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Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 32 Issue 362
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY DECEMBER 31, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



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TRAGIC FRIDAY

Modi bids final adieu to mother, carries on with work



Prime Minister Narendra Modi carries mortal remains of his mother Heeraben Modi, who passed away at the age of 100, in Gandhinagar, on Friday



(Left) In this Saturday, June 18, 2022 file photo, Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets his mother Heeraben Modi on her 100th birthday, in Gandhinagar. Heeraben, who was admitted to Gujarat's UN Mehta hospital, passed away at the age of 100 on Friday (PTI photo)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags off Vande Bharat Express train connecting Howrah and New Jalpaiguri, via video conferencing on Friday



Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags off Vande Bharat Express train connecting Howrah and New Jalpaiguri, via video conferencing on Friday (PTI photo)

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi bid final adieu to his mother Hiraben Modi on Friday morning. Hiraben died at the UN Mehta Institute of Cardiology and Research Centre in Ahmedabad at 3.30 am. She was 99.

The mortal remains of the PM's mother were consigned to flames at a crematorium in Gandhinagar. "Hiraben Modi passed away on December 30 at 3.30 am during the treatment at UN Mehta Heart Hospital", the medical bulletin said.

After learning about her death, Modi flew to Ahmedabad and straightaway drove to the house of his younger brother Pankaj Modi at Raysan village on the outskirts of Gandhinagar. The PM's mother lived with his brother.

A stoic-looking PM

offered floral tributes to his mother and bowed down at her feet. Later, the PM shouldered her mortal remains on way to the cremation ground for the last rites. Modi and his brothers performed the last rites and lit the funeral pyre of their mother. A family member told reporters that a condolence meet would be organised a few days later at Modi's native place Vadnagar.

Despite the enormity of the tragedy, Modi decided to carry on with his official engagements and directed the Union Ministers to continue with their engagements. After attending the last rites of his mother, Modi went ahead with the launch of projects worth ₹7,800 crore in West Bengal, choosing to do so through via video-conferencing instead of being in the eastern State physically as scheduled earlier.

Continued on Page 2

PM flags off Howrah Vande Bharat, unveils ₹7,800 cr projects for Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday morning flagged off eastern India's first semi high-speed Vande Bharat Express train from Howrah station and launched development projects worth over ₹7,800 crore in the State.

Considered primarily a tourist and business class train linking Kolkata to State's second most important city Siliguri and hill stations Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Mirik and Pelling apart from Sikkim and the North East, the train will take about an hour less than the Shatabdi Express to reach NJP. It will run six days a week between Howrah and

New Jalpaiguri. Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav and Bengal Governor CV Anand Bose were present during the programme when the train was virtually green-signalled by the PM.

The blue-and-white train resembling its high-speed cousins from Japan, France, China et al Vande Bharat will cover 564 km in 7.45 hours and stop at Bolpur Shantiniketan which has memories of Rabindranath Tagore, Malda the ancient capital of Gaur Vanga and Barsoi junction that joins Bihar's Katihar division and Bengal.

Continued on Page 2

Pant injured in car accident, stable

PNS ■ HARIDWAR

Indian cricketer Rishabh Pant was injured in a road accident in the early hours of Friday when the car he was driving hit the road divider at Narsen near Roorkee. Pant was rescued out of the car just in time before the vehicle caught fire after the crash.

The BCCI stated in a statement that the India wicket-keeper met with a car accident early on Friday morning near Roorkee and was admitted to Saksham Hospital Multispecialty and Trauma Centre where he was treated for impact injuries.

He sustained two cuts on his forehead, a ligament tear in his right knee and also hurt his right wrist, ankle, toe apart from abrasion injuries on his back. His condition remains stable and he has been shifted to Max hospital in Dehradun, where he will undergo MRI scans to ascertain the extent of his injuries and formulate his further course of treatment.

"When he was brought to



Charred remains of cricketer Rishabh Pant's car after it collided with a road divider on the Delhi-Dehradun highway and caught fire, in Roorkee on Friday (Pioneer)

our hospital, he was fully conscious and I spoke to him. He wanted to surprise his mother and was going back home," Dr Nagar of Saksham hospital told PTI. Pant had two lacerations (blunt trauma) on his head but there were no stitches, Dr Nagar said.

"Reports of X-rays conducted at our hospital suggest that there are no bone injuries. Yes, there is a ligament tear on his right knee. How serious it is can only be detected after further investigation and a detailed MRI done."

Continued on Page 2

Pelé remembered for transcending soccer



AP ■ NEW YORK

Pelé was remembered for a life beyond the field, for transcending the sport of soccer and becoming perhaps the most well-known person on Earth.

"Before Pelé, '10' was just a

number," current Brazil forward Neymar wrote following the soccer great's death Thursday at the age of 82.

"That line, beautiful, is incomplete. I would say that before Pelé soccer was just a sport. Pelé changed everything. He transformed soccer into art,

entertainment. He gave voice to the poor, to the Black and above all he gave Brazil visibility. Soccer and Brazil elevated their standing thanks to the King! He is gone, but his magic will endure."

Pelé scored 12 goals in 14 World Cup matches and is the only three-time world champion, winning titles in 1958, 1962 and 1970. His death was especially impactful for generations of Brazilian players who idolized him.

"Today Brazil waves goodbye to one of its most illustrious children," wrote Romario, a 1994 World Cup champion who used Pelé's full name in his post. "Edson Arantes do Nascimento made the world bow to his talent and took Brazilian soccer to the altar of

gods. Throughout his life, Pelé inspired generations of athletes and deserves every tribute."

Ronaldo, who led Brazil to a fifth World Cup title in 2002, described Pelé as "Unique. Genius. Skilled. Creative. Perfect. Unmatched."

"What a privilege to come after you, my friend," Ronaldo wrote. "Your talent is a school through which every player should go. Your legacy transcends generations. And that is the way you will continue to live." Pelé was a revered sports figure to a level probably not comparable to any athlete other than Muhammad Ali. As comfortable mingling with heads of states and celebrities as he was evading defenders, Pelé made an impact in capitals across continents.

Azad rejects reports about return to Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

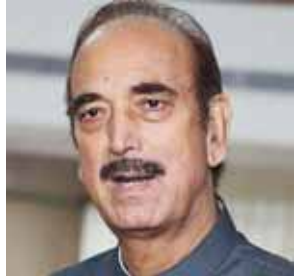
Former Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister and founder of the newly-floated Democratic Progressive Azad Party, Ghulam Nabi Azad on Friday dismissed reports about his possible return to the Congress with which he had snapped his 52-year-old association earlier this year.

Talking to PTI, Azad said reports suggesting his return to the Congress are planted by some vested leaders in the Congress and there was no truth in them.

"I have never spoken to any Congress leader and neither has anyone called me. So I wonder why these kinds of stories are planted in the media," Azad said.

He said these attempts were made by the Congress leaders to create a sense of uncertainty within his party cadres and to demoralise them. "Come whatever may, we will emerge stronger," he said.

Azad, who has served as Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, said, "I have not indulged in any mudslinging with anyone. Whatever I had to say, I made it clear in my res-



ignation letter. After this I am on my own path to serve the people who have given me their trust."

Asked whether he would be joining the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Yatra when it enters Jammu and Kashmir next month, Azad said, "I have no such plan. My hands are full with my own work."

Earlier reports emanating from Congress said efforts are underway to bring back Azad to the party fold and persuade him to join the Rahul-led yatra.

The Congress sources said senior party leaders Ambika Soni, Bhupinder Singh Hooda and Bihar PCC chief Akhilesh Prasad Singh were working to prepare the grounds for a "comfortable rejoining" of Azad.

Continued on Page 2

Uzbek deaths claim: Noida firm export licence suspended

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government has suspended the export licence of Marion Biotech, the Noida-based manufacturer of Dok-1 Max syrup that reportedly led to the death of 18 children in Uzbekistan.

The Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India Limited has written to Marion Biotech that the death of children has brought bad name to the entire pharma industry and may have global repercussions as well.

PEPCIL functions under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and was set up under the provisions of the Foreign Trade Policy in 2004 to promote pharmaceutical exports from India.

In a letter to Sachin Jain, chairman and managing director of the company, Udaya Bhaskar, director general at Pharmexcil, said, "Alleged supply of substandard medicines by your company led to the death of 18 children brought bad reputation to the Indian pharma industry and is also likely to have an impact on the trust of international agencies on Indian pharma exports."

Continued on Page 2

Non-IAS rewarded with elevation to Joint Secy post

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday appointed 19 Joint Secretaries with the major portion of officers coming from the non-IAS or allied services including the Central Secretariat Services (CSS).

The elevation of the non-IAS officers to the post of joint secretary is part of the Government's continued thrust to give more weightage to officers out of the IAS cadres in appointment of crucial offices, especially those at Union Ministries and related departments.

Of the total appointments, only five are from the IAS and the rest are from different services with the Government. The rest are from officers from Defence Estate Services, Indian Forest Service, and Central Public Sector Enterprise services.

Padam Lal Negi (IDAS) has been appointed as joint secretary & financial advisor, Ministry of Civil Aviation, while Sanjeev Kumar Kassi (CPES) will be JS Coal Ministry and Gangadhar Panda (IRS) additional director of the Directorate General of Foreign



Trade (DGFT), according to an order issued by the Personnel Ministry.

Jitendra Srivastava, a 2000-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Bihar cadre, has been named Joint Secretary, Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation and K Manicka Raj (IAS) joint secretary, Department of Economic Affairs.

Preet Pal Singh (Indian Forest Service) has been appointed joint secretary, Ministry of Food Processing industries, Rina Sonowal Kouli (IIS) joint secretary in the Department of Higher Education, Lokhande Prashant Sitaram (IAS) joint secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, and Chittaranjan Dash (IAS) and Ravi Shankar (IDES) have been appointed principal commissioners, Delhi Development Authority (DDA).

Continued on Page 2

Lakshadweep prohibits entry into 17 isles



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Lakshadweep Administration has prohibited entry into 17 uninhabited islands in the area citing national security and public safety concerns. There are a total of 36 islands in the Lakshadweep Union Territory. As per the notification, permission from the sub-divisional magistrate is required for entering into the 17 uninhabited islands.

The District Magistrate (DM) of Lakshadweep issued a proclamation under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) in this regard.

The decision on the proclamation was taken on Wednesday to prevent terrorist or smuggling activities on the uninhabited islands which have temporary structures as houses of labourers who harvest coconuts.

The administration said there could be people involved in illegal, anti-social and anti-national activities, hence the decision.

Continued on Page 2

Construction curbs in Delhi-NCR amid poor air



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As the Delhi's 24-hour average air quality index stood at 399 on Friday, just two notches below the severe category, the Centre's air quality panel directed implementation of curbs under stage III of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in Delhi-NCR, including a ban on non-essential construction and demolition work.

The sub-committee on GRAP, at a review meeting, noted that the AQI is likely to slip into the severe category due to calm winds and stable atmospheric conditions.

It directed authorities in Delhi-NCR to invoke curbs

under stage III of the anti-pollution plan with immediate effect. GRAP is a set of anti-air pollution measures followed in the Capital and its vicinity according to the severity of the situation.

Non-polluting activities such as plumbing, carpentry, interior decoration and electrical works are allowed.

The next stage — "Severe Plus" category or Stage IV — includes steps like a ban on the entry of trucks into Delhi, allowing 50 per cent of staff to work from home in public, municipal and private offices, closure of educational institutions and the plying of vehicles on an odd-even basis, etc.

Won't compromise national security for good relations with neighbours: Rajnath

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday said India wants to have and maintain friendly relations with its neighbours, but it will not be done at the cost of national security.

Speaking at the 90th annual pilgrimage of Sivagiri Mutt here, Singh recalled former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's remark that we can change friends but not our neighbours.

"Therefore, we need good and friendly relations with our neighbours. However, we will not compromise on national security to maintain good relations. We do not want good relations with anyone at the cost of our national security," the Defence Minister said.

Singh also spoke about Kerala-based social reformer Sree Narayana Guru's teachings, like prosperity through

industry' which is the basis of the Indian's government's 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' policy.

As a result of the same we are considered as one of the top 5 economies in the world and our military is seen as a force to be reckoned with, he contended.

He further said that while he was working to protect the "body" -- boundaries -- of India with the help of the armed forces and under the guidance of PM Modi, the saints of the Mutt were working to protect the soul of the country. "I appreciate the work you are doing. We can survive as a nation only when both the body and soul are safe," Singh said and expressed confidence that this year's annual pilgrimage would also be a success.

In January 1928, Vallabhasserry Govindan Vaidyar and T K Kittan jointly requested Guru to have a



Sivagiri pilgrimage as all the higher classes and others had their own pilgrim centres, but 'avaras' had nowhere to go, according to the Mutt website.

Guru gave his consent to the proposal and fixed a date of first of January of every year for the pilgrimage, prior to which pilgrims have to maintain a 10-day long austere life and wear only yellow clothes, the website said.

The Defence Minister, at the event, also condoled the death of Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's mother -- Hiraben.

Singh said that when he learned about the tragic news he was contemplating returning to Delhi, but the PM told everyone that all should fulfill their official commitments before coming back.

"So on behalf of everyone here, the Sivagiri Mutt and myself, I would like to pay tribute to Ma Hiraben," he said.

Thereafter, a one-minute silence was observed by everyone present there.

IIT-Delhi researchers develop technology for industrial scale production of Nanofibres



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Researchers at IIT Delhi have developed a technology for industrial scale production of Nanofibres which is superior to existing commercial technologies in other countries.

Nanofibres, which are 1/1000 th in diameter in comparison to a cotton fibre, is one such material that has found applications in making high efficiency industrial filters, automobile oil and fuel filters, scaffolds for tissue engineering,

highly responsive electronic sensors, protective devices and many more. The IIT Delhi researchers, led by Prof. Ashwini Agrawal and Prof. Manjeet Jassal from the Textile and Fibre Engineering Department, were able to solve all the challenges and develop a scalable prototype. The pilot machine developed at IIT Delhi has been validated in an industrial set-up for producing nanofibres at commercial scale. The technology has been granted patents in India, the UK and the USA.

Strengthening education system priority of Delhi Govt, says Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday said strengthening the education system was the priority of the Delhi Government and working in this direction, the government made its schools excellent and world-class. School teachers also worked hard to provide quality education to the children.

This statement came after the Deputy CM attended the annual day functions in Government Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, Shakarpur, and Government Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya, West Vinod Nagar on Friday.

"There is no dearth of talent among the children studying in our schools. On the basis of their brilliant performance and determination, they are claiming the top spots in every field. One day they will make



India the No.1 country in the world with their talent," said Sisodia, while addressing the annual day functions.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that they made Delhi schools excellent and world-class. Our teachers also worked hard to provide quality education to the children. "With all this, the children got an opportunity to showcase their talent. Now Delhi government schools which were infamous with name of "tent schools," are now famous as "talent schools," he said.

Modi bids final...

From Page 1

Within hours after he performed the last rites of his mother in Gujarat's Gandhinagar, the PM virtually attended two back-to-back meetings — flagging off the new Vande Bharat Express between Howrah and New Jalpaiguri and chairing the meeting of the National Ganga Council — through video conferencing.

Earlier, the PM tweeted that "a great journey of 100 years" has ended with his mother's demise. "A great journey of 100 years has come to an end. I have witnessed three qualities in mother, a journey like that of a tapasvi (saint), a selfless worker and life dedicated to values," Modi tweeted.

"When I met her on her 100th birthday she told one thing which I always remember. 'Kam karo buddhi thi, jivan jivo suddhi thi' (work using your brain and live life with purity)," he said in the tweet.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said at an event in Kerala that the PM told them (Ministers) to not cancel their scheduled programmes and return to Delhi only after completing their work. Home Minister Amit Shah also went ahead with his programme in Karnataka.

BJP leaders shared pictures of the PM attending the official events in Bengal virtually as they heaped praise on him for putting the "country first". Union Minister Anurag

Thakur said, "Grief-stricken, but country first!! An only too well-known characteristic of our Prime Minister."

"He continues to participate in pre-scheduled events, just hours after performing the last rites of his mother. A true Karmayogi veritabally. Hats off! Countless workers like us are inspired and energized by your supreme efforts and commitment," Thakur said.

Another Union Minister, Jyotiraditya Scindia, praised Modi's dutifulness, dedication and sacrifice. Praising the PM's commitment, his Cabinet colleague Giriraj Singh said it is not possible for a man to have so much dedication.

Tamil Nadu BJP president K Annamalai tweeted, "Nation first, Self last. My PM, My Pride!"

BJP national general secretary C T Ravi said, "Nothing, not even personal loss will stop PM Narendra Modi from discharging his duties for Bharata Mata." Modi had visited the Ahmedabad hospital to inquire about his mother's health on Wednesday after learning about her condition. After spending over an hour at the hospital on that day, the PM had left for Delhi after doctors informed him that her health was stable. He had also spoken to doctors at the hospital, a government-funded autonomous medical facility.

The PM regularly visited Raysan and spent time with his mother during most of his Gujarat visits.

Lakshadweep prohibits entry into 17...

From Page 1

"As there are temporary structures on some uninhabited islands for the purpose of housing labourers to harvest coconuts, it cannot be ruled out that along with these labourers there are persons who engage in illegal, anti-social and anti-national activities such as smuggling, seeking shelter or hideout for hiding weapons or narcotics," said the order. Considering the possibility of terror groups or organisations attacking and vandalising important and key institutions of the country and crowded places, the order said, precautionary measures were necessary.

"To prevent fear and terror among the people through terrorism, violence and the possibility of anti-national, smuggling, illegal and anti-social activities as well as attacks on important military and para-military, industrial and religious places of the country, endangering public safety, I find it appropriate to prohibit entry without prior written permission in the 17 uninhabited islands of Lakshadweep," the DM said in the order, adding that violators of punishment under section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the IPC which provides for a jail-term between one and six months or a fine.

Non-IAS rewarded with elevation to...

From Page 1

Deepika Kachhal (IIS) will be joint secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment, Manish Kumar Kanojia (IRS) will be financial advisor, Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), Mumbai, Surender Mehra (IFoS) as adviser, NITI Aayog and Sanjiv (IRS) as joint secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, said the order.

Lucas Laiconsingh Kamsuan (CSS) has been appointed as joint secretary, Department of Public Enterprises, Anshu Manish Khalkho (IDAS) will be director (A&F), National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (NHIDCL), A Dhanalakshmi as joint secretary, Department of Science & Technology, Mebanshailang R Synrem (IAS) will be joint secretary, Ministry of tourism and Preetam B Yashvant (IAS) as joint secretary, Ministry of Women & Child Development, the order said.

LG, Sisodia, BJP leaders condole passing away of PM's mother

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, Delhi Assembl's Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, Delhi BJP working president Virendra Sachdeva and other BJP leaders on Friday condoled the passing away of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother.

Saxena, in a tweet, prayed to God to provide strength to the prime minister to bear the loss. "Deeply saddened by demise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother Hiraba. Wish Moksha to mother along with crores of countrymen in this hour of sorrow. I pray to God to give strength to the prime minis-

ter to bear the loss of his mother," the LG said.

Modi's mother Hiraben passed away at a hospital in Ahmedabad on Friday. She was 99. Sisodia said the news of her death was very saddening.

Delhi BJP leaders on Friday paid tributes to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother Hiraben, with Home Minister Amit Shah saying the way she nurtured her family through numerous struggles is a role model for everyone. Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri expressed deep condolences to the death of PM Modi's mother. "The entire nation is saddened by the demise respected Mataji. Her loving blessing from heaven will always be with whole country," Bidhuri said.



Expressing deep sorrow over the demise of the mother of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Delhi BJP Working President Virendra Sachdeva has said that the life of PM's Mother Heera Ben is inspirational for all of us.

"Not only did she give values of honesty and service to all her children including Narendra Modi even in adverse economic conditions, but the way she used to do all her work herself at the age of 100 years acts as an inspiration to today's youth," he said.

Uzbek deaths claim: Noida firm export...

From Page 1

The copy of the letters are also marked to drug controller general of India (DCGI) VG Somani and Manish Prabhat, Ambassador of India to Uzbekistan. Bhaskar has asked the company to inform to which other countries it has exported the syrup and other drugs.

He had also asked to furnish manufacturing licence, and product per-

missions to export the medicines in question. Meanwhile, Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Friday all manufacturing activities at Marion Biotech's Noida unit have been stopped in view of reports of contamination of its cough syrup Dok-1 Max.

"Following inspection by @CDSCO_INDIA_INF team in view of reports of contamination in cough syrup Dok1 Max, all manufacturing activities

of Marion Biotech at NOIDA unit have been stopped yesterday night, while further investigation is ongoing," Mandaviya said.

The company's legal representative had said on Thursday that the manufacture of Dok-1 Max has stopped "for now".

Mandaviya had said Thursday that further action would be taken based on the inspection of the pharma company.

PM flags off Howrah Vande Bharat...

From Page 1

The PM, who was scheduled to visit Kolkata, had to attend the programme virtually as he had to rush to Ahmedabad following the demise of his mother Heraben Mod.

The PM who virtually launched development projects worth Rs 7,800 crore was to visit Kolkata to take part in Ganga council meet attended amongst others by the Chief Ministers of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Bengal through which the mighty river flows. While speaking after inaugurating

new Taratala-Joka metro service in southern fringes of Kolkata Modi referred to Bengal as the fountain-head of freedom struggle. "We started from Vande Mataram and today we have reached up to Vande Bharat," he said.

Informing that the Centre was making record investments to modernise the Indian Railways and that in next eight years, India would see railways on a new journey of modernisation, Modi said "now modern trains like Vande Bharat express, Tejas express and Humsafar express are being made in India ...

The Indian Railways have established a global identity... (where) The modern electric engines of India are going global". Saying that "infrastructure and transport were major limitations to India's progress," Modi said, how the PM Gati Shakti master plan was brought to solve these challenges." The Bengal Chief Minister who had conceived the Joka metro project during her speech established her own claim over the projects saying "during her tenure as the Railway Minister she had planned this project and even started it.

Pant injured in car...

From Page 1

Ligament injuries have various grades and it can take two to six months to regain complete fitness. According to Dr Nagar, the big bruises on his back, pictures of which went viral on social media, are not burn injuries.

"The injuries happened because he jumped out of car by breaking the window as soon as it caught fire. As he landed on the side of the road on his rear, the skin peeled off. But those are not burn injuries and not very serious," he said. The BCCI is in constant touch with Pant's family while the medical team is in close contact with the doctors currently treating him. The board will see to it that he receives the best possible medical care and gets all the support he needs to come out of this traumatic phase, the BCCI stated.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami also talked to Pant's mother and assured that the best medical treatment will be provided to him. Pant had left for his home in Roorkee from Delhi late on Thursday night to surprise his family. He had planned to spend the New Year with his family.

The Haridwar senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh said that the mishap occurred at about 5:22 AM and prima facie it appears as if the mishap was caused by Pant

momentarily dozing off while driving.

The driver and conductor of a Haryana roadways bus came out to aid the cricketer and informed the police about the mishap. The bus driver, Sushil Kumar, said he saw the car slamming into the divider, stopped and ran over to help. "When we reached the car, sparks were rising but it had not yet caught fire. We pulled out the man from the car, laid him down and ran back to the car to see if there were others inside. I saw no one. When we ran back to the man... We saw his limbs moving," the bus driver told television channels. "When we went closer, he said I am a cricketer, I am Pant. I had not heard of him but the conductor told me he was a big cricketer," Kumar said.

The police reached the accident site in about 10 minutes. The cricketer was first taken to a local hospital and then to the Max hospital in Dehradun. The car he was driving hit the road divider and then went on for about 200 metres before catching fire at Narsan in Haridwar district. Dr Nagar, who initially treated Pant, said he was brought to the hospital at around 6 am and administered primary treatment before being referred to a higher centre. The doctor said Pant had not sustained grievous injuries but had multiple injuries on his forehead, back and ankles.

Azad dismisses reports about...

From Page 1



Azad had quit the grand old party in August and then launched his political outfit 'Democratic Azad Party' in October.

Azad's newly floated Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPA) is in a state of disarray and several leaders who came from the Congress have either left the fledgling outfit or been expelled from it. They include former Jammu and Kashmir Deputy Chief Minister Tara Chand, former Minister Manohar Lal Sharma and former legislator Balwan Singh.

Chand has said they will remain secular till their last breath and would have no objection to joining the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Yatra when it enters Jammu and Kashmir.

"The decision of the DAP to expel us without any reason or justification came as a big surprise to us. Today, we feel that our decision to resign from the Congress in support of Azad was a blunder," Chand, flanked by the leaders and activists, had told reporters here.

Sources said Hooda and Singh have contacted Azad and requested him to return to Congress by joining the Yatra. At the same time, Ambika is understood to have conveyed to her former party associate to consider joining the party and take the initiative by first joining the yatra.

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)	
1/N.I.T No.	GSU/DLI/08/22-23 Dated: 30.12.2022
2/Name of work with its location	Linking of B.G. P Way track and other allied works such as Assembling, linking & dismantling of BG Railway track, points & crossing, traps, at welding work, glued joints, Supply of ballast, leading, loading & uploading of PWay material & PRC sleepers Subzimandi Delhi in c/w Additional Train handling Facilities and Delhi Subzimandi-Delhi Main Additional line.
3/App. Cost of work	Rs. 5,50,87,568.38/-
4/Earnest Money	Rs. 4,25,400.00/-
5/Completion period of work	8 Months
6/Date & Time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Upto 15.00 hrs on 24.01.2023 Opening of tender at 15.00 hrs. on 24.01.2023
7/Website particulars & notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc.	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in
No.: CPM/GSU/Engg./NIT/08/2022-23 (NIT-08) Dated : 30.12.2022	
	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

NORTHERN RAILWAY		
TENDER NOTICE		
SN	Activity	Description
1	Name of work with its location	Contract for Development of Gati Shakti Mult modal Cargo Terminal (GCT) at PATAUDI ROAD Station Entirely on Railway Land
2	Approx. cost of the work	Rs. 7,63,11,926/-
3	Cost of Tender form	11,800/-
4	Address of the office	Sr. DCM/New Delhi, DRM's Office, Northern Railway, State Entry Road New Delhi-110055.
5	Earnest Money to be deposited	Rs 76,31,200/-
6	Completion period of the construction work	18 Months.
7	Date & Time for submission of e-tender and opening of e-tender	11:00 hrs. on 23/01/2023 11:30 hrs. on 23/01/2023
8	Website particulars where complete details of e-tender can be seen.	Website of Northern Railway www.ireps.gov.in
		No. 1C-MG-PTRD-35-GCT-2022 Dated 30/12/2022
		3493/22
		
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE		



Office Bhopal Municipal Corporation

Project Cell

B-Bing, IInd Floor, Inter state Bus Terminal (ISBT) near Chetak Bridge, Bhopal (M.P.)-462024

N.I.T. NO.: 359/2022

dated 29.12.2022

Online item rate bids for the following works are invited from registered government/non government agencies only for this works and firms of repute fulfilling registration criteria:

S. No.	Tender ID	Name of Work	Probable Amount of Contract (Rs. in lakh)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (In Rs.)	Cost of Bid Document (In Rs.)	Period of Completion (in Months)	SOR
1	2022_UAD_233905_2	Annual tender work (Empanelment basis) provided by various government and non government agencies only for making supplying and fixing of bust/statue of architectural bronze material various height and various places in Bhopal City	19844000/-	99720/-	12500/-	12	Non SOR Item.

1. Interested bidders can view the NIT on website <https://mptenders.gov.in/>

2. The Bid Document can be purchased only online from 2:30 P.M. (time) 29.12.2022 (date) to 17.30 P.M. (time) 12.01.2023 (date).

3. Amendments to NIT (if any) would be published on website <https://mptenders.gov.in/> only, and not in newspaper.

4. E.M. Deposit will not be refunded till the end of contract Period.

5. Contract will be awarded to top 05 contractors (L1 to L5) only.

6. Minimum Rate Quoted by any Bidder will be Applicable to all the Empanelled Contractors.

7. Site/Place of Construction may be changed as per the requirement.

8. The Quantity, height and weight of statue should be increase or decrease by the department as per requirement.

Executive Engineer (Project)

Municipal Corporation Bhopal

District Bhopal

फ़ि.क्र. 1143/022/023

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Printed and published by Narendra Kumar for and on behalf of CMYK Printech Ltd., No. 6, Behind Gulab Bhawan, Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, New Delhi-110 002, Phone: 011-40110455, Communication Office: F-31, Sector 6, NOIDA, Gautam Budh Nagar-201301, U.P. Phone: 0120-4879800 & 4879900 and printed at Jagran Prakashan Ltd, D-210, 211 Sector-63, Noida (U.P.). Executive Editor: Navin Upadhyay. AIR SURCHARGE of ₹ 2.00 East: Calcutta, North: Leh West: Mumbai & Ahmedabad South: Bangalore & Chennai. Central : Khajuraho. Lucknow Office: 4th Floor, Sahara Shopping Centre, Faizabad Road, Lucknow-226 016. Telephones: 0522-2346443, 2346444, 2346445.

Chill, fog likely on New Year's eve: IMD

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Get ready to face winter chill and dense fog on the eve of the New Year. Delhi's minimum temperature rose to double digits for the first time in 15 days on Friday, but the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said winter chill and dense to very dense fog are expected to return on the eve of New Year.

The IMD also issued an advisory saying dense to very dense fog may impact road, train and air traffic in the north west region and there are also chances of tripping of power lines. The IMD also cautioned drivers to be careful while driving or outing through any transport and use fog lights during driving for commuters.

As the Delhi's 24-hour average air quality index stood at 399 on Friday, just two notches below the severe category, the Centre's air quality panel on Friday directed implementation of curbs under stage III of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in Delhi-NCR, including a ban on non-essential construction and demolition work.

According to railways, at least 20 trains to Delhi were delayed and three rescheduled due to dense fog in other areas. The IMD said icy winds from the Himalayas will bring the



minimum temperature down by three to five degrees Celsius in the plains of northwest India. "Dense fog is likely to continue over the region during the next 4-5 days. A fresh cold wave spell is likely to commence over northwest India from January 1.

Due to north-westerly winds from Himalayas over plains of northwest India, minimum temperatures very likely to fall gradually by 3 to 5 degree celsius over the same region during next three days and no significant change

thereafter," the IMD in its bulletin on Friday. Met department officials have stated that cold wave conditions are likely to return to Delhi from January 1 following light rain across the northern plains and fresh snowfall in the mountains under the influence of a western disturbance.

The Safdarjung observatory, Delhi's primary weather station, recorded a minimum temperature of 10.7 degrees Celsius, four notches above the normal. The capital had logged a minimum tempera-

ture of seven degrees Celsius on Thursday, 6.3 degrees Celsius on Wednesday, 5.6 degrees on Tuesday and five degrees on Monday. The relief from cold in north India can be attributed to a western disturbance, a weather system characterised by warm moist winds from the Middle East.

With the western disturbance retreating, cold wave and cold day conditions are predicted to wallop parts of Delhi on New Year's eve and the winter chill would intensify further in early January,

meteorologists said. The mercury will drop to six degrees Celsius on Saturday and further to four degrees Celsius by Monday (January 2). Dense fog and cold wave conditions are predicted in parts of Delhi from January 1 to 4, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast.

A cold day is when the minimum temperature is less than or equal to 10 degrees Celsius below the normal and the maximum temperature is at least 4.5 degrees Celsius below the normal. A severe cold day is when the maximum is 6.5 degrees Celsius or more below the normal.

In the plains, the meteorological office declares a cold wave if the minimum temperature dips to four degrees Celsius or when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees Celsius or below and is 4.5 notches below the normal.

A severe cold wave is when the minimum temperature dips to two degrees Celsius or the departure from the normal is more than 6.4 degrees Celsius.

In its advisory, the IMD said that dense fog contains particulate matter and other pollutants and in case exposed it gets lodged in lungs, clogging them and decreasing their functional capacity which hikes episodes of wheezing, coughing and shortness of breath.

Delhiites to face traffic woes as Ashram flyover to be shut from Jan 1 for 45 days

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Traffic movement is likely to be impacted as authorities have decided to shut the Ashram Flyover for 45 days from January 1 for the construction of a connecting road, police said on Friday.

The move is likely to impact the movement of traffic coming from the Outer Ring Road, both sides of the carriageways passing through Ashram Chowk, DND flyover and Mathura Road and Noida, they said.

During this period, both carriageways of the ring road on the underside of the flyover will be operational, the Traffic police said. "From January 1, both the carriageways of the Ashram flyover will be closed due to the construction of a connecting road between the Ashram flyover and new DND flyover," the traffic police said in a statement.

It also advised people to park only at designated places and plan journeys to reach hospitals, ISBTs, railway stations or airports well in advance. "The movement of traffic may be restricted and diverted accordingly from the roads and stretches connecting the Ashram flyover, both side carriageways passing through



Ashram Chowk, DND flyover and Mathura Road," the statement informed. The Traffic Police also suggested alternate routes to people.

Commuters coming from the Badarpur side are advised to follow Mata Mandir Marg for Ring Road and Sarai Kale Khan, and commuters coming from Badarpur, Sarita Vihar and Jamia side are advised to follow U-turn for Captain Gaur Marg, Lajpat Nagar, AIIMS, it said.

"Commuters coming from Chirag Delhi and IT side are advised to follow Ring Road for Noida. Commuters coming from Akshardham and Noida side are advised to follow Sarai Kale Khan, Bhairon Road, Mathura Road for AIMS and Dhaura Kuan," the statement read. Commuters coming from AIIMS and New Delhi side have been advised to follow Lodhi Road, Lala Lajpat Rai

Marg for Ring Road and Mathura Road.

Those coming from the AIIMS and Chirag Delhi side, police have advised them to take Lala Lajpat Rai Marg for Noida and NH-24. "Commuters coming from AIIMS, Moolchand, and Lala Lajpat Rai Marg are advised to follow Captain Gaur Marg for Mathura Road, Sarita Vihar and Badarpur," they added. A couple of months back, PWD officials said that the construction work of the Ashram flyover extension project would be completed within the given deadline which was around November.

They said the construction work was in progress despite complex work conditions. In August this year, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia visited the construction site and said the flyover will be completed by November 2022.

LG OK's notification for 'protected systems' over increasing cyber attack

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has approved the notification to declare the 'Critical Information Infrastructure' of Delhi Power utilities and the computer resources of their associated dependencies, to be 'Protected Systems' in view of a potential cyber attack threat to the power system in the national capital.

Along with this the person authorized in writing by these Power utilities, to access these 'Protected Systems', will also be notified. This will ensure that critical power infrastructure in the City will be protected from any kind of attack or breach.

In 2020-2021, cyber security monitoring agencies of the Centre had observed some cyber attack attempts aimed at disrupting the power system operations. The Ministry of Power had on March 8, 2021, written to the chief secretaries of all states and UTs for precautionary steps.

Cyber attackers are increasingly targeting the power sector, hence taking preventive measures and mitigating threats to protect the Indian Power System needs the special attention of all power sector holders, the Ministry had then pointed out.

The notification approved by the LG would help put into place certain checks, including information security practices and procedures, and access control.

They will ensure that the computer resources of the power utilities - Delhi Transco Ltd (DLTL), State Load Dispatch Centre (SLDC), and discoms - TPDDL, BRPL, and BYPL - will be secured against any



incapacitation or destruction, the statement said. The computer resources of these utilities fall in the category of the 'Critical Information Infrastructure,' or CII, the destruction or incapacitation of which, will have a debilitating impact on national security, economy, and public health, it said.

The notification to be issued now will authorise persons specifically identified by these utilities and be approved by the power department of the Delhi government.

Any person who secures access or attempts to secure access to these protected computer systems, in contravention of the provisions of the laid down procedures, will be punished with imprisonment for up to 10 years and also liable for a fine, it said.

The National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC) had in March asked the Delhi government and the city's power utilities to identify the CIIs and people who would access them for notification.

Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system, Unified Real Time Dynamic State Measurement (URTDMS) system, and Web-Based Energy Scheduling (WBES) system were identified as CIIs in June this year.

Kartvaya Path to see additional security on New Year

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Anticipating a surge in foot-fall at Kartvaya Path in view of the New Year celebrations, the local authorities will deploy additional police personnel and have created multiple parking sites to manage the crowd.

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) on Friday said all the arrangements have been made ahead of time to ensure that people can enjoy the New Year safely and the crowd does not pose any security problems.

According to officials, Delhi Traffic Police has made elaborate arrangements at and around India Gate to regulate traffic -- both vehicular and pedestrian.

In case of heavy pedestrian movement, vehicles may not be allowed to enter the C-Hexagon and India Gate area



and diverted, the traffic police said in an advisory. Visitors are advised to use public transport as there is a shortage of parking space at India Gate, it said. "The number of people visiting Kartvaya Path has increased.

We have increased the deployment of officials from the health department, enforcement and civil defence volunteers at the C-Hexagon and in the nearby areas of Kartvaya

Path," NDMC vice-chairman Satish Upadhyay said. The NDMC has created multiple parking sites with a capacity of 1,117 cars and 40 buses around Kartvaya Path and surrounding areas. These parking sites are located between Janpath and Rafi Marg (space for 500 cars), C-Hexagon and Man Singh Road (space for 200 cars), and Man Singh Road and Janpath (space for over 400 cars). The 3-km-long Kartvaya Path, ear-

lier Rajpath, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 8. It was thrown open to the public on September 9. Special Commissioner of Police (law and order) Deependra Pathak said, "Police have made adequate security arrangements."

A senior police officer said, "There will be extra deployment of police personnel and paramilitary forces at Kartvaya Path. There will be intensive patrolling and extra pickets will also be set up for crowd management."

On Thursday, Delhi Police said more than 18,000 of its personnel from district and traffic units will be deployed across the national capital to ensure security during the New Year celebrations. Traffic will be restricted at Connaught Place from 8 pm on Saturday and alcometers will be used to check drunk driving

FIR against unknown persons for assaulting sanitation worker

New Delhi: The Delhi Police on Friday registered an FIR against unidentified persons for allegedly assaulting a sanitation worker in east Delhi. The development came a day after MCD registered a complaint with Delhi Police against "unidentified goons having close association" with BJP MLA Abhay Verma for allegedly assaulting a sanitation worker in east Delhi.

On the other hand, the AAP leaders on Friday staged a protest at Laxmi Nagar against local BJP MLA Abhay Verma for allegedly assaulting a sanitation worker. The protest was led by AAP MLA Kuldeep Kumar, who alleged that Verma thrashed a sanitation worker as

he belongs to the Dalit community.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Amrutha Guguloth said, "Based on the complaint we received, we have registered a case under sections 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty) and 34 (common intention) of Indian Penal Code against unidentified persons and an investigation has been taken up."

Verma, however, has alleged that AAP MLAs were trying to malign his image and that he would take legal action against them. SR

AAP to start 'BJP's 15 yrs vs AAP's 3 weeks in MCD', BJP calls it gimmick

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP leader Durgesh Pathak on Friday said the party will start its 'BJP's 15 years Vs AAP's 3 weeks' campaign on Saturday to showcase the work done by its councillors in the last 20 days. Pathak said the AAP will share a report card on the work done by its councillors in the last 20 days.

Responding to Pathak's allegations, Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor has said it seems the bare thin victory of AAP's victory seems to have gone over the head of AAP leader.

"AAP leader Pathak's claim of comparing 15 years of BJP rule to last 15 days since MCD



election results is nothing more than a gimmicky statement more so jumla because AAP has not yet got into governance in MCD," he said. On December 7, the AAP won the MCD polls with 134 seats, ending the 15-year rule of the BJP in the municipal corporation and reducing the Congress to just nine seats in a house of 250. Though the oath-taking

ceremony for new councillors is yet to be held, Pathak said those from the AAP have started working in their wards. "Huge changes" can be seen across the city in just 20 days after the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) results, he claimed. "It has been just three weeks and our councillors have started working in their respective wards. We will start a campaign called '15 years Vs 3 weeks' and we will update everyone about the work done by our councillors in the last 20 days," he said on Friday.

He further stated that after the results of MCD were announced, drains have been cleared, parks cleaned and the sanitation workers are being

treated with respect by the AAP councillors.

"People must have noticed this on their social media that Delhi looks changed in just 20 days. Our councillors have been working hard for the betterment of the city," Pathak said.

"MCD employees are curious that finally their wait of 15 years is over and now they are getting the respect they deserve," he added. Reacting on the Pathak's claim, BJP leader said that it will be better if instead of indulging in jumlabazzi the AAP leaders keep patience till 6 January and reconcile to grim reality that they will not only loose Standing Committee Chairman election but Mayor's election too.

'Lakhs of tulip plants will be planted ahead of G20 in NDMC area in city'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the G-20 summit slated next year, lakhs of tulip plants will be planted by the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) in the area under its jurisdiction.

"In the Year 2021, a total of 62 thousand 800 bulbs of tulip flower bulbs were planted, while this year their number has increased to 1 lakh 26 thousand in which tulips of yellow, white, orange, purple, blue, pink and red colors are being planted," said Satish Upadhyay, Vice Chairman, NDMC, while planting bulbs of Tulip flower at Shanti Path, Chanakypuri.

Upadhyay said that tremendous preparations are going on across the country for the G20 Summit. In such a sit-



uation, work is being done day and night by all the concerned departments of the council.

NDMC VC said that the challenge for us with tulip bulbs is that it requires 15 days of chilling temperature minimum of five degrees temperature to break the dormant and germinate it. In view of this challenge, the council had bought pre-treated and pre-

programmed flowers which are easily avoided in irregular conditions, said Upadhyay.

Informing about the other flowers which will be planted by the civic body apart from tulip, he said that other flower varieties also include Pitunia, Salvia, Senaneria, Dimafortica, Antirinum, Papi, Verbina, Dianathus Holyhok, Nasturitium, Byla, Kelumdlia, Deci, Metrokeria, Coriopsis, Lineum, etc.

"The horticulture department is working on the concept of 'NDMC Age City of Flowers' to enhance the beautification of the area and apart from this, "Flower Festival" and "Tulip Festival" will also be organized in Central Park," he stated. "To ensure the people's participation, Selfie points will

be set up in all areas comes under its jurisdiction which includes various places like Connaught Place, Ranjit Singh Bridge, Barakhamba Road, Talkatora Garden, 11 Idols, Mandi House Goal, RML Goal, Windsor Place Goal C Hexagon, Sunheri Bagh Round, Tilak Marg, etc," said Upadhyay.

Upadhyay said that the NDMC is the first civic body in India to plant such precious flowers. No other civic body has put them in public domain. "The response to these precious flowers is excellent from every walk of life.

Seeing these beautiful flowers not only gives us a positive mindset but also brings happiness while passing from there," Upadhyay added.

No garbage will be dumped at Bandhwadi landfill site from March 31, say officials

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Daily waste will not be dumped at the Bandhwadi landfill site in the Gurugram district from March 31st next year, the officials informed on Friday.

For this, MCG has prepared a plan. This decision was taken in the sixth meeting of the committee constituted by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) under the chairmanship of P Raghavendra Rao, Chairman of the Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) on Friday in Gurugram. The officials said it was decided that from February 15, 2023, 70 per cent of Gurugram Municipal Corporation's and 50 per cent

of Faridabad Municipal Corporation's daily fresh garbage will not be dumped at the Bandhwadi landfill site. The officials informed that the current capacity of 4500 tonnes per day to process legacy waste will be increased in a phased manner to 7500 tonnes per day by January 20 and later to 10 thousand tonnes per day by February 15.

Along with this, it has also been decided to increase the existing capacity from 400 KLD (Kilo Liter Per Day) to 800 KLD (Kilo Liter Per Day) by March 31 to dispose of the legacy leachate scientifically. MCG Commissioner Mukesh Kumar Ahuja told the committee that at present there are decentralized units for processing fresh waste namely 80

tonnes per day in Beriwal Bagh, 70 tonnes per day in Badshahpur, 45 tonnes per day in Sector 44, 30 tonnes per day in BWG, 10 tonnes per day in Darbaripur and 35 tonnes per day in Carterpur, fresh waste is being processed.

Such units have also been set up in Ullawas village and South City-2, but due to the objection of the people, the processing work has stopped there at present. About 150 metric tonnes of fresh waste will be processed at both of these places. "10 acres of land is vacant at Bandhwadi landfill site, a waste-to-energy plant will be set up by 2024 and after that, not only will waste be processed, but it will also be able to generate electricity," Ahuja added.

City court acquits man for roaming during lockdown

New Delhi: A city court has acquitted a man, who was allegedly roaming around during lockdown in May 2021, from criminal charge of disobeying order of a public servant, saying charge was not proved beyond a reasonable doubt. The court observed that analysis of material and crucial aspects showed "many shortcomings" in prosecution's case.

The court was hearing a case against Rajeev, who was accused of intentionally disobeying curfew order of Assistant Commissioner of Police, Shalimar Bagh. According to prosecution, the accused was found "roaming around" near Azadpur Mandi on May 15, 2021, during spread of Covid-19 pandemic, without any permit for movement or a satisfactory reason.

Mins, leaders condole demise of Modi's mother

PM's mother exemplified simplicity, says V-P Dhankhar as other leaders condole her death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, several Union Ministers and Chief Ministers besides top leaders of various political parties on Friday condoled the death of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother Hiraben recalling her simple and compassionate life that was inspiration for all.

"Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's mother Hiraba's hundred years of struggle is a symbol of Indian ideals. Shri Modi imbibed the spirit of '#Matradevobhav' and the values of Hiraba in his life. I pray for the peace of the holy soul. My condolences to the family!" the President said in a tweet in Hindi.

The Vice President said the PM's mother exemplified simplicity and sublimity reflecting the virtuosity of motherhood.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla noted that a mother nourishes a person's life with values and said "Hiraben's virtuous life is an inspiration for all of us". Union Home Minister Amit Shah said a mother is the first friend and teacher of a person's life and the pain of losing a mother is undoubtedly the biggest pain in the world.

"The struggles faced by Hira Ba to nurture the family are a role model for all. Her sacrificial ascetic life will always be in our memory. The entire nation stands with Prime Minister Modi and his family in this hour of grief. The prayers of crores of people are with you (Modi). Om Shanti," he said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said: The death of a mother leaves such a void in



Prime Minister Narendra Modi performs last rites of his mother Hiraben Modi, in Gandhinagar, on Friday

PTI Photo

one's life that is impossible to fill. I express my condolences to the Prime Minister and his entire family in this hour of grief."

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who is currently on a two-nation visit including Cyprus and Austria, said in a tweet "I am saddened to hear about the demise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother Heera Ba. Her life was very inspiring. I pray to God to

give the departed pious soul a place at his feet. My deepest sympathies are with the Prime Minister and his entire family at this difficult time. Om Shanti!" Paying tributes, while Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari said it was the values which Hiraben imparted to her family through a difficult life full of struggles that has given the country a leader like Modi, Information and Broadcasting

Minister Anurag Thakur said, "Losing a mother is one of the deepest sorrows. But her goodness, care, wisdom, and love will always be with you." BJP president J P Nadda said her life will always serve as an inspiration. Her affection and commitment to truth gave the country a glorious leadership, he said.

Veteran BJP leader LK Advani recalled that the PM often spoke about the special

bond that he shared with his mother, about her simplicity and her caring persona, and said, these will always be remembered and missed by all.

Paying respects to the PM's mother, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh said, "Mataji's life was a great example of a meaningful life of continuous work on the strength of devotion to values and unwavering faith in God even in extremely difficult circumstances".

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Rahul Gandhi said "... In this difficult time, I express my deepest condolences and affection to him and his family members," Rahul said in a tweet in Hindi. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the entire family in this hour of grief," Kharge tweeted.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi and former finance minister P Chidambaram termed the passing away of a mother is an irreparable loss.

"Your mother is also our mother," Mamata Banerjee told Modi at the Vande Bharat train launch he attended virtually. Her Tamil Nadu counterpart Stalin and Telangana CM KC Chandrasekhar Rao also sent offered their condolences.

Other chief ministers, including Punjab's Bhagwant Mann, Gujarat's Bhupendra Patel, Maharashtra's Eknath Shinde, Karnataka's Basavaraj Bommai, Assam's Himanta Biswa Sarma, Goa's Pramod Sawant and Uttar Pradesh's Yogi Adityanath, also sent their condolences at the irreparable loss. BSP supreme Mayawati and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav were among other prominent leaders who expressed grief.

Condolence messages pour in from world leaders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI

Many world leaders including Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday expressed condolences on the death of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother Hiraben.

Sharif said in a tweet: "There is no greater loss than losing one's mother. My condolences to Prime Minister @narendramodi on the passing away of his mother."

Taking to Twitter, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida wrote, "PM Modi @narendramodi, I would like to express my deepest condolences for the passing of your beloved mother."

May her soul rest in peace," Israel's newly-elected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also tweeted his condolence message to his friend, Prime Minister Modi. "My dear friend @narendramodi, Prime Minister of India, please accept my deepest condolences on the passing of your beloved mother. May she rest in peace and may you find solace in her memory and the rich heritage she bequeathed to you and many others," Netanyahu wrote. Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" said he is deeply saddened to learn about the passing away of Modi's loving mother. "At this hour of grief, I express heart-

felt condolences to PM Modi ji and the family members and pray for eternal peace of the departed soul," he tweeted.

Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe also offered his condolences to Prime Minister Modi. "Deeply saddened by the passing of the beloved mother of Prime Minister Narendra Modi."

My heartfelt condolences to Prime Minister Modi and the family in this hour of grief," he said in a statement. Sri Lanka's former president Mahinda Rajapaksa also expressed his "heartfelt condolences" to Modi on the loss of his beloved mother.

In a tweet, Nepal's former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba also expressed his heartfelt condolences to Modi

and his family "at the passing away of his venerable Mother. May her eternal soul attain Moksha". Bhutan's Prime Minister Dr Lotay Tshering tweeted, "My prayers and condolences to Prime Minister @narendramodi on the demise of his beloved mother early today. The grief of losing one's parent is inconsolable. I wish you strength." "The rare glimpse of Your Excellency and mother we see often, displaying purest love, and her strength and values in you, was an inspiration for all of us."

"But like love and blessings of all mothers, I believe that her prayers will always remain with Your Excellency. May her soul find eternal peace," the Bhutanese Prime Minister wrote in a message.



India cautions citizens against dubious institutions in Canada duping students

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/OTTAWA

Concerned over recruitment agents duping some of its students on the pretext of securing admission in private educational institutions with dubious track record in Canada, India has cautioned its citizens to verify the credentials of the universities there before enrolling.

Underlining this matter, India's High Commissioner Sanjay Kumar Verma said Indian students get "defrauded" in Canada adding "that's a major issue we have to take a look at."

He urged the community to flag such institutions, so that prospective students can be warned in advance against joining them.



Highlighting the issue late Thursday in Ottawa, Verma said due to "factually incorrect narratives doing the rounds in India", "impressionable" students coming from India get "duped."

The issue, especially

recruiters working on behalf of such private colleges, has been flagged in recent months, with several Indian students facing problems in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

Reports said the recruit-

ment agents promise permanent residency to the gullible students after they pass out from the Canadian institutions.

This was also the conclusion of an investigation conducted by CBC News in October, which noted that "lured by the promise of a post-secondary education and a chance to build a life here, thousands of foreign students are coming every year and arriving to find what they were promised and what their families paid for often isn't what awaits them."

Verma said Canada offered "real educational opportunities", pointing to the nearly 240,000 Indian students currently in the country, but warned against the negative impact of recruitment agents.

CBI seizes ₹40L in multi-city searches after arrest of IDAS officer in graft case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Friday said it has seized Rs 40 lakh in cash during multi-city searches conducted after the arrest of an Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS) officer attached to the Army's South Western Command in a Rs 10 lakh bribery case.

The CBI has arrested 1998-batch IDAS Uma Shankar Prasad Kushwaha attached to the South Western Command in Jaipur as the Integrated Financial Advisor (IFA), along with Ram Roop Meena, an accounts officer posted at the IFA office, Vijay Nama, a junior translator, and alleged middleman Rajendra Singh of Jaipur-based Tanushree Services, officials said. The agency also arrested three private persons

Sunil Kumar of Jind-based Hitech Security Services Private Limited, Prabhinder Singh Brar of Ganganagar-based ESS PEE Traders and Dinesh Kumar Jindal of Bhatinda-based D K Enterprises, on bribery charges.

"It was alleged that the accused of the three private firms entered into a conspiracy and were obtaining all works related to outsourcing of conservancy services for various locations in South Western Command and for extending undue favour in the award of the said works, bypassing the provisions of GeM as well as for payment of bills without objection by way of bribing the officials of Integrated Financial Advisor (IFA), South Western Command, Jaipur, Integrated Financial Advisor (IFA), South Western Command, Jaipur,"

the CBI said in a statement. The companies had allegedly conspired to bribe the IFA officials to get clearances for their bills without any objection.

Kushwaha, in connivance with the Accounts Officer Ram Roop Meena, Junior Translator Vijay Nama and middleman Rajendra Singh (who was acting as the middlemen for the public servants), were allegedly demanding and obtaining

illegal gratification from the private contractors. All the arrested accused will be produced before a special CBI court in Panchkula, Haryana, the agency said. "Searches were conducted at nine different places, including Jaipur, Jind, Bathinda and Ganganagar, which led to recovery of cash of Rs 40 lakh (approx.), various property documents relating to public servants and incriminating documents," it added.



Yogi expresses grief at death of Modi's mother

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday expressed condolences over the demise of Heera Ben, mother of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and said that loss of a mother was "unbearable and irreparable" for a son.

"Mother is the entire world for a son," the Chief Minister tweeted. "The death of a mother is an unbearable and irreparable loss for a son. The death of respected Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother is really sad. May Lord



Shri Ram give peace to the departed soul at his sanctified feet. Om Shanti," he added.

Prime Minister Modi's mother, Heera Ben, died in a hospital in Ahmedabad on Friday. She was 100 years old.



Sand artist Sudarshan Pattnaik makes a sand art to pay tribute to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mother on her demise, at Puri beach on Friday

PTI Photo

New Parliament building likely to be inaugurated in March



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The new Parliament building is likely to be inaugurated in March, when the House convenes for the second part of the Budget Session.

Officials said work was going on in full swing and is expected to be completed by February. The second part of the Budget session is likely to be held in the new Parliament

building, sources said. The Budget session is conventionally held in two parts -- the first part usually commences on January 30 or 31 with the address of the President to the joint sitting of the two Houses. The Union Budget is tabled on February 1. The first part usually concludes on February 8 or 9. The second part of the session usually commences in the second week of March and continues till early May.

Parliamentary sources said the part two of the session is likely to be held in the new Parliament building which has come up adjacent to the present structure.

Last month, Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had said construction work of the new Parliament building is going on at a very fast pace. The new Parliament building is part of the redevelopment of

the Central Vista, the nation's power corridor. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had laid foundation stone of new Parliament building in December 2020. The new building, being constructed by Tata Projects Limited, will also have a grand Constitution Hall to showcase India's democratic heritage, a lounge for members of Parliament, a library, multiple committee rooms, dining areas and ample parking space.

Cost Guard concludes pact for VTOL drones

New Delhi: In a major boost to marine surveillance and interdiction capabilities, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) has concluded the maiden contract for multi-copter (VTOL) drones in consonance with the government policy of embracing drone technology. These drones are capable of being launched from both ships whilst underway, as well as

shore stations and will play a significant role during surveillance, security operations, in addition to assisting in search and rescue (SAR), both by day as well as night, officials said here on Friday.

The ICG plans to induct 100 additional drones by 2025, to meet the ever-growing challenges in India's maritime zones, they added.

Yogi Govt's Sangh appeasement policy delayed civic polls: Maya

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, on Friday, hit out at the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, claiming that had the saffron party not "wasted time" in "Sangh appeasement" by indulging in issues such as conversion, jihad and a survey of madrasas, the delay in holding the civic polls in Uttar Pradesh could have been avoided.

Addressing a meeting of the BSP office-bearers of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand at the party headquarters here, Mayawati also slammed the Congress, alleging that both the grand old party and the BJP were against reservation.

"If the intention and policy of the BJP were not to delay the Uttar Pradesh local bodies' election and hold it in a legal manner on time, instead of wasting time in Sangh appeasement by indulging in issues like conversion, hate, jihad and madrasa survey, it would have focused on Other Backward Classes (OBC) reservation in the civic polls," she was quoted as saying in a statement

issued by the BSP.

The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court quashed the Uttar Pradesh government's draft notification on the urban local bodies' polls on Tuesday and ordered it to hold the elections without any reservation for the OBCs.

"Both the Congress and the BJP are anti-reservation parties. Together, they have made the constitutional right of reservation for the uplift of SCs (Scheduled Castes) and STs (Scheduled Tribes) almost inactive and ineffective and now, the same bad, casteist, hostile attitude is being shown in the reservation for OBCs as well.

"Because of their casteist intentions, thousands of posts reserved for them (SCs, STs and OBCs) in government departments have been lying vacant for years. Even the SP's (Samajwadi Party) thinking, policy and intentions are not right on the issue," Mayawati said.

The BSP chief also targeted the UP government over recent roadshows in foreign countries to attract investment.



She termed the above move of the Yogi Adityanath government as wastage of public money.

The former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh also instructed BSP leaders to travel to villages to raise awareness of the party's programmes from the start of the new year in view of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

In the meeting, party leaders and others also discussed programmes to be organised by the party across the state on Mayawati's birthday. After Mayawati became chief minister in 2007, her birthday is celebrated in a grand manner. On January 15, 2009 (her birthday), display of opulence was

quite palpable as the city was draped in blue, a massive dais was set up on the ground near the chief minister's residence and BSP supporters, majority of them being Dalits, were brought from all over UP as well as neighbouring states to participate in the programme.

Over the years the BSP MPs, MLAs and workers have been donating funds in the party coffers on Mayawati's birthday. The fund-raising drive is termed as 'arthik sahyog' (economic cooperation) by the BSP. After losing power in the 2012 assembly election, the BSP has been celebrating Mayawati's birthday as 'Jankalyankari Diwas'.

CJI: N'tl judicial database says 63L cases delayed due to non-availability of counsels

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

Over 63 lakh cases across the country have been considered to be delayed due to non-availability of counsel and over 14 lakh cases are delayed as they await some kind of document or record, Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud said on Friday here.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Andhra Pradesh Judicial Academy, Justice Chandrachud said people must get rid of the colonial mindset of referring to and treating the district courts as subordinate judiciary in hierarchy and in practice. They are not only the backbone of the judiciary but also the first interaction with the judicial institution for many.

Bail, but not jail, is one of the most fundamental rules of the criminal justice system, he said. Yet, in practice, the number of under-trials languishing in prisons in India reflects a paradoxical situation, the CJI pointed out, adding that deprivation of liberty, even for a single day, is a day too many.

"Across the country

according to the NJDG (National Judicial Data Grid) data, almost 14 lakh cases have been delayed as some kind of record or document is being awaited which is beyond the control of the court," he said.

"Similarly, across the country over 63 lakh cases have been considered to be delayed, as per NJDG data due to non-availability of counsel. We really need the support of the Bar to ensure that our courts are functioning at optimum capacity," the CJI said.

He, however, said it may be much higher or lesser as more data is yet to be received from all courts.

Speaking about district courts, he asserted that Section 438 of the CrPC (bail) and Section 439 (cancellation of bail) must not be meaningless, mechanical, procedural remedies which are perceived at the grassroots level, at the district judiciary, only to get a rejection and then move to a higher court.

According to him, remedies must be provided by the district judiciary itself as they affect the poorest of the country.



Justice Chandrachud said there is also a brooding sense of fear among the courts of the first instance, on how the grant of anticipatory bail or a normal bail will be perceived at the higher level and that fear is not purely irrational.

"There have been multiple cases where trial court judges have been pulled up for grant of bail in certain High Courts. The performance of judges has been analysed on the basis of their conviction rate. At the chief justices conference, I have specifically called upon the chief justices to ensure that such practices are done away with," he said.

The CJI said as part of the 'Digital India' mission, com-

mon service centres are being set up all over the country down to the level of every Gram Panchayat and the Supreme Court is trying to ensure that the e-court services are merged so that judicial facilities are availed at the village level in the country.

"Our mission has to be to ensure that the whole colonial model of people seeking justice is replaced by a new justice delivery system where we reach out to our citizens," he said adding that providing certified copies online is just one step in the process.

The Chief Justice said women legal professionals have outnumbered men coming into the judicial fraternity.

In Modi's own words: Simple yet extraordinary life of his mother who emphasised on 'garib kalyan'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often highlighted his mother Hiraben's deep influence in shaping his life as he rose from a humble family background to become India's Prime Minister.

As Hiraben, who passed away on Friday, entered the 100th year of her life on June 18 this year, Modi had penned an emotional and deeply-felt tribute in what is probably his most detailed impression of his mother in the public realm.

With the poor's welfare at the centre of many of his Government schemes, he had recalled that his mother always inspired him to have a strong resolve and focus on "garib kalyan", a catchphrase associated with him.

When the BJP picked him to be the Gujarat chief minister in 2001, he said his mother was ecstatic and told him, "I don't understand your work in the government but I just want you to never take a bribe."

In the blog, he had highlighted her sacrifices and various aspects of her life which "shaped" his mind, personality and self-confidence.

Modi said a life lesson his mother taught him was that it was possible to be learned without being formally educated.

"My mother is as simple as she is extraordinary. Just like all mothers," he had said in his blog.

Modi said once he wanted to publicly honour all his teachers, including his biggest teacher his mother.

However, his mother declined, saying she was an ordinary person. "I may have given birth to you but you have been taught and brought up by the almighty," Modi recalled her as saying.

He said though his mother did not attend the event, she made sure that he invited someone from the family of Jethabhai Joshi, his local teacher who taught him the alphabet.

"Her thought process and far-sighted thinking have always surprised me," Modi said.

In 2014, when Modi sought his mother's blessings on his 64th birthday, she surprised him by giving him Rs 5,001, something which she had never done before. This sum, she said, was meant for Jammu & Kashmir flood relief fund, according to a Twitter handle which gives out snippets about Modi's past.

The prime minister had recalled in his blog that his family stayed in a small mud house in Vadnagar with clay tiles for a roof. He also mentioned the innumerable every day adversities that his mother encountered and successfully overcame.

"During the rains, the roof of the house would leak and the house would flood. Mother would place buckets and utensils below the leaks to collect the rainwater. Even in this adverse situation, mother would be a symbol of

resilience," he said.

He said his mother not only did all the household chores by herself but also worked to supplement the meagre household income. She used to wash utensils at a few houses and take out the time to spin the 'charkha' to help meet the household expenses, Modi added.

The prime minister said his mother also had deep respect for those engaged in cleaning and sanitation work. Cleanliness was something that she was always extremely particular about, he said.

Whenever someone would come to clean the drain adjacent to their house in Vadnagar, he said, his mother would not let them go without having tea.

Modi said his mother found happiness in other people's joys and was extremely large-hearted.

He recalled that his father brought home his close friend's son, Abbas, after his untimely death. "He stayed with us and completed his studies. Mother

was as affectionate and caring towards Abbas just like she did for all of us siblings," Modi said.

"In my mother's life story, I see the penance, sacrifice, and contribution of India's matrushakti. Whenever I look at mother and crores of women like her, I find there is nothing that is unachievable for Indian women," Modi had said.

The prime minister noted there were only two instances when his mother accompanied him publicly.

Once, it was at a public function in Ahmedabad when she applied tilak on his forehead after he had returned from Srinagar where he had hoisted the national flag at the Lal Chowk after completing the Ekta Yatra, he said.

The second instance was when he first took oath as Gujarat's chief minister in 2001.

He also described his mother as a dutiful citizen who has voted in every election, from panchayat to Parliament.

Noting that she leads an

extremely simple lifestyle, he had said there are no assets in her name.

"I have never seen her wear any gold ornaments and she has no interest either. Like earlier, she continues to lead an extremely simple lifestyle in her small room," he said.

Modi said his mother remains abreast with current developments and continues to have a sharp memory.

"Recently, I asked her how long she watches TV every day. She replied that most people on TV are busy fighting with each other, and she only watches those who calmly read out the news and explain everything. I was pleasantly surprised that mother keeps track of so much," he said.

Describing his mother as a 'Kabirpanthi', he said she has immense faith in the divine but at the same time has remained afar from superstitions and inculcated the same qualities in her family members.

On his decision to leave home at an early age, the prime



minister said while his father, who is no more, was extremely disheathered, his mother understood him and blessed him. Modi said his father later came to terms with his decision and blessed him.

He said since childhood, his mother could feel that he had a different mindset.

Modi said when he looks back at his parents' lives, their honesty and self-respect have been their biggest qualities. "Despite struggling with poverty and the accompanying chal-

lenges, they never left the path of honesty or compromised their self-respect".

He said they had only one mantra to overcome any challenge: hard work, constant hard work.

"In his life, my father never became a burden on anyone. Mother too tries to ensure that she does her own chores as much as possible... I have no doubt that everything good in my life, and all that is good in my character, can be attributed to my parents," Modi wrote.

No one would be spared if found involved in APPSC question paper leak case: Rijiju

PTI ■ ITANAGAR

Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Friday said no one would be spared if found involved in the Arunachal Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) question paper leak case.

Expressing his concern over the paper leak issue in the assistant engineer (civil) exam this year, Rijiju, who hails from Arunachal Pradesh said the country's premier investigating agency the CBI is investigating the case to unearth the truth behind the scam.

Responding to questions from reporters at Naharlagun, near here, the Union Law minister who represents Arunachal West Parliamentary constituency

in the Lok Sabha said, "Investigation should be done strictly against those involved in the job scam which is most distressing for all of us as APPSC is an autonomous body and those working in it should re-think about it and its ongoing chaos."

"I had already spoken to the chief minister after the incident was reported to me and suggested that all the members of the Commission should be held responsible for breaching public trust," Rijiju said.

The union minister said no one should influence the investigation process.

"Let the investigation agency work freely," Rijiju asserted and added that no one should be spared if found involved in the scam.



The alleged paper leak case came to light after a candidate filed a police complaint. More than 400 candidates had appeared for the examination held on August 26 and 27.

In October, the state government handed over the case to CBI. A charge sheet was

filed by the investigating agency against 10 accused people at the District and Sessions Court in Yupia near here on December 8.

The case was initially investigated by the Capital police and later transferred to the Special Investigation Cell (SIC) of the state police.

Maha: Rape accused attacks lawyer after court awards him life sentence

PTI ■ THANE

A 52-year-old man accused of raping his daughters attacked and injured a public prosecutor during a hearing in a special court in Maharashtra's Thane district on Friday.

The special court of judge V V Virkar found the accused guilty of charges under relevant provisions of the IPC and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and sentenced him to imprisonment for life (till his death).

After the judge pronounced the sentence, the accused ran to special public prosecutor Rekha Hiwrale and allegedly attacked her, an official said.

The lawyer, who suffered minor injuries was rushed to a



hospital, and an FIR was registered against the accused with Thane Nagar police, he said.

The accused, a resident of Navi Mumbai, had repeatedly raped his daughters, aged 30 and 17, in 2018 and impregnated one of them.

The accused, who was awarded double life imprisonment for the offences, was also fined Rs 20,000.

SIA files chargesheet against four LeT terrorists in Jammu

PTI ■ JAMMU

The Jammu and Kashmir State Investigation Agency (SIA) has filed a chargesheet against four Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terrorists, including self-styled commander Talib Hussain Shah who had recruited many youths to revive terror ecosystem in different districts of the Jammu region, officials said on Friday.

The chargesheet was filed against Shah and his three associates in a special court for their involvement in terror activities at the behest of their Pakistan-based handlers, the anti-terror agency said in a statement here.

Shah, a resident of Rajouri, and his Kashmiri associate Faisal Ahmad Dar of Pulwama were overpowered by the villagers of remote Tukson Dhok



in Reasi district in July and later handed over to police. Two AK assault rifles, one pistol, seven grenades and a large quantity of ammunition were recovered from them.

"The case was initially registered in Police Station Mahore of Reasi, but later on transferred to SIA Jammu. The investigation has established that Mohd Qasim and Zia-Ul-Rehman, who after joining terrorist ranks exfiltrated to Pakistan, were using drones for supplying weapons and explosives which were collected by Shah and his associates," the statement said.

Shah seeks support for BJP in Old Mysuru, calls Cong, JD(S) corrupt

PTI ■ MANDYA

Hitting the ground running in poll-bound Karnataka, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday called Congress and JD(S) "parivaarvadi" (dynastic politics) and "corrupt", and urged the people of Mandya and Old Mysuru region to support the BJP in forming a government with majority in the state.

The BJP is considered to be weak in the Vokkaliga-dominated Old Mysuru region, and is focusing on this belt to gain complete majority in 2023 Assembly polls.

"Enough of JD(S)-Congress, Congress-JD(S). This



time Mandya, the Mysuru region should make BJP win with full majority. Congress and JD(S) are both parivaarvadi (dynastic politics) parties, they are corrupt parties," Shah said.

Addressing a massive public meeting as part of the ongoing 'Janasankalpa Yatra' of the state BJP, he said: "We have seen administration of both parties. When Congress comes, Karnataka will become Delhi's

ATM and when JD(S) comes, it becomes ATM for a family. Repeatedly, these two parties through corruption have stopped Karnataka's progress."

Stating that time has come to get free from dynastic politics and corruption, Shah asked people to give BJP an opportunity to form the government with a full majority once, and bring a "double engine" government in the state.

"In the next five years under the leadership of Modiji, we will take Karnataka much forward in the path of progress," he said, accusing both Congress and JD(S) of being "corrupt, communal and also protectors of criminals".

AP CM lays foundation stone for ₹986 crore developmental works

PTI ■ JOGINATHUNIPALEM

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy laid foundation stone for a medical college and other developmental works worth Rs 986 crore here on Friday.

He unveiled the plaques of Rs 470 crore Yeleru and Tandava canals link project, Rs 500 crore Government Medical College to be built in 52.15 acres at Narsipatnam and Rs 16.60 crore road widening works on Narsipatnam highway, an official release said.

Later, addressing a large gathering, Jagan said the North Andhra region, "neglected by the previous TDP regime," will

now march ahead with other areas on development front.

He said that the new medical college coming up with an annual admission capacity of 100 seats and the affiliated Nursing College having the same capacity, will cater to the growing health and medical needs of the surrounding areas.

People who used to go to Visakhapatnam for medical treatment in the earlier regime will have a sigh of relief once the construction of the medical college, with a 630-bed IP (inpatient) capacity is completed, he said and adding that it would also change the shape of the Narsipatnam and its surrounding areas.

R-Day parade: BSF women contingent atop camels to don Raghavendra Rathore outfits

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BSF's women contingent atop camels that will be featured for the first time in next month's Republic Day parade will be wearing military regalia designed by popular fashion designer Raghavendra Rathore, a force spokesperson said Friday.

The annual parade held on January 26 will witness the border forces' first-ever women contingent on camels this time, riding alongside their male counterparts.

The famed camel contingent of the Border Security Force (BSF) has been a part of the Republic Day celebrations since 1976, after it replaced a similar squad of the Army



which had been participating in the annual parade since it was first held in 1950.

"The uniforms for the 'mahila praharis' (women guards) represent the many treasured craft forms of India, fashioned in different parts of the country, and assembled in-house at the Raghavendra Rathore Jodhpur studio.

"The uniform incorporates sartorial and cultural elements of Rajasthan's history in its

designs," the BSF spokesperson said in a statement.

While designing the outfit for the female troopers, the spokesperson said, "functionality as well as the privilege and honour of wearing one of the national forces' uniforms has been reflected, which resonates with the iconic RRJ Jodhpuri bandhgala that is stately, classic and elegance personified."

The camel contingent comprises armed BSF personnel and members of its band contingent.

They follow the foot marching contingent during the parade that ambles down the Rajpath, now Kartavya Path, from the Rashtrapati Bhavan to the Red Fort via the India Gate.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Shameless

CBFC under Prasoon Joshi has disgraced itself by surrendering over the song in *Pathaan* movie

The Central Board of Film Certification's (CBFC's) advice to the makers of upcoming film *Pathaan* that they should carry out a few changes in the film, including in its songs, is an abject capitulation to the whims and fancies of the enemies of freedom of expression. The mission statement of the statutory body says that it is mandated to, among other things: ensure healthy entertainment, recreation and education to the public; make the certification process transparent and responsible; and develop the CBFC as a centre of excellence. All this is possible only if creative freedom is ensured, which the panel has miserably failed to do. Indeed the CBFC under Prasoon Joshi has disgraced itself by surrendering to the tetchy, whose sentiments are hurt by anything — from the countenance of Ravan to the colour of Deepika Padukone's attire. The *sanskaris* raised a stink over her dress in a *Pathaan* film song. Explaining his meek surrender to the Hindutva hot-heads, Joshi said that the CBFC is committed to finding "the right balance between creative expression and sensibility of the audience." He said that such a solution could be found through "meaningful dialogue between all stakeholders." Shorn of twaddle, it means: submission to the *sanskari* inquisition is the right balance. Just because some self-proclaimed champions of morals and of Hinduism say that a film or a song hurts their sentiments and religious feelings, a statutory panel shamelessly bows to them without the application of mind.

The Joshi-headed CBFC's submission is so sickening that even his predecessor, ex-CBFC Pahlaj Nihalani, has come out in defence of the movie. He has rightly pointed out about the absence of any guideline specifying the excision of a colour. You can suggest changes, he said, if there's vulgarity or obscenity, but if the cuts are because of colour, it would be wrong. "*Pathaan* is a victim of controversy." Come to think of it: Nihalani was known as a *sanskari* censor who, as CBFC chief, was extremely prudish. When Joshi succeeded Nihalani, many thought that it was a change for the better, for the current incumbent is known for his sugary, inspirational songs. But change in our times is always for the worse; Joshi's capitulation is a testimony to this unsettling truth. Nihalani, who knows about the functioning of the CBFC, has further claimed that Joshi has been pressured by the Information & Broadcasting Ministry. This is quite possible, given the clout the Sangh Parivar enjoys in the current dispensation: some super-moraliser might have pestered the Ministry to 'advise' the CBFC to look into the matter (that is, force the filmmakers to change the song). The CBFC, in turn, 'advised' the filmmakers to do the same. The Ministry and the garrulous saffron commissars ought to answer a simple question: is this how India will grow as a soft power? The fact is that soft power presupposes free speech, which saffronites are undermining.



Au revoir Black Pearl

Best described as poetry in motion, it was Pele's character on and off the field that made him super star

December 29, 2022 will go down in history as a sad day as the world lost 20th century's iconic sport star Pele who breathed his last at the age of 82. The name Edson Arantes Do Nascimento, is likely to evoke a cold stare. But the name Pele is certain to bring a sense of respect, admiration and love as it was synonymous with classic football as well as sportsman spirit of the highest order. Born in a ghetto in the State of Minas Gerais in Brazil, this poor lad rose to become sporting world's all time great through his artistry. Critics describe him as a poetry in motion as he cut through any kind of defense line to score goals from positions non-existent in the radars of the rivals. What added to the beauty of his game was his character on and off the field. Pele was the highest paid sports man in his playing days. Brazil became famous because of Pele and football. What Pele gave to the world was not just football, he excelled in beautiful football which made Brazil the world champions in 1958, 1962 and 1970. The combination of Pele, Garrincha, Zagallo was a lethal combination as the rivals and spectators stood in awe when they mesmerized the maidans with their magic. Connoisseurs of the game say that had Pele not retired from international football at the age of 30 in 1970, Brazil would have won the world cup in 1974 too. Remember, Lionel Messi led Argentina to the winners' podium at the age of 35!

In his 14 years career for the Brazilian national team, this Black Pearl scored 77 goals from 92 international outings. The world had to wait till 2022 to see Neymar equaling Pele's record of 12 goals scored in 14 world cup appearances during 1957 to 1970. The King of the Beautiful Game returned to football in 1975 by signing with Cosmos FC of New York which was a shot in the arm for the New World. India, nay, Calcutta, the soccer city of India, got a chance to see Pele in action in 1977 as he led Cosmos to play an exhibition match against Mohun Bagan at the age of 37! The match ended in a 2-2 draw as the visitors were restrained from going all out because the overnight rains had made the pitch unplayable. Perseverance, artistry, skill and stamina were his secrets. The world will miss Pele, the super star of modern football.

Perennial shadow of apprehensions

Reflections on the cusp: Will the wars give way to peace, will the untold misery of the people around the world ever end, will there be a new dawn?

History, with apologies to T.S. Eliot has many savage passages, and bloodied corridors. This is hardly surprising. As Erich Fromm states in *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, "Man's history is a record of extraordinary destructiveness and cruelty and human aggression, it seems, far surpasses that of man's animal ancestors, and man is in contrast to most animals, a real killer."

The present juncture at the cusp of a departing 2022 and 2023 at the threshold, is not the most violent of the year-end transitions the world has seen. In recent history, the year-endings during the 1914-18 and 1939-45 world wars were drenched in blood. One can cite many other examples, particularly at the regional and local levels. Consider the plight of Ukraine's population, freezing at sub-zero temperatures with the energy grids supplying power to their heating systems knocked out by Russian missiles and Iranian drones used by the Russian forces. Nor can one overlook the plight of hundreds and thousands of inhabitants in vast tracts of the country writhing under the iron heel of the Russian forces of occupation. Consider also the plight of the people of Afghanistan oppressed by the Taliban's obscurantist policies and sadistic practices, which have confined women to perennial house arrest and deprived both men and women of the most basic human rights. Nor can one ignore the situation in Myanmar where a criminal junta seeks to buttress its faltering hold on power through mass murder, artillery fire, air strikes, torture, and large-scale arrests and imprisonment of civilians.

Besides, 2023 comes under the shadow of two disturbing questions. Will the Ukraine war turn into one between Russia and NATO, an apprehension that NATO's secretary-general, Jens Stoltenberg, has recently expressed in public? Will a war between Russia and NATO become a nuclear conflict, which may even mean the end of the world as we know it? While the



chances of a nuclear Armageddon are still slim, a conventional war between Russia and NATO can hardly be ruled out. Other lines of conflict include India's border/line of actual control with China. Will the latter's belligerence, as reflected in its initiation of border skirmishes, lead to war between the two countries? Will China invade Taiwan and will the US intervene on Taipei's side in the ensuing war? None of the situations discussed above may, of course, materialize. Apprehension of one or all of them happening, however, is not conducive to a feeling of tranquility and well-being. There have been moments when the world has retreated from the brink of mass slaughter, perhaps the most remembered of which was the crisis of October 1962, when the issue of the positioning of Soviet nuclear-tipped missiles in Cuba brought Moscow and Washington DC dangerously close to a nuclear conflict. It was the awareness of the devastating consequences that would follow, and the wisdom of Nikita Khrushchev, then Soviet Union's de-facto ruler, and John Kennedy, the US president, that saved the day.



THE PRESENT JUNCTURE AT THE CUSP OF A DEPARTING 2022 AND 2023 AT THE THRESHOLD, IS NOT THE MOST VIOLENT OF THE YEAR-END TRANSITIONS THE WORLD HAS SEEN

The Cuban missile crisis was both a terrifying stand-alone incident and a part of the cold war, the entire period of which the world spent under the shadow of a nuclear conflict that never came about. This is understandable. In its collectivity, the world reflects the survival instinct that prevents most people from doing what can kill or seriously harm them. Thus, the use of poison gas, which caused untold suffering to troops during World War I, was completely banned by the Geneva Protocol of 1925. It has occasionally been used since then but never on a scale seen during World War I.

Russia has consistently opposed, and the NATO countries have not signed, the Treaty on the Prohibition of nuclear weapons, adopted by the UN General Assembly, which came into force on January 22, 2021. A nuclear conflict, however, is extremely unlikely. It will follow when the compulsion of sheer political and physical survival drives the head of a nuclear-armed government to order the pressing of the trigger, and those tasked to do so, obey the order, knowing full well that it would spell the end of the world along with their families. Such a scenario is highly unlikely but cannot be ruled out as things stand now.

Can the Ukraine war push Vladimir Putin into a position in which he feels compelled to order a nuclear strike? Will those around him obey his order? There is no clear answer to either at the moment, as there is none to the question of how long the people of Afghanistan and Myanmar will suffer their terrible fates. Forces of freedom, justice, and morality have prevailed only when they have coincided with the material interests of dominant world power.

The Greek historian Thucydides (460-400 BC) said in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, "Right, as the world goes, is only in question between equals in power, while the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must." This holds true on December 31, 2022, as it did on the last days of all years till now. It will continue to hold true as long as swords are not beaten into plowshares, the chances of which happening are remote at the moment.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RETIREMENT AGE OF JUDGES

Sir — According to various newspapers the "Department of Justice" is proposing to increase the retirement age of the Supreme court and High courts' judges. If this is implemented, can the department of justice give a surety of transparent business of the said departments? If the central government positively supports the proposed movement, there are many more departments that are waiting to demand the same, like education and administration departments.

Therefore the government should not nod for approval towards the presented proposal, whether it is law courts or educational institutions, otherwise, it will definitely hurt the many who are standing in queue for the job. If there is a scarcity of "certain experts" in legal and Educational fields, the government can re-appoint the required experts, subject to physical fitness and qualification. Then they should not be entertained with regular benefits such as PF, Gratuity, Pension, etc. No one can deny that many educated youngsters are already facing unemployment, resultantly working as delivery boys, which is a question mark for educational institutions and the state and central governments indeed.

SM Arif Hussain | Hyderabad

UDDHAV'S JIBE

Sir — The angry Uddhav Thackeray, who heads one of the Shiv Sena factions, on Thursday made a very strong statement targeting the Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde leading the party's rival camp, saying that those who do not have the courage to build anything resort to stealing and capturing. His statement comes a day after both the Sena factions faced off at the party's office in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) headquarters in south Mumbai. The clash led to tension for about an hour before the police intervened.

Thackeray said at the Maharashtra legislature complex, That the government is yet to give a proper response on the supplementary demands of Rs 52,000

Roadshow leads to disaster



Disaster struck in Nellore as 7 people died in a Chandrababu Naidu roadshow and that is the talk of the town. Politicians exceed all the limits and play dirty politics creating enmity with the centre and paying price for the same. Chandra Babu Naidu tried to be over smart by with-

drawing from NDA and not paying a high price for the same. The roadshow spread hatred and Covid19 persisted and the crowd became the super spreader.

The Nellore mishap happened when the leader of the opposition N Chandrababu Naidu was addressing a road show there. People gathered in large numbers at the venue and there was some jostling among the public during the meeting, leading to a stampede-like situation. In the meanwhile, K. Chandrasekhar Rao changed his Modi hate speech as his daughter Kavitha was caught in a Delhi liquor scam and now required redressal.

Gundu K Maniam | Coimbatore

crore, incentives for Vidarbha, and farmers hit due to unseasonal rains. The confrontation at the BMC took place after Shinde faction MP Rahul Shewale, former civic body's standing committee chairman Yashwant Jadhav and former corporator Sheetal Mhatre, all belonging to the Shinde-led Balasahebanchi Shiv Sena, entered the party office on Wednesday evening. Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) faction's former corporators, including Ashish Chemburkar and Sachin Padwal, objected to their presence, leading to heated exchanges and fights. This open political war has broken out between Thackeray and Shinde which may result in tension in the state.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

DANCE OF DEMOCRACY

Sir — Civic nationalism, also known as liberal nationalism, is a form of nationalism identified by political philosophers who believe in an inclusive form of nationalism that adheres to traditional liberal values of freedom, tolerance, equality, and individual rights and has no ethnocentrism. At the dawn of history, India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her successes.

Religion forms a major, and in many cases, the central element of Indian life. Ethnic communities are diverse in terms of linguistics, social traditions, and history across India. Indians nearly universally take great pride in their country. Most Indian adults would say they are very proud to be Indian, and similarly, large percentages say they are very proud to be from their state and to be a member of their religious community.

Though seemingly paradoxical, the democracy and nationalism have been complementary to each other. While democracy is inclusive and embraces diversity, the nationalism on the other hand harps on oneness of ideas, culture, values and ethnicity. India has beautifully demonstrated that both can complement and thrive. The Indian experiment with the democracy has been a difficult one. It has faced many challenges from nationalist forces but at the end has always been able to assimilate the nationalist concerns without harming the core values of the democracy. It is therefore the dance of democracy that is eternal and must be cherished.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Be it keeping the UTS safe, having zero tolerance for corruption, or adopting best practices- the Modi govt is leaving no stone unturned in realising the vision of 'self-reliant' UTS.



Union Home Minister — Amit Shah

The New Twitter policy is to follow the science, which necessarily includes reasoned questioning of the science... anyone who considers criticising science as doubting them cannot be regarded as a scientist. Twitter chief — Elon Musk

Actors will always be treated as 'scapegoats' in both India and Pakistan and as artists, one can only hope that someone in power does not use them as 'easy targets'.



Actor — Mahira Khan

They (India) fired their chief selector, and the selection committee changed the captain because they couldn't digest how Pakistan went ahead of them. Former PCB Chairman — Rameez Raja Today I am going for Vipassana meditation. Many hundred years ago Lord Buddha taught this knowledge. Have you done Vipassana? If not, then definitely do it once. There is a lot of mental, physical and spiritual benefit.



Delhi CM — Arvind Kejriwal

FIRST COLUMN

BEST WAY TO PREDICT FUTURE IS TO CREATE IT

The constant disruption around us is changing us too



One more year will take its last breath soon. It started with the wrong note in Ukraine. The cacophony of war just refuses to cease. Then came the economic meltdown in our neighbouring island nation. In the Big Apple, a knife proved mightier than the pen. Mother nature kept us occupied with her mood swings. Gymnasiums became mortuaries. A singer left the stage heart broken. The Queen bid adieu. But all's well that ends well with the beautiful game on display. The Cup is half filled as the year is running its last lap.

The good news is that we survived. Relatively, the year was gentle with us mortals. It gave us hope to keep the faith. A welcome breather from the turbulence experienced earlier. Gratitude is the overwhelming emotion we carry as the year ends.

Fortunately, the Indian economy grew steadily despite the ongoing inflationary climate and geopolitical flashpoints. We are slowly but surely finding our groove again. All the economic indices today tell us that tomorrow is going to be better. Our GDP growth rate even after correction is just behind Iraq this year. Celebrations in all forms are back. We are poised for undeniable growth. The construction industry also did well, buoyed by the rekindled demand in residential, retail, manufacturing, healthcare and hospitality sectors. The next phase of growth is expected to be a shift towards smaller cities as infrastructure develops and personal mobility of the population increases.



The great resignation is still on. People are comfortable letting go of jobs they feel is a compromise. Recruiting and retaining talent is an uphill task. Flex jobs are on the rise and will dominate the market by the end of this decade. Moonlighting with legal bindings is just around the corner. Rigid employers will find it difficult to survive. KPI has new meanings today.

The nature of work is changing, so is the workplace. The purpose of an office is no longer to keep a group of people in a finite space for a fixed duration. The workspace today is evolving to become more democratic, more flexible and more hospitable. Human interaction is still a necessity, and how we design spaces to enhance the same will be the key to future workplaces. Work and wellness need to go hand in hand. Hybrid is definitely the word of the year.

The constant disruption around us is changing us too. AI is slowly but surely making inroads in our lives. Priorities are recalibrated. Opinions are not open for discussion. Hustle is the new millennial vibe. So, how do we flourish in such turbulent times? How do we embrace this constant uncertainty? So many questions and so few answers.

The silver lining is humans can and will adapt to the changing environment. As planners, as engineers and as policy makers, we have to find our true north star. Design remains a strong tool to usher in change. Environment, society and governance are the fulcrums of future development. Every masterplan, every city, every building we build tomorrow must be human centric, sustainable and inclusive. Designing them accordingly should happen by default and not due to accreditations and ratings requirements. To walk this talk, every one of us needs to contribute to the best of our ability. The next year and the years after that are going to be crucial for us to reign in climate change. It is an uphill and difficult task in a fragmented world. So, while our heads of nations try their best to arrive at a consensus, we can start a conversation with our stakeholders on ESG. As it is said, "The best way to predict the future is to create it".

(The author is Managing Director, Colliers India)

India assuredly enters 2023 for global stake

India came out unscathed in 2022 despite importing inflation on account of the sharp rise in crude oil price

India will be entering into 2023 on a confident note. The past few years tested Indian resilience. The outbreak of the Coronavirus was the top challenge for India. Several countries have socially, politically and economically been battered by the pandemic. Yet, India stood firm. From day one, the Indian faith in the evidence-based science with undiluted commitment of the leadership led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi held India steady.

In 2022, India fully normalised life. The vaccination was a success. The people were well acquainted with the best practices. The healthcare was made robust. Facilities were put in place. The people felt confident and they returned to their daily routine life. This was a remarkable success in the face of extreme adversity. The Indian scientists, healthcare personnel and the people at large collectively deserve applause for effectively dealing with the pandemic.

When the economy was normalising the Russia-Ukraine War unfolded, which is still raging even after 10 months. India is a major oil customer. The world plunged into an energy crisis. The crude oil prices went up as much as \$127 per barrel. Yet, India dealt with the crisis effectively. The global energy crisis acquired a strategic dimension, as the world became polarised. India was expected to take sides. But PM Modi remained firm, as India remained tied to its national interests only.

Europe has legacy issues in expecting all nations to accord primacy to the problems of the continent. But India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar lucidly argued at the global fora to convince the nations not to take narrow views on problems faced by the world. He steadied the Indian interests steadfastly. Some of the inherent contradictions in the western viewpoints were brought to the fore.

The immediate fallout of the Russia-Ukraine War was the food crisis in some of the countries. India again rose to the occasion. The Indian wheat once more proved crucial to safeguard the vulnerable nations, which were hit hard by the Russia-Ukraine War. The world once more saw that India has always been the first country to respond in times of humanitarian crisis. During the pandemic, India with its Covid vaccines had come to the rescue of several nations. From the Caribbean islands to the African continent and the immediate neighbourhood of South Asia to the South American nations, the Indian made vaccines and medicines were instrumental in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Additionally, India once more demonstrated that she is a true friend. The Sri Lankan economy collapsed, which set off popular protests against their incumbent government. But India immediately responded and extended an assistance of about \$4 billion to stabilise the economy of the island nation. This once more demonstrated that India seeks partnership with the



A NUMBER OF NATIONS RESORTED TO PRINT CURRENCIES AFTER THE OUTBREAK OF THE PANDEMIC. THERE WERE VOICES WITHIN THE COUNTRY, WHICH CALLED FOR PRINTING OF CURRENCY TO DEAL WITH THE DISRUPTIONS CAUSED BY THE PANDEMIC

(The author is Director, Public Policy Research Centre)



small island nations with development cooperation, which are useful for the people of such countries.

A number of nations resorted to print currencies after the outbreak of the pandemic. There were voices within the country, which called for printing of currency to deal with the disruptions caused by the pandemic. But the government did not budge from the path of economic prudence. The Modi government did not take any shortcuts. In the end, PM Modi was vindicated, because the countries which had resorted to printing of the currencies faced the onslaught of inflation. The supply chain constraints coupled with the Russia-Ukraine War plunged the western nations deep into inflation. They are not yet able to tame the runaway inflation.

But India came out unscathed despite the country importing inflation on account of the crude oil price rising sharply. This was done by sticking to prudent economic policies. Yet, the Modi government was most sensitive to the needs of the vulnerable sections of the society. The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojna for 80 crore people provided free foodgrains, which ensured that none went hungry in the country during the economic disruptions and hardships. This was the caring touch of the Modi government for the people.

The electorate understood the enormity of the challenges which were successfully faced by the Modi government. The people richly rewarded the Bharatiya Janata Party

in the elections which were held in 2022. Barring Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, the BJP won all the Assembly elections. In Uttar Pradesh, the BJP government was re-elected, which was a first for any incumbent dispensation since the 1980s. The people retained the BJP governments in Goa, Uttarakhand and Manipur to demonstrate that the pro-incumbency agenda got popular support. In 2022, the BJP also made a loud entry in the Telangana politics by winning a few key byelections.

The Gujarat victory was special for the BJP, for the people reaffirmed faith in good governance with long term vision even while the party had been in power for 27 years.

For the first time, India went past the \$400 billion mark in annual exports. This has been one of the most creditable achievements. This has also happened in the post-pandemic era. The global supply chains is in a reset. The Modi government had come out with a slew of production linked incentive schemes to promote local manufacturing in several areas. They were meant to ensure self-reliance for India in some of the areas for which India was dependent on imports. The policies have paid rich dividends. The exports of mobile phones are on the rise. Electronic goods are being exported.

Even critical components such as semiconductor and APIs for the pharmaceuticals saw strong positive momentum. The state governments have come out with their own policies to attract investments in criti-

cal areas. Gujarat and Karnataka bagged mega semi-conductor foreign direct investments, which will soon ensure that India will not be dependent on imports.

Also, India became the fifth largest economy, India has pushed to become the fourth largest economy within a few years. The economic foundation laid down by the Modi government has given architecture to ensure that India will be the third largest economy in another few years. By the time India celebrates the centenary of Independence in 2047, the country would have already transformed into a most advanced economy, which would be inclusive.

India is entering into 2023 with the G20 Presidency. India is already the voice of the Global South. Now, India has become the hope for all. In PM Modi's articulation that "this is not an era of war", the world has seen hope in the Indian leadership to work for solutions to some of the pressing challenges. PM Modi's mantra to deal with the issue of climate change is already resonating at the global stage. India is the hope for global food security too.

India has all the momentum in her favour to scale new heights in 2023 in economy and social equity. The next year should be a launch pad for the country to take the rightful position in the high table of the global power centre. The strength of the economy will help India scale all adversities. Under PM Modi, India will see a new dawn of development in 2023.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

FIRST, IT WAS THE DEATHS OF 70 KIDS IN GAMBIA & NOW IT IS THAT OF 18 CHILDREN IN UZBEKISTAN. MODI SARKAR MUST STOP BOASTING ABOUT INDIA BEING A PHARMACY TO THE WORLD & TAKE THE STRICTEST ACTION.
— CONGRESS LEADER JAIRAM RAMESH



THE DEATHS IN GAMBIA HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THE COUGH SYRUP MADE IN INDIA... BUT BLINDED IN ITS HATE FOR MODI, CONGRESS CONTINUES TO DERIDE INDIA AND ITS ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT. SHAMEFUL...
— INCHARGE BJP IT DEPT AMIT MALVIYA

2022: Driven by luxury homes, realty transformed

Virtual reality technology lets buyers to visit dozens of properties from the comfort of their homes

The real estate market in 2022 saw dramatic shifts in demand and buying behaviour due to a combination of factors such as record low borrowing rates, government initiatives, and developers offering discounts. This unprecedented level of activity in the sector has not been seen in recent years and is expected to continue even as we approach the beginning of a new year.

Investment in luxury housing is on the rise, as it has emerged as one of the most dynamic and resilient real estate segments, having bounced back impressively from the effects of the pandemic, while remaining relatively insulated from wider market conditions.

Developers have been able



(The author is Managing Director, 4S Developers)

to successfully anticipate consumer needs and trends in the market, creating projects imbued with an effortless and elevated lifestyle. Furthermore, branded residences have become increasingly popular due to their promises of an easy and worry-free home ownership experience. Buyers are willing to pay a premium for the turnkey, experiential lifestyle that these properties offer, driving the sector's overall recovery.

The emphasis on streamlined processes and a convenient home ownership experience has made these branded residences a more attractive option for potential buyers.

The global pandemic has led to the rapid acceleration of digital transformation in virtually all sectors, including the

real estate market. Real estate companies have been able to leverage modern technologies such as 3D tours, drone videos, and virtual staging in order to provide prospective buyers and renters with an immersive, cost-effective alternative to physically touring prospective properties.

In a traditional real estate search, buyers may spend days or weeks visiting various properties before selecting a suitable one. This process often entails considerable time and effort, as well as associated travel costs for both the buyer and their agent. Virtual reality (VR) technology offers an alternative solution, allowing buyers to visit dozens of properties from the comfort of their homes. With VR, users can view properties from

every angle, get an in-depth look at the finer details, and make an informed decision on the best option for an in-person visit within an afternoon.

VR is poised to revolutionise the real estate sector. As more developers and property managers adopt this cutting-edge technology, the potential benefits are immense. For example, VR-based walkthroughs can provide a high-fidelity, immersive experience that allows users to explore properties without leaving their homes. This technology promises to increase efficiency and reduce the time and resources required to navigate the real estate world.

According to one report, aggregate rental demand (searches) increased by 29 per cent year on year, while

average rent in India increased by 5.2 per cent quarter on quarter. Rent and home prices are expected to remain elevated in the coming years. Despite this, potential home buyers are undeterred, with some being willing to pay well above the asking price to ensure they get the house. Consequently, existing homeowners are also seeing their home equity increasing, as the market value rises.

Migration from cities to suburbs is having an increasingly significant impact on the real estate industry, with more people opting for a suburban lifestyle. This shift in demand from apartments in urban areas to single-family homes in the suburbs has resulted in a surge in the demand for suburban housing and a subse-

quent rise in suburban real estate prices across the nation. To satisfy this trend, developers and real estate companies are constructing a variety of suburban housing developments, such as town homes and multi-family homes, to meet the increased demand.

A smart house is a leading real estate technology trend now. Smart home technology has the potential to save homeowners time and money while adding value to their properties. These homes can provide convenience and access to their homes, along with safety and security. Homeowners can control things such as lighting, climate, security, home theatre systems, and more with the use of a simple interface on their smartphone

or tablet. Furthermore, the cost of installation and maintenance for these technologies is becoming increasingly affordable, making it feasible for nearly any homeowner to upgrade their home. As a result, smart home technology is playing an increasingly important role in the real estate sector as it gives homeowners more value for their money.

Though not immediate, the real estate industry in India is undergoing a revolutionary transformation. Cutting-edge technology will profoundly influence the industry, while luxurious residences will have a greater impact on homebuyers than traditional rental properties. As a result, the real estate sector will face a paradigm shift in the way it does business.

Evidence of Russian crimes mounts as war in Ukraine drags on

AP ■ KYIV

Ten months into Russia's latest invasion of Ukraine, overwhelming evidence shows the Kremlin's troops have waged total war, with disregard for international laws governing the treatment of civilians and conduct on the battlefield.

Ukraine is investigating more than 58,000 potential Russian war crimes - killings, kidnappings, indiscriminate bombings and sexual assaults.

Reporting by The Associated Press and "Frontline," recorded in a public database, has independently verified more than 600 incidents that appear to violate the laws of war. Some of those attacks were massacres that killed dozens or hundreds of civilians and as a totality it could account for thousands of individual war crimes.

As Karim Khan, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court in The Hague, told the AP, "Ukraine is a crime scene."

That extensive documentation has run smack into a hard reality, however. While

authorities have amassed a staggering amount of evidence - the conflict is among the most documented in human history - they are unlikely to arrest most of those who pulled the trigger or gave the beatings anytime soon, let alone the commanders who gave the orders and political leaders who sanctioned the attacks.

The reasons are manifold, experts say. Ukrainian authorities face serious challenges in gathering air-tight evidence in a war zone. And the vast majority of alleged war criminals have evaded capture and are safely behind Russian lines.

Even in successful prosecutions, the limits of justice so far are glaring. Take the case of Vadim Shishmarin, a baby-faced 21-year-old tank commander who was the first Russian tried on war crimes charges. He surrendered in March and pleaded guilty in a Kyiv courtroom in May to shooting a 62-year-old Ukrainian civilian in the head.

The desire for some combination of justice and vengeance was palpable in that courtroom. "Do you consider yourself a murderer?" a woman



shouted at the Russian as he stood bent forward with his head resting against the glass of the cage he was locked in.

"What about the man in the coffin?" came another, sharper voice. A third demanded the defence lawyer explain how he could fight for the Russian's freedom.

The young soldier was first sentenced to life in prison, which was reduced to 15 years on appeal. Critics said the ini-

tial penalty was unduly harsh, given that he confessed to the crime, said he was following orders and expressed remorse.

Ukrainian prosecutors, however, have not yet been able to charge Shishmarin's commanders or those who oversaw him. Since March, Ukraine has named more than 600 Russians, many of them high-ranking political and military officials, as suspects, including Minister of Defence Sergei

Shoigu. But, so far, the most powerful have not fallen into Ukrainian custody.

"It would be terrible to find a scenario in which, in the end, you convict a few people of war crimes and crimes against humanity who are low-grade or mid-grade military types or paramilitary types, but the top table gets off scot-free," said Philippe Sands, a prominent British human rights lawyer.

Throughout the war Russian leaders have denied accusations of brutality.

Moscow's UN ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, said no civilians were tortured and killed in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha despite the meticulous documentation of the atrocities by AP, other journalists, and war crimes investigators there.

"Not a single local person has suffered from any violent action," she said, calling the photos and video of bodies in the streets "a crude forgery" staged by the Ukrainians.

Such statements have been easily rebutted by Ukrainian and international authorities, human rights groups and journalists who have meticulously documented Russian barbarity since the Kremlin ordered the unprovoked invasion in February.

Part of that effort, the AP and Frontline database called War Crimes Watch Ukraine, offers a contemporaneous catalog of the horrors of war. It is not a comprehensive accounting. AP and Frontline only included incidents that could be verified by photos, videos or firsthand witness accounts.

There are hundreds of reported incidents of potential war crimes for which there was not enough publicly available evidence to independently confirm what happened.

Still, the resulting database details 10 months of attacks that appear to violate the laws of war, including 93 attacks on schools, 36 where children were killed, and more than 200 direct attacks on civilians, including torture, the kidnapping and killing of civilians, and the desecration of dead bodies.

Among Russia's targets: churches, cultural centres, hospitals, food facilities and electrical infrastructure. The database catalogs how Russia utilised cluster bombs and other indiscriminate weapons in residential neighbourhoods and to attack buildings housing civilians.

An AP investigation revealed that Russia's bombing of a theatre in Mariupol, which was being used as a civilian shelter, likely killed more than 600 people. Another showed that in the first 30 days after the invasion, Russian forces struck and damaged 34 medical facilities,

suggesting a pattern and intent.

"That's a crime against the laws of war," said Stephen Rapp, a former US Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes. "Once somebody's injured, they're entitled to medical care. You can't attack a hospital. That's the oldest rule we have in international law."

Experts say Russia under President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly ignored the rules established by the Geneva Conventions, a series of treaties that dictate how warring countries should treat each other's citizens, and the Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court and defined specific war crimes and crimes against humanity.

"These abuses are not the acts of rogue units; rather, they are part of a deeply disturbing pattern of abuse consistent with what we have seen from Russia's prior military engagements - in Chechnya, Syria, and Georgia," said Beth Van Schaack, the US Ambassador at Large for Global Criminal Justice, speaking earlier this month at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Netherlands.

Russia hits key infrastructure with missiles across Ukraine

AP ■ KYIV

Russian missiles hit Ukraine Thursday in the biggest wave of strikes in weeks, damaging power stations and other critical infrastructure during freezing winter weather.

Russia fired 69 missiles at energy facilities and Ukrainian forces shot down 54, Ukrainian military chief Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi said.

Local officials said attacks killed at least two people around Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city.

The strikes also wounded at least seven people across the country, although the toll of the attacks was growing as officials assessed the day's events.

Russia dispatched explosive drones to selected regions overnight before broadening the barrage with air and sea-based missiles, the Ukrainian air force said.

Air-raid sirens rang out across the country, and the military activated air-defence systems in Kyiv, the regional administration said.

Ukraine's defence ministry said the attack damaged 18 residential buildings and 10 pieces of critical infrastructure in 10 regions.

Russia has attacked Ukrainian power and water supplies almost weekly since October while its ground forces struggle to hold ground and advance.

Mayor Vitali Klitschko



warned of power outages in the capital, asking people to stockpile water and to charge their electronic devices.

In the southeastern Kyiv district of Bortnychi, an explosion flattened at least one house and broke the doors, roofs and windows of several others nearby.

Yana Denysenko went through broken glass inside her grandparent's home to collect personal items.

Though she does not live there, she came immediately after the explosion and found her wounded mother, sister and 14-year-old niece in ambulances.

Denysenko hugged her tearful grandmother Anhelina, who was at work when the explosion happened.

"I'm scared to see all this, how many mothers are crying?" Anhelina said. "I want my children to recover."

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called

the attacks "senseless barbarism."

"There can be no neutrality' in the face of such mass war crimes. Pretending to be neutral equals taking Russia's side," Kuleba tweeted.

After more than 10 months of fighting, Russia and Ukraine are locked in a grinding battle of attrition.

The Ukrainian military has reclaimed swaths of Russian-occupied territory in the country's northeast and south, and continues to resist persistent Russia attempts to seize all of the industrial Donbas region in the east.

At the same time, Moscow has targeted Ukrainian power facilities and other key infrastructure in a bid to weaken the country's resolve and force it to negotiate on Russian terms.

The time between strikes has increased in recent weeks, though, leading some commentators to theorize Russia is trying to ration its missile supply.

The Ukrainian military has reported success in shooting down incoming Russian missiles and explosive drones in earlier attacks but many cities have gone without heat, internet and electricity for hours or days at a time.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said a number of energy facilities were damaged during what he said was the 10th such large-scale attack on his country.

Putin, Xi vow closer ties as Russia bombards Ukraine again

AP ■ KYIV

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping vowed on Friday to deepen their bilateral cooperation against the backdrop of Moscow's 10-month war in Ukraine, which weathered another night of drone and rocket attacks following a massive missile bombardment.

Putin and Xi made no direct mention of Ukraine in their opening remarks via video conference, which were broadcast publicly, before going into private talks.

But they hailed strengthening ties between Moscow and Beijing amid what they called "geopolitical tensions" and a "difficult international situation," with Putin expressing his wish to extend military collaboration.

"In the face of increasing geopolitical tensions, the significance of the Russian-Chinese strategic partnership is growing as a stabilising factor," said Putin, whose invasion of a neighbouring country has been stymied by fierce Ukrainian resistance and Western military aid.

The Russian leader said he expected Xi to visit Moscow in the spring. Such a trip "will demonstrate to the whole world the strength of the Russian-Chinese ties on key issues, will become the main political event of the year in bilateral relations," he said.

Putin said military cooperation has a "special place" in the relationship between their



countries. He said the Kremlin aimed to "strengthen the cooperation between the armed forces of Russia and China."

Xi, in turn, said through a translator that "in the face of a difficult and far from straightforward international situation," Beijing was ready "to increase strategic cooperation with Russia, provide each other with development opportunities, be global partners for the benefit of the peoples of our countries and in the interests of stability around the world."

In its report on the meeting, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV described the events in Ukraine as a "crisis."

The term marked a departure from China's usual references to the "Ukraine situation," and the change may reflect growing Chinese concern about the direction of the conflict.

"Xi Jinping emphasised that China has noted that Russia has never refused to resolve the conflict through diplomatic negotiations, for which it (China) expresses its appreciation," CCTV report-

ed. Ties between Moscow and Beijing have grown stronger since Putin sent his troops into Ukraine on February 24. Just last week, Moscow and Beijing held joint naval drills in the East China Sea.

China, which has promised a "no limits" friendship with Russia, has pointedly refused to criticize Moscow's actions in Ukraine, blaming the US and NATO for provoking the Kremlin, and has blasted the punishing sanctions imposed on Russia.

Russia, in turn, has strongly backed China amid the tensions with the US over Taiwan.

Russia and China are both facing domestic difficulties. Putin is trying to maintain domestic support for a war that has lasted longer than anticipated, while a surge in COVID-19 cases has overwhelmed hospitals in China.

In Ukraine, authorities reviewed the toll from a widespread Russian missile attack on power stations and other vital infrastructure on Thursday that was the biggest such bombardment in weeks.

3 Pakistan Army personnel killed in exchange of fire with militants

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

At least three Pakistan Army personnel were killed in an exchange of fire with militants in Pakistan's restive Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, a military statement said.

The exchange of fire took place in the Kurram district of the province, which also led to the killing of two terrorists, Pakistan military's media wing, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), said.

The soldiers were identified as Subedar Shuja Muhammad (43), Khuzdar Naik Muhammad Ramzan (32) and Sukkur Sepoy Abdul Rehman (30), it said.

The exchange of fire took place when troops raided a hideout in a former militant stronghold near the Afghan border, the statement said, adding that the raid was carried out to eliminate terrorists from the area.

"Pakistan Army is determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the statement said.

The incident came amid a spike in terrorist attacks across the country claimed mostly by the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan



(TTP) which unilaterally scrapped a ceasefire in November, effectively ending a start-stop negotiation process brokered by the Afghan Taliban, the Express Tribune newspaper reported.

The TTP, which was comprehensively defeated in a decisive kinetic operation by the military, has found safe havens across the border in Afghanistan from where the group has been directing its terrorist operations in Pakistan, the report added.

Last week, a Pakistani Taliban fighter detonated a car bomb in Islamabad and he was from Kurram.

The attack was claimed by TTP, which has reactivated

Afghan refugees in US face uncertainty as legislation stalls

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Congress has failed so far to create a path to residency for Afghans who worked alongside US soldiers in America's longest war, pushing into limbo tens of thousands of refugees who fled Taliban control more than two years ago and now live in the United States.

Some lawmakers had hoped to resolve the Afghans' immigration status as part of a year-end government funding package. But that effort failed, putting the issue into the new year, when Republicans will take power in the House.

The result is grave uncertainty for refugees now facing an August deadline for action from Congress before their temporary parole status expires.

Nearly 76,000 Afghans who worked with American soldiers since 2001 as translators, interpreters and partners arrived in the US on military planes after the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021.

The government admitted the refugees on a temporary parole status as part of Operation Allies Welcome, the largest resettlement effort in the

country in decades, with the promise of a path to a life in the US for their service.

Mohammad Behzad Hakkak, 30, is among those Afghans waiting for resolution, unable to work or settle down in his new community in Fairfax, Virginia, under his parole status.

Hakkak worked as a partner to the US mission in Afghanistan as a human rights defender in the now-defunct Afghan government.

"We lost everything in Afghanistan" after the Taliban returned to power, he said. "And now, we don't know about our future here."

For the past year, a bipartisan group of lawmakers, backed by veterans organizations and former military officials, has pushed Congress to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act, which would prevent the Afghans from becoming stranded without legal residency status when their two years of humanitarian parole expire in August 2023. It would enable qualified Afghans to apply for US citizenship, as was done for refugees in the past, including those from Cuba, Vietnam and Iraq.

Court in Myanmar again finds Suu Kyi guilty of corruption

AP ■ BANGKOK

A court in military-ruled Myanmar on Friday convicted the country's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi of corruption, sentencing her to seven years in prison in the last of a string of criminal cases against her, a legal official said.

The court's action leaves her with a total of 33 years to serve in prison following a series of politically tinged prosecutions since the army toppled her elected government in February 2021.

The case that ended Friday involved five offenses under the anti-corruption law and followed earlier convictions on seven other corruption counts, each of which was punishable by up to 15 years in prison and a fine.

She has also been convicted of several other offenses, including illegally importing and possessing walkie-talkies, violating coronavirus restrictions, breaching the country's official secrets act, sedition and election fraud.

All her previous convictions had landed her with a total of 26 years' imprisonment.

Suu Kyi's supporters and independent analysts say the numerous charges against her and her allies are an attempt to legitimise the military's seizure of power while eliminating her



from politics before an election it has promised for next year.

In the five counts of corruption decided Friday, Suu Kyi was alleged to have abused her position and caused a loss of state funds by neglecting to follow financial regulations in granting permission to Win Myat Aye, a Cabinet member in her former government, to hire, buy and maintain a helicopter.

Suu Kyi was the de facto head of government, holding the title of state councillor. Win Myint, who was president in her government, was a co-defendant in the same case.

Friday's verdict in the purpose-built courtroom in the main prison on the outskirts of the capital, Naypyitaw, was made known by a legal official who insisted on anonymity for fear of being punished by the authorities.

The trial was closed to the media, diplomats and spectators, and her lawyers were barred by a gag order from talk-

ing about it.

The legal official said Suu Kyi received sentences of three years for each of four charges, to be served concurrently, and four years for the charge related to the helicopter purchase, for a total of seven years. Win Myint received the same sentences.

The defendants denied all the charges, and her lawyers are expected to appeal in the coming days.

The end of the court cases against Suu Kyi, at least for now, raises the possibility that she would be allowed outside visitors, which she has been denied since she was detained.

The military government has repeatedly denied all requests to meet with her, including from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which seeks to help mediate an end to the crisis in Myanmar that some UN experts have characterised as a civil war because of the armed opposition to military rule.

US says Chinese intercept could have caused air collision

AP ■ BEIJING

The US military says a Chinese fighter jet flew dangerously close to an Air Force plane over the South China Sea, forcing the American pilot to maneuver to avoid a collision.

US Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement on Thursday that the incident occurred December 21 when the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy J-11 flew in front of and within 6 metres (20 feet) of the nose of an RC-135, a type of large reconnaissance plane operated by the US Air Force.

The US plane was "lawfully conducting routine operations over the South China Sea in international airspace," the statement said. Its pilot was forced to "take evasive maneuvers to avoid a collision."

China frequently challenges military aircraft from the US and its allies, especially over the strategically vital South China Sea, which China claims in its entirety.

Such behavior led to a 2001 in-air collision in which a Chinese plane was lost and pilot killed.

"The US Indo-Pacific Joint Force is dedicated to a free and open Indo-Pacific region and will continue to fly, sail and operate at sea and in international airspace with due regard for the safety of all vessels and



aircraft under international law," the statement said.

"We expect all countries in the Indo-Pacific region to use international airspace safely and in accordance with international law," it said.

China deeply resents the presence of US military assets in the South China Sea and regularly demands its ships and

planes leave the area.

The US says it is fully entitled to operate in and over the South China Sea and ignores the Chinese demands.

Such dangerous incidents persist despite US-China agreements on how to deal with unexpected encounters.

The US and others have also accused China of harass-

ing military aircraft and ships in the East China Sea off the Chinese coast and as far away as the Horn of Africa, where China operates a naval base.

There was no immediate response to the latest US complaint from the PLA, the military wing of China's ruling Communist Party.

Chinese Foreign Ministry

spokesperson Wang Wenbin offered no details, but accused the US of posing "serious threats to China's national security," with its surveillance operations.

"China will continue to take necessary measures to firmly defend its sovereignty and security and work with regional countries to firmly defend the peace and stability of the South China Sea," Wang said at a daily briefing on Friday. Wang also renewed Beijing's objections to US arms sales to Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy that Beijing threatens to bring under its control by force if necessary. Washington this week approved the sale of a USD 180 million anti-tank system to Taiwan as the threat from China's military rises.

Though the US has no formal ties with Taiwan in defence to Beijing, it is required by US law to ensure the island has the means to defend itself.

While Beijing has given Taiwan no deadline to accept its ultimatum, some US defence officials believe Chinese leader Xi Jinping has become more eager to force a military solution in the coming years.

The US "should stop arms sales and military contact with Taiwan and stop creating new factors that could lead to tensions in the Taiwan Strait," Wang said.

Trump's tax returns released after long fight

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Democrats in Congress released six years' worth of former President Donald Trump's tax returns on Friday, the culmination of a years-long effort to learn about the finances of a onetime business mogul who broke decades of political norms when he refused to voluntarily release the information as he sought the White House.

The returns, which include redactions of some personal sensitive information such as Social Security and bank account numbers, are from 2015 to 2020. Their release follows a party-line vote in the House Ways and Means Committee last week to make the returns public. Committee Democrats argued that transparency and the rule of law were at stake, while Republicans countered that the release would set a dangerous precedent with regard to the loss of privacy protections.

Trump had refused to release his returns when he ran for president and had waged a legal battle to keep them secret while he was in the White House. But the Supreme Court ruled last month that he had to turn them over to the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee.

The release, just days before Trump's fellow Republicans retake control of

the House from the Democrats, raises the potential of new revelations about Trump's finances, which have been shrouded in mystery and intrigue since his days as an up-and-coming Manhattan real estate developer in the 1980s. The returns could take on added significance now that Trump has launched a campaign for the White House in 2024. They are likely to offer the clearest picture yet of his finances during his time in office.

Trump, known for building skyscrapers and hosting a reality TV show before winning the White House, did give some limited details about his holdings and income on mandatory disclosure forms. He has promoted his wealth in the annual financial statements he provides to banks to secure loans and to financial magazines to justify his place on rankings of the world's billionaires.

Trump's longtime accounting firm has since disavowed the statements, and New York Attorney General Letitia James has filed a lawsuit alleging Trump and his Trump Organization inflated asset values on the statements as part of a yearslong fraud. Trump and his company have denied wrongdoing. It will not be the first time Trump's tax returns have been under scrutiny.

In October 2018, The New

York Times published a Pulitzer Prize-winning series based on leaked tax records that showed that Trump received a modern-day equivalent of at least \$413 million from his father's real estate holdings, with much of that money coming from what the Times called "tax dodges" in the 1990s.

A second series in 2020 showed that Trump paid just \$750 in federal income taxes in 2017 and 2018, as well as no income taxes at all in 10 of the past 15 years because he generally lost more money than he made. In its report last week, the Ways and Means Committee indicated the Trump administration may have disregarded a post-Watergate requirement mandating audits of a president's tax filings.

The IRS only began to audit Trump's 2016 tax filings on April 3, 2019 — more than two years into his presidency — when the committee chairman, Rep. Richard Neal, D-Mass., asked the agency for information related to the tax returns.

By comparison, there were audits of President Joe Biden for the 2020 and 2021 tax years, said Andrew Bates, a White House spokesperson. A spokesperson for former President Barack Obama said Obama was audited in each of his eight years in office.



Israel indicts soldiers for trying to bomb Palestinian home

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel's military said its prosecutor has filed indictments against two soldiers who allegedly hurled an explosive device at a Palestinian home in the occupied West Bank, a rare instance of Israeli troops facing serious charges over an offence against Palestinians.

Prosecutors charged the two soldiers with making an explosive device, aggravated intentional assault, intentional harm to property and impeaching the investigation, the army announced late Thursday.

The court ordered the soldiers to remain in detention until a hearing next month. They were arrested on November 28.

The indictment said the two defendants acted out of revenge for the abduction of the body of an Israeli schoolboy in the flash-point West Bank city of Jenin on November 22.

Palestinian militants in Jenin had snatched the body of 17-year-old Tiran Fero, a member of Israel's Druze Arab minority, from a local hospital where he was receiving treatment after a car crash. Fero's father accused the militants of removing his son from his life-support machine while he was still alive. The Israeli military had said he was already dead when the militants took him.

The seizure of the boy's body spread alarm among Israel's Druze community. As anger rose, videos circulated on social media of Druze men threatening to take revenge against Palestinians. Police said Druze villagers even attacked and tied up three Palestinian labourers in northern Israel.

Amid the standoff over Fero's body, the two defendants — reportedly Druze soldiers — teamed up with another soldier to assemble an explosive device, the military said on Thursday.

The soldiers identified a Palestinian home near the West Bank city of Bethlehem as their target and lobbed stones at it. A few days later, they threw the explosive into the crowded house "with the intent of starting a fire in the home," the military added.

The extent of the damage or any casualties was unclear. There were no details about the targeted family in Palestinian media.

Attack kills 10 in Syria, Kurdish forces arrest 52 militants

AP ■ BEIRUT

A militant rocket attack in eastern Syria on Friday targeted a bus with oil industry employees, killing at least 10, the government said. To the north, Syrian Kurdish-led forces announced they arrested 52 militants in an operation against the Islamic State group's sleeper cells.

According to Syria's petroleum ministry, the rocket struck in the Al-Taym gas field in eastern Deir el-Zour province. There was no immediate claim of responsibility but

the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitoring group, said IS was behind the attack.

The Observatory also reported a higher death toll from the rocket attack, saying at least 12 workers were killed.

Also Friday, the US-backed and Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces said their raids had reportedly thwarted an attack planned for New Year's Eve. The IS militants were hiding in residential areas and farms, a statement from the forces said.



The years long US-backed campaign had succeeded in crushing the militants' territorial control in Iraq and Syria, but IS fighters maintain sleeper cells and have staged attacks that have killed scores of Iraqis and Syrians in the past months.

On Thursday, the Syrian Kurdish-led forces announced their operation, citing a surge in IS attacks and saying that "Operation Al-Jazeera Thunderbolt" aims to target sleeper cells in al-Hol and nearby Tal Hamis areas.

Since 2011, Syria has been mired in a bloody civil war that has drawn in regional and global powers. Syrian President Bashar Assad has mostly regained control of the country, but parts of its north remain under the control of rebels, as well as Turkish and Syrian Kurdish forces.

Also, some 900 US troops in Syria support the Kurdish-led forces' fight against IS and have frequently targeted IS militants, mostly in parts of northeastern Syria under Kurdish control.

The US Central Command on Thursday reported conducting some 313 operations against IS in 2022 in Syria and Iraq, mostly in cooperation with Kurdish-led forces. According to a CENTCOM statement, 215 militants from the Islamic State group were arrested and 466 were killed in Syria.

South Korea's unannounced rocket launch causes UFO scare

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea's military confirmed it test-fired a solid-fuelled rocket on Friday after its unannounced launch triggered brief public scare of a suspected UFO appearance or a North Korean missile launch.

The Defence Ministry said in a statement that the rocket launch was part of its efforts to build a space-based surveillance capability and bolster its defence posture.

It said it didn't notify the general public of the launch in advance because it involved sensitive military security issues. A twisty tendril of vapour in white-to-red ombre could be seen snaking behind a bright white light in parts of South Korea's sky on Friday evening.

South Korean social media and internet sites were abuzz with messages by citizens who said they saw a soaring object, rainbow-coloured vapour trail or other mysterious lights. Some also posted photos and videos.

"What is this? Is this a

UFO? I'm scared," said one Twitter user. Another said they suspected it was a North Korean missile launch and worried about a war, while a third said they believed a North Korean spy operating in South Korea was sending a signal back to the North.

Others suspected it was a supernatural phenomenon.

South Korean emergency offices and police received hundreds of citizens' reports of witnessing of a suspicious flying object and mysterious lights across the country, according to local media.

The South Korean rocket launch came four days after the South accused the North of flying five drones across the rivals' border on Monday for the first time in five years. South Korea's military detected the drones but failed to shoot them down, caus-

ing security concerns about its air defense network. The military later offered a rare apology for that.

ing security concerns about its air defense network. The military later offered a rare apology for that.

Biden signs \$1.7 trillion bill funding Govt operations

AP ■ KINGSHILL (US)

President Joe Biden on Thursday signed a USD 1.7 trillion spending bill that will keep the federal government operating through the end of the federal budget year in September 2023, and provide tens of billions of dollars in new aid to Ukraine for its fight against the Russian military.

Biden had until late Friday to sign the bill to avoid a partial government shutdown.

The Democratic-controlled House passed the bill 225-201, mostly along party lines, just before Christmas. The House vote came a day after the Senate, also led by Democrats, voted 68-29 to pass the bill with significant-

ly more Republican support.

Biden had said passage was proof that Republicans and Democrats can work together. Rep. Kevin McCarthy, the House Republican leader who hopes to become speaker when a new session Congress opens on Jan. 3, argued during floor debate that the bill spends too much and does too little to curb illegal immigration and the flow of fentanyl into the U.S. from Mexico. "This is a monstrosity that is one of the most shameful acts I've ever seen in this body," McCarthy said of the legislation.

McCarthy is appealing for support from staunch conservatives in the GOP caucus, who have largely blasted the

bill for its size and scope. Republicans will have a narrow House majority come Jan. 3 and several conservative members have vowed not to vote for McCarthy to become speaker.

The funding bill includes a roughly 6% increase in spending for domestic initiatives, to USD 772.5 billion. Spending on defense programs will increase by about 10%, to USD 858 billion.

Passage was achieved hours before financing for federal agencies was set to expire. Lawmakers had approved two short-term spending measures to keep the government operating, and a third, funding the government through Dec. 30, passed last Friday.

PUBLIC NOTICE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN, the general public at large is hereby informed that my client "Ms PANCHSHEEL BUILDTECH PVT. LTD", having its head office at H-159, Sector-63, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301, is hereby going to cancel the allotment of unit No. 2107, tower-F3 situated at Panchsheel Pinnacle at Housing Plot No. 01A, Sector-16B, Greater Noida, U.P. allotted in the name of Mr. Altaf Alam & Mrs. Rooksana. The general public be it any is hereby called upon to inform that the above mentioned company, is going to cancel the allotment of Unit No. 2107, on 21st Floor, Tower-F3 at Panchsheel Pinnacle at Housing Plot No. 01A, Sector-16B, Greater Noida, U.P. since the address of the allottee is not traceable and several notice has been sent to the allottee but there is no response. The allottee has not adhered to the terms and conditions of the tripartite agreement. However in respect of the same, the allottee can come forward and settle his account as per the terms and conditions of the Builder buyer agreement within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice or else any such claims by the allottee shall not be considered and shall be deemed to have been waived and/or abandoned and the company shall proceed to conclude the negotiations and no claim shall be entertained thereafter.

PUBLIC NOTICE

My Client, Smt. Shandili D/o Sh. Rajesh Prakash R/o H. No-4 Sector-14A Noida Jila Gautam Budh Nagar is the registered owner of property i.e. Apartment No-702 7th floor block Silver Palm-II Gulmohar Enclave Nasarapur GZB., UP, vide registered gift deed dated-29.10.2020 executed by Mr. Vipin Dwivedi & Mr. Sachin Dwivedi Both S/o Late Sh. Ram Chand Dwivedi, Vide Reg No.5855 Book No.1 Volume No.17827 Page No.97 to 136 Dated-29.10.2020 SR-I-Chaziedad, above said property is going to be mortgaged with Hero Housing Finance Limited. Any Person/Bank/Financial Institution having any claim/right, lien, any objection whatsoever in regard to above property, should notify the same to the undersigned/Adv. Vishal Mahani, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence through registered A/D within 10 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or any objection shall be deemed to be waived off.

PUBLIC NOTICE

E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092, Mobile No. 9811215181

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

SN	Activity	Description
1	Name of work with its location	Contract for Development of Gati Shakti Mult modal Cargo Terminal (GCT) at PARTAPUR Station Entirely on Railway Land
2	Approx. cost of the work	Rs. 7,03,34,446/-
3	Cost of Tender form	11,800/-
4	Address of the office	Sr DCM/New Delhi, DRM's Office, Northern Railway, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055
5	Earnest Money to be deposited	Rs. 70,33,446/- R/o 70,33,500/-
6	Completion period of the construction work	18 Months
7	Date & Time for submission of e-tender and opening of e-tender	11:00 hrs. on 23.01.2023 11:30 hrs. on 23.01.2023
8	Website particulars where complete details of e-tender can be seen.	Website of Northern Railway www.irpsps.gov.in

No.: IC-MG-PRTP-34-GCT-2022 Dated: 30.12.2022 3494/22

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Phone/Fax No.: 0135-2671940, E-mail: semdus@rediffmail.com

फ़ॉक: 4360/-ई-निविदा सूचना/2022-23 ई-निविदा संशोधन दिनांक: 30.12.2022

इस कार्यलय फ़ॉक सं.-4010/ई - निविदा सूचना/2022-23 दिनांक 09.10.2022 से आमंत्रित निविदा को फ़ॉक सं.-4163/-ई-निविदा सूचना / 2022-23 दिनांक 19.12.2022, फ़ॉक सं.-4251/ई-निविदा सूचना/2022-23 दिनांक 23.12.2022 एवं फ़ॉक सं. - 4312/ ई - निविदा सूचना/2022-23 दिनांक 27.12.2022 के द्वारा संशोधित किया गया अपरिहार्य कारणों से उक्त निविदाओं की तिथियों में निम्नानुसार संशोधन किया जाता है

निविदा समय सारणी (मुख्य तिथियाँ) निम्नवत् हैं:

क्र.सं.	विवरण	अनुसूची
1	ऑनलाईन प्रकाशन की तिथि	03.01.2023 at 11:00 Hrs
2	निविदा प्रश्न डाउनलोड करने की तिथि	04.01.2023 at 11:00 Hrs
3	प्री-बिड मीटिंग की तिथि	07.01.2023 at 11:00 Hrs
4	बिड ऑनलाईन क्या करने की प्रारम्भ तिथि	09.01.2023 at 11:00 Hrs
5	बिड ऑनलाईन क्या करने की अन्तिम तिथि	16.01.2023 up to 17:00 Hrs
6	ऑफ लाइन रूप से क्या किये जाने वाले प्रश्न (निविदा प्रश्न हेतु निर्धारित शुल्क, बिड सिस्टोरिटी, स्टॉपी पेपर एवं अन्य सम्बन्धित दस्तावेज)	17.01.2023 up to 17:00 Hrs
7	समीक्षा की बिड खोलने की तिथि	17.01.2023 at 11:00 Hrs
8	वित्तीय निविदा खोलने की तिथि	सूचना पृथक से दी जायेगी

शेष नियम एवं शर्तें निविदा के अनुसार यथावत रहेंगे।

'जल संचय-जीवन संचय'

अधिसूचना अधिनियम

Wheat exports rise 30% to \$1.5 billion in Apr-Nov

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Wheat exports rose 29.29 per cent to \$1.50 billion during April-November this fiscal from \$1.17 billion in the same period the previous year, the commerce ministry said on Friday.

Though the government banned wheat exports in May, some shipments are allowed to meet the food security needs of the countries that request it.

The ministry said that Basmati rice exports too increased by 39.26 per cent to \$2.87 billion during April-November 2022, while that of non-basmati rice registered a growth of 5 per to \$ 4.2 billion in the same period.

“Wheat export has registered an increase of 29.29 per cent in eight months of the current fiscal as its export rose to \$1508 million in April-November 2022 from \$1,166 million in April-November 2021,” it added.

The outbound shipments of agricultural and processed



food products rose by 16 per cent in the eight months of the current fiscal to \$17.43 billion.

“For 2022-23, an export target of \$23.56 billion has been fixed for the agricultural and processed food products basket and an export of \$17.435 billion has already been achieved in eight months of the current fiscal,” the ministry said.

In April-November 2022, fresh fruits were exported to

the tune of \$ 991 million against \$ 954 million in the corresponding months of the previous fiscal.

The export of pulses increased by 90.49 per cent in eight months of the current fiscal to \$ 392 million, it added.

Similarly, dairy products recorded a growth of 33.77 per cent as its export rose to \$ 421 million in April-November 2022 from \$ 315 million in the year-ago period.

Sensex closes 2022 with annual gain of 4.44%, Nifty ends up 4.32%

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex and BSE Nifty closed on a bearish note on the last trading day of 2022 due to fag-end selling in select banking, IT and capital goods shares.

The key indices, however, posted annual gains of over 4 per cent in 2022 to emerge as the world's best-performing large market indices.

Stock markets opened on a bullish note on the last session of the year and traded in green in the most part of the day. Gains in Asian markets also supported the local equities.

Sensex rose by 258.8 points or 0.42 per cent to an intra-day high of 61,392.68 while Nifty touched a high of 18,265.25 points. The market lost steam after weak opening in European stocks with the indices paring all gains.

The 30-share BSE Sensex closed down 293.14 points or 0.48 per cent at 60,840.74. The broader NSE Nifty declined 85.70 points or 0.47 per cent to end at 18,105.30.

The BSE barometer closed 2022 with an annual gain of 4.44 per cent or 2,586.92 points while the Nifty ended the year higher by 4.32 per cent or



751.25 points. Sensex touched its all-time high of 63,583.07 points on December 1 after hitting its 52-week low of 50,921.22 points on June 17.

Sensex jumped 10,502.49 points or 21.99 per cent last year.

“On the last day of a tumultuous year, domestic indices shed their early gains as negative signals from global peers pushed indices lower. Investors remained concerned over the economic outlook for the new year, underpinned by growing fears of recession,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

“The ongoing volatility is expected to be sustained in the near-term because of high interest rates and a slowing economy,” Nair said.

Centre's fiscal deficit touches 59% of full-year target in November-end

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government's fiscal deficit in end-November touched 59 per cent of the full year Budget Estimate on increased capital expenditure and slow growth in non-tax revenue, according to Finance Ministry data released on Friday.

In actual terms, the fiscal deficit, which is the difference between expenditure and revenue, was Rs 9.78 lakh crore during the April-November period of 2022-23. In the corresponding period last year, the deficit was 46.2 per cent of the Budget Estimates of 2021-22.

The government has budgeted fiscal deficit to be Rs 16.61 lakh crore or 6.4 per cent of the GDP in the current year ending March 2023. The deficit is funded by market borrowings.

As per the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) data, the net tax revenue at Rs 12.24 lakh crore was 63.3 per cent of BE 2022-23. During the corresponding period of 2021-22, the net tax revenue was 73.5 per cent of that year's BE.

Non-tax revenue was at Rs



1.98 lakh crore or 73.5 per cent of BE. In the last fiscal, the collection was 91.8 per cent of BE.

The central government's total expenditure during April-November works out to be 61.9 per cent of BE 2022-23, higher than 59.6 per cent of BE in the year-ago period.

Capital expenditure was at Rs 4.47 lakh crore or 59.6 per cent of BE between April-November. In the last fiscal, capex was 49.4 per cent of BE.

Commenting on the data, Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA said in April-November FY2023, the fiscal deficit widened considerably to Rs 9.8 lakh crore, with net tax revenues reporting a moderate growth of 8 per cent, amidst an 11 per cent contraction in non-tax revenues, 11 per cent rise in revenue expenditure, and high 63 per cent expansion in capex.

Sebi bans DS Capital Venture, its directors from securities markets for 3 years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi has barred DS Capital Venture and its directors from the securities markets for three years for violating regulatory norms.

DS Capital Venture (DS Capital) is registered as an Sebi-investment adviser and its directors are Sanjay Dwivedi, Piyush Kumar Sharma, Deepali Sharma and Abhishek Tiwari.

Sebi in May 2019 to January 2020 had received investor complaints against DS Capital. The complaints received on SCORES were sent to DS capital so as to be redressed by it. However, despite sending reminders to the company, it did not redress the complaints.

Accordingly, an inspection of DS Capital was approved by the regulator to examine the compliance of IA (Investment Advisers) regulations.

In its final order, Sebi said DS Capital failed to redress the investors grievances but is also found to be misleading its clients with respect to their dealing in securities by availing its advisory services, thereby violating PFUTP (Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices) rules.

Govt hikes interest rates on NSC, post office deposits; no change in PPF rate

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Friday hiked the interest rates on small deposits — including post office term deposits, NSC and senior citizen savings scheme — by up to 1.1 percentage points from January 1, in line with firming interest rates in the economy.

However, the interest rates on Public Provident Fund (PPF) and the girl child savings scheme Sukanya Samridhi has not been changed.

National Savings Certificate (NSC) will yield a 7 per cent interest rate from January 1, compared to 6.8 per cent at present. Similarly, the senior citizen savings scheme will give 8 per cent interest against 7.6 per cent currently.

Interest rates on Post office term deposit schemes of duration 1 to 5 years will rise by up to 1.1 percentage points.

The monthly income scheme too will yield 7.1 per cent interest, up from 6.7 per cent.

Coal sector constructs 8 eco parks to promote mine tourism 2 more to be completed by March 2023

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a bid to give a fillip to mine tourism, eight eco-parks have been constructed recently in different parts of the country and two more will be completed in the ongoing financial year, the Government said on Friday.

The said eco-parks are being developed on reclaimed land.

Coal and mines minister Pralhad Joshi had inaugurated Jhurey/Bal Gangadhar Tilak eco-park of Coal India arm WCL in October.

NLC India Ltd (NLCIL) has entered into a pact with Pondicherry Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) recently to promote eco-tourism at mine-I and mine-II and display sustainable



mining activities.

The pact between Northern Coalfields Ltd (NCL), a CIL arm, and Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board to give a fillip to Singrauli Eco-Tourism Circuit and another MOU by WCL with Directorate of Tourism, Maharashtra are also to further promote eco-tourism in the coal sector.

In line with the sustainable development and greening initiatives coal/lignite PSUs have planted around 47 lakh saplings on 2300 Ha land from January to November this year.

Gold rises ₹205; silver declines ₹30

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rose by ₹205 to ₹55,210 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid positive global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had touched ₹55,005 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

Silver, however, declined by ₹30 to ₹69,698 per kg.

“COMEX gold heads for a second weekly gain after US job data eased concern that a hot labour market would lead to hawkish Fed,” an analyst at HDFC Securities said.

In the overseas market, gold was trading in green at \$1,817.4 per ounce while silver was marginally down at \$ 23.83 per ounce.

Rupee gains 14 paise to close at 82.73 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee gained 14 paise to close at 82.73 (provisional) against the US dollar in the last trading session of 2022, as the American currency retreated from its elevated levels and a rising appetite for riskier assets among investors.

The local currency, however, ended the year on a negative note, with a loss of 844 paise or 1.36 per cent, primarily led by a strong dollar against its major crosses overseas.

The greenback climbed in the overseas market as the US Federal Reserve raised rates aggressively following surging inflation.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.77 and touched an intra-day high of 82.70 and a low of 82.82 against the greenback. It finally settled at 82.73,



registering a rise of 14 paise over its previous close of 82.87.

On December 31, 2021, the rupee settled at 74.29 against the US dollar.

According to Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, the rupee appreciated on Friday on softness in US Dollar and risk-on sentiments in global markets.

However, a surge in crude oil prices and sustained selling by foreign investors put downward pressure on the rupee. FIIs have remained in the past 5 consecutive sessions. The US Dollar declined on the rise in risk appetite in global markets. “We expect the rupee to

trade with a slight negative bias on expectations of recovery in the US Dollar and recovery in crude oil prices. Concerns over a surge in Covid-19 cases may also put downside pressure on the rupee,” Choudhary said.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 293.14 points or 0.48 per cent to end at 60,840.74, while the broader NSE Nifty fell 85.70 points or 0.47 per cent to 18,105.30.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, advanced 0.02 per cent to 103.85.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures fell 0.53 per cent to \$83.02 per barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Thursday as they offloaded shares worth ₹572.78 crore, according to exchange data.

Core sector output up 5.4% in Nov

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Production of eight infrastructure sectors increased by 5.4 per cent in November against a 3.2 per cent growth in the same month last year on a better show by coal, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity segments, according to the official data released on Friday.

Crude oil, natural gas and refinery products, however, recorded negative growth in November this year. The production growth of eight key sectors slowed down to 0.9 per cent in October.

The growth rate of eight infrastructure sectors — coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity — stood at 8 per cent in April-November this fiscal as against 13.9 per cent during the same period last fiscal.

Reliance seeks bids for sale of KG-D6 gas at rates linked to JKM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Industries Ltd and its partner by plc of the UK have sought bids for the sale of natural gas from the eastern offshore KG-D6 block at a price linked to the rate at which LNG is delivered to Japan and Korea.

The two partners invited bids for the sale of 6 million standard cubic meters per day of gas starting February 2023, according to the tender document.

Users such as city gas operators that convert gas into CNG for sale to automobiles and pipe it to household kitchens for cooking purposes, or power plants that use it to generate electricity or fertiliser units that use it to make urea, have been asked to quote premium they are willing to pay over the JKM price.

JKM is the Northeast Asian spot price index for LNG delivered ex-ship to Japan and Korea. JKM price for February is \$28.83 per million British thermal unit.

Bidders have been asked to



quote variable 'V' in the gas price formula 'JKM + V'.

The starting bid for 'V' has been set at \$ (minus) 0.30 per mmBtu. “Each Bidder is required to enter bids that are higher than or equal to the starting” bid quote, the tender document said.

The maximum valid bid for 'V' shall be \$5.01 per mmBtu beyond which the bid shall not be accepted by the e-bidding portal, it said.

The gas price, it said, shall be higher of the government-set ceiling price for gas produced from deepsea fields or the lower of price arrived at the bidding and the ceiling price.

In May last year, Reliance-pb had auctioned 5.5 mmscmd of incremental gas from the

newer discoveries in the KG-D6 block, benchmarking it to the same JKM gas marker.

Three-fourths of that volume was picked-up by Reliance and its affiliates.

The price discovered in that e-auction came at a USD 0.06 discount to the JKM (Japan-Korea Marker) LNG price.

Prior to that, the duo had sold 7.5 mmscmd of gas at a discount of \$ 0.18 per mmBtu to JKM.

The government sets a cap or ceiling rate at which natural gas from difficult fields like deepsea can be sold. This cap for the period October 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023, is \$ 12.46 per mmBtu.

Reliance has so far made 19 gas discoveries in the KG-D6 block. Of these, D-1 and D-3 - the largest among the lot — were brought into production in April 2009, and MA, the only oilfield in the block, was put to production in September 2008.

While the MA field stopped producing in 2020, output from D-1 and D-3 ceased in February 2021.

ADB grants \$100 million to Shriram Finance for vehicle loans to women entrepreneurs



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Multilateral funding agency Asian Development Bank (ADB) has sanctioned USD 100 million (about ₹830 crore) to Shriram Finance Limited (SFL) to provide vehicle loans to women entrepreneurs. The \$100 million External Commercial Borrowing (ECB) is a five-year loan and is under SFL's Social Finance framework to provide credit towards the purchase of new and used vehicles throughout India, Shriram Finance said in a statement.

Proceeds from ADB can be used for vehicle finance for commercial purposes for BS VI compliant vehicles and electric vehicles, specifically, finance women entrepreneurs, cater to under-developed states of the country and empower and promote the social and economic status of the under-served communities, it added.

Besides the ADB loan, SFL has also successfully raised \$250 million from US Development Finance Corporation and \$ 475 million through a 144A Bond from the international market in 2022, thereby continuing to diversify its funding profile and continue its objectives for financial inclusion.

Adani group acquires NDTV founders Prannoy, Radhika's 27.26% equity stake

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Adani Group on Friday said it has acquired 27.26 per cent equity stake in NDTV from Prannoy Roy and his wife Radhika Roy — founders of the news broadcaster.

“RRPR, an indirect subsidiary of the company and member of the promoter/promoter group of NDTV, has acquired a 27.26 per cent equity stake in NDTV from Prannoy Roy and Radhika Roy by way of inter-se transfer...,” said a regulatory filing from Adani Enterprises.

On December 23, Prannoy Roy and Radhika Roy had announced to sell 27.26 per cent out of their remaining 32.26 per cent shareholding in the NDTV to the Adani Group.

“Vishvapradhan Commercial Private Limited (an indirect subsidiary of the company) holds 8.27 per cent equity stake in NDTV and RRPR (prior to the present acquisition) held 29.18 per cent equity stake in NDTV. Consequently to the present acquisition, RRPR will hold 56.45 per cent,” the filing said.



Adani Group has acquired Roys' share at the price of ₹342.65 per share. Based on this price, the sale of 1.75 crore shares would have fetched the Roys up to ₹602.30 crore.

“The acquisition was completed on December 30, 2022 on the block deal window of NSE,” it added.

Last week NDTV board had also appointed two nominee directors of the richest Asian Gautam Adani-run conglomerate on the board - Sanjay Pugalia and Senthil Sinniah Chengalvarayan.

Adani Group acquired a 29.18 per cent stake in NDTV by buying a company backed by the television network's

founders, Radhika Roy and Prannoy Roy. Thereafter, it made an open offer to acquire an additional 26 per cent from public shareholders.

That open offer found investors willing to sell over 53 lakh shares of NDTV despite the deep discount on the stock's trading price.

The stock tendered translated to an 8.26 per cent shareholding, taking the total interest of Adani Group in NDTV to 37.44 per cent - higher than the 32.26 per cent holding of founders.

Currently, Prannoy Roy is the chairperson of NDTV while his wife Radhika Roy is an executive director.

Equity investors turn richer by ₹16.36 lakh crore in 2022

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Dalal Street investors became richer by more than ₹16.36 lakh crore this year as the equity market scaled new highs despite persistent geopolitical uncertainties and inflation worries.

Analysts attributed better macroeconomic fundamentals, the confidence of retail investors and foreign investors investing again in the domestic equities towards the latter



half of 2022 as the key factors that led to the outperformance of the Indian market in comparison to many other stock markets worldwide.

During the initial part of the year, markets were jolted by the Russia-Ukraine war. On February 24, when Russia launched its attack on Ukraine, the 30-share BSE Sensex had plunged about 2,850 points before closing at 54,529.91 points, registering a massive fall of 2,702.15 points or 4.72 per cent. In subsequent months, the key index recouped the lost ground and has climbed 2,880.06 points or 4.94 per cent this year till December 29.

Sensex touched its all-time high of 63,583.07 points on December 1 after hitting its 52-week low of 50,921.22 points on June 17.

“In 2022, the Indian stock market has gained despite challenges and heavy outflows from risk-averse foreign investors. Domestic institutional flows and resilient fundamentals have supported the market, though certain sectors and stocks have outperformed while others have underperformed.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

From connecting people with 5G services to lowering the cost of operations, the country's revitalised telecom sector is witnessing the bloom of reforms, and is set to attract more than ₹1.5 lakh crore investments to build up networks in the new year.

Once the poster boy of India's growth story, then a debt-laden segment that saw many players withering away

and now riding the wave of reforms as well as big-ticket investments, the telecom sector turned a new chapter in 2022.

While the Adani group is yet to unveil its full-fledged plan for the telecom business, Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani has committed ₹2 lakh crore investment for rolling out a 5G network across the country by December 2023.

“It has been an exciting year because of the launch of 5G, a much-awaited technolo-



gy for 4-5 years. This is a big

step forward. We look forward to a robust rollout of 5G next year because this year is just the beginning.

“We are all working on use cases. We are telling state governments, ministries, startups and innovators to come out with innovative use cases in the Indian context, which will unlock businesses and will also solve some public problems, some challenges,” Telecom Secretary K Rajaraman told PTI.

PELE, ETERNAL KING OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME

AP ■ RIO DE JANERIO

Pele was the best-loved footballer of his or any other generation, the eternal master of the beautiful game.

He won the World Cup with Brazil in 1958, 1962 and 1970, his sumptuous range of skills making him the embodiment of his country's golden age of football.

When he finally retired in 1977, Pele had scored more than 1,000 goals.

He scored 77 for Brazil, a mark only equalled at the recent World Cup by Neymar.

But his impact on his sport went far beyond the pitch as he also became a money-making phenomenon, lending his name to sportswear, credit cards and watches among an array of products.

Born Edson Arantes do Nascimento in October 1940, Pele played his first game for Santos as a 15-year-old in 1956.

He earned a call-up to the national team a year later, scoring on his debut against Argentina. In 1958 he was picked for the World Cup in Sweden.

His participation at the finals had been a matter of fierce debate in Brazil, with many critics questioning whether the slender-framed teenager was ready for the physical demands of the tournament.

Nursing a knee injury on arrival in Sweden, Pele was unavailable for Brazil's opening two matches.

He might also have been forced to sit out their third, against the Soviet Union, had coach Vicente Feola decided to heed the advice of a team psychologist who had urged that Pele was "infantile" and not fit for duty.

In the event Feola opted to



play the youngster, and it paid off. Working in tandem with Garrincha and his famously bent legs, Pele gave a virtuoso display as the Soviets were vanquished 2-0.

Once in the team, Pele

made it impossible for him to be removed. A winning goal in the quarter-final against Wales and a hat-trick in the 5-2 semi-final victory over France were followed by two more in the final win over Sweden.

Still only 17, Pele had become the youngest World Cup winner in history. The next two tournaments, however, were to be unhappy experiences.

Twenty-one by the time of

the 1962 World Cup in Chile, an older, stronger Pele had been expected to take the tournament by storm.

He gave a tantalising glimpse of what he was capable of with an electric individual goal against Mexico in Brazil's opening 2-0 win.

But he aggravated an existing injury in the second game, against the Czechs, and was forced to sit out the remainder of the tournament as his countrymen successfully defended their title.

Pele's frustration that injury had limited his appearances in Chile were nothing compared to the sickening disappointment of England in 1966 where, unprotected by referees, he was literally kicked out of the tournament.

Brutally assaulted by Bulgaria's defence in the first game to the extent that he was forced to miss the second match, the nadir came against Portugal.

Two crippling challenges by Joao Moraes left a tearful Pele being carried from the Goodison Park pitch in Liverpool swearing never to play in a World Cup again.

"I don't want to finish my life as an invalid," he said.

Thankfully, Pele's disconsolate vow was to prove an empty threat. He returned four years later in Mexico to spearhead what is regarded as the greatest team of all time.

Where 1966 had been viewed as a victory for cynicism, the 1970 tournament, and Pele and Brazil's winning contribution to it, have become synonymous with the beautiful game.

It is a testament to the quality of Pele's play in Mexico that he is remembered for the goals he didn't score as much as for the ones he did.

‘Football in four letters’: Global media bows to ‘King’ Pele

AP ■ RIO DE JANERIO

His face appeared on television around the world and dominated the homepages of news outlets everywhere as global media bowed to the late, great Pele, the undisputed "King" of football.

News organisations across the planet hailed the legendary Brazilian, who died on Thursday at the age of 82 and was widely considered the greatest footballer to ever play the game.

To the Brazilian daily O Globo, Pele may have died, but he remained the "immortal king of football".

The Folha de S.Paulo quoted the late Brazilian poet Carlos Drummond de Andrade, who said: "The difficulty, the extraordinary, is not to score 1,000 goals like Pele — it's to score one goal like Pele."

Their obituary suggested that while Edson Arantes do Nascimento -- Pele's birth name -- may have passed on, "it isn't true that Pele is dead".

In Argentina -- home of Diego Maradona and Lionel Messi, both also contenders for the title of greatest of all time -- the Clarin remembered Pele as "a supreme symbol of football's spectacle" and a "great among the greats".

The Argentine sport daily Ole wrote: "Beyond the rivalry that exists between

Argentina and Brazil, no one can doubt that Pele was one of the greatest footballers in history, for many the best, on top of Diego Maradona and Lionel Messi".

In Britain, The Times hailed him as "football's first world superstar".

"Pele popularised the description of football as 'the beautiful game' and no one played it more beautifully or with such joy than the man known as the King in his native Brazil," The Times said in its obituary.

The Guardian had a touching tribute from Jorge Valdano -- a team-mate of Maradona's when they lifted the 1986 World Cup trophy -- who watched Pele's exploits in the 1970 World Cup on a TV bought specially for the then 14-year-old by his mother.

"Pele is an idea of perfection for me," he told the paper.

"When a television comes into the kitchen of your home, with Pele inside, that marks you for life."

"I cried with emotion, with happiness, because of that Brazil team."

The Sun, to the backdrop of three photos of Pele with Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar and, rather incongruously, former England star Wayne Rooney, trumpeted "The Greatest of All Time... He turned football into art".

For the Daily Mail, Pele was "a cut jewel -- sharp

edged, glittering and flawless...perfect in every dimension and stands alone as football's greatest of all time."

German tabloid Bild did not pull their punches, declaring: "Pele was better than Messi, Maradona and (Cristiano) Ronaldo combined."

In Mexico the image of Pele celebrating his third world title win in 1970 at the country's Estadio Azteca circulated widely, with El Universal declaring, "Football in mourning!"

The main story on the homepage of Ecuador's El Universo was titled in part: "Goodbye to Pele, the 'supernatural footballer'".

In the far less football-mad United States, the New York Times called Pele the "global face of soccer" who "helped popularise the sport" stateside with his 1975-1977 stint with the New York Cosmos.

In France, sports daily L'Equipe devoted 22 pages to Pele.

"Behind the sadness is hidden the happiness of having seen him play, seen him dance, even in old images, and of having seen him give another meaning to the most universal game on the planet," purred one of their journalists.

El Pais in Spain, meanwhile, headlined one of several stories on the legend's passing: "Pele, global football in four letters".

‘Pele is eternal’: Neymar leads tributes to Brazil legend



AP ■ RIO DE JANERIO

Neymar led the tributes to Pele after the Brazil legend's death on Thursday as the Paris Saint Germain star said his iconic compatriot had "transformed football into an art". Brazil forward Neymar hailed Pele, a three-time World Cup winner, in a social media post alongside two pictures of himself with the legend.

"Before Pele, '10' was just a number," the heir to Pele's famed shirt number wrote on

Instagram.

"But that beautiful sentence is incomplete. I would say that before Pele, football was just a sport.

"He transformed football into an art, into entertainment... Football and Brazil gained status thanks to the King. He has gone, but his magic will remain. Pele is ETERNAL!"

Like Pele, France striker Kylian Mbappe shot to stardom after winning the World Cup at a young age.

"The king of football has left us but his legacy will never be forgotten. RIP KING," PSG forward Mbappe tweeted.

Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo said, "He will never be forgotten and his memory will live on forever in each of us football lovers. Rest in peace, King Pele."

Argentine World Cup winner Lionel Messi wrote, "Rest in peace, Pele."

Pele: Five great World Cup goals

AP ■ RIO DE JANERIO

Pele, arguably the greatest footballer of all time, died aged 82 on Thursday in his native Brazil.

Here a look at five of the best goals the three-time World Cup winner scored at the global showpiece:

1958 QUARTER-FINAL V WALES (1-0 WIN)

The first of Pele's 12 World Cup goals came in the 1958 last eight against a strong Wales side led by John Charles. The then-17-year-old had become the youngest player ever in the tournament in Brazil's final group game against the USSR.

Pele decided a tight match with a moment of brilliance in the 66th minute. He controlled the ball inside the box with his chest, before flicking the ball over a bewildered defender and volleying a low finish into the bottom corner. Photographers swarmed onto the pitch to capture his celebrations with his teammates in the back of the Welsh net.



1958 SEMI-FINAL V FRANCE (5-2 WIN)

Pele did not waste much time in adding to his World Cup tally, decisively turning a close semi-final against France in Brazil's favour. Leading 2-1 at half-time

against Just Fontaine's Les Bleus, Pele plundered a second-half hat-trick to power Brazil into the final.

He bundled in after a goalkeeping error to make it 3-1, before lashing home following some exquisite skill for

his second. But the coup de grace was the goal which capped his only World Cup hat-trick, as he killed Garrincha's right-wing cross with one touch and thumped an unstoppable volley into the corner.

1958 FINAL V SWEDEN (5-2 WIN)

Pele wrote himself into footballing folklore by becoming the first teenager to score in a World Cup final, a feat only matched 60 years later by France's Kylian Mbappe. His first goal of a double in the 5-2 triumph over hosts Sweden was unforgettable, as he scored after three touches when the ball never hit the ground.

He controlled a long pass on his chest, knocked it over the advancing defender and slammed a now-trademark volley into the bottom corner.

1970 GROUP STAGE V ROMANIA (3-2 WIN)

Having injured himself during the second game of Brazil's 1962 World Cup win and then effectively being kicked out of the 1966 edition in England, Pele arrived in Mexico with plenty to prove in 1970.

The 29-year-old underlined his status as the world's top player, in arguably the greatest team ever. His first goal of a brace in a 3-2 group-stage

victory against Romania was a thunderous free-kick from 30 yards out which flew into the net.

1970 FINAL V ITALY (4-1 WIN)

After a tournament for which he will best be remembered for two misses -- a shot wide after an incredible dummy to confound a goalkeeper and an effort from the halfway line which drifted narrowly off target -- Pele scored his last World Cup goal in the final.

Rivelino ran onto a throw-in from Tostao in the 18th minute and hooked a left-footed cross towards the back post, where Pele hung in the air and powered a magnificent header into the bottom corner.

Italy equalised through Roberto Boninsegna, but Brazil cruised to a famous win, with Pele providing the assist for the fourth goal for Carlos Alberto, waiting for his captain to arrive late on the scene from right-back and score what is widely regarded as the best-ever World Cup goal.

Pele, Maradona, Messi: Who is the greatest of all time?

AP ■ RIO DE JANERIO

When FIFA declared Pele and Diego Maradona jointly the players of the 20th century, and effectively the best of all time, they side-stepped but did not resolve a heated debate that has grown more complicated as Lionel Messi has dominated the 21st century.

Just who is the greatest? Pele, who died on Thursday, and the two Argentines all won the sport's greatest prize -- the World Cup -- and were undoubtedly the kings of their eras.

Here's a look at who is the best between the magical Brazilian, the controversial Maradona, who passed away in November 2020 at the age of 60, and a second Argentine, the twinkling Messi who is still playing:

TRIPLE CROWN V SINGLE TITLES

Pele played in four World Cups, winning three times, a record not yet beaten and giving him one more than Maradona and Messi combined. He was just 17 in 1958 when he was world champion in Sweden, scoring six goals, two in the final. Pele was injured in the second match as Brazil won the 1962 World Cup but claimed a third title, and sealed his international reputation, in 1970 as his magical side beat Italy in the Mexico City final.

Maradona, not picked in the squad that won the World Cup at home in 1978 and sent off in a tournament-ending 3-1 loss to Brazil in Spain in 1982, shot to global fame in 1986 for the right and wrong reasons. His infamous 'Hand of God' goal against



England was followed by an individual effort voted FIFA's 'Goal of the Century'. He scored twice in the semi-final win over Belgium and supplied the cru-



cial pass in the 3-2 win against West Germany in the final.

After Messi completed his World Cup quest in Qatar this month, the ailing Pele saluted on



Instagram: "Messi winning his first World Cup, as his trajectory deserved. Diego is certainly smiling." The Argentine has a complete set of major medals: a

World Cup (2022), a Copa America (2021), four Champions Leagues and three Club World Cups as well as a multitude of domestic Spanish and French trophies.

NO. 10 V NO. 10 V NO. 10

All three men wore the No 10 shirt.

Pele's role was often described as a "nine and a half", his attacking skills yielding 1,281 goals in 1,363 matches for his clubs, Santos and New York Cosmos, and the Brazilian national team.

Maradona, known as "D10S" (a word play with the number 10 and God in Spanish) played in a free role, more the playmaker, and his career statistics reflect that: 345 goals in 692 matches. Messi, who plays a variety of attacking positions, has also piled up the goals: 793

in 1,003 professional matches by the end of 2022.

ROLE MODEL V A REBEL & A QUIET CHILD

Pele was the clean-cut hero, scandal-free, honourable, sporting, with a career spent at just two clubs -- Santos (1956-74) and New York Cosmos (1975-77).

Maradona played for six teams, was sent off at the 1982 World Cup, scored with his hand against England in the 1986 tournament, was banned in Spain for fighting on the pitch, and was sent home in disgrace from the 1994 World Cup after failing a drugs test. He also suffered a cocaine addiction.

Messi, the quiet child, resembled Pele in his loyalty to his first club Barcelona until their money troubles allowed Paris Saint-Germain to pry him

away in 2021. His difficulties with the Spanish tax authorities and a host of sponsorship deals have not tarnished his image.

EGO WARS

Until they reconciled in 2016, Pele and Maradona sparred over who was the greatest. Pele has a museum. Maradona said Pele belonged "in a museum".

Maradona, who enjoyed showing off his Fidel Castro and Che Guevara tattoos, mocked the Brazilian's respect for authority.

Pele condemned Maradona as "not being an example" to youngsters because of his drug problems.

The more guarded Messi, as heir to Argentina's greatest sporting hero, has avoided suggesting he is better than Maradona.

Pak earn draw against NZ

AP ■ KARACHI

Poor visibility ended a thrilling final session of cricket in the drawn first Test Friday after New Zealand had threatened to snatch victory following Pakistan's daring declaration.

Chasing 138 to win in 15 overs, New Zealand was at 61-1 in only the eighth over of the second innings when the Test finished early because of bad light.

Pakistan resumed after tea at 249-7 in its second innings - a lead of 75 - and Kiwi legspinner Ish Sodhi (6-86) threatened to set up his team for victory.

Lefthanded Saud Shakeel made an unbeaten 55 and got plenty of support from the two tailenders, Mohammad Wasim (43) and Mir Hamza (3 not out). They did so well that Pakistan captain Babar Azam caught the visitors by surprise and declared at 311-8 late in the final session.

It set New Zealand, which scored 612-9 declared in the first innings, a tempting target and the visitors went for it. Tom Latham was unbeaten on 35 and Devon Conway was not out on 18 when the light intervened to potentially save Pakistan from its fifth straight test defeat at home.

"We wanted to get a result and that's why we went for the declaration," Babar said. "It's cricket, you never know what happens, we took a chance, but the light was not good enough."

Earlier, Pakistan's middle-order had capitulated to 206-7



against Sodhi's first five-for in Test matches and was ahead by only 32 runs before Shakeel came to the rescue.

Pakistan was in big trouble when Sodhi had top-scorer Imam-ul-Haq stumped for 96 an hour before tea and exposed the tail, but Wasim (43) and Shakeel defied the spin threat of Sodhi, Michael Bracewell and Ajaz Patel with an aggressive 71-run eighth-wicket stand.

"A couple of good innings took the game to safety for them," said Tim Southee, who took the New Zealand captain-

cy after Kane Williamson stepped down ahead of the Black Caps' first test tour to Pakistan in 20 years.

"It was interesting declaration, but our intention was to chase it down."

Sodhi again raised the visitors' hopes when he had Wasim trapped leg before wicket off a flipper that thudded the batter's pads on the backfoot with Pakistan stretching its lead to 103. However, Hamza, playing his first test after four years, defended astutely before Babar declared.

Sodhi, recalled for the test series after four years, had sliced through Pakistan's batting after lunch while exploiting lot of turn from the bowlers' footmarks on a deteriorating fifth-day pitch.

Imam and Sarfaraz Ahmed (53) had wiped out a huge first-innings deficit of 174 with an aggressive 85-run stand before both fell to Sodhi after lunch in quick succession.

First innings century-maker Agha Salman was also undone by Sodhi's straight delivery that knocked back the stumps as

Sodhi continued to pose a tough challenge to batters.

The collapse started a ball after Sarfaraz followed his first-innings 86 with another fifty but played a reckless cut off a wayward delivery that caught the edge to wicketkeeper Tom Blundell.

Imam looked nervous in his 90s as he needlessly came out of his crease to reach his 100 with a big hit and got stumped.

Imam, who scored three Test centuries in Pakistan this year, threw away his bat in anger before the left-hander walked

inside the dressing room.

Sodhi had claimed captain Babar (14) lbw with a sharp googly off his first delivery on the final day before Sarfaraz and Imam dug in and nudged Pakistan ahead by seven runs in an extended 2-1/2 hour first session.

Imam, resuming on 45, twice survived TV referrals against Sodhi while Sarfaraz was aggressive against spinners with his sweeps and reverse sweeps.

New Zealand spinners made early inroads to reduce Pakistan to 100-4 inside the first hour after Pakistan resumed on 77-2.

Bracewell struck early when he had nightwatchman Nauman Ali trapped leg before wicket in the day's third over off a full-pitched ball. Nauman couldn't add to his overnight 4 as the ball hit low on his front pad after missing the inside edge.

Babar, who made 161 in Pakistan's first innings score of 438, twice pulled Bracewell's short balls for boundaries on the outside before he repeated a similar shot against Sodhi's first ball of the day and was adjudged lbw. Sodhi bowled a perfect googly which kept a bit low as Babar unsuccessfully went for a television referral and walked back with Pakistan still trailing by 77 runs.

The second test begins at the same National Stadium from next Monday after it was shifted from Multan because of weather concerns.

Mandhana only Indian in race for ICC Cricketer of the Year honour

PTI ■ DUBAI

Stylish opener Smriti Mandhana is the only Indian across women and men category to feature among the ICC nominees for the Cricketer of the Year honour.

Mandhana will be competing for the top honours alongside England's Nat Sciver, New Zealand's Amelia Kerr and Australia opener Beth Mooney.

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam, England Test captain Ben Stokes, Zimbabwe all-rounder Sikandar Raza and New Zealand Test captain Tim Southee are the nominees for the Men's Cricketer of the Year award.

Stokes is also among the Test Cricket of the Year nominees alongside compatriot Jonny Bairstow, Australia opener Usman Khawaja and South Africa speedster Kagiso Rabada.

Voting for the awards is set to commence next week where global cricket fans will have the chance to submit their votes alongside a specialist ICC Voting Academy comprising prominent cricket media representatives to determine the 2022 winners, said the ICC in a statement.

Mandhana, who is the winner of the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year 2021, is in the running once again to bag the coveted price in 2022.

Mandhana continued her rich vein of form in international cricket for the second year running, finishing as India's highest run-scorer across formats. She showed her incredible prowess in the white-ball formats and was the highest run-getter in T20Is (594 runs) and the second-highest in ODIs (696 runs) for India.

Mandhana made her presence felt at both the major tournaments this year – the Women's Cricket World Cup and the Commonwealth Games. In the latter, she was one of the driving forces in India going through to the final and bagging the silver medal in the first-ever Women's cricket event at the Commonwealth Games.

Stokes is a front-runner to become the Men's Cricketer of the Year.

England were living a nightmare in Test cricket after humiliating series losses in the Ashes and the series against West Indies. Joe Root resigned as the Test skipper and the reins were handed over to Stokes and Brendon McCullum, the coach.

Since then, Stokes has taken England to new heights, winning nine of the 10 Tests as captain. Along the way, he has scored 870 runs, including



two centuries and picked up 26 wickets.

The talismanic all-rounder did not have a brilliant white-ball year. In fact, he announced his retirement from ODI cricket to focus on the other formats.

In T20Is, he scored 143 runs in nine matches and picked up seven wickets. The numbers may not seem significant, but 52 of those runs came when England needed it the most in the World Cup final.

ICC AWARDS 2022 – SHORTLISTS:

Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year: Babar Azam (PAK), Sikandar Raza (ZIM), Tim Southee (NZ), Ben Stokes (ENG)

Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year: Amelia Kerr (NZ), Smriti Mandhana (IND), Beth Mooney (AUS), Nat Sciver (ENG)

ICC Men's Test Cricketer of the Year: Jonny Bairstow (ENG), Usman Khawaja (AUS), Kagiso Rabada (SA), Ben Stokes (ENG)

ICC Men's ODI Cricketer of the Year: Babar Azam (PAK), Shai Hope (WI), Sikandar Raza (ZIM), Adam Zampa (AUS)

ICC Women's ODI Cricketer of the Year: Alyssa Healy (AUS), Shabnim Ismail (SA), Amelia Kerr (NZ), Nat Sciver (ENG)

ICC Men's T20I Cricketer of the Year: Sam Curran (ENG), Sikandar Raza (ZIM), Mohammad Rizwan (PAK), Suryakumar Yadav (IND)

ICC Women's T20I Cricketer of the Year: Nida Dar (PAK), Sophie Devine (NZ), Smriti Mandhana (IND), Tahlia McGrath (AUS)

ICC Emerging Men's Cricketer of the Year: Finn Allen (NZ), Marco Jansen (SA), Arshdeep Singh (IND), Ibrahim Zadran (AFG)

ICC Emerging Women's Cricketer of the Year: Yastika Bhatia (IND), Darcie Brown (AUS), Alice Capsey (ENG), Renuka Singh (IND).

Agar, Renshaw in Oz squad for 3rd SA Test



AP ■ SYDNEY

Spin-bowling allrounder Ashton Agar and Opener Matthew Renshaw were called up to the Australia squad Friday for the third Test against South Africa with Cameron Green and Mitchell Starc ruled out injured.

Pace spearhead Josh Hazlewood, meanwhile, has recovered from a side strain that kept him out of the last two Tests and is expected to play in Sydney next week.

Australia has already won the three-Test series after a six-wicket victory at Brisbane and by an innings and 182 runs in Melbourne.

Green, who didn't bowl in South Africa's second innings in Melbourne, has a fractured right index finger.

Starc bowled 18 overs with a bruised and bloodied finger that officials have now revealed was also fractured.

Both players will be sidelined for weeks and are racing against the clock to be ready for Australia's blockbuster Test tour of India in February.

"Ashton offers a second spin option should the Sydney pitch be conducive to turn, as it has done in the past. He also brings a solid batting component," said selector Tony Dodemaide.

"Matthew is included as a versatile batting option who is in good form, including an unbeaten century in the recent PM's XI tour match against the West Indies."

Renshaw has played 11 Tests, but not since 2018 against South Africa, while Agar has featured four times, with his last Test in 2017 in Bangladesh.

With Hazlewood recovered from a side strain and the uncapped Lance Morris -- touted as the most exciting fast bowler in Australia -- also in the squad, selectors have plenty of options.

"In terms of fast bowlers, it's a blessing to have Josh returning, while Lance offers a genuine point of difference with his raw pace and skill," said Dodemaide.

No retirement plans for hungry Warner

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Veteran opener David Warner played down talk of retirement on Friday after a gritty double century in his 100th Test against South Africa, saying he was hungry to tour India and England next year.

Speculation had been building over the 36-year-old's future after a run of low scores, but his 200 in searing heat at the Melbourne Cricket Ground put to bed any concerns about his form.

Warner said he was in "as happy a place as I have been for a long time", adding that selectors had told him he was key to their plans for a four-Test tour of India in February-March and a five-Test Ashes campaign in England that follows.

"The extra motivation for me is winning in India and completely winning a series in



England," he said.

"I've been told by the coach (Andrew McDonald) and the selectors that they'd like me to be there."

"Obviously there was a lot of stuff before this series going

through my mind... of course there were doubts.

"But for me, it was about going out there and knowing that I've still got that hunger and determination."

Warner said he would know when the time was right to call it quits, and it was not just yet.

"People keep telling me 'you'll know when it's time', and I haven't really felt that at all yet," he said.

"I'm still enjoying it, and I still know what energy I can bring to the team."

The opener said he would know it was time if he started "losing that spark and energy around training, and taking the mickey out of people and playing some jokes and pranks here and there."

His epic double century in Melbourne was characteristic of one of Australia's greatest-ever openers, made against the odds and in aggressive fashion.

Kvitova beats Pegula but US win United Cup tie

AP ■ SYDNEY

Petra Kvitova upset world number three Jessica Pegula on Friday at the United Cup, but fellow top 10 players Maria Sakkari and Caroline Garcia both earned victories.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Kvitova clinched a thriller, saving seven set points in the first set before winning 7-6 (8/6), 6-4 at the Ken Rosewall Arena.

It was not enough to save the tie for the Czechs, though, as the United States took it 4-1.

In Perth, the sixth-ranked Sakkari and WTA number four Garcia from France both came through with victories.

Sakkari gave Greece an unassailable 3-0 lead over Bulgaria when she beat Viktoriya Tomova 6-3, 6-2.

"I was a little nervous in the beginning, especially being 2-0 up in the tie, I knew my match was crucial in winning the tie," said Sakkari.

"She was very solid, but I found my game and got better."

Her teammates Stefanos Tsitsipas and Despana Papamichail won their matches on Thursday.

Garcia, winner of last month's year-end final in Texas, hammered Argentine Nadia Podoroska 6-2, 6-0, finishing with a leaping overhead smash after 64 minutes to give France



a 3-0 success after two opening-day wins.

"Our team members all have the same goal," Garcia, who ranked 74th a year ago due to injury, said.

"Let's see where it brings us. We want to get some more points, we want to go for it."

After the Americans won the opening two rubbers on

Thursday, Kvitova's victory gave her country hope in the inaugural tournament, which features two men's and two women's singles matches along with a mixed doubles.

But the US clinched the tie when Tomas Machac injured his ankle against 19th-ranked Francis Tiafoe and was forced to retire hurt while down 6-3,

2-4.

The Czech Republic will face Alexander Zverev's Germany on Saturday while the US have two days off before they close out group play against the Germans.

Switzerland completed a 3-0 defeat of Kazakhstan in Brisbane, with captain Stan Wawrinka beating Alexander Bublik 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) a day after wins from Olympic champion Belinda Bencic and Marc-Andrea Huesler.

Wawrinka, a three-time Grand Slam champion who has struggled with injury, finished his match with a winning forehand to the corner.

"It feels good to be back in Australia," the 37-year-old said. "It's been a long time since I played here. Tonight I had a great level. I'm super-happy with how I'm playing."

"I had to play aggressive and push him at every opportunity."

Italy wrapped up their tie against Brazil when they won both singles matches in Brisbane, with the tournament being played across three cities.

Matteo Berrettini downed Thiago Monteiro in a gruelling clash 6-4, 7-6 (9/7) before Lucia Bronzetti saw off an outclassed Laura Pigossi 6-0, 6-2.

Brazil face Norway on the weekend while Italy take on the Norwegians on Monday and Tuesday.



Thiem handed Australian Open wildcard

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Former world number three Dominic Thiem was handed a wildcard to the Australian Open on Friday, as he continues his comeback from a serious wrist injury.

The Austrian, who pushed Novak Djokovic to five sets in the 2020 Australian Open final, was sidelined for nine months with the injury sustained during the 2021 grass-court season.

He has shown encouraging signs on his return to the tour, rising from outside the top 350 to 102 in the second half of this year, including semi-final runs at Gstaad, Gijon and Antwerp.

His rapid ranking rise meant the 29-year-old only narrowly missed directly qualifying for the main draw of the Australian Open, which starts in Melbourne on January 16.

Thiem, a two-time French Open runner-up, won the US Open in 2020.

Other wildcards went to American pair Taylor Townsend and Christopher Eubanks, and French players Diane Parry and Luca Van Assche.

India Open: Srikanth, Sen, Prannoy clubbed in 'quarter of death'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian men's singles players Iwera handed a tough draw with Kidambi Srikanth, Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy -- all clubbed together in the same quarter at the Yonex Sunrise India Open badminton tournament, scheduled to be held here from January 17 to 22.

Former world champion and double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu will face her last edition's nemesis Supanida Katethong in the opening round of the BWF World Tour event, which has been upgraded to Super 750 category this year.

Reigning champions Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty will, meanwhile, begin their men's doubles campaign against Denmark's Jeppe Bay and Lasse Molhede, ranked No. 31 in the world.

The fifth seeded duo would target a potential quarterfinal clash against top seeds Takuro Hoki and Yugo Kobayashi of Japan, in what would be the first major hurdle in their title defence.

The trio of Srikanth, Prannoy and Sen will carry India's hopes in the tournament but given the draw only one can cross the last eight hurdle, which includes reigning World and Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen, China's Shi Yu Qi and Japan's Kento Momota.

Defending champion Sen will begin his campaign against



compatriot Prannoy and the winner of the match is likely to run into Momota, who is looking to return in 2023 after struggling for form this year.

Former champion Srikanth has to overcome the challenge of top seed Axelsen in the opening round with a potential clash against Shi, who has made a strong comeback after being out of action for almost 10 months.

Among others, fifth seed Sindhu faces Kathethong in the

repeat of last edition's semi-final clash, which the Indian lost in three games.

The former world champion, who has been out of action due to a heel injury since the Commonwealth Games in August, has a potential quarter-final clash against Chen Yufei.

Former world No. 1 Saina Nehwal, who had a forgettable season with injuries, will kick off her campaign against Denmark's Mia Blichfeldt.