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GROW IN INDIA

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**MONEY 10**  
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LABELING ON HONG KONG GOODS

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INDIA TO GO  
FOR KILL IN  
2ND TEST  
11 SPORT



## 4 cases of BF.7 driving China's Covid surge reported in India

Wear masks in crowded areas, take booster dose: Centre

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Four cases of the highly transmissible Omicron sub-variant BF.7, apparently the strain that is driving China's current surge of Covid cases, have been detected in India so far since October this year even as the Centre on Wednesday called for strengthening the surveillance and implementation of Covid norms, including wearing masks in crowded areas and taking the booster dose to contain the disease.

Though there has been no change in international travel norms as of now, random genome sampling of travellers returning from foreign shores has been initiated at the airports across the States, many of which have already started pulling up the socks to check the virus spread.

"Covid is not over yet. I have directed all concerned to be alert and strengthen surveillance. We are prepared to manage any situation," Union Health Minister Mansukh



Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya arrives to hold a meeting with senior officials and experts on the Covid-19 situation, in New Delhi on Wednesday PTI

Mandaviya told reporters after holding a meeting to review the Covid-19 situation in India and preparedness of the public health system for surveillance, containment and management of the virus.

The meeting was held in the wake of the recent spike in cases of Covid-19 in some countries such as Japan, South Korea, the USA, France and particularly China, where the virus has spread like wildfire.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), BF.7 is a shorter term for BA.5.2.1.7 and is the fastest spreading Covid virus.

Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Dr VK Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan and senior officials and public health experts were among those present in the meeting.

An official from the Ministry said the Union Health Minister was briefed on the global Covid-19 situation and the domestic scenario. India has been witnessing a steady decline in cases with 137 cases and 3 fatalities reported till Wednesday morning.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Cong slams BJP after Min asks Rahul to stop yatra amid Covid threat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya's letter to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi asking him to consider suspending his Bharat Jodo Yatra in view of the renewed Covid threat emerging from China drew a sharp response from the main Opposition party which, on Wednesday, said it is an attempt to disturb the Yatra given the increasing public support to it.

Accusing the Government of selectively picking on the Bharat Jodo Yatra over Covid concerns, the Congress pointed to the BJP taking out marches in Karnataka and Rajasthan besides the ongoing Parliament Session, and asserted public health is far too serious an issue to play party politics on.

Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said the BJP is "looking for excuses after seeing the success of the Yatra".

"Was Modi wearing a mask when he went door to door to seek votes in Gujarat," he asked.

Congress General Secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said, "Parliament is meeting normally. Masks are no longer compulsory anywhere including on flights."

"The BJP has taken out yatras in Rajasthan and Karnataka. There has been no advisory from the Centre to States of late except the one issued yesterday on genome sequencing."

*Continued on Page 2*

### What is BF.7

BF.7, an Omicron subvariant, is in transmission for almost a year. In India, it was first reported in Gujarat in October this year. Many countries like the US, Australia, Belgium and France among others are affected by this variant. Experts said Omicron BF.7 has more immune escape capability, a shorter incubation period, and a faster transmission rate.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Will jail all drug mafia in 2 years, vows Shah

HM calls for State-Centre coordination to eliminate menace

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said the battle against drugs was delicately poised and urged States to fight the menace together with the Central Government, keeping aside politics. Shah said the Modi Government has a zero tolerance policy towards drugs and vowed to put behind bars drug traders, however big, in the next two years.

He was replying to a short-duration discussion in the Lok Sabha on the drug-abuse problem in the country and steps taken by the Government to control it.

"Drug menace is a major problem and drug money also contributes to funding terrorism. There are three ways to fight this menace namely cooperation, coordination and collaboration. These are essential in this fight. And this is not a fight of any Government or a party or a Government agency," he said.

"We have mapped the drug network across the States. No matter how big the criminal is, in the next two years



Home Minister Amit Shah speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Winter Session of Parliament, in New Delhi on Wednesday PTI

there will be a situation that they will be behind bars," Shah said, reiterating the joint effort of Centre and States to combat drug menace.

He said the issue of drug menace is a serious one as profits from this trade are also used to finance the acts of terror. The Home Minister said the presence of dirty money also destroys the economy and the Government will leave no stone unturned in achieving the target of drugs-free India.

Shah said ₹97,000 crore worth drugs were destroyed between 2014 and 2022, while ₹23,000 crore drugs were seized between 2006 and 2013, and the Government will carry forward its campaign against drugs with gusto. On the seizure of 3,000 kg drugs in Gujarat, he said it was a reflection of the State Government's pro-active action against the menace.

He said all those involved in the drugs smuggling were arrested.

"Drug hauls doesn't mean Gujarat is the largest source of drugs. It shows the State is best in seizing drugs. One national leader (Rahul Gandhi) who is now on yatra said Gujarat has become a drug hub, isn't it better to seize drugs? This campaign is not of a Government or a party or an agency. The State and Centre will work together. The fight is at a critical juncture. I appeal, don't do politics on this issue, said Shah.

The source of drugs was traced to some Gulf countries and action has been taken to ensure that the factories have been shut down, he said, adding the consignment was seized due to the scientific surveillance mounted by the Customs department and allied agencies.

*Continued on Page 2*

### CAPSULE

#### TALIBAN ENFORCE HIGHER EDU BAN FOR WOMEN

**Kabul:** Taliban security forces in the Afghan capital on Wednesday enforced a higher education ban for women by blocking their access to universities, with video obtained by The Associated Press showing women weeping and consoling each other outside one campus in Kabul. P9

#### NEPAL SC ORDERS SOBHRAJ'S RELEASE

**Kathmandu:** Nepal's Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered the release of French serial killer Charles Sobhraj, who is serving a 19-year jail term in the country since 2003 on murder charges, on health grounds. He was awarded life sentence for the murder of American citizen Connie Jo Bronzich and Canadian citizen Laurent Carriere in 1975.

#### 'INEQUALITY EXISTS DUE TO ADHARMA FOR 2K YRS'

**Ahmedabad:** Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Wednesday said inequality is still prevailing in society because people mistook 'Adharma' (irreligious behaviour) for 'dharma' (religion) for nearly 2,000 years.

## 5 students killed as bus overturns in Manipur's Noney

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Five students were killed and over 20 others injured after a school bus overturned in Manipur's Noney district on Wednesday, police said.

The accident happened on Old Cachar Road near the Longsai area of the hill district, around 55 km from State capital Imphal, they said.

The students of Thambalnu Higher Secondary School went on an annual school study tour to Khoupum in Noney district in two buses. The bus in which the girl students were travelling overturned after the driver lost control of it, police said.

"Deeply saddened to hear



Locals gather at the site of the accident after a school bus overturned on Old Cachar Road, in Noney district on Wednesday PTI

about the accident of a bus carrying school children at the Old Cachar Road today. SDRF, Medical team and MLAs have rushed to the site to coordinate the rescue operation. Praying for the safety of everyone in the bus," Chief Minister N Biren Singh tweeted, sharing a video clip of the overturned bus.

The injured students were being shifted to the State capital for treatment, officials said.

## Bid to inject life into Delhi's nights

Eateries, cafeterias in Siri Fort Sports Complex, Qutub Golf Course, Bhalswa Golf Course to stay open till 1 am

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

To boost nightlife across the city, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Wednesday permitted the restaurants and eateries in the Delhi Development Authority-owned Siri Fort Sports Complex, Qutub Golf Course and Bhalswa Golf Course to stay open till 1 am. At present, food and drink services are allowed to remain open till 11 pm on Siri Fort premises. Thousands of people visit the campus daily which offers a wide range of sports facilities.

As per the statement released by the Raj Niwas, "These DDA institutions, run by private licensees that offer food and beverages services, apart from others, have a daily football running into thousands. Visitors to these complexes include members, temporary members, visitors on a payment basis, and their guests, who could avail of the food and beverages services only till 9 pm or 11 pm till the date."

"This comes as a gift to the



people of the city during the ongoing festive season and the forthcoming new year celebrations. Starting today, residents of the capital will be able to enjoy a richer nightlife at these premier locations.

The decision will also result in increased economic activities resulting in more revenue generation," said officials.

"In an order issued to this effect, the DDA has directed the concerned authorities at the three complexes to ensure adequate security, lighting and parking," said officials.

The L-G also constituted a high-powered committee to ease and facilitate licence

requirements for restaurants/eateries and directed it to examine the existing regulations and suggest ways of expediting the licensing processes.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) recently granted licences for open, terrace and outdoor dining to around 150 eateries/restaurants in different areas of the city. In October this year, the L-G approved 314 commercial establishments, including online delivery services of food and medicines, logistics, transport and travel services and other essential commodities, as well as business process outsourcing (BPO) centres to operate 24x7.

## Submit proof for 'false' Pegasus spying charge, HM snaps at Cong MP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday snapped at Congress member Gaurav Gogoi for alleging that the Government snoop on politicians with Israeli spyware Pegasus and sought the Congress leader to give proof of his claim, saying Parliament was not meant for "reckless politics".

Shah, who seemed to be in a mood to spare none, also silenced Trinamool Congress leader Saugata Roy, who sought to interrupt him while he was replying to a discussion on the drug menace in the country.

"You are a senior member...either you speak and I sit down..." the Home Minister said. But soon after, Shah said smilingly "sometimes elder members too need to be told".

Before this, Shah intervened while Gogoi was debating on the drug menace.

Gogoi sought to know from the Government about the kind of surveillance mechanism it has in place on the country's land and sea borders, as well as international airports, to check the entry of contraband into the country.

Gogoi also sought to know from the Home Minister as to what kind of surveillance and intelligence mechanisms are in place to check arms smuggling, human trafficking, and smuggling of animal parts at the India-Myanmar border.

"You snoop on us again and again, install Pegasus on our phones and that of the journalists," Gogoi charged.

"You tell us how many drug mafias you have caught through Pegasus so far," Gogoi asked Shah.

Objecting to the Congress member's remarks, Shah asked Gogoi to submit in the House the proof of his accusation.

*Continued on Page 2*

## Gadkari lays down 'road' map for Delhi's odious landmarks

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's stinky, unhygienic, infamous landmarks — the three landfill sites — could soon be gone. The entire inert waste gathered at the three landfill sites in the National Capital will be used for road construction.

Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday issued directions to the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) in this regard following his meeting with Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena.

The Minister also decided to provide Delhi with ₹700 crore from the Central Road Fund for construction, repair, maintenance and beautification of roads in the National Capital.



The NHAI had earlier committed to using 20 lakh tonnes of the waste for road construction.

The garbage mounds had been a major issue in the recent MCD elections and the ruling BJP lost the elections after a 15-year rule.

According to sources, the Delhi Lieutenant Governor met Gadkari and urged to provide ₹700 crore under the Central Road Fund for con-

struction, repair, maintenance and beautification of roads in Delhi.

The meeting, which was called for resolution of issues pertaining to NHAI projects like Urban Extension Road-II, Dwarka Expressway, Delhi-Dehradun Highway and parallel flyover at Vasant Kunj Sector C-D, had senior officials from both sides headed by Union Minister Gadkari and LG Saxena.

The NHAI had signed an agreement with the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) in November 2016, it estimated, for the year 2018, a cumulative cost of ₹349 crore (inflation costs added) to use the entire garbage volume at Ghazipur-13 million metric tonnes.

*Continued on Page 2*

## No more electronics tray at airport security

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Passengers may soon be able to zip through airport security checks without having to lay out laptops, phones and chargers in separate trays.

The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has proposed installing Computer Tomography (CT) scanners at airports that will provide a three-dimensional view of the objects in hand baggage.

The new baggage scanners, already in use at many airports in the US and Europe, do not require passengers to remove their electronic devices or jackets.

This comes after massive congestion and chaos at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport last week. Mumbai airport also reported chaos and congestion on Wednesday. The call for modernisation comes at a time when airports across the country are seeing a record number of air travellers that have already exceeded pre-Covid levels. A total of 4.21 lakh domestic travellers were seen on December 20.

Currently, the scanners used at airports provide a two-dimensional



view of the objects inside a hand baggage. However, it requires passengers to remove the devices because the batteries and some electronics items have so dense metallic material that they hide what's beneath.

The new machines will be first

installed in all major airports such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad and reach other airports within a year.

CT scanners are used in airports for security screening purposes to create detailed images of the contents of lug-

gage, which can be used to identify any potential threats such as explosives or other prohibited items.

"With such scanners, passengers will not be required to take out their electronic devices from hand baggage before going through the scanner," Jaideep Prasad, Joint Director General of the BCAS said.

Installation of such scanners is also expected to help in speeding up the security check in process at airports. Specific details about the recommendation could not be immediately ascertained.

In recent weeks, there have been complaints about congestion and long waiting hours at various airports, especially at the airport in the national Capital. Passengers queued for hours to pass through check-in and security at the main domestic and international terminals of Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi, leading to some flight delays. Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia visited the airport and said more x-ray machines and staff were added to Terminal 3.

India is one of the fastest growing civil aviation markets globally.



# Many youth end up in gig economy, get no job security, says Rahul

PTI ■ ALWAR

Youth from across India come to Rajasthan to study and hope for good jobs, but many end up in the new "gig economy" which offers little security despite government efforts, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said Wednesday.

In his letter addressed to the people of Rajasthan as the Congress' Bharat Jodo Yatra entered Haryana, he also mentioned the rights of the tribals and expressed confidence that the Ashok Gehlot Government would act swiftly to resolve these issues.

The Kanyakumari to Kashmir march of the Congress entered Haryana from the Mundaka border in Nuh after spending 16 days in Rajasthan. The letter was posted on Twitter by Congress leader Jairam Ramesh.

The former Congress chief, who covered nearly 500 km in six districts of Rajasthan before

entering Haryana, said youth come to Rajasthan hoping to study and get good jobs, in a possible reference to coaching hubs like Kota.

"Despite Government efforts, these hopes go unfulfilled too often. Many work in the new 'gig economy' for companies like Uber, Ola, Swiggy, Zomato and Amazon in jobs which offer little security.

"The process to give Adivasis their rights guaranteed in law needs to be much smoother. I am confident the Rajasthan government will act swiftly to resolve these problems," Gandhi said.

Praising the schemes and programmes of the Congress Government in Rajasthan, Gandhi said the Government's initiatives are aimed at providing "each section of society with security, removing fear from hearts and minds and assuring a bright future for the younger generation".

"We met people who were



treated free of cost through the Chiranjeevi scheme when they were seriously ill. Children's aspirations are rising as they learn English at Mahatma Gandhi English medium schools. For the first time, MGNREGA has been extended to urban areas with the Indira Gandhi Employment Guarantee Scheme," he said.

During the Rajasthan leg of the Yatra, people shared with Congress leaders their pains and worries, Gandhi said and

hoped that the state government will work to resolve those.

Sharing his experience in Rajasthan, he said this has been the longest stretch the Yatra has spent in any state. "We have been amply repaid with the tremendous response and affection of the people of Rajasthan."

Gandhi said that lakhs woke up early and braved the cold, and women especially welcomed and encouraged the Yatra in large numbers.

# Mumbai, Bengaluru airports told to redesign systems to handle peak passenger movement

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Civil Aviation on Wednesday asked the operators of Mumbai and Bengaluru airports to put in place additional capacity and redesign their systems as well as processes wherever required to deal with peak passenger movement.

Against the backdrop of complaints about congestion at various airports, the ministry also said the situation is likely to further ease in the coming days. On Wednesday, Civil Aviation Secretary Rajiv Bansal held a meeting with the operators of Mumbai and Bengaluru airports to take stock of measures for decongestion during peak hours.

The meeting was also attended by Director General of Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) and other senior officials.

During the meeting, the secretary emphasised that airport operators have to provide the requisite facilities com-

mensurate with the growth in number of passengers, facilitating hassle-free travel for air passengers.

The airport operators must install additional capacity and redesign their systems and processes, wherever needed to be in readiness for any peak demand scenario, according to a release issued by the ministry.

Airport operators have been advised to give daily reports on efforts, including putting sign boards to indicate the real-time basis waiting time at entry gates, security lanes and also sharing of the same through social media feeds. They have also been asked to check whether all airlines are manning their check-in counters adequately and about installation of additional X-ray machines to increase the number of security lanes.

Further, they were advised to look at rebalancing the peak hour flight schedule with the availability of security lanes and disseminating all the relevant information to passengers.



About congestion at airports, the ministry said, "with the continuous monitoring of the situation at major airports and augmentation of capacity, the situation has improved and is likely to get further eased in coming days".

The government had taken note that a few major airports are facing congestion and longer waiting time at various touch points in passenger processing due to an increase in the number of air travellers on

account of seasonal travels.

On December 7, civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia had directed major airport operators to identify bottlenecks and augment capacity to meet the growing passenger demand.

After being significantly hit by the coronavirus pandemic, the country's civil aviation sector is on the recovery path. Domestic carriers flew 4,18,794 passengers on December 20.

# UPSC aspirants protest for more attempts in exams, detained in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Wednesday detained around 40 UPSC aspirants who were protesting at Rajender Nagar with a demand to be allowed more attempts in the civil services exams.

According to Deputy Commissioner of Police (central) Shweta Chauhan, a group of 60 to 70 aspirants had assembled at Bada Bazaar, Old Rajender Nagar (near Thalassery restaurant), around 7 pm Tuesday with banners and posters.

The group had applied for permission to protest, but it was rejected, the DCP said.

The protesters were raising slogans against the department of personnel and training and were asked to disperse from the



spot, Chauhan said.

According to police, when the protesters refused to budge and were seen to be preparing to pitch a tent there settling with mattresses etc in front of the media, additional force was called in to remove them.

The agitators were held at Rajender Nagar Police Station under 65 Delhi Police Act and were later released, Chauhan said.

The central Delhi locality is a hub of UPSC coaching centres and accommodates hundreds of aspirants.

# Auto driver foils kidnapping bid, honeytrapper arrested

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

An auto driver with his presence of mind foiled a kidnapping bid when he drove his auto in the way of the car in which a man was being forcibly taken away.

According to a senior police official, the incident happened in southeast Delhi's Kalkaji area on Sunday.

Police have arrested a man and a woman in connection with the abduction attempt. "The arrested have been identified as Iqar Ali, 27, a resident of Sahibabad in UP, and Anuradha alias Priti Gupta, 19, a resident of Sunder Nagri," they said.

When police reached the spot on Sunday at around 6.50 pm, Ali and Anuradha were already trapped inside the car,

with their target, Javed, with them.

During interrogation, Anuradha revealed that she was part of the conspiracy to honeytrap Javed, with other associates, a senior police officer said.

She said that she was informed by her associates that Javed belonged to an affluent family and there was a good scope of extortion of hefty sums from it if they abduct him.

The three had tried twice before to abduct Javed, but he refused to come and meet Anuradha on both occasions, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (southeast) Surendra Choudhary said.

Anuradha was allegedly in touch with Javed through WhatsApp chats and calls.

# RJD demands apology from Goyal over 'demeaning' Bihar remark

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) on Wednesday sought an apology from Union Minister Piyush Goyal for his alleged "demeaning" remarks against Bihar during a debate in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. The party also sought that the Union Minister apologise to the people of Bihar for his statement.

In a letter to Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, party MP Manoj K Jha said that Goyal's comments are "representative of the contemptuous and condescending attitude of the Government of India towards Bihar".

On Tuesday, during Manoj Jha intervention in a debate on the Appropriation Bill, Goyal



interjected to say, "inka bas chale, toh desh ko Bihar hi bana de" (If they have their way, they will turn the country into Bihar).

Objecting to Goyal's comments, Jha in a letter to Dhankhar said that such a "demeaning" statement was not expected from a person of Goyal's rank. It is deeply problematic, he said, that the Government of India is sin-

gling out one State and terming it as a "failure".

"Bihar has been long ignored by governments at the Centre and Biharis have always been treated as second class citizens. To overcome the long-lived prejudices against our State, Bihar needs national concern and sympathy, and no sheer insensitivity towards our situation," he said.

# Submit proof for 'false' Pegasus spying charge...

From Page 1

"He has levelled a very serious allegation that Pegasus has been installed in his mobile. He must submit here the basis (of his accusation) in the House. Either his words are removed or he must submit the basis," Shah said.

"The House is for serious discussion, not for reckless politics," he added.

Gogoi urged Speaker Om Birla to issue an order if he made any mistake in asking the government to tell the House if it uses Pegasus for surveillance or not.

"He has said (Pegasus was) used on him. He must submit facts. He can't just talk like this. Rest the Supreme Court has decided," Shah said referring to the apex court's decision on the Pegasus spyware matter.

"What can we do if you also do not read like your leader," Shah said, hitting out at Gogoi over his remarks.

Intervening, the Speaker told the members that it will enhance the dignity of the House if they make their points with facts and proof.

# What is...

From Page 1

It has a faster transmission rate when compared to the BA.1, BA.2, and BA.5 variants detected previously. BE.7 is believed to have an R0, or basic reproduction number, of 10 to 18.6. Therefore, an infected person will transmit the virus to an average of 10 to 18.6 other people when he or she is in contact. Omicron had an average R0 of 5.08. Research has shown, BE.7 has more mutations in its spike protein than its base variant, which makes it even more infectious and dangerous, even to those who are fully vaccinated. The symptoms caused by BE.7 are similar to other Omicron sub-variants: Fever, cough, sore throat, and other symptoms like vomiting and diarrhoea.

# 3 cases of BF.7 driving China's...

From Page 1

However, a consistent rise in global daily average cases has been reported since the last 6 weeks, with 5.9 lakh daily average cases reported in the week ending December 19, 2022. The BE.7 strain of the Omicron variant has been found to be behind a wider surge of Covid infections in China.

A section of medicos like Dr Randeep Guleria, former Director of AIIMS Delhi and Chairman of the Institute of Internal Medicine and Respiratory and Sleep Medicine and Director at Medanta's

MedEdu has sounded alarm saying that viral infections tend to rise in the winter season and that people need to take the booster dose.

Earlier in the day, Congress Lok Sabha MP Manish Tewari sought a ban on flights to and from China and strict Covid-19 restrictions in India. Tewari tweeted, "Given the alarming Covid-19 situation in China, the Government must suspend all flights to and from China ASAP. Given the spike in the US, Japan, and South Korea and the possibility of a new lethal variant emerging India should consider reintroducing Covid-19 protocols".

In the meantime, the

Gujarat Health Department has issued a statement that the two patients infected with BE.7 & BF 12 variants of Omicron reported in July-October-November-2022 have been fully recovered after they were treated in home isolation.

Underlining the challenge posed by the increasing number of Covid-19 cases in some countries across the world such as China, Japan, South Korea, France and United States, Mandaviya noted the importance of being prepared and remaining alert against new and emerging strains of Covid-19, especially in view of the upcoming festive season.

Mandaviya also directed for strengthening the surveillance system for whole genome sequencing of positive case samples to track the variants through Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) network to ensure timely detection of newer variants, if any, circulating in the country. "This would facilitate the undertaking of appropriate public health measures. States/UTs have been requested to send samples of all Covid-19 positive cases to INSACOG Genome Sequencing Laboratories (IGSLs) on a daily basis, for sequencing, to track new variants, if any," the official said.

# Will jail all drug mafia in 2 years, vows...

From Page 1

Referring to the row over the powers given to the border guarding forces to register cases along the international borders, the Home Minister said those who were making political issues out of it were supporters of drug trade.

The Home Minister said that in 2019, the Government set four levels of Narco Coordination Center (NCORD) ranging from the Centre to the districts but indicated that a lot of work remains to be done. "Recently, we had the fifth meeting of the NCORD. Nearly 100 per cent States have formed state level NCORD. But most important is district level NCORD. As long as DC and SP don't sit together with social welfare officers to create NCORD, we can't fight this war effectively. 32 per cent of districts have set up NCORD. The day all districts are covered, we will benefit in this war," he said, adding India has asked the Interpol to share real time information

on narcotics and terror.

"We have mapped the entire route of drug smuggling in India, mapped 472 districts," he said. Elaborating on the systems India has put in place, Shah pointed out that frontline forces such as BSF, Indian Coast Guards and SSB have been empowered to file cases and the NIA can go to any country to conduct a probe.

"Hackathons have been organised to ban dark net and crypto. We have created five modules to train people how to build a case, electronic data analysis and rehabilitation. We are preparing to ensure the chances of bail for the accused is minimum. This is the Modi Government and people who don't follow rules, will not be spared. Money flow to states will be monitored closely. But people who want to change demography and use FCRA (Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010), they will face the law," said the Home Minister detailing India's fight against drug menace.

# Gadkari lays down 'road'...

From Page 1

In 2017, the NHAI had floated a tender for "lifting and segregation" of the Ghazipur landfill trash, to fill up the 96-km-long Delhi-Meerut Expressway. But the garbage was used only for construction of two kilometres of roads. The NHAI refused to lift the landfill trash due to financial viability.

Delhi has three sanitary landfill sites located at Ghazipur, Okhla, and Bhalswa. Earlier, a piece of land in South Delhi's Tehkhand area has been allocated to the MCD for an engineering landfill site and the project is expected to be completed by April 2023. This proposed "engineering landfill site" will be the city's first such site. The current three landfill sites in Delhi are spread over an area of 202 acres in total.

According to sources, it was informed in the meeting that the hitherto pending issues with regards to the above mentioned, like tree cutting / translocation permissions, allotment of land,

handing over of possession of allotted land, removal of garbage collection point, shifting of power transmission line on part of Delhi Government / DDA / MCD had already been completed. These issues, pending for long, had been sorted with active steering by the L-G over the last few months, the last being clearing proposals for tree translocation, which was done on December 19. This has cleared the bottlenecks in implementation of the critical NHAI projects.

BJP MP from East Delhi Gautam Gambhir on Wednesday said that reduction of height of the Ghazipur landfill has been his priority from day one, and claimed that in three years the massive dump will be "decimated totally". A statement issued by his office said that biomining of the legacy waste is being carried out using a trommel machine since October 2019. It claimed that 18-20 metre of the landfill's height has been reduced at different stretches from the top.



## CHANGE OF NAME

I, Tek Chand S/o Sh. Ishwer Dass residing at H.No. 165, 2nd Floor, Mohan Garden, Nr. Gautam Chowk, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059. I have changed my daughter name from Navya to Navya Bharti vide affidavit dt. 08/12/2022 sworn before notary G. S. Ahuja, Delhi.

PD(90227)C

**SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE**  
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Whereas  
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.  
As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Jagdish Chaba/ Shashi/ Nitini/ LBPNNP00005237964/ LBPNNP00005237953/ LBNOD00005333264	House No.481, Part House No.65, 66, 67 B-1, Ward No.10 Gohana Distt. Sonapat Haryana/ December 17, 2022	April 26, 2022 Rs. 34,22,713/-	Sonepat/ Noida

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

Date : December 22, 2022  
Place : Noida

Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited



# Kejriwal to hold emergency meeting on Covid today

‘Delhi Govt is on alert to deal with BF.7 driving Covid surge in China’

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As Covid is back at the centre of India's health and political map on Wednesday with the Government advising people to get vaccinated and mask up, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has called an emergency meeting on Thursday to discuss the preparations for the BF.7 variants.

"Delhi Government is on alert. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has called an emergency meeting regarding coronavirus on Thursday. The Delhi Government is not taking any chances and making "taking any chances and making thorough preparations amid outbreak of omicron variant BF-7.

The Delhi Government is keeping a watch on the Covid-19 situation and Kejriwal has directed the health department to ensure genome sequencing of samples and



take other steps needed to meet any eventuality," officials said. After Union Home Ministry advisory to wear masks in crowded areas, people are asking whether winter vacations will take place early in schools and colleges or restrictions being imposed by the authorities. According to sources, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority meet-

ing is expected to be soon to take precautionary measures. "The Centre's guidelines on Covid behaviour will be followed. Any restrictions in Delhi will be decided by the DDMA. The Delhi Government is keeping a watch on the Covid-19 situation and Kejriwal has directed the health department to ensure genome sequencing of samples and take other steps needed to meet any eventuality. Kejriwal himself is monitoring the preparedness," sources said. "The CM has directed health department officials to ensure genome sequencing and other steps needed to meet any eventuality. Whatever steps need-

ed to meet the emerging Covid situation will be promptly taken," the officer said. Hospitals have been asked to be prepared for Covid. Sources said that hospitals have been directed to be ramped up their bed capacity as a precautionary measure. Delhi has recorded 20,07,097 Covid cases and 26,519 deaths since the pandemic started in early 2020.

Amid a sudden spurt in Covid cases in Japan, South Korea, Brazil, China and the US, the central government had on Tuesday urged all states and Union territories to gear up the whole genome sequencing of positive samples to keep track of emerging variants.

BF.7 is a sub-lineage of the Omicron variant BA.5 and has the strongest infection ability since it is highly transmissible, has a shorter incubation period, and a higher capacity to cause reinfection or infect even those vaccinated.

In a letter to states and UTs, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan had said such an exercise will enable timely detection of newer variants, if any, circulating in country and will facilitate undertaking of requisite public health measures.

# City Govt to include 10-minute mini snack break in schools

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has come up with a new rule for schools in Delhi in order to battle rampant malnutrition among schoolchildren. It has decided that mini snack breaks and parental counselling sessions will be introduced in all

## Schools told to hold sensitisation activities over climate change

**New Delhi:** In a bid to combat air pollution in the national Capital and raise awareness among children about climate change, the Delhi Government's Directorate of Education has directed its schools to organise sensitisation activities.

All deputy directors of education (DDE)-district have been requested to nominate two prominent private schools and two government schools as the first points of contact for sensitisation and send the details of the nominated schools to the Science Branch by December 26, a DoE circular said. SR

Delhi schools to combat the problem that hampers optimum physical and cognitive development of children. According to a circular by the Directorate of Education, schools have been directed to include a 10-minute mini snack break in the school timetable.

The mini break should be 2.5 hours before the lunch break, it said. The thought behind the move is to give ample chances to students to eat more food.

Normally, a student eats breakfast in the morning and then eats lunch in the afternoon. After this rule is implemented, they will get an additional meal which might bridge the nutritional gap.

The DoE said it had surveyed the heights and weights of all students in government schools in November. The department is conducting medical check-ups of students identified with low BMI. DoE also shared that a Delhi government school had conducted a pilot project to find out the nutritional status of the students in the school and BMI (body mass index) and had adopted strategies such as parental counselling sessions, medical check-ups, mini snack breaks, and alternative recipes during mid-day meals to overcome the

issue of malnutrition. "Result obtained on implementation of these strategies was very satisfying in the pilot project. Thus, it is needed to extend best practices and interventions adopted by the school to other government schools for students requiring nutritive care in order to facilitate effective learning at the school level," stated the circular issued by Himanshu Gupta, director, education.

As per the circular, schools have been asked to prepare a weekly planner of snacks offering three food choices every day which may include food items such as seasonal fruits, sprouts, salad, roasted chana, peanuts etc. The planner will be displayed in each class. "Suggested items should be cost-effective.

Students must be advised to bring at least one food item mentioned in the weekly planner for mini snack break. Head of schools and home science faculty to monitor implementation of planner during this break. In evening shift schools, mini snacks with low volume and high nutrition should be preferred in weekly planner," the DoE circular said. In evening shift schools, mini snacks with low volume and high nutrition should be preferred in weekly planner, said

the circular. The department has also directed the schools to hold class-wise counselling sessions in consultation with home science teachers emphasising on the relation between healthy diet and its effect on performance in academics, attention span, physical activity, comprehension, and growth of children.

It said that the counselling sessions should also focus on encouraging parents and guardians to make low cost high nutritive value dishes as suggested by home science teachers at school.

"Class teachers maintain a record of height and weight of each student enrolled in the class and update it regularly. This record must be correlated with general health as well as presence of children in schools so that children at risk of malnutrition may be identified in time and parents may be informed accordingly.

"Alternative dishes with high nutritive values may be introduced in the menu for mid-day meals," the DoE circular said. "These strategies will also reduce absenteeism of students in school owing to poor health conditions. It will also promote overall health and development of the students," it added.

# Stop effluent flow into Najafgarh drain, LG urges Haryana CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has asked Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar to ensure checking effluent flowing into the Najafgarh Drain from several sources in the State. Saxena will also be travelling to Chandigarh for a meeting with Khattar to discuss the issue.

Khattar has assured the LG that the Haryana government will take steps to check effluents flowing into the Najafgarh drain from the state's feeder drains. According to sources, Khattar has also proposed for a joint meeting between officials to comprehensively address the issue in

one go and L-G along with officers from Delhi will be soon traveling to Chandigarh for the said meeting, where Khattar will also be present.

The Najafgarh drain, which contributes to about 40 per cent of the pollution to the Yamuna, is in turn, polluted to the extent of 36 per cent by three drains flowing into it from Haryana.

"On the other hand 32 drains that have been partially trapped by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) contribute 44 per cent of pollution and 20 per cent of pollution comes from 52 drains yet to be trapped by DJB, into the Najafgarh Drain," Sources said. "When the Yamuna enters then national

capital from Haryana at Palla, the total fecal coliform is 1100, when it reaches ISBT, after absorbing the discharge from Najafgarh Drain, its fecal coliform load is to the tune of 2,10,000," they stated.

"The officials may be noted that ever since Saxena started personally monitoring and supervising the rejuvenation of the Najafgarh Drain, which has till now resulted in about 12 km of the Drain upstream to be cleaned and refurbished, the mentioned 32 drains being sufficiently trapped so as to not discharge sewage and silt into the Drain. Of these, on 05 drains the MCD has completed works of full trapping," Sources added.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Election to pick the new Mayor of Delhi after the high-stakes municipal polls will be held on January 6 and the last date to file nominations is December 27.

Delhi Lt Governor V K Saxena recently had approved a proposal to convene the first meeting of the corporation on January 6, 2023.

"The elections to the coveted posts of mayor, deputy mayor of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and six members of the standing committee from the House, will be held on Friday, January 6, 2023 at 11:00AM during the first meeting of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi," the MCD said in a statement.

This will be the first



municipal House consisting of 250 councillors who have been just elected after the high-stakes civic polls held on December 4. The House will be convened at the Civic Centre, the headquarters of the MCD on Minto Road. According to the DMC Act 1957, "The Corporation shall at its first

meeting in each year elect one of its members to be the Chairperson to be known as the Mayor and another member to be the Deputy Mayor of the Corporation."

The MCD said that the last date for filing nominations is December 27.

"The nominations can be filed in the office of Municipal Secretary on any working day between 11 AM and 5 PM. Election for the six members of standing committee will also be held in the first meeting of the House.

The post of a mayor of the MCD is reserved for female member in the first year," it said. The post of mayor sees five single-year terms on a rotation basis, with the first year being reserved for women, the second for open category, third for reserved category,

and the remaining two also being in the open category.

The election to the top post will take place nearly a month after the civic polls, results for which were announced on December 7.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) won the MCD polls by bagging 134 seats, ending the 15-year rule of the BJP in the MCD, and reducing the Congress to just nine seats in a House of 250 members.

The post of mayor is considered prestigious and a Delhi mayor wielded a lot of power until the erstwhile unified MCD, set up in 1958, was trifurcated into North Delhi, South Delhi and East Delhi municipal corporations in 2012 with a mayor each for three civic bodies. The civic bodies were reunified in May 2022.

Former mayor of North Delhi Jai Prakash, who served in the post from 2020-2021, earlier said, according to the old DMC Act, which governs the MCD, besides elected councillors, some nominated members also are eligible to vote in a mayoral poll.

"Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs representing constituencies which comprise wholly or partly the area of the corporation, and one-fifth of the members of the Delhi Assembly representing constituencies, to be nominated by the Speaker, and chairpersons of various municipal committees can vote in a mayoral poll," he said.

Ten aldermen are nominated to the MCD by the Lt Governor, but they don't vote in a mayoral election, he added.

# Water supply to be hit tomorrow, day after

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) has issued an order stating that the water supply in the national capital will be affected on December 23 and December 24, due to the maintenance work.

According to the order dated December 21, "due to annual programme for flushing of Underground Reservoir and Booster Pumping Station, water supply will be affected on December 23 and 24.

Informing about the areas at which the water supply will be affected on December 23, it stated that the areas are MNO Block BPS Dilshad Garden, ABC-1 BPS Dilshad Garden, Pocket E Mayur Vihar Ph-II, Mounet Kailash, Block-II Kalkaji, Hill View Apartment,

South Park Apartment, Shastrri Park, Inderpuri Area, Janta Park Area, DG-II Vikas Puri, Sarai Khalil DDA Flat. Giving the details of the areas of the national capital where the water supply will be affected on December 24, the DJB said that L&H Block BPS Dilshad Garden, Old Seemapuri BPS, Arvindo Market, Kailash Hill, Shivalik Apptt., R.K. Puram Sec-04, Sec-03 Flat, K-40 CR Park, 28-Block West Patel Nagar Area, Inderpuri Area JJ Cluster Area, DG-II, (New) Vikas Puri.

The DJB advised the residents to store a sufficient quantity of water in advance as per their requirement and make judicious use of water to avoid any inconvenience. The water tankers will also be available in the time of emergency.

# Reducing height of Ghazipur landfill my priority from day one: Gambhir

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

BJP MP from East Delhi Gautam Gambhir on Wednesday said that reduction of height of the Ghazipur landfill has been his priority from day one, and claimed that in three years the massive dump will be "decimated totally".

A statement issued by his office said that biomining of the legacy waste is being carried out using trommel machine since October 2019. It claimed that 18-20 metre of the landfill's height has been reduced at different stretches from the top.

"As a parliamentarian, it is my duty to ensure that the Prime Minister's vision of Swachh Bharat is fulfilled and cleanliness in my area is maintained. My first promise for the people of my constituency was



reduction of the Ghazipur landfill, and it has been my priority since day one," Gambhir said. "I have been constantly working on getting East Delhi rid of this mammoth garbage mountain. I am answerable to the people who have voted for me, and I want to reassure them that in three years time, it will be decimated totally," he was quoted as saying in the statement. The East Delhi MP

who was elected in 2019 elections, also thanked Lt Governor V K Saxena, saying, he is the "guiding force behind this mammoth task". Describing the landfill sites in Delhi as "grave health hazards" and a "national shame", Lt Governor Saxena in July had reached out to the people and sought their ideas that could help efforts by authorities in getting rid of these "unseemly mountains of garbage". In a post on Twitter, the LG had shared a poster bearing a tagline -- "The challenge we have inherited since years! Let's come together to overcome it".

The civic officials had earlier said that the deadline to flatten the Ghazipur landfill is December 2024 while efforts are on to raze the Bhalaswa dumping site by July next year.



Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, with Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora, looks at narcotics and psychotropic substances seized under the 'Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyan' before their incineration, in New Delhi on Wednesday

# Mechanical upkeep work at Hanuman Mandir begins

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The mechanical housekeeping work at the historic Hanuman Mandir was inaugurated by the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) Vice Chairman (VC) Satish Upadhyay on Wednesday.

"Mechanical Housekeeping work has been started today in Hanuman Mandir Complex to welcome the delegates of the G-20 Summit and to improve quality of development projects and better citizen services to enhance beauty of the New Delhi area," Upadhyay said.

Giving details of work of sweeping, washing, cleaning, and maintenance by machines has been divided into two periods, which will be done from 6 am to 2 pm and 2 pm to 10 pm.

# More birds but of only 16 species have arrived at wetland: Ecologist

SAURAV GUPTA ■ NOIDA

Contaminated water due to delay in removing invasive water hyacinth coupled with late winter season has impacted the arrival of the winged birds at the Surajpur wetland in Uttar Pradesh's Greater Noida.

Usually, migratory birds come to the waterbody spread over 60 hectares of area by November month but this year, these long distant visitors from Serbia have started arriving from this month i.e. in December only.

But what is surprising is that a few species have arrived this time though their number is comparatively more than the last year, senior ecologist TK Roy told *The Pioneer*. "Till date around 3,500 birds of only 16 species have arrived at the wetland. Last year the number of birds that arrived at



the Surajpur bird habitat was over 2000 of 22 species," he pointed out.

Informing about the reasons behind the delay in the arrival of these winter migratory water birds, Roy said that global climate change impacts seasonal climate-changing patterns as being irregular. For instance, he said, warm weather this time has continued till November, delaying the winter

season by a month to December. Also, the wetland had been almost completely covered with water hyacinth which deters the migratory birds to sit or roost at the site, he added. Jalkumbhi also known as Water Hyacinth needs to be removed from the water from time to time, only then the migratory bird comes to wetlands.

However, delay in its

removal seems to have prompted the birds to give the wetland a miss this time. Giving details of the species that have arrived this year, Roy said that both species of Geese, that is Bar-headed Geese and Greylag Geese are dominating the wetland this year instead of the duck Northern Shoveler. "Apart from this, other mixed species of ducks – Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Gadwal,



Common Teal, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, Eurasian Wigeon, Ruddy Shelduck. On the other hand, the divers species that arrived

at the wetland is Great Cormorant, but in a few numbers that is five," said Roy. The wader species are majorly missing except a few species that is

White-tailed Lapwing, Ruff, Wood Sandpiper, Grey Wagtail, Black-tailed Godwit in few numbers each species as the water level is higher than nor-

mal at the wetland. "These Geese usually and largely migrate from Central Asia and the ducks usually from North Asia and Central Asian region. Among these only two species were IUCN Red-listed threatened species – Common Pochard (VU) and Black-tailed Godwit (NT)," Roy said.



# Govt keeping close watch on inflation: FM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Wednesday said the Government is keeping a close watch on inflation to ensure there is no surge in prices, and highlighted the targeted approach in pulling out the economy from pandemic disruptions without slipping into recession.

She also expressed confidence that the fiscal deficit will not breach the target because of enough revenue buoyancy to take care of additional expenditure of Rs 3.25 lakh crore in 2022-23.

The minister was replying in the Rajya Sabha to a discussion on the first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2022-23. The supplementary demand for grants was later returned to Lok Sabha, thus authorising the government to spend an additional Rs 3.25 lakh crore over and above the funds approved in the Union Budget.

Sitharaman said the supplementary demands for grants is essentially for meeting expenditure towards food security and fertiliser subsidy, and providing support to the Indian economy.

While participating in the debate, former finance minister and Congress veteran P Chidambaram wanted to know from the government how it plans to fund the additional spending.

"In September itself, government made it clear that we aren't changing our borrowing schedule and borrowing plans... There's enough revenue buoyancy which gives me confidence that we will fund this supplementary demands without breaching fiscal deficit target," Sitharaman said.

The government borrows from the market to bridge the gap between expenditure and revenue. In the Union Budget 2022-23, the government had announced to keep the fiscal deficit at 6.4 per cent of the GDP.

Sitharaman, who is scheduled to present the next Union Budget on February 1, said, "Because of the targeted approach in which the government decided to give relief during Covid and address concerns given as inputs from



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Winter Session of Parliament in New Delhi on Wednesday PTI Photo

various stakeholders, it has kept India on safe course of revival and also not getting into recession".

Further, she said that some large economies are facing recession because of the approach they had adopted to deal with challenges of the pandemic. "Borrow and spend and even print money to reboot the economy was the suggestion by a former finance minister and others during Covid.

As we close 2022, we should look at the negative effect of use of this suggestion by other countries, which have gone into recession," she said.

Referring to the price situation in the country, she said, "We are keeping a good eye on inflation like considerations" which are purely extraneous nowadays, because of the fuel and fertiliser crisis in the international market.

On remarks made by Raghav Chadha during the debate on Tuesday, the minister said the AAP member, who is a qualified accountant, "should look into numbers before he speaks".

"He said inflation is high and in double-digit. He should notice that WPI inflation is at 21-month low of 5.85 per cent. Wholesale food inflation is at 2.17 per cent," the minister said.

Citing a report of an equity research firm, she said private sector capex announcements are up 35 per cent year-on-year and 53 per cent above

pre-Covid levels. In an apparent reference to Punjab government, she said media reports have recently highlighted that one state government is unable to timely pay salaries of its employees, and they are protesting.

"It is perhaps because funds are being used in giving numerous full-page advertisements in newspapers," she said. The minister stressed that subsidies and freebies should be contextualised.

"If you are able to put in your budget, make provision for it, no one will have any objection," Sitharaman said and added education, health and farmer subsidies are justified.

Sitharaman also took exception to Raghav Chadha's remarks that Aadhaar card has become Udhav card, saying small borrowers should not be mocked at because they use the unique identification number as a KYC document in banks.

On allegations of the government working for big corporate houses, Sitharaman said the Modi-government works on 'development of all and appeasement of none' principle.

Of the net additional spending of over Rs 3.25 lakh crore, approved by Parliament, Rs 1.09 lakh crore will go for fertiliser subsidy payout and Rs 80,348.25 crore for meeting expenditure of the food and consumer affairs ministry (mainly for giving free food grains to the poor).

## '98 FDI plans of neighbouring nations OK'd since 2020'

**New Delhi:** The government has approved 98 foreign direct investment (FDI) proposals from countries sharing land border with India since April 2020 out of 423, Parliament was informed on Wednesday.

Many of these proposals are from China, either directly or indirectly, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Som Parkash said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

"Since April 2020, 98 FDI proposals from countries sharing land border with India were approved by various administrative ministries /departments," he said, adding since April 2020, 423 FDI proposals from countries sharing land border with India were received. PNS

# Sonia slams Govt for refusing debate on Chinese 'incursion'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday slammed the Government for "stubbornly" refusing a discussion on the India-China border issue in Parliament, saying silence on matters of serious concern has become its defining feature. She also accused the Centre of making a calculated attempt to "delegitimise" the judiciary, terming it as a "troubling new development".

Launching a scathing attack on the Modi government during her address to party MPs in the central hall of Parliament, Sonia said refusing a parliamentary debate on such a serious issue as Chinese "incursions" shows "disrespect for our democracy and reflects poorly on the government's intentions".

She said a frank discussion strengthens the nation's response and it is the duty of the government of the day to inform the public and explain its policies and actions with respect to the security and border situation.

Noting that the "continuing incursions by China on our border is a matter of serious concern", the former Congress president who was chairing the parliamentary party meeting said the nation stands with vigilant soldiers who repelled these attacks under difficult conditions.

Sonia Gandhi said when facing a significant national challenge, it has been the tradition in the country to take



Congress MPs Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, P Chidambaram, KC Venugopal, DMK's TR Bалу and other members during a protest near the Gandhi Statue, demanding discussion on national security and Indo-China border dispute issue during the Winter Session of Parliament, in New Delhi on Wednesday PTI Photo

Parliament into confidence. "The government, however, stubbornly refuses to allow a discussion on the issue in Parliament. As a result, Parliament, political parties and the people remain ignorant of the true situation on the ground," she said. "Unfortunately, silence on matters of serious concern has become the defining feature of this government's tenure.

While blocking debate, the government is also actively engaged in targeting the opposition and any questioning voices, manipulating the media and undermining the institutions which stand in their way.

This is happening not only in the Centre but also in every state where the ruling party governs," she charged. She alleged that "by following divisive policies, by spreading hatred and targeting some sections of our society, the government makes it harder for the country to stand up as one against foreign threats."

During the CPP meeting Sonia also accused the government of making an effort to reduce the standing of the judiciary in the eyes of the public.

"A troubling new development is the calculated attempt underway to delegitimise the

judiciary. Ministers - and even a high constitutional authority - have been enlisted to making speeches attacking the judiciary on various grounds.

Congratulating party colleagues for winning Himachal Pradesh in the just concluded assembly polls, Sonia said now is the time to fulfill the promises made to the people of the Himalayan state.

She also took a dig on prime minister handing over appointment letters for a few thousand whereas crores more face an uncertain future with government vacancies unfilled, exams unreliable, and PSUs being privatised, she said.

# States told to release prisoners behind bars due to non-payment of fine: MoS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking note of the plight of prisoners languishing in jails even after their terms have ended due to non-payment of fine, the Centre has asked State Governments to release them, Minister of State for Home Affairs Ajay Kumar said in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

The Minister was responding to a question by Imran Pratapgarhi (Congress), who also raised the issue of release of convicts in the Bilkis Bano case.

"We have created a special scheme for August 15, 2022, January 26, 2023 and August 15, 2023, under which States have been asked to release such prisoners who are behind bars due to non-payment of fine," Kumar said in response to a supplementary asked by Pratapgarhi.

The Congress member said the minister tabled an "irresponsible answer" to his question.

He said around 80 per cent of prisoners in India are under trial and asked what steps are being taken by the government to reduce this. The minister said the Congress member should collect information about the matter first.



As per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, the responsibility of administration and management of prison lies with the state and the Centre only supports it.

In his second supplementary to the question, the Congress leader referred to President Droupadi Murmu's Constitution Day speech, in which she suggested decongesting jails by helping poor people languishing there for years for petty crimes.

Pratapgarhi also asked the minister whether the release of the convicts in the Bilkis Bano case is a state matter or the Home Ministry too is looking into it.

In his reply, Kumar only mentioned advisories issued to states for the release of prisoners who have completed their

punishment period and asked for putting up separate notices on matters related to pardon of punishment.

Raghav Chadha(AAP) asked about the status of the promise made by the prime minister on the eve of Gurupurab for release of Sikh prisoners. In his response, Kumar said state governments have been asked to send their proposals and a decision would be taken after that.

The minister also said any person convicted with life imprisonment and those for heinous crimes, including offences against women and children, are not eligible for special remission announced as part of the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrations.

He said in a written reply as part of the 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav', the government had approved a scheme to grant special remission to specific categories of prisoners and release them in three phases on August 15, January 26, 2023 and on August 15, 2023.

"In terms of the guidelines provided on the subject, persons convicted with sentence of life imprisonment and those convicted of heinous offences, including offences against women and children, are not eligible for special remission under this scheme," he said.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties walked out of the Lok Sabha on Wednesday seeking a discussion on the border row with China. Before the walkout, the House was adjourned for an hour.

As soon as the House assembled for the Zero Hour, Congress and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) members staged the walkout, followed by MPs from the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and Janata Dal (United).

Congress' Leader of the House Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury urged Speaker Om Birla to allow a discussion

on the India-China issue, saying it is the opposition's right. "We have been demanding a discussion on the China issue since morning. Discussion is happening on TV, everywhere outside (the Parliament). Give an opportunity to the opposition to discuss it. It is our right," he said. Sudip Bandyopadhyay of the TMC also pressed for a discussion.

The House later resumed discussion on the issue of drug menace. Later, Chowdhury again sought to raise the India-China border issue and demanded a discussion in the house. Meanwhile, amid demands by the Opposition for a discussion in Parliament on

# Kids' mental health, drones threat, rubber farmers plight figure in RS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Issues like mental health of children, threat posed by drones or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) to national security and plight of rubber farmers figured prominently in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. Incidentally, the house functioned smoothly for the first day after a few days of protests by the Opposition demanding a discussion on the latest Chinese incursion into Arunachal Pradesh.

On Wednesday, Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar did not accept two notices on the border issue with China and rising prices of essential commodities under Rule 267 of the House, saying they were not in order. Pramod Tiwari(Congress)had given notice on the China issue while



Dola Sen(TMC)notice was on price rise. Raising the matter of children, Manoj Kumar Jha(RJD)said their mental health has not received adequate attention by the government.

He said many children in pre-covid and now were suffering from various ailments related to mental health adding the situation was more worrying in rural areas of the country. Jha urged the government to set up special cells in hospitals at the district level to

address such ailments. Drawing the attention of the house to drone threat, Rajiv Shukla(Congress)said recent incidents of UAVs intruding into Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir through the international border and the Line of Control(LOC)needed a firm response from the government.

He said drones were used for drug smuggling and most of the UAVs were of the Chinese origin and urged the government to strengthen the anti-drone system. Jose K Mani(KC(M)) said the dipping prices of rubber had made it difficult for the farmers and urged the government to step in. Tyre manufacturers were earning massive profits from the low rubber prices, he claimed and called for passing on the import duty earnings to farmers to improve their lot.

# Parliament passes Maritime Anti-Piracy Bill-2022 by voice vote

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Parliament on Wednesday passed the Maritime Anti-Piracy Bill, which provides for stringent punishment to those convicted of such crimes. The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday passed by voice vote the Maritime Anti-Piracy Bill-2022 which was moved for consideration and passage by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. The bill was passed by the Lok Sabha on Monday.

In the bill, the government has added provisions for death penalty and life imprisonment for those convicted of maritime piracy. Replying to a debate on the bill, Jaishankar said it will help the country in having international cooperation to deal with piracy. "We

will have jurisdiction on foreign ships (which would indulge in piracy)," Jaishankar said in the upper house.

About the members' suggestions about having standard operating procedures (SOP) for have better enforcement, he stated that the suggestion is well taken as it would help in its enforcement. He appreciated the members' views that authorised persons — armed forces dealing with piracy — need to be given immunity.



# MPs demand more action to deal with menace of drug abuse

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cutting across party lines, members in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday demanded more action to deal with the rising menace of drug abuse in the country.

Participating in a short-duration discussion in the House on the drug-abuse problem in India and steps taken by the government to control it,

TMC's Saugata Roy asked whether the government is thinking of capital punishment in cases of possession of drugs. He also wondered why there are lot of drug consideration seizures at Mundra port in Gujarat. "All drug dealings are happening through darkweb or crypto currency. What is the government doing to deal with this," Roy asked. He said government steps are inadequate and "we

want a national movement" for removal of this menace. "We also need an urgent action by the government of India," he added.

Rahul Shewale (SS) suggested the government to take steps to stop sale of certain cough syrups that are being sold without a doctor's prescription. Flagging the issue of alleged suicide of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, he asked "What is

the status of CBI inquiry" on his death. AIADMK's member P Ravindranath asked the government to make it mandatory for schools to teach children about ill-effects of drugs. He also asked for amendment in laws and setting up of a national monitoring committee. TDP's K R Naidu too demanded more steps to deal with this menace. Congress member R Unnithan said Rajput's suicide was attrib-

uted to drug abuse and it shows how drug abuse is affecting poor and celebrities both. BJP members Dilip Saikia, Som Parkash, Jagdambika Pal and Ratan Lal Kataria stated about steps taken by the government to contain drug abuse in country. Saikia said that as against the arrest of 1363 drug peddlers and smugglers during 2000-2013, 4880 people were arrested during 2014-2022.

**New Delhi:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday conducted searches at two locations in Sirsa, Haryana to dismantle and disrupt the emerging nexus between terrorists, gangsters and weapon suppliers based in India and abroad. Joint searches, along with Haryana Police, were conducted during the night of Tuesday/Wednesday at the houses/premises of Chhotu

Bhaat of Chautala village and Jagga Sarpanch of Takhatmal village, both under Sirsa district, Haryana. The NIA said.

"During the searches, four illicit weapons (one rifle, one gun, two pistols), over hundred ammunition of different calibres, a number of blank and fired cartridges and sharp edged weapons have been seized," it said in a statement. A few of the most desperate gang leaders

and their associates based in India and abroad, who are spearheading and carrying out such terror and criminal activities were identified and booked in two cases registered by NIA in August, 2022, according to the NIA. The present searches were aimed at dismantling illegal arms support infrastructure, apart from hideouts of absconders of Bamba-led terror-criminal syndicate. PNS



# G20 meet secure as terror's core hit: LG

PTI ■ JAMMU

Jammu & Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday said the planned G20 preparatory meeting in Srinagar will be held in a secure and peaceful atmosphere as the backbone of terrorism has been broken and the era of outside interference, an apparent reference to Pakistan, is over.

He also asserted the Union Territory will witness investment of over Rs 70,000 crore in coming years and said the figures tabled in the parliament on the subject are being corrected.

His statement on investment came days after PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said the claim made by the government about heavy investment flow into Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 is a "lie".

"Despite GOIs tall claims of



heavy investment flow into J&K post abrogation of Article 370, the figures presented by them in the Parliament prove otherwise. 840 crores in 2017-18 vis-a-vis 376 crores in 2021-22. A lie has no legs," Mehbooba Mufti tweeted on Tuesday.

The LG on Wednesday reviewed the administration's preparations for the G20 meeting and "to chalk out our plan to ensure that J&K is showcased in its right perspective."

"We have requested the Central government for another such event for Jammu but the permission is yet to be granted," the LG told reporters here.

After the meeting, attended by senior officers, he said, "I am hopeful that the event will be held like in other parts of the country. We will not lag behind in the preparations and we all together will make an attempt to ensure that J&K is presented before the world in the best way."

# Eviction drive to continue in Assam, says Himanta

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Brushing aside pleas by Opposition parties, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Wednesday, asserted that eviction drives to clear "Government and forest land in Assam" will continue in the BJP-run state.

The statement comes in the backdrop of a massive eviction drive earlier this week at Batadrava in the state's Nagoan district, uprooting more than 5,000 "encroachers" from government land in the vicinity of the birthplace of Assam's medieval Vashnavite saint Shankardev.

"Eviction is a continuous process and it won't stop ... There is no point in talking about it.

"We will clear forest and Government land (across the State) as well as in Batadrava," he said during a Zero Hour discussion initiated by Congress MLA Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha.

The chief minister also



informed the House that many ousted people, who were actually landless, have been given land 'pattas' (ownership documents) in different places by the government after verification of their credentials.

"All people, whether Hindus or Muslims will have to vacate Sattralands. We request encroachers to leave or else we will carry out eviction there," he added.

Responding to appeals by Congress MLA Rakibul Hussain seeking help for the evicted people in Batadrava, the chief minister said, "It is the job of the NGOs. There's no gov-

ernment policy to give water to them. They broke the law by occupying land so we can't set up camps for them."

When Hussain claimed that those evicted are living under the open sky and drinking water from ponds, Sarma retorted that Assamese people have been consuming such water since ages.

"We said in our election manifesto that encroachers are not our responsibility. I say it always that we (BJP) do not need their votes. But why did the Congress not survey the chars (riverine islands)?" he asked.

# Kavitha terms 'Delhi excise policy scam' charge bogus

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Ruling BRS MLC in Telangana K Kavitha on Wednesday said the allegations against her in the 'Delhi excise policy scam' case are completely bogus and false and that it was "political vendetta of BJP".

Kavitha said this in reply to a tweet on the allegations against her by Congress MP and AICC in-charge of party affairs in Telangana Manickam Tagore.

"The accusations on me are completely bogus and false. Only time will prove my sincerity. It's a political vendetta of BJP as they fear BRS Party Chief CM KCR ji's expose on their anti-farmer & pro-capitalist policies," she said.

Citing media reports on the allegations against Kavitha in the 'Delhi liquor scam', Tagore has said "Lot explanations @RaoKavitha garu".

Kavitha also replied to BJP leader and former MLA Komatireddy Raj Gopal



Reddy's tweet that her name was mentioned 28 times in a charge sheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate in the 'Delhi excise policy scam' case.

She said a lie does not become truth if her name is mentioned not 28 times but even 28,000 times.

A team of CBI sleuths on December 11 examined Kavitha at her residence here in connection with the alleged 'Delhi excise policy scam' and recorded her statement.

# DGCA looking into heated exchange between IndiGo air-hostess, passenger

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is looking into an incident in which an IndiGo passenger and an air-hostess were involved in a heated exchange over choice of meals onboard a flight from Istanbul to Delhi.

A video clip of the heated exchange onboard the flight on December 16 was shared on social media on Wednesday. In a statement, the airline said it is looking into the incident.

"My crew is crying because of you," the IndiGo air-hostess



is heard telling the passenger. The passenger is also heard telling her, "You are a servant of a passenger", to which she responded, "I am an employee and not your servant... I am not your servant."

# PM honouring tribal population, quantum leap in funding: Pradhan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Wednesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is giving long overdue honour to the tribal population of the country and hence there has been a quantum leap in funding of Centrally sponsored schemes aimed at the welfare of tribal population.

Addressing a Press conference, Pradhan said affirmative action and promoting inclusion for all round development of tribals is the key thrust areas of Government policy. The allocation for STC funds has been increased from Rs. 19,437 cr in



2014-15 to Rs. 87,585 cr. in 2022-23 and the allocation for Ministry of Tribal affairs has also been increased from Rs. 3832 cr. in 2014-15 to Rs. 8407 cr. in 2022-23, he mentioned.

While speaking about the increased allocation, the education minister said that for the Government 'Sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka prayaas' is not merely a slogan but a guid-

ing philosophy and a responsible commitment. He also said that this is reflective of Prime Minister's commitment to the upliftment of tribal population by touching aspects including protecting their culture, respecting their identity, education, health, self-employment.

Speaking about education, he said that education in local languages and mother tongue is one of the key focus areas of the National Education Policy 2020 of which tribal population will be a key beneficiary. He also spoke about the Eklavya Model Residential Schools for tribal population in which over 1 lakh students are enrolled.

# Indira Gandhi Prize 2022 given to medical fraternity for Covid role

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development-2022 was awarded to the country's medical fraternity as a whole for their stellar role in taking care of millions who suffered due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

The award, instituted by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust, would be presented to representatives of the Indian Medical Association and the Trained Nurses Organisation of India, who largely represent the medical fraternity in the country.

"The jury of the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace,



Disarmament and Development chaired by former Chief Justice of India T S Thakur wishes to honour this heroic endeavour by awarding the Indira Gandhi Prize for

2022 to the Covid warriors of India in grateful recognition of their actions during 2020 and 2021 at the worst of the pandemic," the trust said in a statement.

# No salary will be paid to PM Package Pandit staffers on strike: J&K Guv

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Wednesday provoked agitating Kashmiri Pandit employees, employed under the Prime Ministers' package, by sending out a "loud and clear" message — no salary will be paid to them for sitting at home.

In the aftermath of killing of Rahul Bhat by the terrorists, an employee of the Revenue department inside his office in Chadoora tehsil of Budgam on May 12, more than 4000 employees have been staying away from their routine duties.

These employees have been staging regular protest demonstrations in Jammu since the last 224 days in support of their one point demand of 'relocation' to safer areas outside the Kashmir valley.

The crisp statement, however, evoked a strong reaction from the representatives of the Kashmiri pandit employees and community elders.

The representatives of the PM package employees labeled Sinha's statement as 'insensitive and irresponsible' while prominent voice of Panun Kashmir and a leading Kashmiri author Dr Agnishekhar called it

'shameless'.

PM package employees claimed the irresponsible statement is a clear reflection of the fact that both the centre and the UT administration have failed to protect us. "It is a clear admission of their own failure. They want to make us the scapegoat. We will not return to Kashmir under the prevailing circumstances".

"Since May 12 the government has failed to check the targeted killings. The Kashmiri pandits were targeted even in the month of August and October 2022. There has been no significant change in the

security scenario. The government is forcing us to go there at the mercy of God. We will not return to the valley", the employees thundered, warning against further intensifying their agitation.

Dr Agnishekhar in a video message said targeted killings of Kashmiri pandits took place under the rule of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah. The UT administration also failed to protect these migrant employees and instead of relocating them to safer areas they are being told their salaries will not be paid, if they will not

resume their duties.

Dr Agnishekhar questioned, if LG Manoj Sinha and all senior bureaucrats cannot move around without any security cover, why are they forcing our children to risk their lives and resume duties in the Kashmir valley where terrorists are issuing threats to target them.

Earlier, addressing media men at a convention centre in Jammu, LG Manoj Sinha said, "We have cleared their (protest-employees) salaries till August 31, but it cannot be done that they will be paid their salaries by sitting at their

homes. This is a loud and clear message to them and they should listen and understand it," he said.

Sinha said, "since May 2022 the PM package employees are on a strike. I was in constant touch with them and made sincere efforts to address all their long-pending issues. Almost all of them were transferred to district headquarters in consultation with district commissioners, superintendents of police and other government functionaries"

He, however, said some people are placed at tehsil headquarters, and some in vil-



lages close to the city as those posted in the rural development department cannot be transferred to the city.

"Minority employees will not be deployed alone in any office and it was decided that two to three more people will

be stationed along with them. We have appointed officers in every district and one in Raj Bhavan to look after their grievances. They are listening to them and are looking for necessary steps to address their issues," he said.

# PMAY, MNREGA CORRUPTION IN BENGAL

## Adhikari raises graft issue in State

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal BJP leadership raised Bwith the Centre the issue of large scale corruption in the MP awas and MNREGA schemes in Bengal.

Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari and State BJP president Sukanta Majumdar has reported to Union Minister Giriraj Singh about how "the Trinamool Congress government has made the large-scale loot of public funds meant for PM Awas and 100-days' work schemes into a cottage industry of sorts."

There is no district or no block in the State where there is no bungling in PM Awas scheme, Majumdar and Adhikari who met Singh on Tuesday said.

"The Centre has made 17 criterion for getting a house under awas scheme but here we can see that the names of genuinely needy people have been struck of the list of deserving candidates whereas the relatives of the TMC panchayat members and even MLAs who own big houses, cars and similar things have secured houses under the central government scheme," said Majumdar.

"We have requested the minister to fine the officers who were guilty of fudging reports," said Majumdar.

Adhikari who on Wednesday held a grand rally at his home town Contai alleged how "dozens of TMC leaders have illegally got hous-



es in their names depriving the poor people ... they will have to return these houses."

Not only the PM Awas scheme the TMC government has made a mess of the MNREGA scheme to they alleged. "The NREGA funds have not reached their targets ... the central grants have been siphoned off by creating fake job

cards ... in other places the people whose names have been enrolled in the scheme have to shell out half of their wages to the TMC netas ... this is the reason the Centre has asked them to account for NREGA funds," Adhikari said.

From the Wednesday's rally Adhikari said the TMC Government would fall on its own and that the BJP would not require to engineer any defection in that party.

"We will come to power through democratic means ... there will be no defection engineered ... the BJP will follow the constitutional path, win elections and come to power," he said.

## Centre cancelled Christsmas holiday: Didi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday slammed the Centre for not declaring a public holiday on December 25 and said that her Government in its part had declared a holiday on the day following the Christmas..

Saying that the "Centre has cancelled the Christmas holiday on December 25 ... as it is Sunday they should have given a holiday the next day but they haven't done so ... but our Government has declared December 26 as a public holiday so that the people can celebrate this day fully ... We want more and more people to celebrate the



day so we have taken the decision."

Banerjee on Wednesday visited a number of places including the iconic Alen Park at Park Street and the St Xaviers College.

Earlier in the day she held an administrative meeting with State and central government officials as also the members of the defence forces at State secretariat Nabanna where she discussed the preparations for the coming Ganga Sagar fair.

# Contract signed for defence manufacturing in country



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to tap the potential of start-ups within the country for defence manufacturing, Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX), the flagship initiative of Department of Defence Production, has reached a milestone with the signing of its 150th contract on Wednesday.

The contract relates to an Indian Navy project of the Defence India Start-up Challenge (DISC 7) SPRINT edition. The challenge was titled 'Expendable Mobile Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) Training Target (EMATT)' capable of simulating the sound and movement of a submarine' and the winner was Altair Infracore Pvt Ltd, Pune.

The Challenge envisaged development of a training target capable of being deployed from P8I aircraft, MH60R helicopters, ships doing speed up to 10 knots and other Remotely Piloted Aircraft without undertaking any modification on the platform from which the EMATT is required to be launched, defence ministry officials said here.

**NEW OKHLA INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida G.B. Nagar, (UP)  
Website : [www.noidaauthorityonline.com](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.com)

**E-TENDER NOTICE**  
E-Tenders are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPCL Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened / downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on NOIDA Authority's official website: [www.noidaauthorityonline.com](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.com) & <https://etender.up.nic.in>  
Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/ amendments & corrigendum etc.  
**Job No. 06/Manager System/Jal-Billing/2022-23**, AMC of Water Billing Software/System and Facility Management NOIDA, **Cost Rs. 58.59 Lacs**  
The above tenders can be uploaded by date **04.01.2023 upto 5.00 PM**. Pre- qualification shall be opened/downloaded on date **05.01.2023 at 11.00 AM**.  
**Manager (System)**  
**CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005  
The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Arnav Tandon/ South City 2 Q 1 271 Sector 49 Gurgaon, Haryana Near Park Hospital Gurgaon- 122018- LBBNG00005829057/ LBBNG00005864325	Schedule 'A' Property (description of The Entire Property) All that piece and parcel of the converted land bearing Sy. No.48/4 measuring 10 guntas, Sy.no.55/1 measuring 8¼ Guntas and Sy. No.39/10 measuring ¾ Guntas in all measuring 19 Guntas situated at Kengeri Village, presently comes under BBMP Limits bearing Katha No.4961, 39/10/48/4/55/1, Kengeri Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk, duly converted into non-agriculture purpose, vide OM NO.AL.NIS/JKAMSR-7/8/2009-10 dated 3-8-2010, issued by Special DC, Bangalore District, Bangalore, and bounded on the: East by: Road West by: Passage North by: Sri. P. Shivakumar's Land; and South by: Sri Beerappa, Ramakrishnappa and others land Schedule 'b' Property (description of Undivided Land Share Hereby Conveyed) 310 Sft., of undivided share, right, title, interest and ownership in Schedule-A Property Schedule 'c' Property (description of Apartment Hereby Conveyed) All that property being Two bedrooms, Hall, Kitchen residential Apartment bearing No.001 in Ground Floor of the development known as "Dream Delight" and presently bearing BBMP Katha No.4961/39/10/48/4/55/1 GF-001 with 1150 Sft., of Super built up area along with One car parking slot No.01, in Still Floor. The apartment is having Vitrified tiles flooring and Jungle wood windows.	14/11/2022/ Rs. 60,33,802.00/-	03/08/ 2022

The steps are being taken for substituted service of notice. The above borrower/s and/or their guarantors (as applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

**Date : December 22, 2022**  
**Place : Gurgaon**

**Authorized Officer**  
ICICI Bank Limited







FIRST COLUMN

RISHIKESH, GOA ARE TOP BUNGY DESTINATIONS

They have emerged as the hubs of adventure sport



NIHARIKA NIGAM

Mumbai, the city of dreams, is an ideal location to reside and grab your dream career in your respective field, but is this all to the finance capital? People from all over the country come here in search of a bolt from the blue experience and in no time, they start adjusting to the hustle and bustle of the city.

However, Mumbai is also surrounded by breathtaking sights from Matheran, and Mahabaleshwar to the awe-inspiring beaches of Raigad, which Mumbaikars often head to beat their work stress. While this can't be everything for an extreme adventure lover, Rishikesh and Goa have proven to be ideal adventure destinations that can provide the much-needed thrilling experiences to the young and ambitious Mumbaikars.

Adventure comes in many forms. It depends on what you are looking for. Rishikesh is often described as the adventure capital of the country. One can enjoy thrilling adventure sports such as 'white water rafting' and India's highest bungee jump platform. One may be delighted to know that Rishikesh has the highest bungee jumping platform, set up in 2010. The experts have been trained extensively in New Zealand.

However the greatest testimony to the safety would be that the handlers have operated over 150,000 jumps so far, generating a new market in India altogether. While on one hand, Uttarakhand is home to a number of revered temples, holy rivers, and spiritual sites, on the other hand, it provides much-needed space for adventure enthusiasts.



The place is well-known for India's highest bungee jumping platform set in Mohanchatti, 15 km uphill from Lakshman Jhula (at 83 meters over River Hall, a tributary of the Ganga). Rishikesh has no dearth of warm and cozy guest houses, camping sites, and hotels to stay in, so you can also plan a family tour here without any second thought! Local food is also famous for its authentic taste. You can either plan a group outing or go alone, you will return with a lot of polaroids to stick on your cupboard doors or room walls!

Goa is no doubt one of the most famous holiday destinations for the majority of Indians. Be it roaming around on the stunning beaches all day or partying with friends all night, Goa is synonymous with fun and adventure. While Goa has plenty to offer in the form of parasailing and scuba diving, Mayem Lake in North Goa has recently been the talk of the town for a thrilling bungee jumping experience as people from across the country make a beeline to the destination.

At any given time of year, the place is filled with tourists enjoying a range of adventure activities and you can add bungee jumping on Mayem Lake too to your bucket list. The fixed cantilever bungee jump platform in Goa is 55 meters high and surrounded by stunning landscape around the panoramic views of the lake.

Both Rishikesh and Goa are perfect getaways for short trips. While Goa is nearer to Mumbai as compared to Rishikesh, you will never regret the longer journey, even as regular flight service is available to both destinations. However, do your own research before you head to these destinations, and always choose the best operators who ensure safety along with adventure.

(The author is Director, Business Development, with Jumpin Heights)

# Make in India propels manufacturing, exports



DARSHANA JARDOSH

## PM Modi's clarion call for a self-reliant India and emphasis on Aatmanirbhar Bharat have borne fruit

Circa 2014. September 25, 2014, to be precise. That's when the story began. 'Make in India' was launched on that day, aiming to bring in investment, encourage innovation, facilitate world class infrastructure, and design India as an ideal hub for manufacturing, design and innovation.

It was also aimed to strengthen the local manufacturing and supply chains that carry maximum possible products and services on them. Not to forget that our country has a diverse product range, so the aim was to help India's cause in this very diversity in which its products are unique and also have commercial viability.

They just required a little push, for which the time had come. Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan or Make in India was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clarion call for a self-reliant India. It has borne fruit.

Make in India was the good opportunity that gave direction to the efforts of startups and tech ecosystems to innovate, develop and promote homegrown goods. It also revived our local industries, indigenous industries, resources and entrepreneurs.

Just as India was focusing on and strengthening its own 'Make In India' capacities, the world came to a halt. The pandemic had hit. Yet making headlines during a catastrophe was India's bold move and mission towards becoming self-reliant.

The mantra 'Vocal for Local' caught up and expanded to become 'Local goes Global-Make in India for the world'. That's exactly what India started doing. It started expanding its local manufacturing to meet the world. It succeeded.

Prime Minister Modi asked Indian exporters to take advantage of the new opportunities created by changes in the global supply chains in the post pandemic world. Urging Indian missions overseas to help develop new markets for Indian goods, he promised the government would work with the industry to boost exports. For expanding its exports in global trade, India needs to have 'seamless and high quality supply chain and low cost logistics', he said.

"This is the time for us to establish a new identity of quality and reliability. We have to try that there is a natural demand for high value-added products of India in every nook and corner of the world."

The Prime Minister's words fuelled new vigour, new confidence while underlining the readiness of the Government to redefine industrial policies to help 'Ease of doing Business'. While recovering from a Covid-19 induced slowdown, PM Modi asked industries to look at ways to increase exports. PM Modi had in the previous year spelt out a strategy to boost export goods from India, a move aimed at lifting a sagging economy amid the outbreak of the



INDIA'S TEXTILE AND APPAREL EXPORTS (INCLUDING HANDICRAFTS) ACHIEVED \$44.4 BILLION IN FY22 SHOWING YOY INCREASE OF 41 PER CENT. EXPORTS OF READYMADE GARMENTS, WHICH INCLUDED COTTON ACCESSORIES, RECORDED \$6.19 BILLION FOR Y22

(The author is Minister of State for Railways)



pandemic. Towards this, the Prime Minister had said that there was a need for diversification of India's export basket as well as identification of new products that could be exported and relevant markets for such items and strategies which needed to be prepared for that.

India geared up and prepared for the new identity it had to don. From 'Make in India' to 'Make for the world', India succeeded. The increase in domestic manufacturing capacity and competitiveness helped India's exports grow at a record pace. And robust exports always boost economic growth.

Then the time came, India reached a high in exports. PM Modi in his 'Mann ki Baat' said, "For the first time ever, India's merchandise exports have crossed \$400 billion in a fiscal year."

He also noted during his address, "Today our small entrepreneurs are playing a major role in government procurement through the government e-marketplace. A transparent system has been developed through technology."

Revival of exports provided relief, while there were multiple factors that helped achieve this surge. One notable element was the much needed export basket diversification. Indian exports were also supported by several production linked incentive (PLI) schemes introduced in many sectors including mobile manufacturing, electronic and textile products. These proactive policy schemes by the government – such as merchandise export schemes, duty exemption scheme, export promotion capital goods, transport and marketing assis-

tance scheme, have helped the export sector.

To ride on this resurging global growth, it was a stellar performance by some of the sectors. India exported rice worth \$9.65 bn, the highest among agricultural commodities. Wheat exports also saw a rise of 288 per cent.

India's textile and apparel exports (including handicrafts) achieved \$44.4 billion in FY22 showing YoY increase of 41 per cent. Exports of readymade garments which included cotton accessories recorded \$6.19 billion for Y22. With new agricultural reforms, cotton production in India is said to reach 7.2 million tonnes by 2030.

India exports inorganic and organic chemicals, tanning and dyes, agro chemicals, plastics, synthetic rubber, filaments, etc. In FY 2022-23, exports of chemicals and petroleum products stood at \$ 8.24 billion. The export growth of chemicals has been achieved because of a surge in shipments of organic, inorganic chemicals, inorganic chemicals, agrochemicals, dyes and dye intermediates and specialty chemicals.

Pharmaceuticals consist of OTC medicines, generics, APIs, vaccines, biosimilars and Custom Research Manufacturing (CRM) as its key segments. Formulations and Biologics constituted a major portion of India's exports with a share of 73.31 per cent followed by drug intermediaries and bulk drugs.

Iron and steel in FY 22: Exports of finished steel stood at 13.49 MT. India was the world's second largest

producer of crude steel, with an output of 10.14 MT in April 2022. The growth in the Indian steel sector has been driven by the domestic availability of raw materials such as iron ore and cost effective labour.

Several reform initiatives have been introduced to enhance the export potential of the Indian economy. India's exports indeed put up an impressive show this fiscal.

Topping the export growth chart were the states of Odisha, Gujarat and Karnataka. Our states have also started playing a more active role on this front in the export sector. But they need to do a little more, for a holistic approach to boosting exports. The state governments need to become more proactive in creating the right business environment and facilities.

Infrastructure, industrial parks, adequate power and quick administrative processes are required to be in place at the state level. In a remarkable achievement, India's exports of toys registered a tremendous growth of 636 per cent from the period of April – August 2022.

While the party has just begun with this outstanding accomplishment, India has targeted \$1 trillion merchandise exports by 2030. The momentum has to continue. Fourteen products including pharma, electrical machinery, plastics, gems and jewellery, furniture and textiles are among the expected old hands, defence, digital and green are expected to be the new drivers.

The spark has been ignited, the exports are fuelling the engine of growth that chugs on towards a prosperous future.

## POINTCOUNTERPOINT

**BJP IS GETTING NERVOUS ABOUT BHARAT JODO YATRA. OUR SOLDIERS WERE HARMED AND IF RAHUL GANDHI SAID SO, THIS IS NOT AN ANTI-NATIONAL STATEMENT.**  
— HP CM  
**SUKHWINDER SINGH SUKHU**



**RAHUL GANDHI'S STATEMENT WORKS TO DEMORALIZE OUR ARMY. THE INDIAN ARMY IS A SYMBOL OF BRAVERY AND VALOUR. .**  
— BJP NATIONAL PRESIDENT  
**JP NADDA**

# Gaslighting is behavioural lapse; must be countered

## Left unaddressed, gaslighting can take a significant toll on your self-esteem and overall mental health

You are overthinking... We all have often come across phrases in our daily life at least once or on repeated terms such as -- You have always been crazy; I don't know what you want me to say; It's your fault; Everyone agrees with me; That's not how it happened; Your memory seems to be slipping; I did that because I was trying to help you.

Such phrases undermine our trust and belief. The more we hear them, the more we stop trusting ourselves. When some other person becomes a gatekeeper to your reality, then you are in a spot which is vulnerable to further manipulation. In other words, when someone controls or denies or tries to play with your thoughts, feelings or



SAKSHI SETHI

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

behaviours especially on a repeated term, then you are right to suspect reality doubting often termed 'gaslighting'.

The term 'gaslighting' has its origin from a 1938 play, Gas Light, and its adaptation by Patrick Hamilton, known in America as 'Angel Street', which later developed into the film 'Gas Light' by Alfred Hitchcock. Since the movie was an accurate portrayal of controlling the toxic actions used by manipulators, various psychologists and counsellors began to label this emotional abuse as gaslighting.

Gaslight is a covert type of emotional abuse in which the abuser misleads the victim (target), creating a false narrative and making them question their judgments and reality. It can confuse the

victim and cause the victim to question their own judgment, memory, self-worth and overall mental health.

According to 'The National Domestic Violence Hotline's fact sheet "Withholding, Countering, Blocking/diverting, Trivializing and Denial" are the five techniques which a gaslighter may use to manipulate someone. A gaslighter will often start with something that is true and sensitive to the victim. They may praise the victim initially and immediately confide in them.

They do so to attain power over their victim as they wish to control them either emotionally, physically or financially. Gaslighting can occur in any type of relationships be it personal

(an abusive spouse or a parent), or professional (a co-worker or a boss) or, at public and legal institutions where the abusive person may use gaslight to isolate their target, undermine their confidence and ultimately control them.

The more this happens, the more power and influence the victim has on the abuser. The victim starts relying heavily on what others say and have no scope of trusting themselves. They end up doubting their memory, their perception and sanity. They feel confused, anxious and even depressed about their relationship, make excuses for the partner's behaviour, are not able to understand the reason for unhappiness in their own life, always end up

apologizing and are left with no option but to rely on the gaslighter's version of reality.

With time, a gaslighter's manipulations can make it difficult for the victim to see the truth. At times, it can even lead to the mental health concerns including addiction and even thoughts of suicide.

Gaslighting is not always intentional or malicious. It is a psychologically manipulative tactic to get a person or a group of people to doubt their reality and memory. Almost anyone can be susceptible to this tactic. People gaslight for numerous reasons and every situation is different. Lying and distortion are the cornerstones of gaslighting behaviour followed by repetition. Repetition technique is a brainwashing tactic wherein if a person knows that something is a blatant lie, repetition starts to make them believe it.

Remember gaslighting works because it confuses people and shakes the confidence. But if the victim shows that he is not affected by the behaviour, the person trying to gaslight will decide that it isn't worth it. Do not be afraid of speaking. When a person is in isolation, chances are that he may be more susceptible to self-doubt and when a gaslighter knows about this, will try to convince as per their best interest. Stand firm in your truth, i.e., believe in yourself, your feelings for the person doing the gaslighting, the goal is to have the receiving person (the victim) doubt their perception.

Keep simple conversations, start writing things or maintain a journal about day to day happening which will help you ground yourself in your own truth and will also make you feel confident in case you start feeling confused or low at your self-esteem. Start collecting evidence such as saving screenshots of texts and emails, taking photos of any damage done to property, keeping a record of the date and time of conversations. Start engaging yourself in physical activities like yoga, long run and meditation. These activities serve as an outlet for tension and distress. Left unaddressed, gaslighting can take a significant toll on your self-esteem and overall mental health.



# Zelenskyy to meet Biden

## Address Congress as war rages on

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was making his way to Washington on Wednesday for a summit with President Joe Biden and to address Congress in his first known trip outside the country since Russia's invasion began in February.

Zelenskyy said on his Twitter account that the visit was "to strengthen resilience and defence capabilities" of Ukraine and discuss cooperation between his country and the US with Biden.

The highly sensitive trip is taking place after 10 months of a brutal war that has seen tens of thousands killed and wounded on both sides of the conflict, along with devastation for Ukrainian civilians.

It also comes as US lawmakers are set to vote on a year-end spending package that includes about USD 45 billion in emergency assistance to Ukraine and as the Pentagon prepares to send Patriot surface-to-air missiles to the country to defend itself.

Zelenskyy headed abroad after making a daring and dangerous trip on Tuesday to what



he called the hottest spot on the 1,300-kilometre (800-mile) front line of the conflict, the city of Bakhmut in Ukraine's contested Donetsk province.

He praised Ukrainian troops for their "courage, resilience and strength" as artillery boomed in the background.

In a statement on Tuesday night, White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden looks forward to the visit and that the address to Congress will demonstrate "the strong, bipartisan support for Ukraine."

"The visit will underscore the United States' steadfast commitment to supporting Ukraine for as long as it takes, including through the provision of economic, humanitarian, and military assistance," she said.

Zelenskyy was scheduled

to meet with Biden at the White House in the afternoon and then join Biden for a news conference in the East Room. He was expected to address Congress in the evening.

In her invitation to Zelenskyy to address a joint meeting of Congress at the US Capitol, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said "the fight for Ukraine is the fight for democracy itself" and that lawmakers "look forward to hearing your inspiring message of unity, resilience and determination."

US and Ukrainian officials have made clear they don't envision an imminent resolution to the war and are preparing for fighting to continue for some time.

Biden has repeated that while the US will arm and train

Ukraine, American forces will not be directly engaged in the conflict.

Biden and Zelenskyy first discussed the idea of a visit to Washington during their most recent phone call, on December 11, and a formal invitation followed three days later, said a senior US administration official, briefing reporters on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the visit.

Zelenskyy accepted the invitation on Friday and it was confirmed on Sunday, when the White House began coordinating with Pelosi to arrange the congressional address.

The White House consulted with Zelenskyy on security for his departure from Ukraine and travel to Washington, including the risk of Russian action while Zelenskyy was briefly out of the country, the official added, declining to detail the measures taken to safeguard the Ukrainian leader.

The official said the US expected Russia to continue its attacks on Ukrainian forces and civilian infrastructure targets despite the trip.

The tranche of US funding pending before Congress would be the biggest American infu-

sion of assistance yet to Ukraine — even more than Biden's USD 37 billion emergency request — and is meant to ensure that support flows to the war effort for months to come.

On Wednesday, the US was also set to announce that it will send a major package of USD 1.8 billion in military aid to Ukraine that will for the first time include a Patriot missile battery and precision guided bombs for its fighter jets, US officials said.

The aid signals an expansion by the US in the kinds of advanced weaponry it will send to Ukraine to bolster its air defences against what has been an increasing barrage of Russian missiles in recent weeks.

The package will include about USD1 billion in weapons from Pentagon stocks and USD 800 million in funding through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, officials said.

The decision to send the Patriot battery comes despite threats from Russia's Foreign Ministry that the delivery of the advanced surface-to-air missile system would be considered a provocative step and that the Patriot and any crews accom-

ppanying it would be a legitimate target for Moscow's military.

# US to send USD 1.8 bn in aid, Patriot battery, to Ukraine

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The US will send USD 1.8 billion in military aid to Ukraine in a massive package that will for the first time include a Patriot missile battery and precision guided bombs for their fighter jets, US officials said on Tuesday, as the Biden administration prepares to welcome Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Washington.

US officials described details of the aid on condition of anonymity because it has not yet been announced.

The aid signals an expansion by the US in the kinds of advanced weaponry it will send to Ukraine to bolster the country's air defences against what has been an increasing barrage of Russian missile strikes.

The package, which was expected to be announced on Wednesday, will include about USD 1 billion in weapons from Pentagon stocks and another USD 800 million in funding through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, which funds weapons, ammunition, training and other assistance, officials said.

Zelenskyy and other Ukraine officials have pressed Western leaders to provide more advanced weapons, including the Patriots, to help their country in its war with Russia.

The Patriot would be the



most advanced surface-to-air missile system the West has provided to Ukraine to help repel Russian aerial attacks.

The timing of the military aid announcement — as Zelenskyy makes his first trip out of Ukraine since the war began — sends a strong message of continued US support for Ukraine as the war drags on.

The aid comes as Congress is poised to approve another USD 44.9 billion in assistance for Ukraine as part of a massive spending bill. That would ensure that US support will continue next year and beyond as Republicans take control of the House in January. Some GOP lawmakers have expressed wariness about the assistance.

During the quick trip, Zelenskyy is expected to meet with Biden at the White House, take questions from the press,

and deliver an address before Congress.

White House officials said the visit, which will come 10 months after the Russian invasion, is meant to help underscore Biden's message that the US will be there for Ukraine for as long as it takes to repel Russian forces.

Biden and Zelenskyy spoke about the possibility of the visit during their December 11 call and the White House formally extended the invitation three days later.

The decision to send the Patriot battery comes despite threats from Russia's Foreign Ministry that the delivery of the advanced surface-to-air missile system would be considered a provocative step and that the Patriot and any crews accompanying it would be a legitimate target for Moscow's military.

# 'We will find you:' Russians hunt down Ukrainians on lists

AP ■ KYIV

Three days after the first Russian bombs struck Ukraine, Andrii Kuprash, the head of a village north of Kyiv, walked into a forest near his home and began to dig. He didn't stop until he had carved out a shallow pit, big enough for a man like him. It was his just-in-case, a place to lie low

if he needed.

He covered it with branches and went back home.

A week later, Kuprash got a call around 8 a.m. from an unknown number. A man speaking Russian asked if he was the village head. Something was amiss. "No, you've got the wrong number," Kuprash lied. "We will find you anyway," the man

responded. "It's better to cooperate with us." Kuprash grabbed some camping kit and his warmest coat and headed for his hole in the woods.

Kuprash — and others The Associated Press spoke with — had been quietly warned that they were targets for advancing Russian forces. Word went round in circles of



# Data modelling predicts huge Covid death toll in China

PTI ■ LONDON

As India's health ministry held urgent talks on the COVID-19 situation on Wednesday, different sets of data modelling indicate that China could be facing a massive death toll from a surge in cases after it lifted its stringent zero-COVID policy.

According to a recent report in The Economist, around 1.5 million Chinese could die based on its model that calculates the trajectory of the country's outbreak under different scenarios based on estimates of the rates at which people become infected, get sick, recover or die – referred to as the SEIR model.

Those figures tally with other recent modelling, including a report in "The Lancet" journal from last week quoting analysis by Airfinity, a UK-based science information and analytics company, which projected that somewhere between 1.3 and 2.1 million people could die from COVID-19 after China re-opens.



"Predicting the number of deaths is tricky. Much will depend on the coverage and timing of the COVID-19 vaccines among the elderly and vulnerable, as well as the availability of antivirals," The Lancet noted.

"Serological studies from the UK have shown that almost everyone in the nation has antibodies against SARS-CoV-2; equivalent data for China are not publicly available, but levels of natural immunity will certainly

be low. The country has registered fewer than 2 million cases of COVID-19 throughout the course of the pandemic," it said.

According to the journal, Feng Zijian, former deputy director of the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, has suggested that 60 per cent of the country's population could become infected with SARS-CoV-2 – the virus which causes COVID-19 – in the first wave of disease following opening up, which equates

to 840 million people.

Airfinity, meanwhile, extrapolated from the experience of Hong Kong with Omicron earlier this year to make projections that ending the zero-COVID strategy would result in 167-279 million cases of the disease.

"China's zero-COVID strategy also means the population has almost no naturally acquired immunity through previous infection. As a result of these factors, our analysis shows if mainland China sees a similar wave to Hong Kong's in February, its healthcare system could be pushed to capacity as there could be between 167 and 279 million cases nationwide, which could lead to between 1.3 and 2.1 million deaths," warns the Airfinity analysis.

Zhengming Chen, professor of epidemiology at the University of Oxford, has questioned the timing of the shift in policy, given that Chinese New Year was around the corner, which will entail a huge amount of travelling and social interaction.

# 2 killed, 2 held after attack, say Iranian officials



AP ■ CAIRO

Iranian authorities said Wednesday that two suspects were killed and two more were arrested in connection with a shooting that left seven people dead at a bazaar last month in the country's southwest.

IRNA, Iran's official state news agency, said the two suspects killed were among the perpetrators of the market shooting in the Iranian city of Izeh last month. The report said two others accused of being involved in the attack were arrested in the same operation, led by the Revolutionary Guard and the Country's Intelligence Ministry.

Iranian authorities provided no further details about when the operation took place. They offered no evidence that the four men were involved in the attack. News of the security operation was first announced by Iran's Revolutionary Guard in a statement published on Tuesday.

It remains unclear what motivated the gun attack in Izeh, or if it is linked to the nationwide protests that have rocked the country since late September. Iranian authorities labelled the incident a 'terrorist' attack but have not accused any particular group of being behind the shooting.

Iranian state TV has in the past said that two gunmen on motorbikes opened fire at Izeh's Bazaar on the evening of November 16. Around the same time, protesters had gathered in different areas of the city, chanting anti-government slogans and throwing rocks at the police, it reported.

# Nepali Cong elects PM Deuba as parliamentary party leader



PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba will be the ruling Nepali Congress party's candidate for the post of prime minister in the new government after he was elected the parliamentary party leader on Wednesday.

The 76-year-old Nepali Congress President, who has served as the prime minister for a record fifth term, defeated his challenger party General Secretary Gagan Kumar Thapa by 39 votes, officials said.

Deuba secured 64 votes, while Thapa could muster only 25 votes, they said.

All 89 lawmakers of the party participated in the voting.

The win means that Deuba will possibly lead the next government after the Nepali Congress emerged as the single-largest party in the general elections held on November 20.

Prime Minister Deuba thanked party lawmakers for making him the parliamentary party leader and said that he will work to create a party free from obstacles.

"Everyone helped me win. Thank you very much. I will keep the party free from hurdles

in the coming days by moving this party forward well," he said.

Thapa, 45, was the lone challenger to Deuba.

Both submitted their nominations on Tuesday.

Senior party leader Ram Chandra Paudel proposed Deuba's nomination and was seconded by Purna Bahadur Khadka.

Dr Shekhar Koirala proposed Thapa's nomination, which was supported by Bishwa Prakash Sharma, Pradeep Paudel and Dhanraj Gurung.

The election was delayed for about an hour on Wednesday due to the disagreement over whether cell phones should be permitted in the voting booth, according to My Republica newspaper.

Nepali Congress lawmakers were asked to show up for the vote along with their election certificate, the report said.

It is the only national party to hold elections to select its parliamentary party leader.

The party has won 89 seats — 57 in the first past the post-electron system and 32 in the proportional representation election system — in the House of Representatives in the recently-concluded general elections.

# Oz-China Mins meet in bid to repair ties

AP ■ BEIJING

The foreign ministers of Australia and China met in Beijing on Wednesday in a bid to restore high-level political contacts and return stability to a relationship that has undergone major turbulence in recent years.

Penny Wong's visit comes on the anniversary of 50 years of official diplomatic relations between the nations, a symbolic occasion the sides appear to hope will help maneuver ties back on track.

The Australian Associated Press said Wong met with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in the first visit by an Australian foreign minister to China in four

years.

"We all share an interest in a region that respects sovereignty, that is peaceful, that is stable and is prosperous," Wong was quoted as saying.

She added that "through a more stable relationship between Australia and China we can help ensure our people, our region and world can enjoy peace and security," AAP reported.

Wong's visit has raised hopes of an end to import blocks imposed by China and the possible freeing of two Australian citizens detained in China.

Wong said she would continue to advocate for Australians held in China without giving details.

Wong's trip furthers a ten-



tative thaw in relations between the two nations since Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese won an election victory in May, replacing the more conservative Scott Morrison in the top role.

Albanese and Chinese President Xi Jinping met on the sidelines of the Group of 20

summit last month in Bali, the first such formal meeting between the leaders of the two nations in six years.

Relations between Australia and China have been poor since China imposed trade barriers and refused high-level exchanges in response to Australia enacting rules targeting foreign interference in its domestic politics and calling for an independent inquiry into the COVID-19 pandemic.

Albanese has also said he remained committed to building a fleet of submarines powered by US nuclear technology despite the French president describing the plan as a "confrontation with China."

As a treaty partner with the

# More pressure on Rwanda as France condemns backing rebels

AP ■ NAIROBI

International pressure is growing on Rwanda as France is the latest party to openly accuse the country of supporting armed rebels in neighbouring eastern Congo — with possible repercussions for foreign aid that Kigali has long enjoyed.

For months, the renewed attacks by the M23 rebels have angered Congo's government and led to talk of war in eastern Congo, a volatile region rich in minerals critical to much of the world's technology.

A report by United Nations experts earlier this year said they had "solid evidence" that Rwanda's armed forces were backing the rebels, and the United States has openly asked Rwanda to stop it.

Now France has joined the criticism of Rwanda. On Tuesday, its foreign affairs ministry in a statement condemned "Rwanda's support for M23," and its junior minister in charge of development during a visit to Congo warned that the M23 "must stop the fighting" and withdraw. The junior minister, Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, is



in charge of implementing aid policies, including toward Rwanda.

Rwanda's government has not responded publicly to the comments of France, which could affect recent efforts by the countries to repair ties. A government spokesman on Wednesday told The Associated Press it was too early to comment.

Longtime President Paul Kagame last week on the sidelines of the US-Africa summit denied that Rwanda had created the trouble in eastern Congo and called it "Congo's problem."

But concerns are growing that international partners could back their warnings with cuts in

aid to Rwanda, which has long benefited from outside support in health, defense and other areas.

Belgium, a former coloniser of Rwanda, also asked the country to stop supporting the M23 rebels earlier this month.

The public pressure on Rwanda over its alleged support of the M23 is notable. Human rights watchdogs and others have long accused Rwanda of using the international community's guilt over its delayed response to the country's horrific 1994 genocide to dampen criticism of its actions including the stifling of opposition at home and abroad.

The genocide killed more than 800,000 ethnic Tutsi and moderate Hutu who tried to protect them, and it remains a deeply sensitive subject. Rwanda's president and his government in recent weeks have expressed concern for the ethnic Tutsi in eastern Congo who are affected by the current violence.

The M23 is largely made up of Congolese Tutsi. It has denied having the backing of Rwanda's armed forces.

# 4.8 mn immigration form processed by Canada in 2022

PTI ■ TORONTO

Canada has processed a record 4.8 million immigration applications till the end of November, the Immigration Department said, nearly twice the 2.5 million processed during the same period last year.

"Immigration is critical to Canada's economy and our communities. Newcomers helped build our country, were on the front lines as we battled the pandemic, and remain key to our success," the Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) said in a press release on Monday.

"Our government has reduced its pandemic backlogs by nearly half a million, while also processing a record-breaking number of immigration applications this year," Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Sean Fraser, was quoted as saying.

As of November 30 this year, IRCC processed over 670,000 study permits.

# Afghan women weep as Taliban fighters enforce university ban

AP ■ KABUL

Taliban security forces in the Afghan capital on Wednesday enforced a higher education ban for women by blocking their access to universities, with video obtained by The Associated Press showing women weeping and consoling each other outside one campus in Kabul.

The country's Taliban rulers a day earlier ordered women nationwide to stop attending private and public universities effective immediately and until further notice. The Taliban-led administration has not given a reason for the ban or reacted to the fierce and swift global condemnation of it.

Journalists saw Taliban forces outside four Kabul universities Wednesday. The forces stopped some women from entering, while allowing others to go in and finish their work.



They also tried to prevent any photography, filming and protests from taking place.

Rahimullah Nadeem, a spokesman for Kabul University, confirmed that classes for female students had stopped. He said some women were allowed to enter the campus for paperwork and administrative reasons, and that four graduation ceremonies were held Wednesday.

Members of an activist group called the Unity and Solidarity of Afghanistan

Women gathered outside the private Edrak University in Kabul on Wednesday morning, chanting slogans in Dari.

"Do not make education political!" they said. "Once again university is banned for women, we do not want to be eliminated!"

Despite initially promising a more moderate rule respecting rights for women's and minorities, the Taliban have widely implemented their strict interpretation of Islamic law, or

Sharia, since they seized power in August 2021.

They have banned girls from middle school and high school, barred women from most fields of employment and ordered them to wear head-to-toe clothing in public. Women are also banned from parks and gyms.

A letter shared by the spokesman for the Ministry of Higher Education, Ziaullah Hashmi, on Tuesday told private and public universities to implement the ban as soon as possible and to inform the ministry once the ban is in place.



The move is certain to hurt efforts by the Taliban to win recognition from potential international donors at a time when Afghanistan is mired in a worsening humanitarian crisis. The international community has urged Taliban leaders to reopen schools and give women their right to public space.

<p><b>"APPENDIX- IV-A</b>  <b>[See proviso to rule 8 (6)]</b>  <b>Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property</b>  E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. [CIN: L65922DL2005PLC136029] ("Secured Creditor"), the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as is where is", "as is what is" and "whatever there is" basis on <b>24.01.2023</b> from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M., for recovery of <b>Rs. 32,26,126/- (Rupees Thirty Two Lakh Twenty Six Thousand One Hundred Twenty Six only)</b> pending towards Loan Account No. <b>HHLDMT0435669</b>, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till <b>14.12.2022</b> with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other related loan document(s) w.e.f. <b>15.12.2022</b> along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from <b>Jai Singh Yadav and Renu Yadav</b>. The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be <b>Rs. 17,00,000/- (Rupees Seventeen Lakh only)</b> and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be <b>Rs. 1,70,000/- (Rupees One Lakh Seventy Thousand only)</b> i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.</p>
<p><b>DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY</b>  Plot No- C-189, UGH, Block-C, Khasra No-10/16-18, Village Matiala, Sainik Nagar, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059.  For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. <a href="http://www.indiabullshomeloans.com">www.indiabullshomeloans.com</a>. For bidding, log on to <a href="http://www.auctionfocus.in">www.auctionfocus.in</a>  <b>Sd/-</b>  <b>Date : 15.12.2022</b> <b>Authorized officer</b>  <b>Place : NEW DELHI</b> <b>Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited</b></p>

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<p><b>DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY</b>  Plot No.-B-85 &amp; 86, Upper Ground Floor (Rear Side Western Portion) , Khasra No.-919 &amp; 920, Village Nawada, Majra Nawada, Gulabhi Bagh, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi-110059.  For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. <a href="http://www.indiabullshomeloans.com">www.indiabullshomeloans.com</a>. For bidding, log on to <a href="http://www.auctionfocus.in">www.auctionfocus.in</a>  <b>Sd/-</b>  <b>Date : 15.12.2022</b> <b>Authorized officer</b>  <b>Place : NEW DELHI</b> <b>Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited</b></p>

<p><b>"APPENDIX- IV-A</b>  <b>[See proviso to rule 8 (6)]</b>  <b>Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property</b>  E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. [CIN: L65922DL2005PLC136029] ("Secured Creditor"), the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as is where is", "as is what is" and "whatever there is" basis on <b>24.01.2023</b> from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M., for recovery of <b>Rs. 15,81,397/- (Rupees Fifteen Lakh Eighty One Thousand Three Hundred Ninety Seven only)</b> pending towards Loan Account No. <b>HHLRHN00312768</b>, by way of outstanding principal, arrears (including accrued late charges) and interest till <b>14.12.2022</b> with applicable future interest in terms of the Loan Agreement and other related loan document(s) w.e.f. <b>15.12.2022</b> along with legal expenses and other charges due to the Secured Creditor from <b>Swadhin Kumar Panda and Rasmita Panda</b>. The Reserve Price of the Immovable Property will be <b>Rs. 10,65,000/- (Rupees Ten Lakh Sixty Five Thousand only)</b> and the Earnest Money Deposit ("EMD") will be <b>Rs. 1,06,500/- (Rupees One Lakh Six Thousand Five Hundred only)</b> i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.</p>
<p><b>DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY</b>  Upper Ground Floor without roof/terrace rights towards back side of built up Property bearing Plot Number RZ-TA-58, admeasuring 40 Square Yards i.e. 33.45 Square Meter, out of Khasra Number 18/5, situated in Revenue Estate Village Matiala Extension in Block-C, now known as TA-Block, Uttam Nagar, Delhi-110059 with proportionate rights of the land underneath, common staircase, lift facilities, entrance and passage, including appurtenant rights thereto, with all common rights of the building, with common one two wheeler parking space at Ground Floor of the said property and is bounded as under : -  East : Other's property North : Other's property  West : Other's property South : Portion of property  For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. <a href="http://www.indiabullshomeloans.com">www.indiabullshomeloans.com</a>. For bidding, log on to <a href="http://www.auctionfocus.in">www.auctionfocus.in</a>  <b>Sd/-</b>  <b>Date : 15.12.2022</b> <b>Authorized officer</b>  <b>Place : NEW DELHI</b> <b>Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited</b></p>

<p><b>"APPENDIX- IV-A</b>  <b>[See proviso to rule 8 (6)]</b>  <b>Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Property</b>  E-Auction Sale Notice for sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described Immovable Property mortgaged to Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd. [CIN: L65922DL2005PLC136029] ("Secured Creditor"), the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of the Secured Creditor, will be sold on "as is where is", "as is what is" and "whatever there is" basis on <b>24.01.2023</b> from 02.00 P.M. to 04.00 P.M., for recovery of <b>Rs. 1,06,500/- (Rupees One Lakh Six Thousand Five Hundred only)</b> i.e. equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price.</p>
<p><b>DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY</b>  Residential Unit/Independent Floor No. A – R1/5A having covered area of 335 Square Yards alongwith common area and common facility on Ground Floor &amp; Basement, Block – A, built-up on Residential Plot admeasuring 500 Square Yards in the Project known as "Emperor Floors" of TDI City situated in Kundli, Sonapat – 131001, Haryana.  For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided on the website of the Secured Creditor i.e. <a href="http://www.indiabullshomeloans.com">www.indiabullshomeloans.com</a>. For bidding, log on to <a href="http://www.auctionfocus.in">www.auctionfocus.in</a>  <b>Sd/-</b>  <b>Date : 14.12.2022</b> <b>Authorized officer</b>  <b>Place : SONIPAT</b> <b>Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited</b></p>

NORTHERN RAILWAY				
Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system				
Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-				
S. NO	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
01	18221251	THERMAL TICKET ROLLS OF 500 EACH FOR UNRESERVED TICKETING	20000 NOS	16-01-23
02	07221356	AIR SPRING ASSEMBLY (140KN) FOR ICF TYPE BOGIES.	108 SET	16-01-23
03	04220054	GREASE NO: '0' GRAPHITED	143894 KGS	16-01-23
04	07223473	BOLT FOR PRIMARY VERTICAL STOP FOR LHB COACHES.	21121 NOS	16-01-23
05	05224891B	SUSPENSION TAPER ROLLER BEARING	114 NOS	16-01-23
06	16220627A	HELICAL SPRING FOR HIGH POWER	271 NOS	18-01-23
07	16220639A	P.T. PUMP	13 NOS	18-01-23
08	06225062A	ISHB-200, LENGTH-10000MM	400000 KGS	18-01-23
09	09215002A	CAST STEEL CASNUB 22HS BOGIE	274 NOS	19-01-23
10	09322189	BRAKE WEAR PLATE	25765 NOS	23-01-23
11	09322177	ADJUSTER SPINDLE	2590 NOS	24-01-23
12	07221111A	ALTERNATE EQUALISING STAY (FORGED TYPE)	4425 NOS	24-01-23
		<b>NOTE -1.</b> Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> for details. <b>2. No Manual offer will be entertained.</b>		
				
Tender Notice NO. 71/2022-2023 Dated : 21.12.2022				3390/2022
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE				



# WTO rejects US ‘Made in China’ labeling on Hong Kong goods

AP ■ GENEVA

World Trade Organization arbitrators concluded Wednesday that the United States was out of line in requiring products from Hong Kong to be labeled as “Made in China,” a move that was part of Washington’s response to a crackdown on pro-democracy protesters there in 2019 and 2020.

A WTO dispute panel found the US violated its obligations under the trade body’s rules and rejected Washington’s argument that U.S. “essential security interests” allowed for such labeling. The panel said the situation did not pose an “emergency” that would allow for an exemption under the trade body’s rules.

The United States and Hong Kong could appeal the ruling to the WTO’s appeals court. However, the Appellate Body is currently inactive because the U.S. Has almost single-handedly held up appointments of new members to the court amid concerns it had strayed beyond its mandate. As a result, any such appeal would go into an arbitration void and remain unsettled.

The United States trade representative’s office all but said it planned to ignore Wednesday’s ruling anyway. “The United States does not intend to remove the mark-



ing requirement as a result of this report, and we will not cede our judgment or decision-making over essential security matters to the WTO,” office spokesperson Adam Hodges said in a statement.

Hong Kong is one of China’s special administrative regions and is considered a separate trading entity from China.

Three decades ago, the U.S. Congress passed a law allowing products from Hong Kong to benefit from a trading status different from China’s – and potentially lower tariffs — as long as it remained sufficiently autonomous. By marking products as “Made in China,” the U.S. Can in essence ratchet up the tariffs it levies on goods from Hong Kong.

The U.S. Move came in response to political upheaval in Hong Kong in 2019 and 2020, in particular over a National Security Law that Beijing imposed on the former British colony, using it to silence or jail many pro-democracy activists.

## Commerce Min to come up with advanced version of GeM portal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The commerce ministry will come up with a more dynamic Government e-Market (GeM) portal for public procurement purposes by upgrading the existing software of the platform.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said the existing software will be reworked and the work may take over a year to be completed.

GeM CEO P K Singh said they have floated the request-for-proposal for the project and it will be assigned to the successful bidder.

The work would start from January next year and it would take about 16-17 months to come up with the advanced version of the portal, Singh told reporters.

The portal was launched in August 2016 for online purchases of goods and services by all the central government ministries and departments.

Procurement of goods and services from GeM has crossed Rs 1.11 lakh crore so far this fiscal.

Goyal expressed hope that the figure may touch ₹2 lakh crore by the end of this fiscal.

The minister said the improvement in the GeM Portal is an ongoing and evolving process. Efforts are on to add new features and functionalities, he said.

# Markets wilt for 2nd day as fresh Covid worries spook investors

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Sensex slumped 635 points while the Nifty finished below the 18,200-mark on Wednesday as surging Covid cases in China and concerns over renewed outbreaks in other countries sapped risk appetite.

Three cases of Omicron subvariant BF.7, apparently the strain driving China’s current surge of Covid cases, have been detected in India so far, official sources said. Different sets of data modelling indicate that China could be facing a massive death toll after it lifted its stringent zero-Covid policy.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Wednesday reviewed the Covid-19 situation in the country and directed officials to be alert and strengthen surveillance.

Declining for the second straight day, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tumbled 635.05 points or 1.03 per cent to settle at 61,067.24. The broader NSE Nifty declined 186.20 points or 1.01 per cent to end at 18,199.10.

IndusInd Bank was the biggest laggard in the Sensex pack, shedding 2.28 per cent, followed by Maruti Suzuki, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv, ICICI Bank, Tata Motors and Axis Bank.



Sun Pharma topped the index gainers’ chart with a jump of 1.67 per cent. HCL Technologies, Tech Mahindra, TCS, Nestle India, Wipro and Infosys were the other winners, climbing as much as 1.01 per cent.

“Bears continued to cause havoc in the domestic market while Wall Street snapped its losing streak ahead of the release of the US GDP numbers. Though all other sectors bled, pharma stocks were on a high owing to renewed fears of a global Covid outbreak, and IT witnessed bargain buying,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said Covid-related sectors like pharma and diagnostics were in the limelight in Wednesday’s session and are expected to maintain momentum.

# Indian economy likely to grow at over 7% in FY23, says Niti Ayog

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian economy is likely to grow at over 7 per cent in the current fiscal year, former Niti Aayog vice chairman Arvind Panagariya said on Wednesday, while observing that the growth rate should sustain next year too provided the forthcoming Budget does not have any negative surprises.

Panagariya further said recessionary fears have been around for a while but so far neither the US nor the EU has gone into recession.

“From the viewpoint of India, in terms of headwinds originating abroad, the worst is probably behind us,” he told PTI.

Earlier this month, the RBI revised down its growth estimate for FY23 to 6.8 per cent from the earlier 7 per cent, while the World Bank revised upwards its GDP growth forecast to 6.9 per cent, saying the economy was showing higher resilience to global shocks.

“Overall, I still expect us to end the current fiscal year with a growth rate exceeding 7 per cent. Next year, the 7 per cent growth rate should sustain assuming the forthcoming Budget does not have any negative surprises,” the eminent economist said.

Panagariya said capital outflows induced by the hikes in policy rates by the US Fed Reserve had placed the rupee under considerable pressure.



“Those flows have reversed with positive net portfolio inflows in November,” he said, adding that inflation in the US is also coming down, suggesting the worst may be over in that country as well.

But in the meantime, according to Panagariya, the rupee has appreciated against currencies such as the Euro and Yen which may contribute to weakness in exports in the coming year.

Even prior to this episode, the rupee had been overvalued, he added.

“So, I would lean in favour of further depreciation of the rupee against the dollar,” Panagariya, currently a professor of economics at the Columbia University, said.

Replying to a question on unemployment, Panagariya said going by the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), which is the most reliable household survey available, he does not see that the unem-

ployment rate is high.

“Higher unemployment among the youth is not a new phenomenon. This rate has always been higher than the overall rate because youth do not take the first job they are offered. Instead, they wait in the hope of getting a better offer,” he argued.

Panagariya also pointed out that in recent years, due to rising urban incomes, parents are able to support their children for longer.

“As a result, the waiting period has become longer, which has resulted in an upward shift in this rate,” he said, but pointed out that as per PLFS, the unemployment rate among those aged 15 to 29 years has fallen from 20.6 per cent in 2017-18 to 18.5 per cent in 2020-21.

To buttress his argument, Panagariya said that based on usual status measure, unemployment rate stood at 4.2 per cent in 2020-21 compared to 6.1 per cent in 2017-18.

## Coordinated approach between Govt and RBI on price rise; Govt equally serious about taming inflation: Das

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday said there is a “very coordinated approach” between the Union government and the central bank to fight inflation.

Speaking at the BFSI Insight Summit 2022 organised by Business Standard, Das said the government is “equally serious” about taming inflation.

The remarks came weeks after the RBI wrote a note to the government explaining the reasons for missing the upper end of the tolerance band on inflation set for it for nine consecutive months, which is a first since the onset of the flexible inflation targeting framework in 2016.

“I must say that to check inflation, there has been a very coordinated approach between the central bank and the central government,” Das said, listing out the measures taken by the two.

He said the RBI actions included one on the rates,



stance of the monetary policy and liquidity measures, while the government undertook several supply side measures like cutting down taxes on petrol or diesel, reducing duties on imported food items.

Stating that the “government also is equally serious about controlling inflation”, the bureaucrat-turned-central bank governor said, “everyone is interested in bringing down inflation and I am sure the government also will be equally keen that inflation is brought down”.

Das, while answering a question that the general elections are scheduled for 2024 and how he sees the last full budget of the current government to be outlined in February 2023, said monetary policymaking is for controlling inflation.

# Office leasing set to grow 10-15% in FY-2023, next fiscal, says Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

In spite of ebbing growth momentum, commercial leasing activity is likely to grow at a healthy 10-15 per cent this fiscal and the next, a report said on Wednesday.

At this growth rate, commercial leasing space will touch 28-30 million sq ft (msf) this fiscal and grow further to 31-33 msf, riding on the improvement in demand as more and more employers are going back to working from office, the report by Crisil said.

It added that even at this rate of growth, demand will be below the pre-pandemic high of 42 msf in fiscal 2020, but within sniffing distance of fiscal 2019 level of 34 msf. This is attributable to growing global recessionary headwinds and slower hiring in technology companies, subduing demand growth.

It also said credit profiles of commercial realtors will continue to be healthy during these two years, backed by



adequate leverage.

The report is based on an analysis of players with over Rs 63,000 crore debt and total leasable area of 170 msf.

Grade-A office space has an operational stock of around 670 msf as of March 2022 across the seven major cities of Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai Metropolitan Region, Delhi-NCR, and Pune.

According to Anand

Kulkarni, a director with the agency, after gathering pace in the first half of this fiscal, office leasing will fall back temporarily in the second half. However, next fiscal, leasing growth will be supported by three factors — firstly, the IT/ITeS sector, which accounts for 45 per cent of office leasing space, will continue to witness low single-digit employee addition in the current and next fiscals.

# Rupee slips 10 paise to 82.80 against dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee declined 10 paise to settle at 82.80 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday as a massive sell-off in domestic equities and risk aversion in global markets dented investor sentiment.

However, a weak greenback against major rivals overseas and fresh foreign fund inflows supported the domestic unit and capped the losses, forex traders said.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened weak at 82.76 against the greenback and witnessed an intraday high of 82.66 and a low of 82.83.

It finally ended at 82.80, a decline of 10 paise over its previous close of 82.70.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 635.05 points or 1.03 per cent lower at 61,067.24, while



the broader NSE Nifty fell 186.20 points or 1.01 per cent to 18,199.10.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.90 per cent to \$80.71 per barrel.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback’s strength against a basket of six currencies, slipped 0.09 per cent to 104.06.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) turned net buyers in the capital markets on Tuesday as they purchased shares worth ₹455.94 crore, according to exchange data.

# Gold climbs ₹192; silver jumps ₹433

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold rose ₹192 to ₹55,261 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid gains in precious metal prices internationally, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal had closed at ₹55,069 per 10 grams.

Silver also jumped ₹433 to ₹69,962 per kilogram.

“Gold price is a little up in the Asian trading hours. Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at ₹55,261/10 grams, up ₹192/10 grams,” said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities.

In the international market, gold was trading higher at \$1,815 per ounce while silver was up at \$23.94 per ounce.



## Sebi bans 3 ex-executives of firm linked to Chandamama comics publisher from securities market for one year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has barred three former executives of Geodesic Ltd, which owned children’s magazine Chandamama, from the securities markets for one year for siphoning off funds.

Those barred by the capital markets regulator are -- Kiran Kulkarni, who was the managing director of Geodesic; Pankaj Kumar, who was the company’s chairman; and Prashant Mulekar, who was the director and compliance officer, according to a Sebi order.

Chandamama India Limited, publishers of the much loved Chandamama range of children’s magazines, was a subsidiary of Geodesic Ltd.

In its order, Sebi found that these persons were involved in siphoning of USD 125 million raised by the com-



pany through redeemable Foreign Currency Convertible Bonds (FCCBs) from overseas investors in 2008. The funds were mobilised for the purpose of investing in companies including wholly owned subsidiaries.

As per Sebi, audited balance sheet of the company for FY 2011-12 was full of misleading financial data and did not contain the true and correct numbers pertaining to its financial health.

The forensic auditor

appointed by Sebi in its report indicated that complex layered transactions were executed on behalf of the company and the persons behind such acts were Kulkarni, Kumar and Mulekar, who were the promoter and directors of the firm.

The funds were first invested in the foreign subsidiaries of the company — GTSL, Hong Kong and Geodesic Holding Limited Mauritius — from where such funds were further diverted to other entities.

“The investments which were reflected to have been made in the foreign subsidiaries, were further siphoned off from the accounts of those foreign subsidiaries to other various entities of suspected status and dubious antecedents,” Sebi said in its 56-page order passed on Monday.

Finance. M3M Group is also developing Trump Tower in Gurugram.

“We have taken over the loan of Indiabulls Group,” Bansal said. The company plans to launch this township project in February of next year and expects to complete it in the next 18-24 months. In the township, M3M India will develop plots, villas, retail space, a hospital and school, among other infrastructure facilities.

# Domestic demand for finished steel to grow 8% this year: Icrs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The demand for finished steel in India is expected to grow eight per cent this year compared to 2021, according to rating agency Icrs.

Supported by the government’s infrastructure-led growth model, domestic finished steel demand has registered a double-digit growth of 11.9 per cent in the first eight months of the current fiscal, the ratings agency said in a report on Wednesday.

The demand is “poised to close the year with a growth of 8 per cent...7-8 per cent growth for FY 2022-23,” Icrs said.

However, domestic steel companies “face a bumper road ahead” as the external



environment becomes more challenging due to elevated inflation/energy prices and rising interest rates.

Given the expectation of a slowdown in the pace of economic activity over the next few quarters, domestic steel demand growth is likely to moderate to 6-7 per cent in FY24, Icrs said.

Jayanta Roy, Senior Vice-President & Group Head - Corporate Sector Ratings at ICRA, said dependence on external financing to meet committed expansion plans is likely to increase going forward.

# Auto components industry grows 34.8% to ₹2.65 L cr in H1 FY23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India’s auto components industry witnessed a 34.8 per cent growth to ₹2.65 lakh crore in first-half of 2022-23, riding on domestic demand, particularly from the passenger vehicles segment, the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India said on Wednesday.

During the period, exports of components grew by 8.6 per cent to USD 10.1 billion (₹79.03 lakh crore), while imports climbed 17.2 per cent to USD 10.1 billion (₹79.8 lakh crore), Automotive Component Manufacturers Association of India (ACMA) said.

“We’ve seen great growth come out of passenger cars and



commercial vehicles... The festive season was very positive for two-wheelers, and we hope that two-wheelers will be back on the growth track, like they have been in the past,” ACMA President Sunjay Kapur told reporters in a virtual conference.

He further said moderation in the supply-side issues, such as availability of semiconductors, high input raw-material costs and non-availability of

containers, also helped in the growth witnessed in the first half of the ongoing fiscal.

ACMA Director General Vinnie Mehta said, “In the first half, 47 per cent of our revenue to the supply to the OEMs, which is \$28.6 billion dollars, came from passenger vehicles. Interestingly, in the first half of last fiscal, the passenger vehicles accounted for about 38 per cent of our revenue from the OEM”.

There has been a demand shift towards SUVs, and the value proposition has also been enhanced, he added.

However, he said as the two-wheeler industry was under pressure, it accounted for about 18 per cent of the revenue against 21 per cent in the first half of the last fiscal.

## M3M India to develop township in Haryana

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm M3M India on Wednesday announced that it has acquired 350-acre land in Panipat, Haryana for ₹1,500 crore, and will invest another ₹1,200 crore to develop an integrated township. Gurugram-based M3M India promoter Pankaj Bansal said the company will invest a total of ₹2,700 crore, including land and construction

costs, to develop this township project and expects a sales revenue of ₹5,000 crore.

“We have already forayed into the Noida market last month and now we have bought 350-acre land in Panipat from Ambience Group. This is the first step towards becoming a pan-India player,” Bansal said at a Press briefing. He said the company has entered into tripartite agreements with Ambience Group and Indiabulls Housing

Finance. M3M Group is also developing Trump Tower in Gurugram.

“We have taken over the loan of Indiabulls Group,” Bansal said. The company plans to launch this township project in February of next year and expects to complete it in the next 18-24 months. In the township, M3M India will develop plots, villas, retail space, a hospital and school, among other infrastructure facilities.

# Seminar on Ferroelectrics & Dielectrics held

PNS ■ AMRAVATI

The 22nd National Seminar on Ferroelectrics and Dielectrics (NSFD-2022) was organized by the VIT-AP University from 17th to 19th December, 2022 on virtual platform.

The main objective of the seminar was to provide the ongoing research activities in the field of Ferroelectrics and Dielectrics for the develop-



ment of advanced devices for memory, sensor, data storage, solar cells and radar absorbing

materials. The ongoing research activities on Ferroelectrics and Dielectrics

have been directed towards high k-dielectric and high energy density materials of supercapacitor for health technologies of defense requirements.

The primary co-sponsor of the seminar is Taylor & Francis, UK and the other co-sponsors are VB Ceramics, Tangent Technologies, Indfurn Furnace Heating systems and Indian Bank, VIT-AP campus and Zonal office.

## Health infinity policy launched

Mumbai: Reliance General Insurance Company Ltd has launched first of its kind premium health insurance product offering limitless benefits. Reliance Health Infinity Policy offers sum insured up to Rs 5 crore, with features like MoreGlobal Cover, Maternity Cover, OPD Cover. CEO Rakesh Jain said, “With the Reliance Health Infinity Policy, we want to empower our customers with the best-in-class features.”



# INDIA TO GO FOR KILL IN 2ND TEST AS WTC BATTLE HEATS UP

PTI ■ MIRPUR

Stand-in skipper K L Rahul would be eager to overcome his lean patch as India are expected go for the kill in the second Test against Bangladesh, beginning here on Thursday, to strengthen their position in the World Test Championship.

The race for the top-two spots in the WTC standings has become more interesting with India (55.77 PCT) moving up to the second position following South Africa's (54.55 PCT) heavy loss to Australia (76.92 PCT) in two-day Gabba Test.

The upcoming home series against Australia will be decisive in India's bid for a second straight WTC final but they also can't afford any slip-ups against Bangladesh, who showed plenty of fight in the first Test after a poor first innings with the bat.

With regular skipper Rohit Sharma yet to recover from his thumb injury, no changes are expected in the Indian playing eleven.

The first Test presented a golden opportunity for the likes Shubman Gill and Kuldeep Yadav and they made it count. Had Rohit been fit for the game, it would have been extremely difficult to drop Gill following his maiden Test hundred in Chattogram. However, that situation did not arise and Gill will be keen to cash in on another opportunity.

Rahul too would look to lead from the front after the disappointment



of his two innings in the first Test. Like Chattogram, the pitch is expected to be slow and decent for batting, providing Rahul an ideal platform to get runs under his belt before the Australia series. It would be fair to say that Cheteshwar Pujara, who made a comeback with the one-off Test in England, has consolidated his number three position with a 90 and an unusually attacking 102 not out in the series-opener.

It was refreshing to see Pujara going for his shots as India needed to accelerate in the second innings.

The stage will also be set for Virat Kohli to score his first Test hundred since November 2019.

India batted at more than four runs per over in the second innings and it remains to be seen if that positive approach was only the need of the hour or a sign of things to come.

Considering the conditions, the bowlers will once again be looking to target the stumps, be it the pacers or slower bowlers.

Kuldeep, playing his first Test since February last year, flaunted his artistry

with a match haul of eight wickets. Compared to lead spinner R Ashwin and Axar Patel, he was slightly under-bowled in the second innings but the left-arm wrist spinner still managed to take three wickets.

Ashwin could manage only one wicket in spin friendly conditions and he will be looking to make up for that here.

Axar displayed his utility to the team with four strikes in the second innings with the batters struggling against his fast left-arm spin.

Bangladesh too will be confident of their chances given how they batted on day four. Rookie opener Zakir Hasan has shown he belongs at this level. Senior batters including Litton Das and Mushfiquir Rahim will be aiming to learn from their mistakes and make big hundreds.

Skipper Shakib Al Hasan did not bowl in the second innings due to an injury and that is why Bangladesh have added left-arm spinner Nasum Ahmed to the squad. Nasum is likely to make his Test debut on Thursday.

Former captain Mominul Haque too could get a game.

"He'd be the first to admit that in last year he hasn't got the runs. But he is too good a player to not have around. You cannot lose a player of Mominul's quality. He will definitely be considered for the second Test," said head coach Russell Domingo.

## SQUADS:

**Bangladesh:** Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Najmul Hossain Shanto, Mominul Haque, Yasir Ali, Mushfiquir Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan (c), Litton Das, Nurul Hasan, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Taijul Islam, Taskin Ahmed, Khaled Ahmed, Zakir Hasan, Rejaur Rahman Raja.

**India:** KL Rahul (C), Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara (VC), Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant (WK), KS Bharat (WK), Ravichandran Ashwin, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Shardul Thakur, Mohd. Siraj, Umesh Yadav, Abhimanyu Easwaran, Saurabh Kumar, Jaydev Unadkat.



## Axar surges to career-best ICC Test ranking, Kuldeep jumps 19 spots

PTI ■ DUBAI

India all-rounder Axar Patel jumped 20 spots to reach a career-best 18th position while spinner Kuldeep Yadav catapulted 19 places to 49th in the latest ICC Test rankings released on Wednesday.

Kuldeep, who was adjudged the Player of the Match for his eight for 113 in the first Test of the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) against Bangladesh, has 455 rating points.

Axar, who claimed five five scalps in the match, has 650 points as he broke into the top 20.

Meanwhile, the injured Jasprit Bumrah (4th) and Ravichandran Ashwin (5th) continued their stay in top five.

Among batters, veteran Cheteshwar Pujara and young Shubman Gill jumped 10 positions each to be 16th and 54th.

Pujara knocks off 90 and 102 in the first Test against Bangladesh last week helped him break into the top 20 with 664 rating points.

The other Indian centurion of the match, Gill is 54th with 517 rating points.

Shreyas Iyer's first innings 86 has lifted him 11 places to 26th as wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant continues to remain the top-ranked Indian batter at number six.

Skipper Rohit Sharma,

who missed the opening Test due to thumb injury, is number nine while the talismanic Virat Kohli moved a spot to 12th.

Pakistan captain Babar Azam has attained a career-best second position after notching two half-centuries in the final Test series against England in Karachi.

Babar's knocks of 78 and 54 have helped him overtake Steve Smith, who managed 36 and six in a low-scoring game between Australia and South Africa in Brisbane.

Babar, who is ranked first in ODIs and fourth in T20Is, trails Marnus Labuschagne by 61 points in the Test rankings.

Australia batter Travis Head, whose first innings score of 92 was the highest in the Brisbane Test, has gained three slots to reach a career-best fourth position as he crosses the 800-rating point mark for the first time in his career.

His previous best was fifth position in January this year.

England captain Ben Stokes (up places to 23rd), South Africa's Temba Bavuma (up eight places to 24th) and Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan (up four places to 37th) are some others to move up the batters' list.

England's Harry Brook is in the top 50 for the first time after scoring centuries in all three Tests in Pakistan.



## Samarth's 137 takes Karnataka to 304, Puducherry reach 58/3 in 2nd innings

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Opener Ravikumar Samarth struck a century as Karnataka posted 304 all out in their first innings and then reduced Puducherry to 58 for three on the second day of their Ranji Trophy group C match here on Wednesday.

Resuming at 111 for 1, Samarth continued to anchor the Karnataka innings as he cracked a 242-ball 137 laced with 17 hits to the fence. The opener added 63 with Nikin Jose (30) and 55 with Manish Pandey (45) before being dismissed by Paras Dogra in the 82nd over.

Left-arm spinner Ankit Sharma also had a good day in office as he snapped five wickets on day 2 to go with the one he had taken on the opening day. But the hosts still managed to grab a crucial 134-run first innings lead.

Karnataka bowlers, who had bundled out Puducherry for 170 in their first innings, then got into the act, leaving their rivals tottering at 58 for 3 at the end of the day.

At stumps, opener Jay Pande (25 batting) and Sridhar Ash-

wath (3 batting) were in the middle with Puducherry still 76 runs behind.

Ronit More (1/9) and Vijay-kumar Vyshak (1/13), who had shared five wickets in the first innings, were again among wickets, while Krishnappa Gowtham (1/21) also accounted for one.

## BRIEF SCORES:

**At Bengaluru:** Karnataka 304 all out in 93.2 overs (Ravikumar Samarth 137; Ankit Sharma 6/60) vs Puducherry 170 and 58 for 3 (Jay Pande 25; Ronit More 1/9).

**At Jamshedpur:** Jharkhand 386 all out in 128.1 overs (Kushagra 96; Darshan Misal 4/68, Mohit Redkar 3/125) vs Goa 99 for 4 in 48 overs (Amogh Sunil Desai 41; Utkarsh Singh 3/12).

**At Jaipur:** Rajasthan 337 all out in 97.1 overs (Deepak Hooda 133; Jalaj Saxena 3/78) vs Kerala 268 for 8 in 73 overs (Sachin Baby 109; Aniket Choudhary 3/73, Manav Suthar 3/75).

**At Delhi:** Services 213 all out in 60.1 overs vs Chhattisgarh 280 for 5 in 86.5 overs (Ajay Jadav Mandal 101; Diwesh Pathania 2/51).

## Railways vs Punjab game suspended due to 'unfit' Karnail pitch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ranji Trophy match between Railways and Punjab at the Karnail Singh Stadium was on Wednesday suspended after the track was deemed "dangerous and unfit for play" by the match officials, who decided to have a two-day game on a new surface beginning Thursday.

As many as 24 wickets fell in just 103 overs with fast bowlers accounting for 20 of them when play was stopped by the match officials. Punjab was at 18 for 4 in their second essay after taking a 12-run first innings lead.

"I have never seen a wicket like that in Ranji before. The bounce was too unpredictable making the pitch very unsafe. What we have been told that the game will be played on a fresh



pitch," Punjab batter Abhishek Sharma told PTI.

"The umpires and match referee took the right call to abandon today's play and start afresh tomorrow. Players put a lot of effort into preparation for this game so disappointed to see a wicket like that."

The decision was taken dur-

ing the drinks break in the second session when on-field umpires K Madanagopal and Rajeev Godara discussed the matter with match referee Youraj Singh and also had a word with both captains - Mandeep Singh of Punjab and Karn Sharma of Railways.

With the Elite Group D game reduced to a two-day affair, a result is highly unlikely, which might affect both Railways and Punjab's chances in the tournament.

Punjab's first match had ended in a draw after bad light brought early end to their contest against Chandigarh, while the Railways had lost to Vidarbha by 194-run.

In the past too, tracks of Karnail Singh Stadium had been in news for the wrong reasons with BCCI's technical committee putting the venue on a watchlist for producing poor pitches in 2011.

A year later, the venue was banned for two years from hosting games after the committee discovered that local curators had deliberately under-prepared the wicket to help Railways, forcing the team to shift their home base to Bhubaneswar.

## Quality of bowlers played big role in Oz-SA Test: Vettori

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Former New Zealand spinner Daniel Vettori conceded that the pitch conditions at the Gabba were tough for batters but felt the quality of bowlers in Australia and South Africa's line-up played a big role in the opening Test ending inside two days.

The Brisbane pitch received a 'below average' rating from the International Cricket Council (ICC) after the hosts won the match by six wickets to take a 1-0 lead with three days to spare.

However, Vettori, who took over as Australia's assistant coach in May this year, said he had seen "worse" pitches.

"It was just really tough conditions and once in a while as a bowling group you don't mind that," Vettori was quoted as saying by "Zero Wicket" on

Wednesday.

"Just because of the nature of how good those bowling attacks were they probably embellished it a bit. So, you wouldn't want to play on it every day, but I think for occasional Test matches it's not the worst thing," he added.

The ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees member Richie Richardson noted that the Gabba pitch was "too much in favour of the bowlers".

"There was extra bounce and occasional excessive seam movement. The odd delivery also kept low on the second day, making it very difficult for batters to build partnerships," Richardson had noted a day after the match ended.

South Africa skipper Dean Elgar also criticised the green top, saying, "I don't think that was a very good Test wicket."



The 43-year-old Vettori, a veteran of 113 Tests, said that when players like Travis Head, Steve Smith and South Africa's Kyle Verreynne applied themselves, they were able to score runs.

Head and Smith scored 92 and 36 respectively in the first innings, while Verreynne struck a patient 64.

"It was definitely amplified because of the standard of the bowling. People talk about these two attacks being potentially the best in the world."

"And the wicket did a lot. But I think we saw through Travis Head's innings, Steve Smith and (Kyle) Verreynne if you got in you could score on it," added Vettori.

The second Test against South Africa will begin on December 26 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

## Nikhath emerges as India's biggest star in year filled with historic performances

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In Nikhat Zareen, a new star emerged on the horizon while veteran MC Mary Kom, standing in the twilight of her career, was left heartbroken in what was an eventful year for Indian boxing. As India enjoyed good results in the ring, they were also awarded the hosting rights of next year's women's World Championships but on the global front, the sport's Olympic future continued to remain under scrutiny.

## NIKHAT'S GOLDEN RUN

After spending her formative years in the shadows of the legendary Mary Kom, Nikhat grabbed the opportunity with both hands when time came to make the flyweight division, which was dominated by the six-time champion, her own.

Nikhath claimed a hat-trick of gold medals in 2022. She started the year by etching her name in the history books as she became the first Indian boxer to win a second gold medal at the

prestigious Strandja Memorial tournament.

Once requesting a "fair trial" for a shot at the Olympics, the Telangana boxer replicated her idol Mary Kom's world championship-winning feat. It was India's first Worlds title in four years and only the second (after Mary) outside the country.

Her slew of wins as a teenager had led people to hail her as a possible heir to Mary Kom's throne and her gold-winning triumph, India's first yellow metal in four years at the World Championship, consolidated the view.

The 26-year-old boxer then entered the Commonwealth Games as a strong medal contender and she didn't disappoint, clinching the 50kg title.

Each bout was a testament to her evolution as a boxer, who is technically sound and knows when to use her power.

## MARY'S HEARTBREAK

As Nikhat rose from the ranks, the defining force in Indian boxing for well over a decade,

the timeless Mary Kom decided it was time for the next generation to make its mark.

The London Olympic bronze medallist opted to skip the World Championships and the now-postponed Asian Games to concentrate on the Birmingham CWG.

But fate had other plans — cruel ones. The six-time world champion missed out on the opportunity to defend her CWG title after suffering a knee injury in the middle of her bout against eventual gold medallist Nitu Ghanghas during the trials.

At 40, time is not on her side as according to IBA rules pugilists between the ages of 19 to 40 are categorised as Elite Boxers. The Asian Games, now pushed to September next year, could be her swansong should she get fit and decide to participate. She has always maintained "I can play till 40."

But if her body doesn't permit it, the Manipuri has nothing left to prove, for she has inspired innumerable youngsters to take up the sport. And the new crop



of boxers comprising the likes of Nikhat, Nitu, world championship bronze medal-winning duo of Parveen Hooda and Manisha Moun and Jaismine Lamboria are trying to follow her lead.

## AMIT'S REDEMPTION AND SHIVA'S TRYST WITH HISTORY

Unlike Mary Kom, Amit Panghal had a lot on the line this year. He had been a strong medal contender at the Tokyo Olympics, having won an unprecedented world championship silver and rising to the number one rank.

But the Games proved to be a disaster as he crashed out in the first round.

However, the Rohtak boxer redeemed his hard-earned reputation by bettering the colour of his 2018 CWG Gold Coast silver. The signature salute and his little smile after winning the title at Birmingham Games showed the satisfaction he felt.

Veteran Shiva Thapa also sparkled in the men's circuit.

While he made a quiet exit at the CWG, the 29-year-old became the first-ever male boxer in the history of the Asian Championships to win six medals.

The climax was bittersweet though as he was forced to withdraw midway through his final bout due to an injury, settling for a silver.

## LOVLINA'S ROLLER-COASTER

Lovlina Borgohain had saved the boxing contingent the blushes in Tokyo, winning the sole medal. But shoved into the limelight and burdened with endless felicitation functions and other commitments after her bronze medal in Tokyo, the Assam boxer lost her focus, resulting in an underwhelming show at the World Championships this year.

At the CWG she was the protagonist of the Indian contingent's biggest and only controversy at the Games as she raised a hue and cry over her personal coach Sandhya Gurung's accreditation.

In a Twitter post, Lovlina

alleged that her preparation was getting affected due to the "continuous harassment" of her coaches.

After everything was sorted, Lovlina ended up making a shock quarterfinal exit. However, the 25-year-old was able to put behind the underwhelming year with a gold in her maiden appearance in the middle-weight category (75kg) at the Asian Championships. Her previous 69kg weight class was scrapped from the Paris Olympics.

## OLYMPICS FUTURE

In a massive blow to the sport, boxing has been left out of the initial roster list for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles, a decision made due to a number of governance issues.

While the International Boxing Association (IBA) claims to be doing everything to get the sport back, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) continues to express concerns with the world body's current leadership under Umar Kremlev, the President from Russia.





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COP15

## “Chinese tea smells so good! Cheers!”

During the second phase of COP15 held in Montreal of Canada, China's contribution to biodiversity conservation impresses the participants.



Participants tasted Chinese tea in the China Pavilion set up during the second phase of the COP15 at the Montreal Convention Center on December 7. (Photo by Xinhua)

“Chinese tea smells so good! Cheers!” During the second phase of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) held in Montreal, Canada from December 7 to 19, many attendees and visitors were attracted to the China Pavilion sideline activity by the aromatic Chinese tea.

The tea served here, known as Pu'er tea, came from pollution-free moun-

tains more than 2,000 meters above sea level in southwest China's Yunnan province. The tea leaves were harvested from tea bushes that have lived for over 1,000 years. They were fermented and made into tea cakes before being transported thousands of miles to Montreal, which is now in a snowy season.

“Man and nature make up a community of life. Only by respecting nature, following its ways, and protecting it will we be

able to take good care of this blue planet of ours,” Huang Runqiu, Chinese Minister of Ecology and Environment and COP15 President, said at the Chinese Corner sideline activity. “China has taken a package of measures to conserve the biological diversity since 2012.”

China has made remarkable advances in biodiversity conservation over the past few years. Now, 90 percent of its terrestrial ecosystems and 74 percent

of its wildlife species under special State protection are effectively protected; 112 rare and endangered wildlife species unique to the country have returned to nature; the wild populations of more than 300 rare and endangered wildlife species are steadily increasing.

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, executive secretary of CBD said, “From stopping polluting behavior, restoring degraded land, conserving species and ecosystems, to tackling poverty and working towards broader human development goals, what China did over the past few decades is representative of our transforming of development pattern.”

China has strengthened biodiversity conservation through bilateral and multilateral cooperation with other countries. China and Russia are working together to protect Siberian tigers, which now travel between the two countries more and more. The

crested ibises have been reintroduced to Japan, where local crested ibises are at the brink of extinction. China and Uzbekistan have jointly built an allium garden to conserve and research into allium germplasm resources from all over the world.

Biodiversity conservation has become an important consideration in jointly building the Belt and Road. For example, the Nairobi-Malaba Railway in Kenya, which is jointly built by China and Africa, adopts a super large bridge where the railway crosses the Nairobi National Park. With its lowest piers exceeding six meters in height, even giraffes can pass under the bridge without having to lower their heads. Additionally, sound barriers are installed on both sides of the bridge guardrails to effectively reduce the noise of trains passing.

During the second phase of COP15, China actively promoted the adoption of

the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. According to Huang Runqiu, China has hosted nearly 40 COP15 meetings of the presidium and presided over four meetings of the open-ended working group in Geneva and Nairobi, among other locations, in collaboration with the CBD secretariat. Since the conclusion of the first phase of COP15, China has made use of gatherings such as the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the G20 Joint Environment and Climate Ministerial Meeting to organize exchanges and high-level roundtables on key COP15 issues.

“With 18 percent of the planet's population and 18.5 percent of global GDP, China has a key role to play in protecting nature,” Vanessa Hull, an assistant professor at the University of Florida of the US, wrote in an article on the Australia-based website The Conversation. (Xinhua, People's daily)

Last October, the first phase of COP15 was held in Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan province, and the parties reached the Kunming Declaration. To date, among other major measures, China has established the Kunming Biodiversity Fund and the country's first five national parks, such as the Sanjiangyuan National Park at the sources of the Yangtze, Yellow, and Lancang rivers and the Giant Panda National Park.

ECONOMY

## Optimized Covid-19 control measures instill new impetus into Chinese market

In recent days, many places in China have adjusted and optimized COVID prevention and control measures to better coordinate anti-epidemic work with economic and social development. The country is stepping up efforts to ease the difficulties of businesses and taking multiple measures to promote the resumption of work and production.

China's earlier epidemic prevention and control strategy has laid a solid foundation for the resumption of work and production. For example, the Omicron coronavirus mutant has become less pathogenic; the national COVID vaccination rate has exceeded 90 percent; the medical service and disease prevention and control system has accumulated a wealth of experience and a set of effective diagnosis and treatment technologies. On December 7, China further adjusted and optimized its COVID response by releasing 10 new measures, including “COVID risk areas shall be delineated in a science-based and targeted manner” and “non-high-risk areas shall not restrict the flow of people and shall not suspend work, production, or business activity”.

With the release and implementation of a series of policies, markets are showing signs of recovery in many places. At the entrance to the warehouse of Luxshare Precision Industry Co Ltd in Xuancheng, Anhui, our reporter saw lorries waiting in line to be loaded.

“After the optimization of epidemic prevention and control measures, lorries can enter and exit the factory and transport products more smoothly, so we've greatly improved the operation efficiency,” said Zhu Lufeng, the company's general manager. Now, the factory has been operating at full capacity since late November and is expected to exceed 1.3 billion yuan in output this year.

At the Xianglala Restaurant in the Grandview Mall in Tianhe District of Guangzhou, our reporter saw many diners enjoying the spicy Hunan-style food. “Since we resumed dine-in business on December 1, we're receiving a steadily increasing flow of customers, which is very promising for small and medium-sized catering businesses like us,” the restaurant manager Wang Yongchun was quoted as saying.

(Xinhua)

IN-PICS



Singh(left) was talking with her mother(right).

## China in the paintings of an Indian girl

Singh was five years old when she came to China from India with her parents in 1999. She has been living and studying in Chinese cities such as Beijing and Tianjin ever since then. She loves oil painting and usually paints at home. Sometimes she visits museums and art galleries to

study traditional Chinese painting techniques.

After living in China for 23 years, Singh has learnt many traditional Chinese painting techniques, and her creative style often shows Chinese elements. Today, Singh teaches painting at her own art studio in Tianjin.

(Xinhua)

BUSINESS

## Yunnan logistics park goes into cross-border e-commerce export business

Recently, a batch of Mengzi-produced pomegranates weighing 24 tons and worth 150,000 yuan (US\$21,510) arrived at the China-ASEAN (Hekou) Cross-border E-commerce Logistics Park. After examination by the Hekou Branch of Kunming Customs, the declared goods passed through the Hekou high-

way port, marking the logistics park's entry into cross-border e-commerce export business.

According to Kunming Customs, the China-ASEAN (Hekou) Cross-border E-commerce Logistics Park now provides one-stop customs clearance services for cross-border e-commerce business, such as

imports and exports handling, centralized inspection, customs transfer supervision, and quarantine disposal. For the said batch of goods, the customs adopted the “9710” customs clearance model—the “cross-border e-commerce business direct export” customs clearance model. This model features

convenient customs declaration formalities. After a transaction with an overseas company is concluded through an online platform, the goods can be directly exported to the overseas company through cross-border logistics, significantly facilitating the circulation and turnover of goods.

(Yunnan Daily)

FOCUS

For its part, China has always been committed to its foreign policy goals of upholding world peace and promoting common development, and it is dedicated to promoting a human community with a shared future.

—An excerpt from the report that Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China

## China injects stability into international situation

The global economic recovery has been sluggish due to the COVID-19 pandemic and multiple other factors. By effectively coordinating epidemic prevention and control with economic and social development, China has minimized the epidemic's impact on economic and social development and provided valuable experience for other countries.

I strongly agree with President Xi Jinping's opinion that “to understand today's China, one must understand the CPC”. China has set an example of socialist construction, and the CPC leadership is the key to China's success. Under the CPC leadership, China has, once and for all, resolved the problem of absolute poverty and achieved the poverty eradication goal of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development ten years ahead of schedule.

I have read Xi Jinping's *The Governance of China* carefully, which fully presents the CPC's new ideas and strategies on governance and will help foreign readers to obtain a comprehensive understanding of China's development path and governance model. President Xi Jinping has put forward the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, the Global Development Initiative, and the Global Security Initiative, proposing that the

world should jointly respond to global challenges on the basis of peace and unity, and create a security architecture featuring fairness, justice, joint contribution and shared benefits. These thoughts have transcended conflicts, confrontation, and Cold War mentality and contributed China's plans for building a secure and stable world.

The vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, which has been written into many bilateral and multilateral cooperation documents and UN resolutions, has increasingly become the consensus of the international community. Today, mankind is faced with many grave challenges, such as food security, climate change, geopolitical conflicts, economic and financial risks. These problems cannot be solved by one or a few countries. They need to be addressed by all countries in a joint way. The international community needs peace and stability more than ever. China, guided by the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind and committed to mutual benefit and common development, will continue to inject stability into the international situation.

(Schemur Mammadov, director of the Azerbaijan “Eurasian Observation” Center for International Studies)

NEWS

## Yunnan increases imports and exports by 16.4 percent in the first 10 months

In the first 10 months of this year, Yunnan's total volume of foreign trade reached 282.46 billion yuan (US\$40.96 billion), up 16.4 percent from the same period last year. During this period, the province registered exports of 140.17 billion yuan (US\$20.32 billion) and imports of 142.29 billion yuan (US\$20.63 billion), up 10 percent and 23.5 percent, respectively.

As of October 2022,

Yunnan's trade with ASEAN nations increased 6.6 percent to 105.5 billion yuan (US\$15.12 billion), accounting for 37.4 percent of the provincial total. In particular, the province's trade with Thailand and Laos increased by 25.2 percent and 25.5 percent, respectively. Its trade with RCEP trading partners grew by 7.9 percent to 119.77 billion yuan (US\$17.17 billion).

(Yunnan Daily)

## Mile-Mengzi high-speed railway goes into operation

The Mile-Mengzi high-speed railway went into operation on December 16.

The newly launched railway, running through Honghe Hani and Yi autonomous prefecture in Yunnan province, connects the Nanning-Kunming high-speed railway in the

north and the Kunming-Hekou railway in the south. With a total length of 106 kilometers and a designed speed of 250 kilometers per hour, it forms a major part of the railway corridor linking southwest China with ASEAN nations.

(China Daily)

## Chinese electric blankets warm freezing Europe

As coldness creeps into Europe, Chinese electric blankets have gained popularity because of the advantages of being low-cost and energy-efficient.

Xinle, Hebei province, the hometown of electric blankets, began to develop the electric blanket industry around 1980. There are 56 major electric blanket manufacturers with

an annual sales volume of 6.9 million pieces, accounting for 40 percent of the total sales volume in China. Among them, exports account for 36 percent of the total sales. The 27 EU countries imported 1.29 million electric blankets from China in July, according to data released by China Customs.