-year-old was dropped from the second Test the second time in six months that he was left out of the team signalling the end was near.

"Everything must come to an end, so on a good note I feel — and my heart and mind understands — that this is the right time to decide that the Karachi Test will be my last for Pakistan," an emotional Azhar

told a press conference. "It was an honour to not only play for Pakistan, but also captain the country, and I am going with fond memories,' added Azhar, who with 7,097

Pakistan's fifth-highest Test scorer. Azhar's 96-match Test career - beginning at Lord's in 2010 - was marked by Pakistan's isolation from international cricket, which deprived him of playing any of his first 75 matches on home grounds.

Pakistan were forced to play

in the aftermath of terror attacks on the Sri Lankan team bus in Lahore in 2009. When Test cricket returned to Pakistan in December 2019,

their matches at neutral venues

Azhar hit a century in the second Test against Sri Lanka in Karachi. "It was massive to play at home and score that hundred,"

said Azhar, who scored 19 Test centuries. "I genuinely thought a few years back that I would not be

able to play a Test at home.

SA 'salivating' at playing Oz



AP BRISBANE

South Africa captain Dean Elgar on Friday said his team was "salivating" at the prospect of facing Australia and conceded there could be "feisty' moments in their first Test series since the "Sandpaper-gate" scan-

The two sides pad up on Saturday in Brisbane for the first time since the infamous 2018 cheating row in which Australia attempted to alter the ball using sandpaper in Cape Town.

It kicks off the first of a three-Test series, with the hosts

the Gabba, losing just once since 1988, against India in But South Africa have rarely

played at the fortress ground and it holds few fears for Elgar's men. We don't have any dirty laundry when it comes to playing at the Gabba because we

haven't played here yet," he said. The history here is not in our favour, and that's OK. The fact we haven't had any failures here might work in our favour.

for this moment. We're looking forward to getting going." The tourists have one of the most hostile pace attacks in world cricket, spearheaded by Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje, and Elgar admitted

But he suggested he could make Australia field first if he



during its unveiling ceremony at the Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in New Delhi on Friday