OPINION 6

'SPORTSWASHING'

BY CHINA ON THIN ICE

the pioneer

WORLD 8

US SENDS MORE TROOPS

AMID UKRAINE ROW

coronavirus-related deaths

around the world and that the

virus is quite dynamic. India

too has reported a rise in deaths in the last few days.

Many States have gradually started opening up a slew

of activities phase-wise. India

saw a significant jump in the

daily Covid death rate as 1,733

fatalities were registered on

Tuesday alone.
WHO Director General

told a Press briefing on

Omicron variant was first iden-

90 million cases have been

He reiterated his concern

over the narrative taking hold

in some countries that "because

regions of the world."

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY FEBRUARY 3, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

CHOPRA

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Budget to provide basic amenities to poor: Modi

'Tap water, jobs. own houses to empower poor'

PNS NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the thrust of the Union Budget 2022-23 is to provide basic amenities to the poor in terms of tap-water, own houses and providing jobs and easy connectivity as it also seeks to go below at the block level to develop "aspirational districts" in the country.

Speaking at a function organised, the Prime Minister spoke of pandemic setting off the possibilities of "a new world order" with India now seen as a country which would play a strong role globally and being appreciated more than in the past. Party president JP Nadda welcomed him on the occasion.

Explaining the key points of the Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Modi said it "gives poor, middle class and the youth opportunities for economic growth and self-reliance".



Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Rajya Sabha during ongoing Budget Session in New Delhi on Wednesday

"In the last seven years, we have given 3 crore poor people pucca houses, and made them lakhpatis. Those who live in slums have their own houses. Our Government has increased the price and size of these

houses are in the name of women. We have made women 'maalkins' (owners)," he said, adding the Budget has kept in

The Budget, Modi said, is houses. giving 80 iakii parka nouses to poor earmarking ₹48,000 crore

mind empowerment of the

poor with social justice.

for the purpose.

He said the Budget has thrust on providing drinking water in the nine crore fami lies of poor under "nal se jal" programme.

'Five crore water connections were given under the jal jeevan mission in two years,"

www.dailypioneer.com

The Prime Minister said "aspirational" backward districts will be lifted-up with development done still below at the block level.

Modi said border areas

which are important from the security point of view would be developed under a "vibrant village" scheme with improvement in their infrastructure and attracting tourists or nature lovers. This, he said would help stop the current migration from border villages.

"People, globally, want to see an empowered and strong India. It is imperative for us that we take our country forward at a rapid pace and strengthen it across several sectors," Modi said. He said in the last 7 years the decisions taken are continuously enlarging the Indian economy. 7-8 years ago, India's GDP was ₹1.10 lakh crore. Today, our GDP is nearly ₹2.3 lakh crore.

The Prime Minister said in 2013-14, India's exports stood at ₹2.85 lakh crore and today it has achieved ₹4.7 lakh crore.

Modi said a new pace is set of vaccines, and because of Omicron's high transmissibil-"to fulfil new aspirations and it is important that India ity and lower severity, prebecomes self-reliant and on that pillar, a modern India is venting transmission is no longer possible and no longer

Don't rush to lift Covid curbs as deaths on rise, says WHO The World Health Organization (WHO) has called on countries that are starting to lift Covid-19 measures to do so in a steady and slow way as recent data have shown a sharp increase in

"More transmission means more deaths. We are not calling for any country to return to the so-called lockdown. But we are calling on all countries to protect their people using every tool in the toolkit, not vaccines

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus alone," he said. "It's premature for any country either to surrender or to declare victory." According Wednesday that since the tified just 10 weeks ago, almost to Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, technical lead of the WHO's reported to the WHO, more Health Emergencies than were reported in the whole of 2020. "We are now Programme, more than 22 million cases have been reported to the WHO in the past seven starting to see a very worrying increase in deaths in most days, largely driven by the Omicron variant.

More concerning right now is that the past four weeks have seen a sharp increase in the number of coronavirusrelated deaths around the world, which "shouldn't be happening at the present time when we have tools that can actually prevent this".

certain countries have started to relax their Covid-19 restrictions, Van Kerkhove urged caution "because many countries have not gone through the peak of Omicron yet" and "now is not the time to lift every-

thing all at once. She said those countries should do so "in a steady and in a slow way, piece by piece," because this virus is quite

dynamic. Dr Mike Ryan, executive director of the WHO's Health Emergencies Programme, echoed that countries should chart their own paths in lifting the measures instead of blindly following what the other countries are doing.

"I think it's a transition phase for many countries, not every country is in the same situation," he said.

'Those countries that are making decisions to open up more broadly also need to be sure they have the capacity to reintroduce measures with community acceptance quickly if needed. So if you open the doors quickly, you better be very well able to close it very quickly as well."

Govt creating 2 Indias for super rich, poor: Rahul

PNS NEW DELHI

In a sharp attack on the Modi Government in the Lok Sabha, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday charged it with creating two Indias one for the extremely rich and the other for the poor. He "putting India at high risk" and allowing China and Pakistan to join hands together against the country.

Participating in a debate in a discussion on the President's address, Rahul said the present Government has "created two nations one that of rich another of poor" and "the gap between the two Indias is widening and 10 people have more wealth than 40 per cent of India

He said a "few industrialists are monopolising the wealth of the nation".

Rahul accused the Government of killing small and medium industries and wiping-out jobs from the country. "The Government has repeatedly attacked the two



Congress MP Rahul Gandhi speaks in the Lok Sabha during ongoing Budget Session in New Delhi on Wednesday

sectors that had the potential to create jobs with its wrong policies like demonetisation, wrong GST and no support during the corona pandemic," Rahul said. 'You talk of Made in India,

Start-Up India, but the youth didn't get the employment they were supposed to. The one they had has disappeared," said the Congress leader.

Citing figures, Rahul claimed that there has been 46 per cent drop in manufacturing jobs in India.

Today, the income of 84

per cent of Indians has

reduced," he claimed. Stating that the rate of unemployment is highest in India at present, Rahul said the Government has pushed back over 20 crore people into

"There was not a single word on unemployment in the Presidential address. The youth across the country is looking for jobs. Your Govt is unable to provide them with one," the Waynad Congress MP said.

Continued on Page 2

I was popular pick for CM | Shah evokes Kalyan's post, but Cong rejected it over my religion: Jakhar

MONIKA MALIK

While the Congress high command is ers' response via televoting to zero in on its Chief Ministerial face for February 20 polls, senior party leader Sunil Jakhar's caims have

put the grand old party in a catch-22 situation.

Punjab Congress' former president Jakhar, in a short video clip, can be heard claiming that 42 legislators voted in his favour after Capt Amarinder Singh resigned as the Chief Minister in September last, while only two voted for Charanjit Singh Channi.

"I have no regrets...Today, I am telling you a fact that when Capt saab had left the Congress in September last year, all the 79 MLAs were asked to vote for the next Chief Ministerial face. At that time, 42 voted for Sunil (referring to himself), 16 for Sukhjinder Randhawa, 12 for Maharani Perneet Kaur (Capt Amarinder's wife), six for



Navjot Singh Sidhu, and only two for Charanjit Singh Channi," Jakhar said, while addressing a small public meeting in

The gathering was amused when Jakhar revealed that only two MLAs took Channi's

Continuing, he said that Rahul ji called me and asked me why I was not keen to become Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab. I told him that it was more than enough that people took my name

was I at that time, not even an MLA". Jakhar, while talking with The Pioneer, has expressed his anguish for being rejected for the Chief Minister's post, notwithstanding the majority of MLAs' support, on the basis of his caste and religion. He asserted that he opted out of the elections this time because he "doesn't want to go for the same thing all over again".

as a popular choice as CM face...I did-

n't want anything else. Otherwise, what

Continued on Page 2

memories in Aligarh

Reminding people of the contribution of Kalyan Singh in the uplift of a backward section of the society, Union Home Minister Amit Shah appealed to the people to support the BJP because the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party cannot fulfill the aspiration of the masses.

Shah was in Atrauli, the Assembly segment in Aligarh from where former Chief Minister Kalyan Singh's grandson, Sandeep Singh, who is also the State

Minister, is contesting elections. "Aligarh is the Karma Bhoomi of Ashok Singhal and Kalyan Singh. Babu i (Kalyan Singh) gave life for restoring the rights of backward society and even sacrificed his Chief Ministership for Ram temple," he said.

Shah said he had visited this place in 2014, 2017, and 2019 and asked for people's support and they supported the BJP. "Now in 2022 Yogi has to be made Chief Minister again. Bua and Bhatija cannot do good to the State," he said. "Now there is a toilet in every house of the poor, electricity in every house. This is because of the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Even



Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses a meeting in Atrauli on Wednesday

during the pandemic, the Government faced the crisis with courage. Akhilesh had initially opposed vaccination but now he has himself taken vaccines," the Union Home Minister said.

He even raised the law and order issue saying during the previous regime goondas used to call the shots. At that time police were afraid of criminals. But now, goons are afraid of the police. Now the criminals are in jail or have shifted

out of State, Shah said. "The SP has fielded criminals in elections. If SP returns to power, mafia rule will return and it may also stop all development projects. I would not be surprised if the Defence Corridor pro-

is also stalled," Shah Continued on Page 2

AAP candidates signed affidavit not to defect to other parties: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI/GOA

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said all AAP candidates have signed an affidavit promising they would not defect to another party after winning elections.

"In the past few elections, we have witnessed how MLAs were bought by the BJP after winning from parties. Joining another party after elections is not merely a breach of trust, you are also selling the votes people gave you to another party. Have handpicked our candidates for Goa; everyone is free to investigate their history, you won't find one example of dishonesty. Public doesn't easily believe that a government can function with honesty. Copies of this affidavit will be

sent to each household in Goa by AAP candidates. This affidavit is an assurance to the people that if the candidate falters, and is dishonest in their work, they can file a case against the candidate," said Kejriwal. Goa CM candidate Amit

Palekar administered the oath to all candidates. Kejriwal said, "Today is

an extremely important day in Goa's politics. The two major problems in the way Goa have oeen governed are — one is flagrant corruption. Goa's Government is one the richest State Governments in the country. Despite this, the people are deprived of basic amenities, the list of public grievances is endless because all the money

goes into the pockets of politi-Continued on Page 2 | the launch of a statue of Saint

KCR mocks PM; BJP says **CM** facing identity crisis

PNS NEW DELHI

major controversy broke-Aout on Wednesday when Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao made a personal remark against Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying he "dresses for elections" and mocked his "Gujarat model". The BJP hit back saying Rao is running a "smear campaign" as he is "depressed and going through an identity crisis." Upar Shervani, andar

pareshani (style outside, no substance inside)," the Chief Minister said, mocking the 'Gujarat model", which, he said, the BIP flaunts as an

example of Modi's governance. Rao said the Prime Minister "dresses for elections" and his Budget exem-

plifies "style without substance". Interestingly three days from now on Saturday, KCR is set to share a helicopter ride with Modi when they travel to the outskirts of Hyderabad for



at a cost of ₹1,000 crore. But Rao said he won't hes-

division," said the CM.

to grow a beard and appear like

Rabindranath Tagore. Arrey

baap re. If it is Tamil Nadu, he

must wear a lungi, what is

this?...What does the country

get with these kinds of gim-

Ramanuiacharva, said to be the world's second tallest and built

itate sharing his criticism in person. "With social media management, lying blatantly, repeating a lie again and again, they managed to fool the people so far. But now they have been exposed. They play communal politics of hate and "If it is election time, he has

micks, what does the country get? If it is the Punjab election he will wear a pagdi (turban). "In Manipur, it will be a Manipuri cap, in Uttarakhand,

it will be another topi (cap), how many caps like this?," Rao sneered at Modi in his noholds-barred acerbic com-The Telangana Chief Minister is scheduled to meet

his Maharashtra counterpart Uddhav Thackeray soon as part of his ongoing Project 2024 to bring various Opposition forces together as an alternative to the BJP and the Congress. He has already held consultations with several other non-BJP and non-Congress-leaders. There's a need for quali-

tative change in the nation,' Rao told reporters on his meeting with Uddhav Thackeray.

ning a smear campaign. Continued on Page 2

In a sharp riposte, Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar said Rao is run-

Crypto tax will help I-T gauge market depth, doesn't bestow legality to trade: CBDT chief New Delhi: The Budget

announcement of taxing 'virtual digital assets' or cryptocurrencies will help the Income-Tax department measure the "depth" of this trade in the country, know the investors and the nature of their investments and it does not "attach any legality" to these transactions, CBDT Chairman JB Mohapatra said The head of the I-T depart-

ment establishment in the country said that this is "the right time" for the taxman to enter this arena, about which, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said that the government was undertaking a stakeholders' consultation to frame a national policy and regulator in the coming days.

Stating that there has been a "phenomenal increase" in transactions in virtual digital assets, Sitharaman announced in her February 1 Budget speech that any income from



asset shall be taxed at the rate of 30 per cent along with some other direct tax measures like application of tax deduction at source (TDS) provisions. 'The department does not

sit in judgment over the legality of any transaction. The income-tax department and the income-tax Act only look at whether the transactions that you have entered into are resulting in income. We are not into the legality of any income but we are into the taxing of that income." "That is the reason, I would say, that taxing cryptocurrency under the new legislation does not attach any legality...it does not... Mohapatra told PTI in a post-Budget interview.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE SIDHU ROAD RAGE: SC TO

CONSIDER PLEA TODAY New Delhi: Weeks ahead of the Punjab Assembly elections, the

Supreme Court is scheduled to re-examine on Thursday the sentence awarded by it to cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu in an over 32-yearold road rage case. The SC had on May 15, 2018, set aside the High Court conviction order.

RAFALE-MARINE FLIGHT TESTS FOR INS VIKRANT Kolkata: The marine version of

the French-made Rafale fighter jet has been successfully flight tested at a shore-based facility in Goa where conditions similar to that on the indigenouslydeveloped aircraft carrier INS Vikrant were simulated, a top diplomat said.

HIZB MILITANT KILLED IN ENCOUNTER IN J&K Srinagar: A Hizbul Mujahideen militant was killed

in an encounter with security forces in Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, police said. He has been identified as Umai Ishfaq Malik alias Musa, a categorised terrorist, they said

Covid cases rise again in Maha

State sees over 3K increase in daily Covid-19 cases in 24 hrs

T N RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

fter substantial drop in the ACovid-19 infections during past three days, Maharashtra on Wednesday witnessed a moderate increase in the number of daily cases from 14,372 to 18,067, even as the daily cases in Mumbai rose from 803 to 1, 128 during the last 24 hours.

On a day when 113 fresh omicron cases were reported in

Rupees):-7500

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(time) 03.03.2022 (date).

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Tender ID

tions in the State rose by 3,695 to touch a daily tally of 18,067. With the fresh infections, the total number of Covid-19 cases in the state rose from 77,35,481 to 77,53,548.

With 79 fresh deaths, the total number of deaths registered in the state since the outbreak of Covid-19 in the state in March 2020 went up from 1.42.705 to 142784

Mumbai, where the daily infections have been dropping steadily for more than two weeks now, witnessed an increase in the number of cases from 803 to 1,128. With the latest cases, the total number of cases in Mumbai mounted from 10,47,393 to 10,94, 521.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECHANICAL

HOSPITAL AND CENTRAL HEATING DIVISION SRINAGAR

Telefax No. :- 0194-2496089, Email Id:- xenmhchdk@yahoo.in

(Short Term) GIST of E -NIT NO: MHCHD/TS /2021-22/305/e-tendering

Dated:-31-01-2022

For and on behalf of the Lt. Governor, J&K UT e-tenders are invited from

registered/reputed/experienced firms with J&K Govt., CPWD, Railways and

Name of Work: - Servicing/Overhauling of 158 CFM Reciprocating Air

Est. Cost (Rs. In Lacs) :- 3.75, Cost of T/Doc. (In rupees) :- 200, Time of

completion (in days): -05, AA Accorded Vide No: :-14-GDC of 2022, Dt:15-

01-2022, TS.NO :- SEMK/TS-14/16, Dt:24-01-2022, Earnest Money (in

1. The Tender document Consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, specifications, Bill of quantities (B.O.Q), Set of terms and conditions of

contract and other details can be seen/downloaded from the departmental

2. The bidders shall deposit their bids in electronic format on the above web site

from 01-02-2022 (10.00 hrs) to 07-02-2022 (14:00 hrs) in two

3. The bids uploaded on the website up to due date and time will be opened on

07-02-2022(16.00 hrs) or any date convenient to the department in the office

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, भोपाल

यांत्रिक विभाग (मुख्यालय) गोविंदपुरा (बी.एच.ई.एल.)

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निम्नलिखित निर्माण कार्य हेतु दो लिफाफा पद्धति के अनुसार म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में केन्द्रीकृत व्यवस्था के

The Bid Document can be purchased only online from 10:30 A.M. (time) 02.02.2022 (date) to 17.30 P.M.

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Rs. in lakh

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2022_UAD ANNUAL TENDER FOR (ON EMPANELMENT

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OF ROAD AT VARIOUS PLACES BY

ASHPHALTING OF BHOPAL CITY ZONE 01 TO 19

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patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March 2020 increased from 73,97,352 to 74,33,633. The recovery rate in the state rose from 95.53 per cent to 95.87 per cent.

The number of "active cases" in the state dropped from 1,91,524 to 1,73,221. The fatality rate in the state stood static at 1.84 per cent, The active cases in Pune dropped from 59204 cases on Tuesday to 52265 on Wednesday.

The active cases in Mumbai dropped from 9900 to 8158, while the active cases in

from 13296 on Tuesday to

Nagpur accounted for 20452 active cases, followed by Nashik (13456), Ahmednagar (8687), Aurangabad (5413) and Satara (4850).

Of the 7,49,51,750 samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far, 77,53,548 have tested positive (10.34 per cent) for COVID-19 until Wednesday. Currently, 973417 people are in home quarantine while 2,617 people are in institutional quarantine. Meanwhile, 113 fresh

Omicron cases were recorded in Maharashtra, taking the total number of the new Covid-19 variant cases to 3,334.



Flock of flamingos on a wetland in Seawoods area of Mumbai on Wednesday

AAP candidates signed affidavit...

From Page 1

"Two -, the problem of defection. No matter which party's ticket a leader contests from, they immediately switch parties after winning. In the past few elections, we have witnessed politicians contesting from other parties and defecting to BJP after winning. This is pure cheating, and voters are being betrayed - because the politicians earn their votes in the name of a party in which the public places its trust and then by switching parties, they sell the votes of the people."

Shah evokes Kalyan's memories in.

From Page 1

Therefore, to ensure the development of UP, the BJP should be voted back to power, he added. He also talked about Kashmir saying when the BJP scrapped Article 370, the parties like SP, BSP and Congress opposed it saying river of blood will flow but now no one has the courage to even throw a single stone. He also raked up the issue of the Uri attack and said the terrorists and their sympathisers did not realise that the Modi Government is at the center when they planned the attack in Uri.

"We gave a befitting reply. Our Army entered Pakistan and eliminated the terrorists. Thus, we sent a strong message that there is a strong Government at the center which will not tolerate any nonsense," he said.

Deve Gowda thanks PM for temples nomination for World Heritage sites

Bengaluru: JDS Supremo H D Deve Gowda on Wednesday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for accepting the suggestion of lovers of art and heritage in Karnataka, for finalising Hoysala temples of Halebid and Somnathapura in the State, as India's nomination for World Heritage List 2022-23

Last month, he had written to the PM requesting him to direct the Archeological Survey of India to submit documents regarding the Hoysala temples to UNESCO as the main nomination dossier.

"Happy, proud that temples of Hoysala architecture in Halebid and Somanathapura are India's official nominations seeking the UNESCO world heritage tag. I sincerely thank @PMOIndia for accepting my suggestion as well as that of all lovers of art and heritage in Karnataka," Gowda said in a tweet with the copy of the letter.

The Union Culture Ministry on Monday had said the Hoysala Temples of Belur, Halebid and Somnathapura in Karnataka have been finalised as India's nomination for World Heritage List for the year 2022-2023.

Before Debts Recovery Tribunal-II, Delhi 4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110001

O.A. No. 510/19 Dt. 17-11-2021 STATE BANK OF INDIA

Applicant Versus

Sh. Maninder Kumar Jha & ORS. Defendants

1. Sh. Maninder Kumar Jha S/o Sh. Bee Shanker Jha, R/o Flat No. 1503 Richmond Tower Omex Hills Sect.-43 Amar Nagar Faridabad - 121003 Also at: D-129, Block D, Krishna Park Khanpur New Delhi - 62 Also at: D-60 Flat No. 2, 4th Floor Krishna Park Khanpur New Delhi -62 Also at: M/s Dhruv Transport Solutions, B-474, 1st Floor Green Field Colony Faridabad -121003, <u>Also at</u>: B-354, 3rd Floor Greei Field Colony Faridabad -121003

2. M/s ADTV Communications Pvt. Ltd B-B, Basement Floor) Angpura Mair Mathura Road New Delhi - 14

Whereas the above named applicant(s has / have instituted a case for recovery of Rs. 1,08,19,952/- (Rs One Crore Eigh Lacs Nineteen Thousand Nine Hundred Fifty Two Only) against you and where as i has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in the ordinary way therefore, this notice i given by advertisement directing you to make appearance in the Tribunal o 08-02-2022 at 10.30 A.M.

Take notice that in default of you appearance on the day before the mentioned, the case will be heard and letermined in your absence

Due to ongoing Pandemic situation, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that

(i) All the Advocates/Litigants shal download the "Cisco Webex" application software: (ii) Meeting ID and Password for the next

date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar/Recovery Officer-I/and Recovery Officer-II shall be displayed in the daily cause list itself of DRT Official Portal i.e drt.gov.in. (iii) In any exigency qua that, the Advocate

litigants can contact the concerned officia at Ph. No. 23748478. Given under my hand and seal of this

Tribunal on this the 17th day of Nov., 2021. By order of the Tribunal Assistant Registrar, DRT-II, Delhi

https://gem.gov.in/

Tender No

SECRHQTM212242

SECRHQTM212246

SECRHQTM212247

CPR/10/331

SECRHQTM212241 Grease, Hydraulic Oil &

SECRHQTM212243 Motor GP=ELE (self starter)

SECRHQTM212244 06 types of Hydraulic Pump

SECRHQTM212248 Nylon Sheet & Side Rubber

For full details of tender notice and tender docume

Mounting Pad

SECRHQTM212245 Chain Guide

Crypto tax will help I-T...

From Page 1

The crypto trade or the digital assets transactions 'do not ipso facto become legal or regular just because you have paid taxes on that", he said.

"The regulation policy on a national level (for cryptocurrency) is under work right now....the tax department is entering into the digital or virtual asset side at a time when the policy itself is being worked out so this is, I would say, the right time for the department to have entered the market," the chief of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said.

Mohapatra elaborated that when an entity declares any profit or surplus on the digital trade, then they also have to say where they have got the money to invest from and, if the investment is proper and justified, then the surplus will be taxed

'The taxation will also help us know if the investment is contaminated or illicit, if he/she is putting unaccounted income or it is a 'benami' of

sequences will follow," he said. So, we are not just looking at the surplus but we are also looking at the nature of the investment he/she is making, Mohapatra said while explaining the rationale behind the gov-

ernment's move in the Budget. "We want to build and map the whole depth of this market through the TDS provisions. We want to look at each of the transactions, who is investing, and where he/she is investing? That one percent of the TDS will give us an idea as to the depth of this market," he said. The Budget has proposed

a 1 percent TDS on payments towards virtual currencies beyond Rs 10,000 in a year and taxation of such gifts in the hands of the recipient. The threshold limit for

TDS would be Rs 50,000 a year for specified persons, which includes individuals/HUFs who are required to get their accounts audited under the I-Also, no deduction in

respect of any expenditure or

"The language used by the

Chief Minister is uncalled

for," he said, adding, "Why is

"It has been said that there are 10 crore investors (in the crypto trade), so we want to see whether it is 10 crore or 1 crore. We want to see whether the profits are declared, whether they are real or just drummed up to build up the market. We want to get into the market, understand how it works, and also want to remove the opacity and bring transparency to the transactions," Mohapatra said.

Asked about the current estimations of the crypto economy in the country, the CBDT chief said he would not like to hazard a guess in the absence of accurate data. There are some project-

based discoveries like in a year we ran a pilot project and we got some data, the next year we had another kind of pilot project and we got some data, he said. "I will not be right in

quoting those data to have a pan-India estimation about the depth of the (crypto) market," the chairman said.

Tax department officials, however, say they have 'unconfirmed or anecdotal inputs" to suggest that there are about 40 crypto exchanges in

turnover of this unregulated trade (since 2017) ranges from Rs 30,000 crore to Rs 1 lakh crore per annum. The CBDT chairman said

the taxman, currently, also does not have clarity on crypto investments and income as they face four kinds of proba-

The first is there is no income tax return (ITR) filed although you are trading, making profit or loss; second is there is ITR but there will be no reference to any trading in the crypto; third is there is ITR and there will be a reference to profit in the crypto trade but when you go into the profit, you find there are mismatches in the purchase and sale and the fourth part is that there is a return, there is a crypto profit and sometimes the profit has been declared as income from other sources, sometimes as business income, sometimes as income from capital gains and

Only legislation will help us in knowing as to who is investing, how much is being invested, the quality of the investment, the nature of investment and whether people are making profits or loss-

various other varieties, he said.

Government of Tripura

Directorate of Youth Affairs & Sports Office Lane, Shiksha Bhavan, 4th Floor Agartala, West Tripura

E-mail: yasdirector14@gmail.com

Advertisement No; 02/2021

Dated, 29/01/2022

RECRUITMENT FOR VARIOUS POSTS FOR KHELO INDIA STATE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE.

The Directorate of Youth Affairs & Sports, Govt, of Tripura and Sports Authority of India (SAI) Khelo India Division under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (GOI), is in the process of setting up the Khelo India State Centre of Excellence (KISCE) for Judo, Athletics and Swimming at Dasarath Deb State Sports Complex (DDSSC), Badharghat to nurture the best talent of the State of Tripura. In order to lead the High-performance centre, offline applications are invited from the Indian Nationals for engagement of the following posts on purely contractual/basis.

2. Details of the Posts: Following are the likely posts that will be filled up through interview:

				, ,	
SI. No.	Name of the Post	No. of Post	Required Qualification from recognized Board / University	Monthly Remuneration in Rs.	Tenure
1.	Head Coach - Judo	1	Diploma in Coaching from SAI /NS NIS	1,00,000 to 1,50,000/-	1 Yr.
2.	Head Coach - Athletics	1	Diploma in Coaching from SAI/NS NIS	1,00,000 to 1,50,000/-	1 Yr.
3.	Masseur Grade -1	2	10+2 passed with certificate course / skill development programme for Masseur / Massage Therapy / Sports Masseur	35,000/-	1 Yr.

Interested candidates may apply in the prescribed format - Annexure-'A' by post or directly visiting the office of the Directorate of Youth Affairs & Sports, Govt, of Tripura. The prescribed format and more details are available in the official website https://yas.tripura.gov.in. Applications duly signed along with self-attested copies of all educational qualification, experience and other testimonials as required to support the candidature of the applicant must be sent to the Director, Youth Affairs & Sports, 4th Floor, Shiksha Bhawan, Office Lane, Agartala - 799001. The application process will be started w.e.f 02.0&2022 (10AM) to 15.02.2022 (5 PM), applications received after 15.02.2022 (5 PM) shall not be entertained. Only short-listed candidates shall be called for the interview.

https://yas.tripura.gov.in ICA/D/1730/22

Director Youth Affairs &Sports Govt. of Tripura

Sd/

King George's Medical University

U.P., Lucknow

Notice No: E-Bid01/MS/TC/2022 Date: 03.02.2022

Customized E-Bid Inviting Notice

under two e-bid system for Supply of Medical

Gases (Oxygen) in King George Medical

University Lucknow. The details of the tender can

be viewed at www.kgmu.org. Detailed bid

document will be available on e-portal

SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY Track Machine/Engineering Department E-Tender for supply of space parts for Track machines

Description of Item

for UTV Track Machine

12 types of Mechanical Spares

Universal Joint & Anti vibration

etails of tender notice and tender documents, tenderer may logon to the w.ireps.gov.in. No manual tenders will be entertained against E-Tender

(Medical Superintendent)

Quantity

As per tende

As per tende

As per tender

As per tende

As per tende

Dy. Chief Engineer/TM/L/HQ

S.E.C. Railway, Bilaspur

01 Nos

11.00 Hour

11.00 Hours

22.02.2022

01 Nos

Online e-bids are invited latest by 24.02.2022

From Page 1 "The CM is attempting to

showcase his government's work in other states and his claim that the country needs a change is nonsense, in fact, people in Telangana want a change," said the BJP leader.

about it now?", he asked.

an identity crisis." The Karimnagar MP objected to the Chief Minister's claim that the BJP message

is using social media to spread that Ramanujacharya's idol is being erected with the help of the BJP. "KCR is afraid that if Prime Minister Narendra Modi comes for the inauguration, no one will care about him," he said.

it that KCR did not write letters to the Centre seeking support for the State in the last few years, why is he talking The State BJP president

said, "Rao is running a smear campaign against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BIP-led Central Government as he is "depressed and going through

> anyone's name — As of now, Congress has all

I was popular pick for CM post, but...

From Page 1 The revelations came at a

time when the Congress high command is taking feedback from the party workers, along with gathering people's response on their choice of Chief Minister through televoting. The receivers of the automated calls were asked to choose among the three options - Chief Minister Channi, Punjab Congress president Sidhu, or not to announce virtually pushing Jakhar out of the race.

along been claiming that 2022 polls would be fought under a "collective leadership" while

projecting Channi, Sidhu, and Jakhar, as the party's face for elections. It was only during Rahul Gandhi's recent Punjab visit that Sidhu and Channi insisted on announcing the CM face, after which the Congress vice-president announced to take workers'

feedback on the same.

Jakhar has been a threetime MLA, representing Abohar constituency in 2002, 2007, and 2012. Even as the Congress won 2017 polls with thumping majority, Jakhar lost to BJP's Arun Narang, a firsttimer. This time, his nephew Sandeep Jakhar is contesting from Abohar.

Govt creating 2 Indias for super rich, poor: Rahul...

From Page 1 "UPA Govt pulled 27 crore

people out of poverty in 10 years. This is not our data, this is factual data. You pushed 23 crore people back into poverty," he said

Rahul also accused the Government of creating a monopoly in the formal sector. "One person has got all the ports and airports of India, power transmission green ener-

gy and the other person has all of telecom, retail, ecommerce, and petrochemical business," he said. The Congress MP accused the Modi-Government of completely "isolating India internationally " and "allowing China and Pakistan to join hands against India".

"This is the dangerous place a nation to be...you are putting nation at huge risk," warned the Congress MP.

He gave an analogy of "Union of India versus the concept of one India" saying under the current regime there is "no conversation" between the union of India and one

Rahul said India has always thrived as the Union of India and the concept of "kingdom" and a "ruler" did not survive in the last 5000 years and will not work even now, he said.

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NEW DELHI | THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 3, 2022 **Govt inducts 30 junior**

the pioneer

The Delhi Government on The Denn Government Wednesday said that it has inducted 30 Junior Environmental Engineers and 22 Green Fellows.

According to Environment Minister Gopal Rai, these engineers and Green Fellows will add strength to the Government's environmental enforcement and regulatory measures which is a priority of the Government.

The Green Fellows are part of a unique Fellowship Programme started by the Government of Delhi for young professionals to contribute to Delhi's green initiatives while the Junior Environmental Engineers will act as a force multiplier for the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC).

Rai said, "The Green Delhi Fellowship programme is a oneof-a-kind initiative of the Government for young, motivated professionals to innovatively and creatively support Delhi's environmental gover-

ther strengthened by hiring 30 Junior Environmental Engineers for the first time in almost three

environmental engineers

Advisor to Environment Minister Reena Gupta said, "The Green Delhi fellows will bolster the initiatives being undertaken by the department. The exposure that the fellowship will provide to these young professionals is unparalleled. Along with the transformation of Delhi's environment which they will support over the next few years, this will also help them become environmental leaders for times to come."

The Fellows and engineers together will work under the close supervision of senior officials of the Delhi Government on various environmental issues from air pollution to preservation of forests and wetlands to Yamuna cleaning to solid waste management and other environmental issues.

The Green Fellows will support the department in making strategies, in data analysis, field other tasks. The new recruits will also strengthen the forest department and aid the government's forestry programs.

Sanjeev Khirwar, Principal Secretary, Department of Environment and Forests, GNCTD, Reena Gupta, Advisor to the Minister of Environment, GNCTD and Dr KS Jayachandran, Member Secretary, DPCC addressed the Green Fellows and JEEs at during a 3-day online orientation program that concluded on Wednesday.

The orientation programme was designed to expose the young professionals to subjectspecific topics on environmental governance, air pollution, solid waste management, Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) among others. Experts from the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), and Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) addressed the professionals during the three-day programme.

AAP accuses NMC DTC to raise of selling schools at throwaway prices

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

 $T^{\text{he Aam Aadmi Party}}_{\text{(AAP) accused the BJP-ruled North Delhi Municipal}}$ Corporation (NMC) of selling 40 schools at throwaway prices.

AAP senior leader and MCD in-charge Durgesh Pathak said that the BJP is on a spree of giving away public assets including schools to bogus NGOs owned by its

leaders.
"The BJP shut down 34 schools last year and is now going to shut down 40 more schools this year. The NMC claims that its admissions have gone up from 2.9 lakh to 3.03 lakh yet the BJP leaders are shutting the schools down saying there are no students to The BJP is conspiring to

give away all these schools to its own people by registering bogus NGOs in their names, he alleged.

Pathak also said, "no country or state in this whole world The BJP is conspiring to give all these schools to its own people by registering bogus NGOs in their names: **Durgesh Pathak**

can claim to walk on the path of prosperity unless it has a robust education system. "No state can progress without having excellent schools in its ambit. The AAP Government developed such an education system which the whole world talks about. The Delhi model of education is successful and has received so much acclaim because the Kejriwal Government developed a robust network of schools across the state. Party workers and leaders are being praised for educational reforms in Delhi during the campaign in Punjab, Goa, Uttarakhand and UP," he added.

funds through mobile towers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a decision to increase its non-operating revenue, the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) is going to licence out its premises across the city for installation of 61 mobile network towers by private bidders.

In a tender floated earlier this week, DTC has invited private bidders for installing mobile network towers at its depots, terminals and residential colonies. The bidders have also been allowed to choose and quote preferable sites for 61 The reserved price for the

licence for per square metre to be used for installing the towers has been kept at ₹16,875. The earnest money deposit for each tower will be ₹38,307, the tender document stated.

The agreement period for installing the mobile towers will be nine years, it said.

DTĆ has been working on

ways to increase its revenue and licensing out spaces for mobile towers is one such step, officer.

The city transporter that runs a fleet of nearly 3,900 lowfloor buses has also been working on redevelopment of its depots and residential colonies to increase parking space and commercial facilities.

In October 2020, DTC signed an agreement with the NBCC to redevelop its four major land parcels in locations across Delĥi for multi-level bus parking depots, redevelopment of residential colonies of DTC and more commercial

The main source of DTC's revenue is the operation of buses. The non-operating revenue is generated mainly from advertisements, rentals on premises, mobile towers, and booths on

DTCP recommends FIR against 50 offenders for violation of building norms

Gurugram: The District Town and Country Planning (DTCP) department has recommended FIR against 50 offenders who violated building plan norms of the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) plots situated in DIF Phase-3 of Gurugram. The officials said during a survey of EWS plots in DIF Phase-3, it was noticed that most of the owners had made several violations including constructing additional floors without any permission, 100 per cent coverage, extended balconies and constructing the building without any approvals from the department.

"Several demolition drives have been conducted in the area wherein encroachments, sealing of commercial activities, partial demolition/sealing of unauthorised building has been done in the past. We have prepared a list of offenders amid violations in EWS plots in U, S, V blocks of DLF Phase-3," DTP R.S. Bhath said.

A total of 50 FIR has been sent to the DLF Phase-3 police station and the remaining shall be prepared, he added. *PNS*

Ecologists raise concern over depleting wetlands

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

On the World Wetland Day -2022, ecologists in Delhi raised concern over the depleting number of wetlands. As wetlands play a pivotal role in maintaining the ecological balance, scientists raised the alarm mentioning that out of 1,000 wetlands on record, about 400 have remained and that too is in deprived states. Wetlands are essential to

achieving sustainable development, keeping in view, DDA has taken a scientific initiative to restore a myriad of wetlands in the network of Biodiversity Parks. Yamuna Biodiversity Park is the first park initiated by S Anil Baijal, the then Vice chairman of DDA and Professor C. R. Babu, an ecologist in 2002, seven Biodiversity Parks have been developed and will be managed now through Delhi Biodiversity

On Wednesday, to celebrate World Wetland Day, Biodiversity Parks along with Agrasen College organised a Virtual Webinar to enhance awareness on conservation and restoration of wetlands. The



"Wetlands action for people and nature". Around 550 students and faculties from different colleges like Hindu College, Central University of North Bihar, Dayal Singh College, Agrasen College, Mata Sundari College, I P College etc have participated. Dr. Rajiv Kumar Tiwari, Prinicipal Commissioner, DDA also joined the webinar.

Dr Faiyaz A. Khudsar, Professor and Scientists incharge, Delhi University initiated the programme and explained the importance of wetlands and celebration of World Wetland day. Prof.

Sanjeev Kumar Tiwari, Principal Agrasen College open the session by saying that "Ecology and Environment set the political agenda.

Dr Manu Bhatnagar of INTACH, highlighted the current status of some of the major wetlands of India like Naini lake of Nainital, water bodies of Chennai and Ganga floodplains, Sambar lake etc due to alteration of natural drainage pattern in the catchment. He also emphasized the need of conservation and practical solutions to revive such

Dr. Asghar Nawab, Head of

Aquatic ecology at Wetland International suggested Striking a Balance through use of wetlands and environmental functions, for a sustainable future.

Dr Anupam Joshi, a Sr. Environmental Specialist with the World Bank, highlighted that development is the need of hour but may put many natural wetland ecosystems at

the Concluding In Remarks, Professor C. R. Babu emphasized that it is critical to identify wetland first followed by prevention in its land use changes, restore it and conserve them for posterity.

'Panel to be set up to resolve issue of submerged land along Najafgarh drain'

PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Labour and Employment, Bhupender Yadav said that a scientific committee is being formed to solve the problem of submerged land along the Najafgarh drain.

The committee will plan and execute the same in the next six months and soon the problem of waterlogging in this area will be resolved," he told reporters.

In this committee, representatives of the Ministry of Environment, the Central Pollution Control Board, besides representatives of the Haryana and Delhi Governments will be included as members. The Union Minister said after solving this problem, farmers and villagers of Haryana especially the Gurugram district will be benefited in a big way.

He said owing to the problem of waterlogging in the Najafgarh region the Haryana Chief Minister has suggested that a drain should be dug for proper water drainage. On his advice, the Environment Department will constitute a committee.

Yadav was speaking as the chief guest at a national level function organized at Sultanpur National Park in Gurugram on the occasion of World Wetland Day on Wednesday. He said that Sultanpur and

already got the status of the Ramsar site. Now the number of Ramsar sites in India has become the largest among South Asian Meanwhile,

Bhindawas of Harvana

Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar while speaking at the event said that many tourists come here to see these migratory birds. Plans are being made for their

"Recently, a homestay policy has been made for Tikkartal and on the same pattern, a homestay will also be started in the villages around Sultanpur (Gurugram) and Bhindawas (Jhajjar) lakes. With this, tourists will be able to experience Haryanvi culture and get glimpses of rural life," he said. He informed that every year 50,000 birds of more than 100 species reach Sultanpur. Similarly, 40,000 birds of more than 80 species come to Bhindawas every year. More than 100 home species of birds are also found in Bhindawas.

Khattar said that for the rejuvenation of ponds in Haryana, Haryana Pond and Waste Water Management Authority has been constituted. There are about 18,000 pounds in the State. "This year 1900 ponds will be cleaned

by removing the dirt from these ponds," he The Union Minister said that the forest department has a record 49 lakes of the country in the Ramsar site, including Sultanpur and Bhindawas lakes of Haryana. In future, work will be done to get 75 lakes of the country registered in the Ramsar sites. We should try to beautify these lakes

by the Pond Authority, next year, the work

of 2500 ponds will be carried out. Thereby

all the ponds of the State will be rejuvenated

and save them, he added.

The Minister said that his department is working at the grassroots level to ensure the celebration of important environment days. Climate change is a big challenge for us, that is why the Government of India has presented the Green Budget, he added.

'Pedestrians, bikers most at risk in 2020'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

rhe 'Delhi Road Crash **▲** Fatalities Report: 2020' revealed that pedestrians and motorcyclists were at most risk and accounted for 85 per cent of the 1,197 deaths in road crashes in 2020. The largest proportion of road deaths occurred among adults aged between 20 to 39 years old. Younger men aged 20 to 34 years accounted for the highest number of deaths among motorcyclists. Interestingly, the number of fatal crashes as well as deaths was highest in January and October.

The report found that of all the fatal crashes, 51 per cent of total crashes were instances of hit-and-run in 2020. The instances of fatal hit-and-run crashes have increased by 4 per cent in 2020 as compared to for 45 percent and pedestrians 2019. More than 60 perc ent of all pedestrian deaths occurred due to hit-and-run crashes.

The report was prepared by the Road Safety Lead Agency (RSLA) of the Delhi Government's transport department in collaboration the Bloomberg Philanthropies Initiative for Global Road Safety (BIGRS).

"In 2020, 1,197 people were killed as compared to 2,110 people killed in 2011. There is a 43 per cent decline in deaths reported since 2011 and a drop of 25 per cent since 2016. The decline of 18 per cent in road crash deaths since 2019 may be partly attributed to the nationwide lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic," the report said. Motorcyclists (both riders and pillion riders) accounted

for 40 per cent of all the deaths. A total of 89 per cent of the deaths occurred among vulnerable road users (pedestrians, motorcyclists and cyclists). Of all the male deaths, 368 were motorcyclists and 364 were pedestrians. Of all the female deaths, 59 were pedestrians and 30 were motorcycle-pillion

peaked on weekends, with Sundays between 2400 to 0200 hours the deadliest span of time. 107 women were killed in crashes out of which 89 women (83 per cent) killed were pedestrians or pillion riders, indicating that women are more at risk while walking and on motorcycles, where most pillion riders do not wear helmets," the report said.

"Road crash fatalities

Road rage: Three men

"Hence, a case was registered and investigation was taken up. Ibrahim revealed

that she procured the fake Oman visa from an agent

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

allegedly travelling on fake Oman visa. Police said that the agent who provided her fake visa was also arrested.

The accused have been identified as Noori Ibrahim, a resident of Tamil Nadu, and Ibraheem Keethadth (44), a resident of Bengaluru.

the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport unit, on January 5, a complaint was received from Sanjay Kumar Rao, co-immigration officer, IGIA alleging that one female passenger deported from Muscat arrived at IGI Airport. Ibrahim illegally travelled to Oman on fake Visa.

Ibraheem Keethadth for a payment of ₹50,000. It was further revealed that the agent provided her the fake visa at Bengaluru airport," said the

Police team reached Bengaluru and made several raids. They tracked Keethadth's location and arrested him from Bengaluru, the DCP said.

The agent disclosed that the fake Oman visa was given to him by one other women agent Tabassum. Keethadth also disclosed the address of Tabassum in Bengaluru, but she was not found there, police

During further course of investigation, Tabbasum also joined the investigation and revealed the name of one more agent. Efforts are being made to nab the absconding agents and further investigation of the

Police nab woman for allegedly | L-G to chair virtual meet of DDMA on February 4

The Opposition party in the national Capital

has demanded reopening of gyms and spas,

saying the ruling AAP was discriminating

against them as Covid restrictions like

weekend curfew have been removed, and

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal will chair a virtual meeting of Delhi Management Disaster Authority (DDMA) on February 4. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal will also be present at the meeting.

The Opposition party in the national Capital has demanded reopening of gyms and spas, saying the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was discriminating against them as Covid restrictions like weekend curfew have been removed, and restaurants and bars have been allowed to operate at 50 per cent capacity.

In a statement, leader of the Opposition (LOP) in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri urged Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to immediately send a proposal in this regard to Lieutenant Governor

Anil Baiial.

"Restrictions like weekend curfew and odd-even have been removed from the markets. Along with this, restaurants, bars, and cinemas have also been allowed with 50 percent capacity. Why is discrimination being done only with gyms and spas?" the BJP leader

It may be noted that DDMA last week lifted the weekend curfew and also allowed restaurants, bars and

restaurants have been allowed to operate. cinema halls to operate with 50 per cent capacity whereas gyms and schools in the city are still

The gym owners took out a protest march to CM Kejriwal's residence to oppose the DDMA's decision to keep gym centres closed while Covid

icantly in the city.

Meanwhile, Delhi on Tuesday reported 2,683 Covid-19 cases with a positivity rate of 5.09 per cent, while 27 more people succumbed to the infec-

cases have come down signif-

Egyptian vulture found in semi-conscious state in Noida

An Egyptian Vulture was found in a semi-conscious state outside a house in Sector-26, Noida. The large bird was rescued by the Wildlife SOS Rapid Response Unit and is currently under observation.

The NGO also rescued an injured Indian Rat snake from St. Martin's Diocesan School in Delhi Cantt.

A family residing in Sector-26, Noida was shocked to find a vulture lying in a semi-conscious state outside their house, earlier this week. Worried for its well-being, they contacted Wildlife SOS on their 24-Hour helpline number.

A two-member rescue team was immediately dis-

provides animal ambulance services to wild animals in distress across Delhi NCR. Upon arrival, they confirmed that the bird was a juvenile Egyptian Vulture. This species is one of the smallest amongst all the vultures and is classified as a globally endangered species on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. The rescuers carefully

shifted the distressed bird to a transport container and rushed to their recovery facility. A detailed examination was conducted by Wildlife SOS veterinarians and the bird was given oral rehydration solution and glucose to regain its strength. The vulture is currently under-

Noida was shocked to find a vulture lying in a semi-conscious state outside their house, earlier this week. Worried for its wellbeing, they contacted Wildlife SOS on their 24-Hour helpline number

A family residing in Sector-26,

going treatment and care and will be released back into its natural habitat on full recovery.

Dr. Saurabh Choudhry, the person who called Wildlife SOS said, "We moved the helpless vulture into our house to protect it from stray cats in the neighbourhood. Thankfully, we came across the Wildlife

SOS helpline number and called them for help.

Kartick Satyanarayan, Co-Founder and CEO of Wildlife SOS, said, "This species is rarely spotted in Delhi but in recent years there have been reported sightings near the Yamuna Biodiversity Park, Asola Bhatti, Sanjay Van and Aravalli Biodiversity Park. The

gral role in our ecosystem." Wasim Akram, Deputy

Director-Special Projects for Wildlife SOS, said, "Juvenile Egyptian vultures take small flights, often stopping for rest in safe areas devoid of predators. This particular vulture was unable to take flight due to severe dehydration. Our team has placed the vulture under mandated medical observation to ensure it recuperates safely."
In another incident, the

Wildlife SOS Rapid Response Unit rescued an Indian Rat snake with a tail injury from St. Martin's Diocesan School in Delhi Cantt. The snake is currently undergoing treatment

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI $D_{ ext{three}}^{ ext{elhi}}$ Police has arrested three men for allegedly

opening fire and injuring three others during an incident of road rage in Angoori Bagh near the Red Fort area in north The accused have been

identified as Shehzada Farid (30), Shadab (31) and Shahbaz alias Badshah (30), all residents of Chauhan Bangar, New Seelampur in northeast Delhi. Investigation has revealed

that all the three accused are related to each other. Shahbaz started beating up people but when he was caught by the public, Shadab took out the weapon from Farid's scooty and fired upon the public to escape from the spot, police

The injured identified as Aabid, Aman and Dilfaraz, police said, adding that they received injuries on their leg, thigh and back and are under treatment at a hospital. Their condition is stated to be out of A case of attempt to mur-

booked for opening fire

der (307) of the Indian Penal Code and Arms Act was registered and three of the accused have been arrested in the case while our teams are conducting raids to nab their remaining associates who have been absconding," said Sagar Singh the Deputy

(DCP), North district. "The country made pistol, a mobile phone and two twowheelers used in commission of crime has been recovered from the accused," he said.

According to the police, the incident took place on Monday night when Mohammad Shahid, engaged in supplying motor parts, was returning home on his two-wheeler after having dinner with his wife. When he reached near his

house in Angoori Bagh area, two men on a two-wheeler coming from the opposite direction, accidently brushed past Shahid's vehicle causing minor damages, the police said. This led to an argument between them. Shahid asked the two men

to get his vehicle repaired. Commissioner of Police Locals of Angoori Bagh area also gathered. One of the two men called his brother who also arrived at the spot along with his associates, a senior police official said.

travelling on fake Oman visa

Delhi Police has nabbed a 41-year-old woman for

According to Sanjay Tyagi,

Centre abolishes 2K posts of ACIO-II in IB cadre shake-up the reasons for an over 13 per-Union Finance Ministry on cial year 2021-22 and subse-On Monday. (DCIO) have been sanctioned been added in the rank of Director and Joint Director.

In a major shakeup in the executive cadre of the Intelligence Bureau, the Centre has abolished 2,000 posts in the rank of Assistant Central Intelligence Officer (ACIO) II and created a similar number of posts, mostly in the higher

The decision was among

3,168.36 crore in the budget for the next fiscal, as against Rs 3,039.36 crore allocated in the ongoing financial year, to augment the additional expenses, officials said.

The proposal was moved by the IB on July 2, 2020 and

Integrated Finance Division of the Union Home Ministry on January 31, they said.

The expenditure arising due to the review in the executive cadre strength of the agency will be met from the sanctioned budget grant of IB was approved by the under the relevant head of Department of Expenditure, account for the current finanaccount for the current finan-

"As many as 2,000 posts of ACIO-II out of a total sanctioned strength 7,898 (Level-7 pay scale) current posts have been abolished and the revised strength will be 5,898 posts in the rank," an official said quoting from the order issued by the Internal Security Division of the Union Home Ministry

Of the abolished 2,000 posts, as many as 1,110 posts will be added to the existing sanctioned 2,697 posts of ACIO-I posts in the higher Level-8 pay scale. Now, the total strength of the ACIO-I posts will be 3,807 posts.

As many as 358 posts in the Level-10 pay scale of Deputy Central Intelligence Officer

1,200, taking the tally to 1,558.

Likewise, 80 posts have been increased in the rank of Assistant Director (Pay Scale, Level-11), making the revised strength to 583 posts. Ten posts have also been increased in the rank of Joint Deputy Director (Level-12 Pay Scale).

A total of 442 posts have

Scale), taking the tally of revised strength of the post to 4,290. This is the only revision in a post lower in pay scale than ACIO-II.

However, no changes have been made in the sanctioned posts of Junior Intelligence Officer I and II, Additional Deputy Director, Deputy

bined strength of the agency will stand at a little over 20,000 posts in different ranks as ear-

The move is aimed at streamlining the functioning of the covert agency engaged in internal intelligence gathering as also enhancing operational efficiency, officials added.

Ayush Ministry officials welcome budget uptick

▼n a major boost to the Ayush **L**sector, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has increased fund allocation for the National AYUSH Mission from Rs 553 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 800 crore in the Budget 2022-23.

Officials in the Ministry said that this would help various services being provided under the Mission which includes upgrading hospitals and dispensaries, support cultivation of medicinal plants and in other areas, including increase in export of valueadded items of medicinal plants

However, overall, the Ministry saw a slight increase of 2.69 per cent from the last year's budget which allocated Rs 2,970 crore to the Ministry.

Budgetary provisions have also been made for the estab-lishment of a Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM-WHO) in India to promote Yoga, Ayurveda and other traditional medicine systems. The centre will directly affect investment in the traditional medicine sector and will help emerge as a global leader with concerted efforts, the official

The research councils, centre of excellence and autonomous bodies have been

include the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences, Central Council for Research in Homeopathy and Central Council for Research in

Unani Medicine. Since the formation of the Union Ayush Ministry a few years back by the Modi Government, various initiatives have been taken to push

Moreover, demand for the alternative traditional medicine has also increased among consumers whether domestic or in the international market who consider its more safe with no serious side effects.

No wonder that despite a slump in economic activity in

allotted Rs 1,870.1 crore. These 2020 due to the Covid-19 crisis, the industry is projected to reach USD 20.6 billion in 2021 and USD 23.3 billion in 2022.

Union Ayush Minister Sarbananda Sonowal at an even too quoted the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) report titled 'AYUSH Sector in India: Prospects and Challenges' saying that the market size of Ayush sector has grown by 17 per cent in 2014-20 to reach USD18.1 billion.

Avush medicines have done exceedingly well in helping Covid19 patients recover faster across the world during the first and second wave of pandemic in the last one and a half years," Sonowal said.

Priyanka focuses on UP, U'khand; Rahul on Goa, Punjab

Uttar Pradesh general sec-retary incharge of Congress, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, has taken the baton of her party also to neighbouring Uttarakhand, which goes to polls this month. She released the Congress' manifesto for the hill State on Wednesday.

While party sources said that former party chief Rahul Gandhi will be focusing more on Punjab and Goa, his sibling Priyanka is understood to remain active in UP and Uttarakhand. The party is hopeful to retain Punjab and wrest Goa and Uttarakhand back from the ruling BJP.

Sources also said that Rahul has expressed his annovance over the way senior leaders of the party including



heavyweight Harish Rawat washed dirty lines in public.

"Priyanka has been active politics and she has been accepted by the party workers as a good leader. She was instrumental in resolving the crisis in Raiasthan and Puniab and had also been to Goa to settle the rift within the party there," explained a very senior

Congress MP when asked about Priyanka releasing the manifesto in Uttarakhand.

Another party leader said that the organisational elections including elections of new party president are due later this year and hence Privanka is taking on bigger responsibilities by the time country gears up for 2024 General Elections.

Priyanka promised to reserve 40 per cent jobs for women in the police department, jobs to four lakh people, and creation of a 'tourism police' force. The manifesto has been

'Uttarakhand Swabhiman Pratigya Patra'.

Accusing the BJP government in Uttarakhand of doing nothing over the past five years, she asked people to take their vote seriously because it was their "most powerful weapon" to bring change.

"The engine of the so-called double engine has itself stopped working due to the unprecedented rise in petrol and diesel prices," she said.

The Congress leader alleged there was no dearth of funds but the intention on part of the government. She

farmers across the country amounts to Rs 14000 crore and it could have been easily settled if Rs 16000 crore spent to buy two aeroplanes for the Prime Minister was utilised for that purpose.
"The country went

through its worst crisis during the second wave of corona as the Centre exported both oxygen and vaccines to foreign countries," she said. She said the party's mani-

festo has been named 'Pratigya Patra' as each commitment made in it will be fulfilled if the Congress is voted to power. She also spoke of her family's long ties with Uttarakhand. "You know our family's

long ties with Uttarakhand. My father, uncle, brother and son studied here," she said.

Speed up vaccination coverage for teens: Centre

The Centre has asked the States and Union Territories to speed up the second dose vaccination coverage amongst due beneficiaries of 15 to 18 age bracket. Over 4.66 crore doses have been administered in this age range covering 63 per cent adolescents with the first vaccine dose in a span of less than



The vaccination drive for bracket was started nationwide from

In a letter to States and UTs, Rajesh Bhushan, Union Health Secretary, said that timely completion of Covid vaccination schedule is important to confer full protection of vaccines to the recipients.

"It is important that the coverage of second dose among adolescents is reviewed daily at your level at state and UTs and similar review is undertaken at

"The vaccine used in this group is Covaxin which has an interval of 28 days between the two doses to complete the primary vaccination schedule. Hence, all the 42 lakhs adolescents who received the first

second dose from January 31", the letter read. A tailored communication strategy focused on adoles-

dose vaccine on 3rd January

have become eligible for the

cents population and their caregivers should also be rolled out to make them aware about the timely completion of vaccination schedule and sustain their vaccine confidence, the letter reads further.

"With the proactive efforts of states and UTs along with the Government of India, we have administered more than 166.68 crore doses of Covid vaccines which is amongst the highest in

Not advisable to condemn every man as rapist: Irani

PNS NEW DELHI

t is not advisable to view Levery man as a rapist and every marriage violent, Minister for Women and Child Development Smriti Irani said on Wednesday. Her remarks in the Rajya Sabha came in the backdrop of petitions now in the Delhi High Court challenging exemption to men from criminal proceedings for sexual assault and marital rape against their wives.

The protection of women and children in the country is a priority for all but condemning every marriage as violent and every man a rapist is not advisable, İrani said during the Question Hour replying to a question by Binoy Visamw(CPI).

government had taken note of Section 3 of the Domestic Violence Act on the definition of domestic violence as well as Section 375 of the IPC on

....Let me say, to condemn every marriage in this country as a violent marriage, and to condemn every man in this country as a rapist is not advisable in this august house," Irani said.

The minister said the MP knows that Rule 47 of the procedures in the Rajva Sabha disallows elaboration on a subject that is currently sub judice.

Sushil Modi(BJP) asked if the government was in favour of criminalisting marital rape or giving immunity as criminalising it will end the institution of marriage. He also said it will be difficult to prove when the wife consented or not. Irani said the matter is sub judice and she cannot elabo-

"However, I would like to highlight to him for research

the 172nd report of the Law Commission and also the department of standing committee related to home affairs

in the year 2013," she added. Elaborating upon the steps taken by the government for protection of women when some Elders sought to know about them, the minister said the endeavour is to protect state governments.

Currently, over 30 helplines are functional across India, which have assisted over 66 lakh women. Besides, 703 'one stop centres' are functional in the country and these have

assisted over five lakh women. ... protection of women and children in our country are a priority for all but yet again, let me reiterate to condemn every marriage in this country as violent is not advisable," she said. Viswam said he never

meant every man is a rapist. The issue of marital rape is before the Delhi High Court. It is hearing a batch of petitions to strike down the exemption from prosecution for the

offence of rape granted to husbands under the Indian Penal The petitioners have challenged the constitutionality of

the marital rape exception under section 375 IPC (rape) on the ground that it discriminated against married women who are sexually assaulted by their husbands.

Saffron fragrance all set to waft up to North East

PNS NEW DELHI

Saffron fragrance is all set to Ssail through North East. With a pilot project of saffron cultivation yielding successful results in Yangyang village of South Sikkim, the North East Centre for Technology Application & Reach (NECunder the DST, is in the midst of bringing more sites under the ambit of high revenue aromatic crop having therapeutic value too. Soon similar projects will be rolled out at various locations in Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya.

In fact, five sites have already been identified for saffron in Meghalaya---Barapani, Cherrapunji, Mawsmai, Shillong, and Lalingtop. In Arunachal Pradesh, there is a good growth of organic saffron with flowers, experiments have shown.

The total cost of the entire project is Rs. 17.68 lakhs for . Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, said Union Minister of S&T Dr Jitendra Singh in a written reply in Lok Sabha on Wednesday. Of these, around Rs six lakhs has been earmarked for Barapani in Meghalaya.

India cultivates about 6 to 7 tonnes of saffron annually, but in order to meet the 100 tonne demand, saffron is imported. A kilo of saffron grown here costs

and Sudhir Kumar Jain.

There are three women judicial

officers whose names have been rec-

ommended for judgeship of the Delhi

High Court which is functioning with

30 judges as against the sanctioned

anywhere between Rs 1.5 to Rs 2 lakh. Scientists at NECTAR feel that there is a huge demand for saffron in the domestic market. "The farmers can take up saffron cultivation to meet the domestic demand as well as export the spice as well," they

prior to 2020, India was the fourth-largest importer of Iranian saffron and had imported saffron worth USD 18.30 million from Iran.

tural product and a cash crop tic value, aroma and taste value, best quality is grown in the in Jammu region. Saffron is cultivated mainly in Pulwama, Srinagar and Budgam. 3,200 hectares of land under cultivation, produces the most saffron in the Valley.

able only for the cultivation of However, in 2020, the Modi Government decided to revive the mission and expand the cultivation of saffron to the north

According to the Trade Saffron - a unique agricul-

is well known for its therapeuand multipurpose usages. The Kashmir valley and in Kishtwar Pampore, a township in Pulwama district with around

Though the National Saffron Mission (NSM) was launched in 2010-11 with an aim to boost the income of the saffron growers, it was applicsaffron in Jammu and Kashmir. eastern part of the country.

156 candidates in UP face criminal cases

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

At least 156 candidates contesting in the Uttar Pradesh assembly polls are facing criminal cases under the Indian Penal Code. The Akhilesh Yadav-Jayant Choudhury led alliance have fielded 70 candidates who have declared criminal cases against themselves, top in the list, followed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Bahujan Samaj Party with 35. The Congress has given ticket to 32 candidates while the Aam Admi Party fielded 13 candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves. Interestingly, the parties fielding them have dismissed the criminal cases against their nominees as being "trivial" or "politically motivated."

As per the affidavit filed by contesting candidates to the Election Commission, 156 candidates have declared criminal cases against themselves. Of them, 121 have declared serious criminal cases against themselves. At least 36 candidates have declared cases related to murder or attempt to murder against themselves. Besides, 31 out of 58 constituencies are red alert constituencies which means three or more candidates have declared criminal cases against

All major parties contesting in Uttar Pradesh phase I elections have given tickets to 15 per cent to 75 per cent can-



didates who have declared criminal cases against themselves. The directions of the Supreme Court have had no effect on the political parties in selection of candidates in Phase 1 of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Elections as they have again followed their old practice of giving tickets to around 25 per cent candidates with criminal cases," the Association for Democratic Reforms, on Wednesday, said in a detailed report of 615 contesting candidates in UP. The report is based on their affidavit submitted to the Election Commission or put on public domain.

For instance, Manindra Pal Singh, the BJP's candidate in Siwalkhas, Meerut, faces 25 FIRs most of them involving charges of criminal intimidation and cheating. Interestingly, Besides BJP, all parties - RLD, AIFB, Azad Samaj Party, Bhartiya Janta Dal, Áll India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen have fielded candidates with criminal cases here. Similarly, Kheragarh seat Agra, BJP, Congress, Azad Samaj Party fielded candidates with criminal cases. Similarly, Thana Bhawan in Shamli, Loni in Ghaziabad, Meerut, Dholana in Hapur, Chhata in Mathura where all political parties have given tickets to candidates having criminal cases.

The ADR report said that analysis of the affidavits filed by the candidates contesting Uttar Pradesh assembly polls disclosed that 12 candidates have declared cases related to crime against women. Out of 12 candidates 1 candidate has declared cases related to rape (IPC Section-376).

"Out of the 615 candidates, 280(46%) are crorepatis. There are 104 candidates having assets five crore and more and 87 candidates have assets between Rs two croe and Rs five crore.

'The role of money power

in our elections is evident from the fact that all major political parties give tickets to wealthy candidates. Among the major parties 28(97%) out of 29 candidates analysed from RLD, 55(97%) out of 57 candidates analysed from BJP, 50(89%) out of 56 candidates analysed from BSP, 23(82%) out of 28 candidates analysed from SP, 32(55%) out of 58 candidates analysed from INC and 22(42%) out of 52 candidates analysed from AAP have declared assets valued more report said.

than Rs 1 crore," the ADR purposes, it finds a reflection in Opp attacks Govt on rising prices, unemployment

SC collegium recommends elevation of

I headed by Chief Justice N V elevation of five Judicial Officers as Ramana, has recommended to the judges at different High Courts. While names of two judicial officers Centre the names of six judicial officers for appointment as judges of the Delhi High Court. The Collegium, which also comprised senior most judges Justices U U Lalit and AM Khanwilkar, held

deliberations on February 1 and rec-Court have been recommended. The two Judicial Officers -- U S ommended the names of Poonam A Joshi Phalke and B P Deshpande--Bamba, Neena Bansal Krishna, Dinesh have been reiterated as judges of the Kumar Sharma, Anoop Kumar Mendiratta, Swarana Kanta Sharma Bombay High Court.

The Collegium resolved to reiterate its earlier recommendation for elevation of Judicial Officer -- Pradeep Kumar Srivastava -- as judge of the Jharkhand High Court. It has also resolved to reiterate its earlier recomcates -- Khatim Reza, and Dr Anshuman Pandey -- as judges of the Patna High Court. Besides, the Collegium approved the proposal for elevation of advocate Rajiv Roy as judge of the Patna High Court.

Telangana High Court. The judicial officers whose names have been proposed are -- G. Anupama Chakravarthy, M.G. Priyadarshini, Sambasivarao Naidu, A Santosh Reddy

PNS NEW DELHI

The Opposition on Wednesday charged the Government in the Rajya Sabha with failing to check rising prices of essential commodities, fuel and unemployment. Spearheading the attack, Leader of Opposition and senior Congress leader M Mallikarjun Kharge also said Prime Minister Narendra Modi could not counter China in Ladakh

Participating in the debate on motion of thanks to the President's address to both the houses on Monday, Kharge said Modi, as chief of minister of Gujarat, used to call for strong action against Chinese transgres-

However, developments in the last few years and China

building infrastructure on disputed territory was a cause of worry, Kharge said adding the Prime Minister had so far kept quiet on the issue. Modi was present in the house when the Congress veteran criticised his policies. Some BJP leaders tried to heckle Kharge during his nearly one hour speech.

On the performance of the government, the Congress leader said it failed to check prices of pulses and commodities thereby hitting the poor hard. Also, the unemployment

scene was grim and Modi's poll promise in 2014 to provide two crore jobs every year had not yielded any result, Kharge said. He also claimed democracy was in danger and anyone speaking the truth was branded anti-national and hound-

Commenting on the fight against corona pandemic, Kharge claimed the government failed during the second wave last year adding more than 50 lakh died then. As regards the plight of dalits and minorities, he said the situation was grim as Christians were getting targeted even though they have contributed immensely in nation building. Kharge urged the Prime Minister to take concrete steps to check this trend.

He also drew the attention of the house to the alleged misuse of investigative agencies by the government against its political opponents.

Senior Samajwadi Party leader Ram Gopal Yadav slammed the government for its so-called inability to address issues concerning the poor. Senior TMC leader Sukhendu Sekhar Ray termed the

President's address an exercise in self=promotion. Siva(DMK) said there was hardly anything to appreciate in the address and alleged discrimination against Tamil Nadu by the centre. Supporting the address, Geeta

alias Chandraprabha(BJP)said the Modi government looked after the downtrodden and women in rural areas. They were provided with toilets and cooking gas thereby making their lives easier and secure, she said while listing out the achievements of the present ruling dispensation.

Her party colleague S Malik highlighted the government's fight against terrorism and surgical strikes against Pakistan. Malik also said the Modi government was committed to hasten the progress of the country in all the

6 judicial officers as Delhi HC judges PNS NEW DELHI mendation for elevation of two advostrength of 60 judges. The Supreme Court Collegium has also resolved to The Supreme Court Collegium, reiterate its earlier recommendation for

- Shampa Dutt (Paul) and Siddhartha Roy Chowdhury -- have been reiterated as judges of the Calcutta High Court, two judicial officers from Bombay High Court and one Jharkhand High

It has approved the proposal for elevation of five judicial officers and seven advocates as judges of the

and D Nagarjun. The advocates whose names have been proposed include Kasoju Surendhar, Chada Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy, Surepalli Nanda, Mummineni Sudheer Kumar, Juvvadi Sridevi, Mirza Safiulla Baig and Natcharaju Shravan Kumar Venkat.

J&K admin OK's land transfer for housing colonies

289 acre land to be transferred to **HUDD** for colonies in Budgam, Srinagar

Jammu: The Jammu & Kashmir administration on Wednesday approved the transfer of land at 17 locations in favour of the Housing and Development Department (HUDD) for the construction of housing colonies in Srinagar and

Budgam districts, officials said. The approval for transfer of land measuring over 289 acres in seven villages at 17 locations in Srinagar and Budgam districts, free of cost in favour of HUDD for construction of housing colonies, was accorded by the Administrative Council (AC) which met under the chairmanship of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha here, an

official spokesman said. He said the construction of

the housing colony project would play a very important role in the economic, industrial, social, and cultural development of Jammu and Kashmir. "It will provide direct

employment skilled/unskilled labour as well as indirect employment to local vendors and youth, besides ensuring the development of local areas to meet the rising housing demand," he said.

Accordingly, the spokesman said, the Srinagar Development Authority and the J-K Housing Board have been assigned the task of finalising the type designs and other modalities of these projects with a special focus on developing affordable housing on these land parcels.

Recently, during the 'Real Estate Summit-2022', decisions were taken to develop housing stocks in both the capital cities of Srinagar and Jammu. PTI

J&K Cong aghast at downgrading of leaders' security, threatens agitation

Jammu: Expressing serious concern over downgrading of security of senior party leaders including former Ministers and legislators, Jammu & Kashmir Congress president G A Mir on Wednesday demanded an immediate review of the decision to facilitate a level-playing field to the Opposition parties.

He threatened to launch an agitation on the issue, alleging that while ordinary political activists of the "parties created overnight" by the government or affiliated with the ruling party are enjoying adequate security, government accommodation and free movement, Congress leaders especially in Kashmir are only allowed to move out of their homes once in a week to meet the public.

"Congress is about 137year-old political party which has a history of sacrifice before and after independence to take the country to new heights. But today the government in power is withdrawing our security deliberately to stop us from meeting the public or raising the public issues," Mir told reporters here.

The Congress leader said the security of senior party

functionaries including former legislators, ministers, former Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) presidents and former Members of Parliament was downgraded, exposing them to the danger of

However, he said the party would not be cowed down by such measures and will continue to stand by the people.

terror attacks.

Mir said he was deprived of one-room government accommodation both in Srinagar and Jammu but "we did not raise the issue even as ordinary workers of the ruling party (BJP) and those parties which were created overnight by the government were provided adequate security and government bungalows at prime loca-

"Now by withdrawing and downgrading the security of our leaders, the government has crossed the limited and we will not stay silent as the lives of our party leaders are in danger...we request the Lt Governor (Manoj Sinha) to stop differentiating people on the basis of their party affilia-

He accused officers

involved in providing security to the political activists of taking "unilateral and wrong" decisions purely on partisan

"Congress party always tried to play the role of a constructive and vibrant opposition as we do not believe in negative politics," Mir said, adding the party despite the August 2019 development when the erstwhile state of J&K was bifurcated into union territories adopted a democratic way of protest to become the

voice of the public. He said the Congress does not believe in disturbing law and order or be campaigners for disturbance.

"After August 2019 development, the government is saying that everything is alright in J&K. The ground situation is that our district presidents in the valley are only allowed to move out of their homes once in a week to attend public functions. In case of inclement weather or weekend lockdown, then they have to cancel all the programmes of that day as well," he said.

On the other hand, he said the government's "created

stooges" are free to meet the public all the seven days of the week. "They are enjoying security and accommodation but the people are wise enough and they will decide their fate (during elections)."

He said the Congress cannot be pushed back by such measures as it is living in the hearts of the public.

'We request the Lt Governor to review the security of all our leaders otherwise we have no option but to flood the roads with our activists and supporters," he said.

Earlier, Congress chief spokesperson Ravinder Sharma said the security is related to the issue of threat and there should be no politics over it.

"Congress has always remained in the forefront in the fight against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. We are playing the role of constructive opposition and therefore our leaders should be given adequate security as per the threat perception," he said, adding there should be no pick and choose policy with regard to the security cover in a democracy.

nized in the Hathras Sadar,

Sikandrau and Sadabad State

constituencies of the district,

Prime Minister Narendra

Modi, without naming the

Congress and other govern-

ments, said that the economy

was dependent on other coun-

tries. Things have changed

after 2014. We are trying to

make the farmer like Annadata,

energy provider. We want farmers to spend the night

with their families by installing

solar pumps and irrigating

during the day. Small farmer

farming is not for pocket but

for life. Along with this, describing the new entrepre-

neurs as job creators, start up,

digital university for hi-tech

education, net banking, mobile

banking in the post office. Told cottage industries and

small entrepreneurs as a strong

pillar of the economy. Along

with this, many provisions of

the budget were explained in

detail in the virtual rally.

Mamata calls Guv 'horse' after blocking him on Twitter

Guv hits back, says, Didi didn't meet CM duties

SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

Two days after blocking him on Twitter Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee continued to fire salvos at State Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar, this time comparing him to a

Though the Chief Minister would not name the Governor she said how she "encountered a horse at the Republic Day parade" in Kolkata alleging the next instant how the Governor always insulted her.

"A herd or horse has been sent to Bengal ... one of these I saw on the Republic Day ... He insults me day and night. He can only see rapes, murders and violence happening in Bengal," Banerjee said asking "why can't you see this happening in Uttar Pradesh?"

She further said a person who cannot even win a civic election wants me to inform him about everything and follow his instructions... Everyday interferes in gover-nance ... he summons the Chief Secretary, the Director General of Police ... this officer or that officer... can he sideline the Chief Minister."

Alleging how the Governor always showered invectives on her she said"everyday he seems to have only one work ... attack me ... insult me and then send then tag me ... what is this happening ... is it the way how he should act."

Earlier on Monday the Chief Minister had told the media that she had blocked the Governor on the twitter alleging how he tweeted something every day abusing her or her officers. "He instructs not advises. Treats an elected Government like bonded labour. That's why I haveblocked him from my Twitter account. I was getting irritated," she said.

The Governor hit back saying how the Chief Minister had failed to discharge her constitutional duties in the last two years.

The last two years I am here I have seen her failed on every front in discharging her



chairperson Mamata Banerjee interacts with party workers after the party's organisational election in Kolkata on

constitutional duties," the Governor said wonderingwhether a Chief Minister was constitutionally correct in not receivinga Governor in a State programme. "On Republic Day she did not receive me the Governor ... which has perhaps never happened in the history of Indian democracy."

Referring to her "horse" remark he said "I am amused by what she said today ... are we to engage in mud-slinging like this," asking her to communicate to him personally if there were any issues instead of making things public. "Madam Chief Minister if you have anything consult me ... do write to me," instead of making things public, he said.

The Governor and the Chief Minister had been at loggerheads ever since he assumed office in 2019 with the ruling Trinamool Congress often accusing Raj Bhavan of acting like a BJP party office and the Governor an agent of the saf-

Meanwhile in an unrelated development Banerjee, who was re-elected the TMC chairperson on Wednesday, urged her party leaders not to indulge in infighting and put up a unit-

ed fight against the BJP instead. "I want all my party leaders and workers to promise they will not fight among themselves. Infighting will not be tolerated....groups within the party will not be tolerated. There are no different groups in TMC, the party is one unit-ed group," Banerjee said reminding the leaders that they would have to fight hard to win all the 42 Lok Sabha seats in the

2024 general elections

Shah campaigns for ex-CM Kalyan Singh's grandson

PNS ALIGARH

mit Shah addressed the Arally for Assembly seat of BJP candidate from Atrauli, Sandeep Singh, the grandson of former Chief Minister Kalyan

Home Minister Amit Shah said that when he comes to Aligarh, how can he forget Mahendra Pratap, who donated land for education. This is the same land where Shaheed Bhagat Singh lived in Shadipur village, here is the land of sacrificers. This is the land of Gopaldas Neeraj and Haridas ji. It is the Karma Bhoomi of Ashok Singhal and Kalyan Singh.

When I was sent here from Guiarat, I had no idea what to do, I asked Babuji for time and had food with Babuii. Babu ii gave his right to the backward society without dividing, a time also came when he had to decide between the chair of CM or Ram Mandir, he did not even think for once and resigned.

There was a look of happiness on his face. Babu ji's soul must have got peace that the PM laid the foundation of construction during his time. I have come here to request with folded hands that first in 2014, then in 2017, You made the PM in

Now in 2022 again, it's time for you all to make CM Yogi as the chief minister again. SP, BSP cannot do any good to the state. Now there is a double engine government. Now there is toilet in the house of the poor, electricity

He criticized other governments and said that now the poor are getting light, toilet and house. This is the fruit of hard work of PM and CM. We got Corona's vaccine free, once Akhilesh used to oppose it, he used to mislead, but later he also got vaccinated due to fear. If we had listened to them and have not got vaccinated, would we have survived in the third

He further said that earlier, the SP BSP government was running, did they remember the university in the name of Raja Mahendra Pratap? CM laid their foundation. Earlier, in the government of Akhilesh

BSP, goons used to do crooks, earlier the police were afraid of the goons, now the goons are afraid of the police, now the mafia is fleeing. Now the goons are in jail or out of Now goons are also seen in the list of SP candidates. If SP's

rule is brought, then mafia rule

will come. In this way Defense

Corridor will not be made in

such a situation. Kashmir should be linked with India forever, Article 370 should be removed. SP BSP Congress always opposed it. Pak lovers did not know that the government had changed. That's why there was an attack in Uri but, this time it was PM

Taking country to new heights, need your help: PM to workers

Modi addresses country's working class through virtual mode

PNS ALIGARH

Tn the virtual rally organized Lon Wednesday on the selfreliant economy, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tried his best to win the hearts of the workers by connecting with them. He said that I have full faith in the workers of the country. The whole country knows how much service you give to the nation.

I have also reached here from your midst. I know your enthusiasm and struggle better. am striving to get the country to new heights of development. He won the hearts of the youth by saying that the



Government understands the youth aspirations and dreams

During this, he applauded the workers by calling the budget development-oriented, sending agricultural products to other places through drone transportation and putting forward the need for digital revolution in villages up to 5G spectrum, as well as Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar for urban development. He did not forget to mention them while

being in favor of him. In the virtual rally orga-

Rane's son surrenders in attempt to murder case

T N RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

A day after a Sindhudurg dis-trict court rejected his his pre-arrest bail plea in an alleged attempt to murder case, Maharashtra BJP MLA and Union Minister Narayan Rane's son Nitesh Rane on Wednesday surrendered before the district court within hours after he withdrew his bail application filed in the Bombay High Court.

After his surrender before the court and subsequent arrest by the Sindhudurg police, Nitesh was produced by the police before the same court which remanded him in their

custody for two days.
Earlier on Wednesday
morning, Nitesh's lawyer Satish Maneshinde told a single HC bench of Justice CV Bhadang that his client – who had moved an application seeking pre-arrest bail -- would like to withdraw his application seek-

Talking to media persons later, Maneshinde said: "The bail application is withdrawn with a statement that the applicant (Nitesh) Rane is surrendering before the Investigating Officer (IO), even though 5 more days of protection by the Supreme Court are left, as he wants to face the investigation".

Amid tight police security, 39-year-old Nitesh surrendered before the Sindhudurg district court. Nitesh's surrender came a day after Sindhudurg District Court's Additional Sessions Judge R. B. Rote rejected Nitesh's pre-arrest bail plea

The rejection of pre-arrest bail to him by the Sindhudurg district on Tuesday had come six days after the Supreme Court gave him protection from arrest for ten days and asked him to seek a regular bail from the trail court,

While rejection Nitesh's

bail application, Judge Rote had observed that the grant of bail would hamper the "incomplete" investigations, and his 'custodial interrogation' was necessitated considering the case facts and circumstances.

In the attempt to murder cases filed against him by the Sindhudurg police, Nitesh has been charged with Sections 307 (attmpt to murder), 120- B (conspiracy) read with 34 (common intention) of the IPC.

Nitesh has been named as the key conspirator behind an attempt to murder Shiv Sena leader Santosh Manohar Parab. who was knocked down from behind by a car on December 18, 2021, while he was returning home by a motorcycle at Kankavali in Sindudurg district which is Ranes' political bastion.

The prosecution's case that a conspiracy was hatched in which one Sachin Satpute was entrusted "to assault and criminally intimidate the complainant/injured". Satpute (A6) with the help of Dhiraj Jadhao who is bodyguard of Sachin Satpute) and accused Sneha Chavan, Dnyaneshwar @ Mauli who were part of the conspiracy. Both Nitesh and Gotya Sawant are alleged to have hatched the conspiracy to make an attempt o the life of Parab.

The Bombay High Court had earlier on January 17 refused to grant an anticipatorv bail to Nitesh and another accused Sandesh alias Gotya Sawant in the alleged attempt to murder case.

The HC's rejection of pre-arrest bail to Nitesh and another accused had come after the Prosecution had among other things had opposed the anticipatory bail being granted to him and Gotya Sawant on the ground that there were all five cases against him (Nitesh) and 26 cases against the latter.

The Prosecution had also told the court Nitesh was arrested by the Kankvali police under Section 353, 332, 342, 324, 147, 143, 148, 149, 323, 504, 506, 109 and 120-B of IPC and Section 3 of the Damage to

Public Property Act. Earlier, seeking pre-arrest bail for his client, Rane's lawyers Satish Maneshinde and S. D. Desai had told the court that the case was politically motivated and a story was concocted, his client was ready to cooperate with the investiga-tions and he had recorded his

statement on December 24. Opposing Rane's plea, Special Public Prosecutor Pradeep Gharat said no notice was served to the prosecution before filing the bail application under Sec. 438 of CrPC and his anticipatory bail applications had been already rejected earlier, and his custody was required for a just and proper

SPP Gharat further contended that the SC had allowed Rane to surrender before the trial court and then apply for regular bail, and the 10 days interim protection was breathing time to prepare him for giving himself up.

Observing that Rane was not "falsely implicated due to political reasons", Judge Rote said the he is the 'main accused' and his prima facie involvement has been shown, a conspiracy was hatched to teach (Parab) a lesson, and hence his "custodial interrogation" was necessary for proper and effective investigation.

There are nine accused in the case. They included six arrested accused -- Chetan Pawar, Karan B. Kamble, Anil Nakka, Karan D. Kamble, Deepak N. Waghode and Sachin Satpute - all from

Mumbai court summons Bengal CM for insulting national anthem Mamata has to

appear before court on March 2

TN RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

Mumbai court has sum-Amoned West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to appear before it on March 2, in a criminal complaint filed by BJP's Mumbai Secretary Vivekanand Gupta against her for allegedly "insulting and disrespecting" the national anthem during her visit to Mumbai in December.

Taking serious cognisance of the criminal complaint lodged with the court along with the videos of the incident, Metropolitan Magistrate, 25th court, Mazgaon at Sewree, Mumbai PI Mokashi on Tuesday ordered issuance of process against Mamta Banerjee for offences punishable under Section 3 of the Prevention of Insults to the National Honour Act, 1971 vide section 204 (b) of the Cr PC returnable on March 2, 2022.

"It is prima facie evident from the complaint, verification statement of complainant, video clip in the DVD and video clips on YouTube links that the accused (Banerjee) had sung the National Anthem and stopped abruptly and left the dias which prima facie prove that the accused (Banerjee) committed (offence) punishable under Section 3 of the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act," the Magistrate noted in his order.

There is no reason as such to postpone the process against the accused under section 202 of Cr PC though she is residing at a place beyond the area of jurisdiction. The prima

facie evidence brought on record by the complaint is sufficient to issue process against the accused," the Magistrate stated in the order.

complaint before the Cuffe Parade police station in south Mumbai. However, as no action was taken by the police on it, he filed a complaint before the Metropolitan Magistrate at Sewree, Mumbai.

The complaint relates to a function that took place at the end of a public function at Yashwantrao Pratishthan Chavan Auditorium at Cuffe Parade in south Mumbai. The complainant said that Banerjee started singing the National Anthem in the sitting position. She later stood up and sung two verses of the anthem before abruptly stopping and leaving the venue, Gupta stated in his

Gupta stated in his complaint that he discovered this incident after he watched a video recording of the West Bengal chief minister's alleged insult to the national anthem on social media.

insult and disrespect to the National Anthem" and an offence punishable under section 3 of the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act of 1971. Though the accused is

Bengal, she was not discharging her official duties (during the event in Mumbai). Thereby, Bengal, does not come under her official duty. Therefore, there is no bar to proceed Magistrate noted.

Initially, Gupta filed a

In his complaint, Gupta said that Banerjee's act was an

the Chief Minister of West this act of the accused, though she is the chief minister of West sanction is not required and against the accused," the



An artist prepares an idol of the goddess Saraswati ahead of the upcoming festival of Sarasvati Puja in his workshop in

Kerala snake catcher bitten by Cobra, in ICU

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The whole of Kerala is praying I for the speedy recovery of Ŝuresh, Thiruvananthapuram based snake catcher who was bitten by a cobra and has been admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of Kottayam Medical College on Monday.

Suresh is on life support system and there were moments of anxiety among the doctors attending to him on Tuesday and Wednesday. By Wednesday evening the Medical College Hospital authorities said that he is recovering. "Since he is on ventilator support system, we are being extra cautious as any fluctuation in the functioning of the heart could be detrimental. The next 24 hours is crucial and critical," said the hospital authorities.

Suresh had gone to

Kottayam on Monday after his

service was requested by a pri-

of a big cobra in the latter's courtyard. The cobra was hiding amidst boulders and Suresh caught the reptile without any hassles. While the cobra was being put to the tin which had been brought by Suresh, the snake suddenly bit him on the thigh. The snake catcher managed to put the cobra into the tin and the same was placed in the boot of his vehicle to take it to the forests where he would set it free. By the time he safely put the

snake in the tin, Suresh fell

unconscious and he was rushed

vate citizen following the citing

where he was admitted to the ICU. Though he remained in a critical condition throughout Monday night, there was slight improvement by Tuesday which deteriorated further by night. Suresh has survived more than 300 snake bites. Vava Suresh is one of the rare non-political and non-film personalities who command

to the Medical College Hospital

affection from the people throughout the State. He does not kill or harm any snakes including King Cobras or vipers. He has caught more than 50,000 snakes and all of them have been set free in deep forests and he exhorts people not to harm rep-

Suresh is a leading wildlife conservationist in this part of the country who was honoured by Prince Philip during his visit to Kerala in November 2013. His weekly TV programme Snake Master has a wide viewership.

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- PAPER WITH PASSION-

Healthier plate

The Government's plan to boost natural yield farming is welcome but it must pass some tests

n her Budget speech on Tuesday, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said: "Chemical-free natural farming will be promoted throughout the country." The Ministry of Agriculture and the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) should back up the important announcement. They should say if natural farming is productive enough to yield good dividends. In 2019, Sitharaman had said that farmers should implement the 'zero budget' technique that would help in 'doubling' their income. Zero-budget natural farming, a technique devised by social activist Subhash Palekar from Vidarbha, recommends using naturally occurring materials such as cow dung, cow urine and neem as manure, fertilisers and pesticides. The technique needs to pass rigorous scientific testing, though. It will certainly make the Government heave a sigh of relief, considering that escalating fertiliser prices overshot the 2021-22 Budget Estimate of the subsidy of ₹79,530 crore by over ₹60,000 crore. The Budget Estimate for 2022-23 is ₹1,05,222 crore. If the international fertiliser prices do not ease this year, additional allocations would be needed. Seen from this perspective, the concept of natural farming is more than welcome. The shift cannot be done overnight, however. Even Sitharaman indicated that its



viability will first be tested in small agricultural corridors. Scientists confirm that natural farming will improve soil health and make farming cheaper. Still, it will not enthuse most farmers because the yields are lower when compared to conventional farming.

Traditional farming methods are becoming popular because the rich are willing to pay higher prices for "pure" farm products. Organic farming uses organic fertilisers and manures. Natural farming uses neither chemical nor organic fertilisers, and does not depend on external, purchased inputs. Organic farming is still expensive because it requires bulk manures. Natural farm-

ing is cheaper as it depends entirely on local biodiversity. Farmers in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh have been experimenting with natural farming but their claims of high yields need scientific validation. It is assumed that yields gradually increase over time. Long-term surveys are needed to confirm these claims. Bodies like IARI should jump into the fray at this juncture to recommend methods for reducing the yield gap. For instance, polyculture and crop rotation, which mimic age-old agricultural systems, do increase the yield. On the other hand, the yield is the same in natural or conventional farming for crops like tomatoes and oats. The Government should shift the focus of R&D investments from conventional to natural farming. Seeds bred for the former underperform in natural farms, and only research can develop seeds that can work with the new methods. A shift to natural farming should be part of a holistic approach to agriculture. Bridging the yield gap means more money and more food. More food means less hunger. But reducing food waste and foodgrain storage losses also means more food which means less hunger, and it also compensates for any yield gap because of the shift to natural farming.



Tribal women participate in a hundred-metre run with water pots, at Rajua village near Balurghat

Let it flow

The Govt's plan to interlink major rivers would give a major boost to farming across the nation

inance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget speech disclosed two major projects which went unnoticed by the experts sitting in TV channel studios or writing columns against her proposals. Her announcement that the Government would take up the Ken-Betwa River Link Project, which costs the exchequer ₹44,605 crore, should be music to the ears of people in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. "The linking of Ken and Betwa, both tributaries of the Yamuna, would lead to irrigation benefits to 9.08 lakh hectare of farming lands, drinking water supply for 62 lakh people and generation of 130 MW clean and green energy," said Sitharaman. She also disclosed that draft



DPRs of five river links, namely Damanganga-Pinjal, Par-Tapi-Narmada, Godavari-Krishna, Krishna-Pennar and Pennar-Cauvery have been finalised. This means that more than a century-old water battle between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu would come to an end. The importance of river linking could be understood if only one takes a trip across Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Between September and December, the Tamil Nadu Government would plead with the Centre for financial aid to tide over the damages caused by heavy rains and floods. Come March, the State would be crying for the Cauvery waters from Karnataka.

This happens at a time when north India would be under a deluge, resulting from the melting Himalayan snow. India's plurality is on full display when one part of the country is ravaged by drought while floods devour another part, simultaneously. Though many experts like KL Rao, CP Ramaswami Aiyer and Sir Arthur Cotton had suggested the interlinking of major rivers, no Government had the will to launch a mission for the same. Even the Supreme Court, in a 2002 verdict, had asked the Centre to interlink the major rivers without any delay. In a normal monsoon year, the east-flowing rivers Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna and Pennar discharge more than 5,000 thousand million cubic feet (TMC ft) water into the sea. A fraction of this water could resolve the water scarcity in Tamil Nadu, which is waging a legal war with Karnataka for the Cauvery waters. If Karnataka sneezes, Tamil Nadu catches a cold. That is the situation in south India which reminds one of the adage "Water, water everywhere, nor a drop to drink". Sitharaman's move is a true silver lining in the skylines of UP, MP and south India.

'Sportswashing' by China on thin ice



Despite its poor human rights record, China is trying hard to project that its world standing is unaffected and that the Games will be a success

hina is well versed with the politics and symbolism associated with boycotts in sporting events, such as Olympics. In the 1980 Winter Olympics at Lake Placid, China had thrown a tantrum and flexed its newly acquired political muscle on the global stage by disallowing Taiwan, then called the Republic of China (ROC), from being called thus, and from using the ROC flag and anthem.

Taiwanese athletes who had arrived on ROC identification cards, soon left thereafter, in protest — only to return in the next Winter Games at Sarajevo 1984, as 'Chinese Taipei', with a flag and anthem that were alien to its own contingent, a humiliation that continues to date. The age-old debate of sovereign decisions to boycott/ban participation in sporting events on account of fundamental disapprovals, geopolitical posturing, wars, apartheid and even doping scandals is not new, and China has routinely asserted sovereign matters to be above

Today, China faces the reverse consequences of 'diplomatic boycott' of its Beijing Winter Olympics and Paralympics on account of its 'human rights abuses and atrocities in Xinjiang'. The US, UK, Canada, Japan, Australia, Lithuania and Kosovo will send their athletes to compete, though in a deliberate diplomatic snub that seeks to embarrass the Chinese, they will not send any Ministers or official delegation. Delinking the participation of individual athletes from the assemblage of officials, a softer version of boycott, as opposed to a hard boycott as was the norm in the Cold War era, is ensuing. As White House press secretary Jen Psaki confirmed, the US Administration was not keen to contribute to the 'fanfare' of Beijing Olympics, yet added simultaneously that it did not feel "it was the right step to penalise athletes who had been training for this moment". in all, this so-called doycott is about diplomatic 'messaging', the 'all-weather-friend'. and even with the same, while China's famed realpolitik is Beijing is clearly irked, it is not readily adopted and institu-



overtly impacted as it goes about its business, mechanically and irrespective. At the heart of criticism

surrounding the Chinese Government is the purported attempts at 'Sportswashing' ie, using a sporting event to gloss over and distract from serious issues like human rights abuses in Xinjiang province, with the beleaguered Uighurs. Amnesty International explained, "China is hoping for sportswashing gold and it's vital to counteract that." Many protestors have gone as far as condemning the games as 'Genocide Games'. Amidst all this symbolism, the expected volte face towards co-religionists, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan insists on attending the opening ceremony himself as he found the issue of incarceration and maltreatment of Uighurs to be "actually not true on the ground"! Clearly, a beholden Imran, who is surviving on desperate doles from China, can gleefully forsake and overlook any atrocity on fellow Muslims, if the same is perpetuated by China's famed realpolitik is



THIS SO-CALLED **BOYCOTT IS ABOUT DIPLOMATIC** 'MESSAGING'. AND EVEN WITH THE SAME, WHILE BEIJING IS CLEARLY IRKED. IT IS NOT OVERTLY **IMPACTED AS IT GOES ABOUT ITS** BUSINESS, **MECHANICALLY IRRESPECTIVE**

tionalised by a vassalised Pakistan and the show goes on as the symbolic 'boycott' plays out and sullies China's efforts towards sportswashing. Interestingly, India is not boycotting the Winter Olympics and will be represented by its lone contestant

in Alpine skiing, Arif Khan. This event has also exposed the conundrum faced by multinational companies who face the stark choice of withdrawing sponsorship and earning the unforgivable wrath of the Chinese regime or continuing with the event sponsorship whilst spouting meaningless platitudes towards societal causes. Earlier too, China's hypersensitive regime did not take too kindly to various sports clothing-manufacturing MNCs expressing reservations about forced labour camps, detentions, and 'reeducation' camps in Xinjiang === the Chinese reaction was immediate, brutal and sustainable, and now almost all sponsors are taking the meek line of 'not mixing sports with political issues? Despite fancy pleages towards code of ethics, standards and social responsibilities, the companies have surrendered

the same at the altar of the world's largest consumer and manufacturing base, as also most reactive Government.

Meanwhile, Beijing is sparing no efforts to sportswash its COVID-hit prestige, status and perception of a reckless expansionist beyond Xinjiang, issues like ongoing unrest in Hong Kong, Tibet, Taiwan etc, are relegated to the backburner with an iron fist. With the citizenry and the local media completely under its control, the narrative of the Games is already pre-scripted. Instead, an expected

counter-narrative of the West trying to steal China's moment under the sun, via its ability to undertake such a gargantuan event, is fed to its controlled masses. The inseparable interlinkages of politics, sports and commerce are underway with competing interests at play, with Beijing clamping down heavily on any potential showstopper like COVID imperatives, embarrassing saga of tennis star Peng Shuai, sovereign boycotts, et al.

There are clearly larger and invisible stakes like China posturing its fabled abilities despite the pandemic, western criticism and 'vested interests', and the realpolitik of calling the bluff of the 'Chinese miracle' and its aggressive footprint, within and outside of its borders. History shows that the controversies like boycotts tend to fizzle out once an event starts and the focus then shifts solely to sporting excellence — but these Games could be different as the undercurrents are unprecedented, including a warning by former US President Donald Trump that China could invade Taiwan immediately after the Winter Olympics!

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Anaaman e Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NADAL WINS THE AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Sir — Many congratulations to Rafael Nadal for winning the Australian Open in a thrilling and coming-from-behind fivesetter against Daniil Medvedey, and in the process creating history with a record 21 Grand Slam titles, moving ahead of his close rivals Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer. It is astounding that collectively the triumvirate is still holding strong in Grand Slams and it would seem that their fingers cannot be prised off the biggest trophies. The troika have guarded the Grand Slams like a demesne, repelling one generation after the next.

Meanwhile, none would have been more disappointed than Djokovic himself, as the Serbian star, due to his vaccination cock-up, messed up a golden opportunity to create tennis history. The triad of legends have reached dizzying heights in men's tennis and still have utmost respect for each other, showing the world a perfect model of sportsmanship among rival stars. No doubt, they will go down in the history of tennis as not only the best players of their generation, but possibly the best of all time.

Sivakumar | Chennai

INDIA MUST WEIGH ALL ITS OPTIONS

Sir — Security and stability in India and its important neighbours including Russia, China, Afghanistan and Pakistan depends on several factors. One of them being mutual cooperation between India and the central Asian countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated this important aspect in the virtual summit between India and the Presidents of the five Central Asian countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in Delhi. These are small countries but being a rich and fertile source of oil and natural gas, they hold great importance in bilateral trade and commerce.

Apart from the trade equation, since three strategically located countries -Iran, Afghanistan and China — border the central Asian nations, the region holds great interest for India. However, India is not the only country that is wooing central Asia. Russia, China and Afghanistan

Priyanka has emerged stronger



mpartially speaking, it was the Congress general secretary and UP-in-incharge Priyanka Gandhi who led from the front the agitation against the Lakhimpur Kheri violence while other Opposition parties sat idle. This move, however, earned the grand old party some political brownie points and brightened thereby its electoral prospects as well ahead of the ongoing Assembly polls in UP, besides Punjab, Uttarakhand, Manipur and Goa. But the simultaneous spate of desertions, defec-

than mere talks, but New Delhi has struck the right chord with the heads of these countries. Integrated and stable extended neighbourhood is India's dream. Evidently, Kabul cannot be kept away in the broad scheme of things pertaining to international importance after the Taliban invasion of Afghanistan. Similarly, India is looking at the Chabahar port as an alternative route to the Central Asian countries. Ganapathi Bhat | Bengaluru

IN THE NAME OF CULTURAL NATIONALISM

Sir — Cultural nationalism is not an objectionable concept if the culture and sentiments of all linguistic and religious groups of the country are awarded due respect by flying the flag of Indian heterogeneity. But if vested interests dare to project the destruction of a historic mosque through sheer barbaric muscular might and construction of a "grand" temple right where the mosque had stood for centuries as "cultural nationalism"; then any sane secular

Indian would definitely object. In contrast,

tions and suspensions of the party stalwarts has had its toll on the Congress's public image of the 'grand old party' - thanks to the unabat-

ed internice bickering brewing in the party. However, Priyanka's charismatic traits and political sagacity endeared her to a large swathe of masses comprising the youth and women in particular even as her poll slogan *Ladki Hoon, Lad Sakti Hoon* fascinated one and all as she has already delivered some of the poll goods by allotting 40 per cent of the party tickets to female candidates. Notwithstanding all these developments, the direct fight in these polls in UP is all set to happen between Yogi Adityanath-led BJP and the main Opposition led by SP chief Akhilesh Yadav. Above all, the election results in Uttar Pradesh will decide the future of Privanka who has visited other States including Punjab and Goa in a bid to acquire a national profile in all probability.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

are also at it. So, more needs to be done individuals who truly love India do respect each and every citizen of their country by rising above all narrow divisive credentials of race, language, caste and religion. In the dictionary of true lovers of the

nation; national flags or anthems are secondary items as they are nothing but mere symbols. The real nation lies in the hearts and human rights of common people. Instead of taking prompt "offense" whenever the flag or anthem gets "dishonoured"; they feel infinite times more pain when human rights of innumerable poor people, vulnerable children, women, minorities and refugees (displaced by riots or climate change) get mercilessly trampled under the marauding feet of vested interests. No wonder why all-embracing civic nationalism gets awarded a much higher pedestal than divisive "cultural nationalism" by all sensible people of this coun-

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

unicorns developed amid the pandemic is a show of strength of the youth of India.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi



I don't consider the situation now more tense than earlier.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy

As my statement hurt the feelings of people, I'd like to humbly apologise for the same.



It's incredible to be on this stage, especially after



US tennis player

My helicopter was stopped in Delhi without reason. It's

not being allowed

Muzaffarnagar

to go to



SP president Akhilesh Yadav

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FIRST COLUMN BUDGET 2022 IS A FUTURISTIC STATEMENT

But no tax cut for the salaried class, and growth and job concerns remain



SHSHANK **SAURAV**

s usual, the salaried and middle class was expecting some tax cuts but given the tight fiscal space, it was unlikely for the Finance Minister to offer any such relaxation. Central Government borrowingsas percentage of GDP have increased from — 49 percent in FY21 to — 59 percent in FY22.An increased borrowing, subdued private investment and yet-to-fully-recover services sector hardly left any scope for tax concessions. The Economic Survey presented a day before the budget said the investment to GDP ratio reached 29.6 percent, the highest in last seven years. However, concerns over growth momentum and employment creation still remain and the budgetary allocation has tried to addressthem. Thrust over the infrastructure creation is visible with the increase in capital expenditure which has gone up to ₹7.5 trillion, marking an increase of 35.4 percent over the previous year. If the grant and aid led capex is also added, then the num-



ber goes beyond ₹10.6 trillion, an increase of 27 percent. Long-term, interest-free assistance of ₹1 lakh crore to states for infrastructure development will help in creating jobs and provide financial room to states to showcase development. The MSME sector was hit badly in the pandemic and they still need Government support to survive. Additional credit support of ₹2 lakh croreto MSME and ₹50 thousand crore to hospitality sector will help the entities operating in these segments. Budgetary allocation for emerging sectors like electric vehicle, drones and green energy will help creating the necessary ecosystem. Increasing the share of domestic procurement in defense purchases should not be viewed from merely from the angle of giving a boost to Make In India but rather as a strategic oneto help India become a major exporter of defense equipment.

In the agriculture sector, increased allocation towards procurement of food grains will pacify those who were agitating till a few months back. Digitisation of land records is a welcome move which will help in minimizing the litigation in rural area. This budget has a touch of realism also. Digital currencies are a reality now and government has also accepted this fact by taxing crypto, NFT and the like. Sooner or later, regulators will also recognize crypto as an asset class and necessary framework will be drafted. Disinvestment targets are also appearing achievable and therefore it is more likely that fiscal deficit will remain within the target limit of 6.4 percent of GDP. This time there were not too many tax proposals in the budget but some initiatives are well-intended in the direction of litigation management and taxpaver assistance. Allowing extended timeline for revision of return in specific cases and avoiding repetitive appeals in case of identical question of law is a welcome decision. There is criticism over small increase in the allocation towards health and education sector. It should be kept in mind that both these items are part of state list of the seventh schedule of the Constitution and therefore we should not look up to central government funds alone. State Governments, irrespective of the political party should be made accountable for poor health infrastructure and dismal performance in education sector. Budgetary allocation of states should be scrutinized in the same manner it is done for the Centre. The FM should be lauded for presenting a policy document and refraining from turning it into a political document in view of upcoming assembly elections. The Government has done its bit and now it is for private sector to shoulder the responsibility of economic growth.

(The writer is a Chartered Accountant and public policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

Budget stokes jobs' dream, focus on poor



As a Budget, it would be moderate on consumption, average on growth and the pace would be possibly as good as it was this year

he Union budget introduces digital crypto currency, gives incentives to kisan, industry and leaves out the wage workers high and dry as direct income-tax remains untouched.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman expects to create 60 lakh jobs under the productivity-linkedincentive (PLI) scheme in 14 sectors. The government hopes that it has the potential to create additional production Rs 30 lakh crore, a bit high of an expectation amid a subdued Economic Survey that does not show much enthusiasm for "spend and enjoy".

The MSMEs get into about ₹2 lakh crore largely credit support. They are in critical state, it is to be seen whether they would be able to have the benefit and

The e-Vidya and the National Digital University is a welcome step for the students and scholars. If data cost even after 5G remains low it would provide countrywide standard education at low cost.

Her expenses rise marginally to ₹39.44 lakh crore from ₹37.70 lakh crore in 2021-22. Her borrowings increase to ₹16.61 lakh crore from ₹15.91 lakh crore. Fiscal deficit at 6.9 percent, reduced from budgeted 9.2 percent, in 2021-22; has

come down to 6.4 percent.

The growth figures projected at 9 percent, though coincides with IMF projections has a catch of minus seven percent growth two years back. Still the actual has to come back to the 2019 level.

The roadmap is to be created through capital expenditure, introduction of 5G communication technology, the Central Bank Digital (crypto) Currency, massive purchase of paddy and wheat from kisan and the master plan for roads and highways.

She says she is setting the pace for India's 'Amrit Kal' -75th year- and eyed economic growth for India over the next

Of course, she has extended a number of tax benefits to the lowering or rationalizing many rates for different industry players. She says that there was discrepancy in rates and she has just brought it to the realistic level. Customs duty cuts on chemicals and other raw materials are welcome for Aatmanirbhar Bharat programmes for increasing competitive rates. It boosts exports.

The Government has massively increased capital expenditure target to '.5 lakh crore from ₹5.5 lakh crore in the last Budget for FY23. It is expected to give an overall boost to economy and create jobs. The basic thrust of job creation of would be through investment in infrastructure creation. It works as per the psyche that more the infrastructure prospecting finances from banks more would be the need for employing people. This year expenses were at 2.48 lakh



OVERALL, THE

BUDGET HAS DREAMS, EUPHORIA, INDIRECT **ASPIRATIONS AT GROWTH LIKE** THE STRESS ON DRINKING WATER PROJECTS, ₹28,000 CRORE TO HOUSING PROJECTS, NATIONAL DIGITAL HEALTH SYSTEM, **INTEGRATED** RAIL-AIR-ROAD PROJECTS AND

THE LIKE

(The writer is a senior

iournalist. The views

expressed are personal.)

crore or about 49 percent. If the government is able to spend the al year of millet, she hopes to government is able to spend the entire amount of ₹7.5 lakh crore, it can create wonders.

Alongside, Finance Minister Sitharaman announced that the RBI will roll out the Central Bank Digital Currency (rupee) using blockchain and other technologies. "This will give a big boost to the economy", she says. It makes international transfer of money, capital, easy. It can have many businesses done without touching the formal transaction. touching the formal transaction routes. Capital inflow and outflow becomes simpler. In a way it integrates the country with the international crypto currency, whose pros and cons are being studied. Since it is a regulated currency by the RBI, it is not likely to have the problems that unregulated crypto system has.

It is also tax integrated, one percent for each transaction to tax provisions. Many governments are yet to accept the crypto but in the parallel market it is becoming an accepted currency.

Keeping an eye on the elections and the recent Kisan stir, that led to withdrawal of three farm bills she announced higher allocation of procurement of wheat and paddy under MSP operations. She spends ₹2.37 lakh crore and hopes this would have a better impact on kisan diversify the food habits and give famers more options for growing different crops.

The expected rise of the PM Kisan pension has not happened. Rightly so perhaps because despite 67 percent rise in revenue it still is not at comfortable level.

The finance minister's hope to have 60 lakh jobs in a year, a reminiscence of the days of Atal Behari Vajpayee, in an economy that has yet to come out of the COVID-19 syndrome is an optimistic move. It, however, requires that much of consumption and manufacturing recovery. The industry has weightage of 28 percent in GDP calculation. Still the income recovery is at a low and sudden boost to consumption is a highly placed expecta-

maintain its trail and 30 percent trooping in but may not be at the al digital health system, intemarket so far is buoyant. But capital investors may like to wait to wait to come out of the Covid-19 syndrome uncertainties.

She proposes some minor direct tax reforms. It remains largely restricted to allow the state government employees also have the standard deduction at per with central employees. Her assessment of having a mere 3.8 crore income tax payee is also not correct. In this country everyone

pays a high indirect tax of approximately 40 percent even the 82 percent who are not in the income tax net. She knows that that the tax by individual is at a high of 30 percent plus cess against the corporate tax of 22 percent. The mismatch is illogi-

The earning salaried classes are about 3.75 crore and they all are in the tax net. The compliance is full specially in a situation where there has been income contraction in the private sector and corporate are paying low taxes compared to individuals. Tax evasion as she says is more a myth. Interestingly they also pay GST, which brings ₹1.40 lakh crore in January 2022.

Overall, the budget has dreams, euphoria, indirect aspirations at growth like the stress on drinking water projects, 28,000.
The investments will be crore to housing projects, nation-

> Vast sections of the population are excluded. The sections struck by extreme poverty, migrant labourers do not have a strong prescription. It is expected to be a job-generating budget with lots of gifts for the citizens.

> As a budget, it would be moderate on consumption, average on growth and the pace would be possibly as good as it was this year.

TWENTY-EIGHT CONGRESS CORPORATORS. INCLUDING THE MAYOR OF MALEGAON, HAVE JOINED THE NCP. - NCP SPOKESPERSON **NAWAB MALIK**





IF THE NCP IS ENGINEERING DEFECTIONS IN THE CONGRESS RANKS, WE, TOO, WILL DECIDE WHAT TO DO IN THE FUTURE. —CONGRESS LEADER

Repo rate cannot be the basis for bank loans

Repo rate can only be a signal for banks to reduce or increase their lending rate and it cannot be a benchmark for the same

⊣he latest Economic Surveycontains the following details under Monetary Transmission - Bank Lending and Deposit Rates.

The RBI has reduced repo rate by 250 bps since February 2019 (the current easing cycle). The Weighted Average Lending Rate (WALR) on fresh rupee loans declined by 197 basis points and by 133 bps on outstanding loans during the period February 2019 to November 2021. Large surplus systemic liquidity, forward guidance of continuing with the accommodative stance and the external benchmark system for pricing of loans in select sectors aided monetary

transmission The transmission has been slightly higher in public sector banks than private sector banks in the overall current monetary



S KALYANASUNDARAM

easing cycle, though it was higher for private banks in AprilNovember 2021.
The WALR on outstanding

rupee loans fell by 135 bps for public sector banks and 123 bps for private banks, while the WALR on fresh rupee loans fell by 210 bps for public sector banks and 177 bps for private sector banks during February 2019- November 2021.

There are some misconceptions in expecting monetary transmission to be in tune with the repo rate mechanism of the Reserve Bank of India. The government and the Reserve Bank of India claim that external bench mark system for pricing aided monetary transmission. First, it is not correct to prescribe external bench mark for lending rates of banks. Any pricing of end product is based



on cost of procurement in any industry and banking sector cannot be an exception. Their lending rate can only be based on the cost of the funds (deposits) procured by them. Asking the banks to fix lending rates based on some other rate is totally arbitrary. But surprisingly nobody questions the wis-

dom of RBI. Next, how can repo rate be a deciding factor for lending by banks?Repo rate is the rate at which the Reserve Bank of India lends money to commercial banks in the event of any shortfall of funds. This is just a temporary (mostly overnight) arrangement for mismatch of funds. This is provided by RBI nal for banks to reduce or

against securities such as treasury bills or Government bonds. Repo rate is related to 'repurchase option' or 'repurchase

As on January 14, 2022, all scheduled banks had a credit portfolio of ₹118,52,628 crore. On the same day, these banks had deposits from public to the tune of ₹164,11,405 crore. The banks had a borrowing of ₹94,732 crorefrom RBI on that day. Hence it is evident that the banks' lending is out of the deposits mobilized by them from the public and not based on borrowing from the RBI. Out of their lending requirement just 0.79 percent is from borrowing from RBI. Then how the repo rate can be a deciding factor for

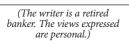
banks credit? Repo rate can only be a sig-

increase their lending rate and it cannot be a bench mark for the same. Moreover, when Repo rate is reduced there is no automatic reduction in the deposit rates by banks and banks' existing fixed deposit accounts will attract contracted interest rate until maturity Hence there cannot be sudden reduction in the cost of funds for banks and forcing banks to reduce interest rate for borrowers lead to erosion in the net interest margin for banks.

The Economic Survey also reveals how the depositors are short-charged by banks at the instance of RBI. During the period from April 2021 to November 2021, the banks have reduced lending rates (weighted average) for outstanding loans by 19 basis points. They have reduced lending rates

(weighted average) for fresh loans by six basis points. However, for term deposits the reduction in weighted average rate was 24 basis points. This shows how banks make the depositors to forego interest rates to help borrowers. Banks, RBI and the

Government are there to favour only the borrowers at the cost of depositors which cannot be in the long-term interest of financial intermediation by banks. As it is bank depositors receive only negative interest when it is adjusted for inflation. With projected fiscal deficit of 6.4 per cent of GDP for the year 2022-23, there may not be any respite from inflation for the bank depositors and with the budget presented without any relief to bank depositors, tough days are ahead for them.



the deployment to be "a clear

signal that the United States

stands with the UAE as a long-standing strategic partner", the

statement said. The rebel attacks have raised Gulf ten-

sions further at a time when

international talks over Iran's

nuclear programme are stum-

bling, and have helped push oil

ing UAE interests after a series

of defeats on the ground in Yemen, inflicted by the UAE-

trained Giants Brigades militia.

seized a UAE-flagged ship in

the Red Sea, saying it was carrying weapons -- a claim denied by the Emirates.

In early January, the rebels

The Huthis began attack-

prices to seven-year highs.

Biden sending more troops to | Militia kills at **Europe amid Ukraine tension**

AP BRUSSELS (BELGIUM)

President Joe Biden is sending about 2,000 troops from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Poland and Germany this week and sending part of an infantry Stryker squadron of roughly 1,000 troops based in Germany to Romania, a senior administration official said Wednesday.

The military moves come amid stalled talks with Russia over its military buildup at Ukraine's borders. And they underscore growing fears across Europe that Russian President Vladimir Putin is poised to invade Ukraine - and smaller NATO countries on the eastern flank worry they could be next.

The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss military moves not yet announced. The United States could be willing to enter into an agreement with Russia to ease tensions over missile deployments in Europe if Moscow steps back from the brink in Ukraine, according to a leaked document published in a Spanish newspaper on Wednesday.

The daily El Pais published two documents purported to be written replies from the United States and NATO last week to Russia's proposals for a new security arrangement in Europe.
The US State department

declined to comment on them. In reference to the second document, NATO said that it never comments on "alleged leaks."

But the text closely reflects statements made to the media last week by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg as he laid out the 30-nation military organization's position on Russia's demands.

The US document, marked as a confidential "non-paper," said that the United States would be willing to discuss in consultation with its NATO partners "a transparency mechanism to confirm the absences of Tomahawk cruise missiles at Aegis Ashore sites in Romania and Poland.

"That would happen on condition that Russia "offers reciprocal transparency measures on two ground-launched missiles bases of our choosing in Russia."Aegis Ashore is a system for defending against short- or intermediate-range missiles. Russia argues the site in Romania could be easily adapted to fire cruise missiles instead of inter-

ceptors, which ram their target and do not carry warheads, a claim that Washington has

Russian President Vladimir Putin again mentioned the possibility Tuesday, saying that "there are MK-41 launchers there that could be configured for firing

He said they "are offensive systems that could reach thousands of kilometers into our ter-

Isn't that a threat to us?" The US document said Washington would have to consult with NATO allies on the potential offer, particularly with Romania and Poland. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov refused to comment on the leaked documents, saying only that "we didn't release anything." In comments

to the state RIA Novosti news agency, Russia's Foreign Ministry also refused to confirm or deny that the documents published by El Pais were authentic.

Fears of a Russian invasion of Ukraine have mounted in recent months, after Putin deployed more than 100,000 troops to areas near Ukraine's borders, including in neighbouring Belarus, backed by tanks, artillery, helicopters and warplanes.

Russian officials have insisted that Moscow has no intention of invading. The US underlined after its written proposals in the leaked document that "progress can only be achieved on these issues in an environment of deescalation with respect to Russia's threatening actions towards

"In his first public remarks on the standoff in more than a month, Putin on Tuesday accused the US and its allies of ignoring Russia's central securidemands but he said that Moscow is willing to talk more to ease tensions over Ukraine.

His remarks suggested that a potential Russian invasion may not be imminent and that at least one more round of diplomacy is likely. After talks in Kyiv Wednesday with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte underlined that "it is essential for dialogue to continue." If not, Rutte, said, "it is clear that further aggression against Ukraine will have serious con-

has already taken a toll on Ukraine's economy, but Zelenskyy said his government has taken steps to calm the markets and the local currency,

the hrvvnia He said Ukraine has also boosted its combat and armed forces capabilities, but underlined that "we think only about peace and de-occupation of (our) territories, solely through diplomatic means.

Notable in its absence from the leaked documents is any mention of Ukraine's hopes of joining NATO. Putin has demanded that NATO stop taking in any new members and withdraw its troops and equipment from countries that joined the alliance since 1997, almost

In the leaked document linked to NATO, the 30 allies said they "reaffirm our commitment to NATO's Open Door policy," without specifically mentioning Ukraine. Under Article 10 of NATO's founding treaty, other European countries may be invited in if they further the goals

of European security.
At a NATO summit in 2008, NATO leaders said that they welcomed "Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO," adding: "We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO." Russia invaded Georgia later that year, and in 2014 annexed Ukraine's

As Russia tensions boil, US farmer remains jailed in Ukraine

Crimean Peninsula.

WASHINGTON: When Kurt Groszhans set out from North Dakota for Ukraine in 2017, he was eager to connect with his family's ancestral homeland and to farm rich, black soil for which country is known. But his farming venture with a law professor who's now a high-ranking Ukrainian government official soon collapsed in acrimony and accusations, culminating in his arrest last November on charges of plotting to assassinate his former business part-

least 60 people at shelter in Congo

AP KINSHASA, CONGO

Militiamen attacked a camp for people fleeing violence in Congo's eastern Ituri province overnight, killing at least 60 people staying at the shelter, local officials said Wednesday.

Fighters with the group known as CODECO arrived at the Plaine Savo displaced persons site in Djugu and killed dozens of people using machetes and other weapons, said Ndalo Budz, who is the head of the camp.

"We currently have 60 people in the shelters for the displaced who were killed with machetes and other edged weapons," he said to local press. Local administrative offi-

cials confirmed the account. Four people have been brought to the hospital, according to Pilo Mulindo, the head of the chiefdom of Bahema N'adhere.

The CODECO militia and the Allied Democratic Forces are active in the eastern Congo region and killed dozens last

the suspension of humanitarian agencies in this part of Congo.

Congo's army on Wednesday condemned the CODECO militiamen for attacking civilians displaced by war and denounced their action as crimes against humanity.

Army spokesman Jules gongo sought to assure people that the army would pursue and punish the perpetrators.

We condemn this criminal, terrorist act to attack the displaced where there is an innocent civilian population who has no means of defense it is worse than madness and cowardice and it is a crime

These perpetrators will be severely punished," he said.The security situation remains worrying in several villages in the territory of Djugu, where civilians have been killed by CODECO rebels despite joint operations by the Ugandan army and Congo.

US To send warship, fighter jets to assist UAE after Yemen Houthi attacks

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

 $T^{
m he}$ United States will deploy a guided missile destroyer and state-of-the-art fighter jets to help defend the United Arab Emirates after a series of missile attacks by Yemeni rebels, a US statement said Wednesday.

The deployment, to "assist the UAE against the current threat", follows a phone call between Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, the US embassy in the UAE said.

The UAE, part of the Saudi-led coalition fighting Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels, suffered its third missile attack in consecutive weeks on

The guided missile destroyer USS Cole will partner with the UAE Navy and make a port call in Abu Dhabi, the statement said, while the US will also deploy fifth-generation fighter planes.

Other actions include "continuing to provide early warning intelligence", it added.

The rebel attacks have

opened a new front in Yemen's seven-year war, which has

UAE-Yemen Conflict: United States will deploy a guided missile destroyer, a statement said

killed hundreds of thousands directly or indirectly and displaced millions. Three foreign workers were killed in a droneand-missile assault targeting Abu Dhabi's oil facilities and airport on January 17, triggering a salvo of deadly air strikes in retaliation.

On January 24, US forces stationed at Abu Dhabi's Al Dhafra air base fire Patriot interceptors and scrambled to bunkers as two ballistic missiles were shot down over the city. And on Monday, a third

missile attack was thwarted during the visit to the UAE of Israeli President Isaac Herzog. The US, a supporter of the Saudi-led coalition, intends

Yemen's civil war began in 2014 when the Huthis seized Sanaa, prompting Saudi-led forces to intervene to prop up the government the following

The UAE, one of the world's biggest arms buyers, announced a redeployment from Yemen in 2019 but remains an influential player. The grinding conflict has left millions on the brink of famine, according to the UN, which has called it the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Leaked text suggests possible US-Russia missile arrangement

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The United States could be willing to enter into an agreement with Russia to ease tensions over missile deployments in Europe if Moscow steps back from brink in Ukraine, according to a leaked document published in a Spanish newspaper on Ŵednesday.

The daily El Pais published two documents purported to be written replies from the United States and NATO last week to Russia's proposals for a new security arrangement in

The US State department declined to comment on them. In reference to the second document, NATO said that it never comments on "alleged leaks." But text closely reflects statements made to media last week by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg as he laid out 30-nation military

organization's position on Russia's demands. The US document, marked as a confidential "non-paper," said that the United States would be willing to discuss in consultation with its NATO partners "a transparency mechanism to confirm the absences of Tomahawk cruise missiles at Aegis Ashore sites in Romania and Poland." That would happen on

condition that Russia "offers reciprocal transparency measures on two ground-launched missiles bases of our choosing in Russia. Aegis Ashore is a system for

defending against short-orintermediate-range missiles. But Russia has claimed in past that the US could attack its territory with Tomahawk intermediate-range missiles should they be deployed to Aegis Ashore sites. The US document said Washington would have to consult with NATO allies on potential offer, particularly with

Romania and Poland. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov refused to comment on the leaked documents, saying only that "we didn't release anything." In comments to state RIA Novosti news agency, Russia's Foreign Ministry also refused to confirm or deny that the documents published by El Pais were authentic. Fears of a Russian invasion

of Ukraine have mounted in recent months, after President Vladimir Putin deployed more than 100,000 troops to areas near Ukraine's borders, including in neighbouring Belarus, backed by tanks, artillery, helicopters and warplanes. Russian officials have insisted that Moscow has no intention of invading

The US underlined after its written proposals in the leaked document that "progress can only be achieved on these issues in an environment of de-escalation with respect to Russia's threatening actions towards Ukraine." In his first public remarks on standoff in more than a month, Putin on Tuesday accused US and its allies of ignoring Russia's central security demands but he said that Moscow is willing to talk more to ease tensions over Ukraine. His remarks suggested that

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that further aggression against Ukraine will have serious consequences." Notable in its absence from leaked documents is any mention of Ukraine's hopes of joining NATO. Putin has demanded that NATO stop taking in any new members and withdraw its troops and equipment from countries that joined alliance since 1997, almost half its

In leaked document linked to NATO, the 30 allies said they reaffirm our commitment to NATO's Open Door policy," without specifically mentioning Ukraine. Under Article 10 of NATO's founding treaty, other European countries may be invited in if they further goals of European security. Ât a NATO summit in

2008, NATO leaders said that they welcomed "Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO," adding: "We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO." Russia invaded Georgia later that year, and in 2014 annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. Around 14,000 people have been killed in conflict that still simmers in eastern Ukraine.

Landslides kill at least 24 as rains deluge Ecuador capital

AP ■ QUITO, ECUADOR

rain-weakened hillside col-Alapsed in Ecuador's capital, sweeping over homes and a sports field and killing at least 24 people, city officials said Tuesday. The Quito Security

Department said at least 48 more people were injured, while eight houses collapsed and others were damaged when the hillside gave way late Monday. The authorities also reported 12 missing people. Neighbors joined rescue

workers in hunting through the ruins for survivors of the disaster that hit following nearly 24 hours of rainfall.

The storm was pounding outside when Imelda Pacheco said she felt her house move as if an earthquake had struck. Suddenly water and rocks began to pour in through doors and windows and she fled before the building was destroyed. "I barely had time to grab the hand of my 4-year-old son and I ran to the stairs, to the terrace. Suddenly the walls in front and to the side disap-

peared," she told The Associated Press. "We shouted to the neighbors on the first floor, but the water carried away the mother and daughter," she said, standing before the ruins of her home.

"I thought I was going to die with my son. I hugged him strongly and we shook, I think from the cold and the fear.. We barely survived," she added, breaking into tears.

Waves of mud, some 3 meters (10-feet) high, carried vehicles, motorcycles, trash bins and other debris under a heavy rain in the neighborhoods of La Gasca and La Comuna below the slopes of the Ruco Pinchincha moun-

As the rescue began, police called for silence so cries of those trapped could be heard. Quito Mayor Santiago Guarderas said the intense rains saturated the soils, setting off the landslide. Smaller waves of muddy water continued pouring down the ravine Tuesday past weary neighbors trying to move stones, tree trunks and debris.

Turkish jets target Kurdish positions in Iraq, Syria

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) Turkish warplanes struck suspected Kurdish insurgent positions in Iraq and Syria early on Wednesday in a new aerial offensive that Ankara said aimed to protect Turkey's borders from "terrorist threats."

The airstrikes killed at least four people, a Britain-based war monitoring group reported, and drew condemnation from U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters who said the attack came days after the Kurdish-led forces in Syria battled Islamic State group militants.

A Turkish defense ministry statement said the strikes hit targets, including shelters, caves, ammunition depots and training camps, on Sinjar Mountain and in the Karacak region in northern Iraq, and the Derik region in northern Syria.The operations dubbed "Winter Eagle" were aimed against Turkey's insurgent Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, in northern Iraq, which Ankara says has hideouts there, and the U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish forces known as People's Protection Units, or

YPG in Syria. The YPG is a close U.S. ally against the Islamic State group but is labeled a terrorist group by Ankara because of its ties to the PKK. The strikes aimed to "eliminate terrorist threats against our people and security forces from the north of Iraq and Syria and to ensure our border security," the ministry statement read. "Last night, we bombed targets in three different locations and they could not even a find a hole to escape to," said Turkish President

Recep Tayyip Erdogan.
Defense Minister Hulusi Akar claimed that several insurgents were "neutralized" in the operation, including a number of PKK names wanted by Turkey. Around 60 aircraft were involved in the offensive, including warplanes and armed and unarmed drones, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported. Close to 80 targets were struck, it said.

The war monitor in Syria the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Turkish drones fired two missiles at a power station near Syria's northeastern village of Malikiyah close to the Iraqi border, killing at least four people. It added that several people were wounded and electricity was cut in a number of nearby villages. It said the strike hit the building where the guards stay, adding that the dead were both guards and

The Observatory reported another Turkish drone strike at a power station a day earlier near the Semalka border crossing between Syria and Iraq's Kurdish region. It said one Kurdish fighter was wounded. A Kurdish-led administra-

tion in northeast Syria condemned the Turkish airstrikes and urged the international community to intervene to stop what it called "the terrorist Turkish aggression."

It said the Turkish strikes came days after the Kurdish-led and U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces defeated scores of IS militants who broke into a prison where some 3,000 extremists are held in the northeastern city of Hassakeh. The weeklong battle left dozens of people dead, including many İS fighters.

migrants freeze to death after Greece pushback

Turkey: Twelve

AP ANKARA, TURKEY

The bodies of 12 migrants I who froze to death were found near Turkey's border with Greece, the Turkish interior minister said Wednesday, accusing Greek border guards of pushing them back over the frontier. Interior Minister Suleyman

Soylu said tweeted that 12 were among 22 migrants who were pushed back into Turkey by Greek border guards. He said they were found near Ipsala border crossing between Turkey and Greece "without shoes and stripped of their clothes.

The minister didn't provide further details, but shared blurred photographs of eight of recovered bodies, including three in shorts and T-shirts. Soylu accused Greek border units of acting as "thugs" toward migrants while showing sympathy toward members of a network — which Turkey says is behind a 2016 failed military coup — who have escaped to

He also accused the European Union of being "helpless, weak and inhumane."The governor's office for Edirne province, near land border with Greece, said deceased included a migrant who died in a hospital after being rescued by Turkish authorities.

Turkey frequently accuses neighboring Greece of illegally pushing back migrants wanting to make their way into Europe. Greece denies accusations that it carries out socalled pushbacks that prevent migrants from applying for international protection. Turkey, which hosts about 3.7 million Syrian refugees, is a major crossing point for migrants from the Middle East, Asia and Africa seeking a better life in European Union

Putin accuses America, allies of ignoring Russian security needs

AP MOSCOW

 $R^{ussian\ President\ Vladimir}_{Putin\ on\ Tuesday\ accused}$ U.S. and its allies of ignoring Russia's top security demands but said Moscow is willing to talk more to ease tensions over Ukraine. The comments were his first on standoff in more than a month and suggested a potential Russian invasion of Ukraine may not be imminent and that at least one more round of

diplomacy is likely. Yet two sides remain unyielding in their main positions, and there was little apparent hope for concessions. Russia is expected to respond soon to a U.S. proposal for negotiations on lesser Russian demands after which Russian Foreign Minister Sergev Lavrov and U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will speak. Lavrov and Blinken spoke Tuesday and reiterated positions put forward by Putin and President Joe Biden.

The White House said Biden and Putin could also speak once U.S. receives Russia's response.In remarks to reporters at a Moscow news conference with visiting leader of NATO ally Hungary, Putin said Kremlin is still studying U.S. and NATO's response to Russian security demands received last week.

But he said it was clear that West has ignored Russian demands that NATO not expand to Ukraine and other ex-Soviet nations, refrain from deploying offensive weapons near Russia and roll back its deployments to Eastern Europe.

Putin argued that it's possible to negotiate an end to standoff if interests of all parties, including Russia's security concerns, are taken into account. "I hope that we will eventually find a solution, although we realize that it's not going to be easy," Putin said. Russia has amassed over 100,000 troops along border of Ukraine, fueling fears of invasion. It has denied any inten-

Russian President Vladimir Putin gestures while speaking to media during a joint news conference with Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban following their talks in Kremlin in Moscow, Russia, Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2022. Putin says U.S. and its allies have ignored Russia's top security demands. In his first comments on standoff with West over Ukraine in more than a month, Putin said Tuesday that the Kremlin is still studying U.S. and NATO's response to Russian

security demands received last week

(Yuri Kochetkov/Pool Photo via AP)

tion to attack. Washington and

its allies have rejected Moscow's

key demands. They emphasize

that Ukraine, like any other nation, has right to choose alliances, although it is not a NATO member now and is unlikely to join any time soon. Putin said Western allies' refusal to meet Russia's demands

violates their obligations on integrity of security for all He warned that a Ukrainian accession to NATO could lead to

a situation where Ukraine launches military action to reclaim control over Russianannexed Crimea or areas controlled by Russia-backed separatists in country's east. "Imagine that Ukraine

becomes a NATO member and launches those military operations," Putin said. "Should we fight NATO then? Has anyone thought about it?" Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 following ouster of country's Moscowfriendly president and later threw its weight behind rebels in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, triggering a conflict that killed over 14,000 people.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Srinisons Wiring Systems Pvt Ltd, Kesavan Srinivasan (Director), Selvan Srinivasan (Director), Kulbhash Chander Hallone (Director), Radha Kesavan (Director), Divya Kesavan (Director), Rangaraj Varadaraj (Director), Kesavan Srinivasan, Selvan Srinivasan, Radha Kesavan, Hema Selvan, Kulbhash Chander Hallone, Ruchika Hallone, Kulbhash Chander Hallone, Ruchika Hallone, Unit No-327, Tower B, Spazedge Commercial Complex, Sector-47, Gurgaon Haryana A/c No:-031405003313		03-01-2022, Rs. 2,05,86,951.45/-	30/07 2021

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

Date: February 03, 2022

Authorized Officer

Iran state TV streaming site targeted with dissident message

Emirates: A streaming website that features Iranian state television programming has acknowledged suffering technical issues amid reports that dissident hackers played an antigovernment message on platform. Telewebion said it suffered "infrastructure" irregularities Tuesday and suffered an archive failure, without elaborating on cause. The problems came as a video message circulated online claiming to be from a selfdescribed group of hackers called "The Justice of Ali" in Farsi. In video, which Farsi-language news networks abroad say

DUBAI, United Arab

masked man appears and a muffled voice says Iran's government "will no longer silence us." "We'll burn hijabs. We'll burn their pictures and propaganda posters," the man savs. We will break their idols. We will reveal their palaces so that people can punish them." The Justice of Ali" did not immediately respond to a request for comment via an account it used in an earlier conversation with The Associated Press. In August it released footage showing grim condition at Iran's notorious Evin prison it claimed it obtained through a hack. AP

played on streaming platform, a

Budget lays foundation for growth in next 25 years: Niti VC

Union Budget lays the foundation for the country's longterm growth in the next 25 years, Niti Aayog Vice-Chairman Rajiv Kumar on Wednesday said the government is taking all possible measures to ignite private investments, which will be the best bet to pull the economy out of the shadows of the coronavirus pandemic.

He also said the procedural bottlenecks related to the complicated process of disinvestment of CPSEs (central

been solved and the process will be more streamlined in the years to come.

"The Budget lays the foundation for India which we want to see in 2047 when we celebrate 100 years of our independence.

"This India will be at the frontier of new technologies and at the same time make the benefits of the growth available to all the people, especially to those at the bottom of the pyramid," he told PTI in an inter-

has focused on infrastructure development as well as on sunrise sectors and frontier technologies, Kumar said the finance minister talked about starting a virtuous cycle that will be led by private invest-ment to which the government investment is going to be a facilitator.

"So, the government is taking all the measures possible to ignite private investment, which will be our best bet to pull the economy out of the shadows of the pandemic," he

said the Economic Survey has estimated India's growth at 8-8.5 per cent for the next financial year, while the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected a growth rate of nine per cent.

"And, that growth rate on a high base now is indicative that the economy is pulling out of the pandemic-induced slowdown," he said.

Regarding the government not achieving its disinvestment target vear after vear, Kumar said the reason seems to be the

vatisation. Noting that Air India was privatised after many years, he said that "I think, now we have solved all those procedural bottlenecks. And, the process is now well defined".

Further, the Niti Aayog vice-chairman said the process will be more streamlined in the years to come. The government has set a disinvestment target of Rs 65,000 crore for the next financial year, which is lower than the current fiscal's estimated mobilisation of Rs 78,000 crore.

was not given any relief in the form of tax cuts, Kumar said India's per-capita income is about Rs 1.2 lakh and the country's income level at which people are taxed is Rs 5 lakh today. Everywhere else, the taxable income starts quite closely after the average per capita income. This is also the reason why the persistent demand to raise the minimum

"Because, unless we expand the base for direct tax-

taxable income level is rather

misplaced, he said.

bring down the rate.

"Also, we will have to

depend more and more on indirect taxation, which is more regressive than direct taxation," he added.

According to Kumar, it is quite well established that changing the tax rates every year is not a good policy because it doesn't make for policy certainty and predictability. "So, for all those reasons, the Budget has done well to leave the tax structures unchanged,

pay taxes are not the poorest, he said that in this year's Budget, there is a special effort to increase employment in the informal sector by giving the hospitality sector access to the Rs 50,000-crore credit guarantee scheme, which will make loans available to them at a lower cost. On high inflation, Kumar said that this time, inflation is not a result of excess demand in the economy and asserted that the country is not facing the threat of stagfla-

BRIEFS

FIRM REPLIES ON DIRECTORS' EXIT

New Delhi: The exodus of independent directors at PTC India Financia Services Ltd over corporate governance issues that prompted several regulators to seek a response from the company on the allegations, the company has responded to SEBI by reiterating its commitment to the highest standards of corporate governance. It also clarified that in the board meeting the MD & CEO addressed all concerns and corporate governance standards were upheld through the aforementioned report.

RAID ON FAKE PRODUCTS' MANUFACTURERS

New Delhi: On the direction of Delhi High Court, Delhi Police along with other authorities conducted raids on manufacturers who were making fake products in the name of Minda brand. The seized products included huge quantities of lubricant oil, product packaging material, and a auto batch code machine. The Delhi Police has sealed the premises in the North West Delhi's Bhorgarh Industrial Area

Draft LIC IPO prospectus to be filed by next week, issue in March: DIPAM Secy

New Delhi: The government is likely to file draft papers for the mega initial public offering of LIC with market regulator Sebi by next week, while a portion of the issue would be reserved for anchor investors, a top official said on Wednesday.

In an interview, Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Secretary to the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), said approval of the insurance regulator is awaited, post which the draft prospectus, detailing the size of the share sale, will be filed.

The issue, after approval of Sebi, is likely to hit the market in March, he said. LIC's listing is crucial for the government to meet the lowered revenue estimates of Rs 78,000 crore for the current fiscal. The government has so far raised about Rs 12,000 crore from privatisation of AI and stake sale in other

CSC signs MoU with BSNL

PNS NEW DELHI

The Common Services Centers (CSC) has signed MoU with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL), one of the largest mobile telecommunication networks in India, to provide services for sale of BSNL SIM Cards, mobile recharge and payment of mobile/landline/Broadband bills to citizens at the last mile.

The partnership will benefit more than 11.6 crore BSNL mobile subscribers, apart from citizens desiring to take new BSNL mobile connections. CSC will facilitate the sale of BSNL mobile products and services, like SIM Card and C-Top up, Bill Payment, Consumer Fixed Access (CFA) products and services through its network of more than 4 lakh Village Level Entrepreneurs across the country.

Elaborating on this part-nership, MD, CSC SPV, Dr. Dinesh Tyagi said, "Our partnership with BSNL is in sync with the Government's emphasis on boosting mobile and broadband connectivity in rural India for fostering economic growth".

Higher public investment to stimulate demand, generate jobs: DEA Secy

New Delhi: The Budget proposals seek to stimulate the economy by stepping up public investments, which will create demand for industrial inputs like cement, steel and capital goods, and generate jobs, Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sithaharaman in her Budget 2022-23 hiked public investment by as much as 35.4 per cent to Rs 7.5 lakh crore or 2.9 per cent of the GDP.

Observing that direct support measures have only limited multiplier effect, Seth said steps which can have long to medium term impact are needed to boost the economy in a sustained manner.

"When we are looking at economic management, it is not a one year affair. One has to look at short, medium or long term. In the short term, what was needed has been provided.

"When we come to the medium and long term, we find that a direct income support that simulates consumption demand has a very limited multiplier effect, whereas capital investment has a much larger, very strong multiplier effect, which lasts more than one

"How it helps? It generates demand for the inputs which get into the investment -cement, steel, capital goods, construction machinery and so on," Seth told PTI in an inter-

In view of the hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the government provided direct support to people through various schemes like Dhan, KISAN and Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana, he said, adding "in year two the need moderated and year three we expect that the need may not be

By increasing public investment, the government has provided the signal that it is ready to pump funds into growth-ori-

ted activities. "It gives confidence to the people about the future and a lot of consumption behaviour gets influenced not by income

of today but gets impacted

also by what are the expectations of future," he noted. Secondly, Seth added, the

initiatives will facilitate crowd ing in of private investments and generate jobs for factory workers, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled persons. This is how crowding in of

private investment happens, he said, adding that in 2019 when corporate tax was brought down, the investment could not take place because of the pandemic but thereafter conditions are ripe for them to invest.

The government in September 2019 slashed corporate tax rate for companies that do not avail of any tax incentive to 22 per cent.

New manufacturing companies have to pay an even lower corporate tax rate of 15 per cent.

The Budget 2022-23, presented by Finance Minister on Tuesday, extended the concessional rate of 15 per cent for one more year till March 2024 for newly incorporated manufacturing companies.

pts in early trade; Nifty breaches 17,650-level

Investors' wealth jump over ₹9.57 lakh cr in 3 days amid Budget-led euphoria

Sensex surges over 400

Mumbai: Equity benchmark Sensex climbed over 400 points and the Nifty breached the 17,650-level in the opening session on Wednesday, a day after the Union Budget proposed higher spending on infrastructure to boost economic growth and job creation.

The 30-share Sensex was trading 416.56 points or 0.71 per cent higher at 59,279.13, and the broader Nifty rose 117.95 points or 0.67 per cent to 17,694.80. PowerGrid was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rising over 2 per cent, followed by ITC, Axis Bank, Kotak Bank, Bajaj Finance, IndusInd Bank and Bajaj Finserv.

On the other hand, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, UltraTech Cement, L&T, Sun Pharma and Wipro were in the red.

Among the 30 Sensex constituents, 24 scrips were trading in the green. In the previous session, the 30-share BSE index finished

848.40 points or 1.46 per cent higher at 58,862.57. On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty surged 237 points or 1.37 per cent to end at 17,576.85. Finance Minister on

Tuesday unveiled a bigger Rs 39.45 lakh crore Budget, with higher spending on highways to affordable housing with a view to fire up the key engines of the economy. "India unveiled on Tuesday

a bigger budget of 39.45 trillion rupees (USD 529.7 billion) for the coming fiscal year, stepping up investment on highways and affordable housing to put growth on a firmer footing as the economy recovers from the pandemic," Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities, said.

Domestic two-wheeler sales dip 21 pc in Jan; recovery likely in coming months

Mumbai: The domestic twowheeler sales witnessed a 21 per cent year-on-year decline in January, even as the segment registered a 14 per cent sequential growth in domestic wholesale volumes, while the pas-senger vehicle wholesale volumes declined marginally by 3 per cent Y-o-Y, credit ratings agency ICRA said on Wednesday.

The two-wheeler sales numbers are based on the data released by six major original (OEMs), ICRA said in a state-

In January 2022, domestic wholesale PV volumes at 2.95 Lakh units represented around 16 per cent growth on a sequential basis and only a marginal decline of 3 per cent on Y-o-Y basis, said Rohan Kanwar Gupta, Vice President and Sector Head - Corporate Ratings, ICRA Limited.

The lower production levels over the months have led to unusually high waiting periods

for many high-selling models, with waiting periods for select models being as high as 6-8 months, he said.

wheeler sales volume in January, highlights the adverse impact of price hikes, fuel inflation, and Omicron-related concerns on consumer sentiments, Gupta stated. Noting that the supply

chain issues in production of

Nonetheless, the industry is cautiously optimistic about recovery in coming months, with easing supply chain constraints and spillover impact from positive announcements on infrastructure spends and agri-initiatives in the Union Budget, Gupta stated.

tic sales environment, steady

The low year-on-year two-Gupta also noted that the

premium motorcycles also persisted, he said, the reinstateto contain the third wave of pandemic, constrained retail sales and led to an 11 per cent sequential (14 per cent year-on-

In contrast to the domes-

demand from African and Latin America (LATAM) regions continued to be the silver lining for the industry, with exports clocking steady volumes of over 3.5 lakh units in January 2022, registering a 3 per cent sequential growth, according to ICRA.

domestic electric two-wheeler sales continued to have a dream-run in the April-January eriod of FY2022, postin times year-on-year growth at 1.49 lakh unit sales In January 2022, the high-

speed e-two-wheelers saw an year) fall in volumes, to 10.2 11 per cent month-on-month growth with 27,563 unit sales (highest monthly sales this year), Gupta said.

The proposed formulation of a battery swapping policy and interoperability standards, announced in the budget 2022-23, could be game-changers for faster EV adoption in the medium-term, Gupta added. PTI

DPIIT to soon seek Cabinet approval on FDI policy changes for LIC: Secy

New Delhi: The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) will soon approach the Union Cabinet to seek its approval on changes in the foreign direct investment (FDI) policy to facilitate disinvestment of the country's largest insurer LIC, a top government official said on Wednesday.

DPIIT Secretary Anurag Jain said an inter-ministerial consultation on the matter is at

"Hopefully, it should happen very soon... All the comments that will come (from different departments) will be supportive (of the proposal),' he told reporters.

He also expressed hope that the Cabinet will soon take up this proposal.

The DPIIT is making changes in the FDI policy to facilitate disinvestment of LIC, after taking views from the finance ministry.

According to the current FDI policy, 74 per cent foreign



the automatic route in the these rules do not apply to Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), which is administered through a separate LIC Act.

As per Sebi rules, both FPI and FDI are permitted under public offer. However, since the LIC Act has no provision for foreign investments, there is a need to align the proposed LIC IPO with Sebi norms regarding foreign investor participation.

The Cabinet had in July last year approved the initial public offering (IPO) of LIC and

in the current March quarter. The finance minister has

directed that the disinvestment has to be completed during the current financial year, "so, obviously, we will try to expedite it (Cabinet note) as much as possible," he added.

On the Budget, the secretary said the Budget has given a clear way forward and now, investment is permitted under it is up to the industry and entrepreneurs to take up the towards Vision 2047.

Talking about National Logistics Policy, the secretary said that by and large, the major issues of the policy have already been incorporated in the PM GatiShakti National Master Plan.

"So, whatever was attempted to achieve through the policy a major portion of that is already out," he said. He added that the Budget

has announced several measures to boost domestic manufacturing.

GUJARAT WATER SUPPLY & SEWERAGE

BRIEF SHORT NOTICE INVITING ON LINE TENDER FOR FIX QUANTITY CONTRACT OF PVC PIPE FOR THE **YEAR 2022**

GWSSB invites online tender through e-tendering of Fix Quantity contract for Manufacture, Supply & Delivery of Ring Fit PVC pipes (63 to 315mm Dia) with ISI Mark 1403.60 MT Estimated amt. Rs. 2273.423 Lacs (with GST), from approved vendors of GWSSB only. Interested bidder who wish to participate in above tender may view the detailed tender notice & down load the Tender documents free of cost from web site. https://www.nprocure.com

The last date of submission of online tender is 11 -02-2022

NO/INF/VPN/2021/G/3028

ANS INDUSTRIES LIMITED Regd. Off.: 136 KM, GT Road ,Vill & P.O Shamgarh, Karnal (Haryana) Head Off.: 144/2, Ashram, Mathura Road, New Delhi - 110014, CIN: L15130HR1994PLC03; E-mail : ansagro.limited@gmail.com, Website : www.ansfoods.com,

This is to inform you that pursuant to Regulation 33 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, Notice is hereby given that a Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company is scheduled to be held on Monday, the 14th day o February, 2022 at 3.00 PM. at the head office of the Company inter alia, to conside approve and take on record the standalone unaudited financial result for the quarter ender

Place : New Delhi Dated: 02/02/2022

DP/26/RLY/22

Company Secretary M.No.ACS-18801

PUBLIC NOTICE This is to inform general public that Ms. Sangseta Arora Wio Late Mr. Ravincler Kumar Arora (25% undivided share), Mr. Rajinder Kumar Khurana S/o Mr. Ram Ditta Mal (25% undivided share), Mr. Umesh Malik S/o Mr. Virender Kumar Malik (25% undivided share) & Mr. Satish Kumar S/o Late Mr. Buta Ram (25% undivided share) & Mr. Satish Kumar S/o Late Mr. Buta Ram (25% undivided share) & Mr. Satish Kumar S/o Late Mr. Buta Ram (25% undivided share) & Mr. Satish Kumar S/o Late Mr. Buta Ram (25% undivided share) & Mr. Satish Kumar S/o Late Mr. Buta Ram (25% undivided share) undivided share) have acquired Property no. A1 13, 2nd Floor, Krishan Nagar, Delhi, New Delhi, 13, 210 Floor, Install Magar, Deliri, New Depiri, New Debit, Hill 10051 vide Relinguishment Deed dated 04.09.2020 and Sale Deed dated 10.10.2018 and Now, Ms. Sangeeta Arora Wo Late Mr. Ravinder Kumar Arora (25% undivided share), Mr. Rajinder Kumar Khurana Sio Mr. Ram Ditta Mali (25% undivided share), Mr. Umesh Malik Sio Mr. Virender Kumar Malik (25% undivided share). Mr. Virender Kumar Malik (25% undivided share) & Mr. Satish Kumar Sio Late Mr. Buta Ram (25% undivided share) are intending to sell the above said property/Floors to Mr. Kush Aggarwak at Satish Aggarwal vide Sale Deed. Further Mr. Kush Aggarwal & Mr. Satish Aggarwal are mort-gaging the above said property/floors with PNB Housing Finance Ltd. & in case amyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 07 days of this publication to Mr. Muneesh Dhawar/ Mr. Suthii: Esin (Advocates) Law Vertes Unit no. Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Veritas, Unit no 907, 9th Floor, GD-ITL Tower, (B-08), Netaj Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9066707172/9818228636 (M).

at P.S. Karawal Nagar, Delhi.

inform to the following.

E-Mail: cic@cbi.gov.in

Fax: 011-24368639

Website: http://cbi.nic.in

Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that **M**I **Prashant** i.e. (Mrs. Lalita W/o Mr. Rames Chandwho is purchasing) the PLOT AREA MEASURING 40 SQ. YRDS, OUT OF KHEWAT NO. 03/03, KHATOUNI NO. 05, MUS. NO. 56//, KILLA NO. 12 (8-0) SITUATED IN VILLAGE AGWANPUR TEHSIL & DIST FARIDABAD, HARYANA from Mr. Babu S/o Mr. Moli who is owner vide of Regd. General Power of Attorney dated 12.12.2014 executed by Mr. Rajnesh Kumar Aggarwal S/o Late Mr. Mahesh Chand, and same to be financed & mortgaged by **Vastu Housing Finance** Corporation Ltd. If any Person having an type of claim/right/title/interest over the saic property, may inform in writing, at the address nentioned below, about his objections, within 07 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc.

Office No. G-03, at Ground Floor, on Plot No. D-61, Sector-2, Noida, UP-201301 Contact # 0120-4130438

SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL

missing since 20.01.2022 from the area of P.S. Karawal Nagar

In this regard a DD No. 37-A, dated 23.01.2022 has been lodged

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out

any one having any information or clue about this girl kindly

information about this girl but no clue has come to light so far. If

General public is here by informed that this

girl Namely: Uma Goswami, D/o Inder

Kumar, Goswami, R/o H. No. C-212, Gali No.

09, Mukand Vihar, Karawal Nagar, Delhi, Age:

about 22 Years, Height: 5'1", Complexion:

Fair. Face: Round, Built: Medium, Wearing:

Brown Colour Top, Pink Colour Skirt, Blue

Colour Jeans and Slippers in Feet has been

of duplicate share certificate.

The society hereby invites claims of objections (in Writing) for issuance of duplicate share certificate letter within the period of 15 (fifteen) days from the publication of this notice. If no claim/objections are ceived during this period the society shall be free to issue duplicate share certificate.

Jai Diba Maa CGHS Ltd. Place - New Delhi EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

Divisional Railway Manager (Signal & Telecom), East Central Railway, Danapur Division, for and on behalf of President of ndia invites tenders on web portal www.ireps.gov.in for the following work: Name of work with its location ovision of Replacement of over aged Felephone Exchange at PNBE and Jpgradation to IP based Telephone exchange at BXR, ARA, BKP, MKA, JAJ & KEU under Danapur division Approximate cost of work: Rs. 86,60,238.36/- 3. Earnest Money: Rs. 1,73,200.00/- 4. Last Date & Time of Submission: Up to 15.00 hrs. on 22.02.2022 **5. Opening of tender:** 15.30 hrs. on 22.02.2022 **6. Website particulars** where detail of the work and criteria can be seen: www.ireps.gov.in 7. Address of the office from where detail information can be obtained: Sr. Divnl. Signal & elecommunication Engineer, East Čentral Railway, Danapur Note: Any corrigendum if required will be

P.S. Karawal Nagar Delhi DP/1329/NE/2022 PR/01604/DNR/S&T/T/21-22/36

Ph. 011-22137761, 8750870730

Public Notice

Notice is hereby given that share certificate in respect of Flat no 78 issued in the name of Shri Keshav Chandra Khanduri by JDM CGHC Ltd. Situated at Plot -11, Sec 5 warka, New Delhi 110075, have been reported lost/misplaced and an application has been made by him to the society for issue

Date: 26/01/22 For & Behalf of

TENDER NOTICE Danapur, Dated: 3 No. DNR/S&T/Tele/2022/4 r. Dated: 31.01.2022

iploaded on above website before 14 days.

Divisional Singal & Telecom Engineer

East Central Railway/Danapur

To be known to all that I, Veena Khosla W/o Late Sh. Vijay Kumar Khosla R/o DDA LIG Flat No.35-A. Ground Floor, Pocket-A Sidhartha Extension, New Delhi purchaser of DDA LIG Flat No.35-A, Ground Floor, Pocket-A, Sidhartha Extension, New Delhi, has applied for conversion of the aforesaid flat from lease hold to free hold vide application No.138525 dated 22.09.2020 in DDA. The original documents i.e. Possession Letter, NOC for Electric and Water connection of the above said flat have been lost. An F.I.R./NCR to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station Any person claiming any right, interest objection with respect to this property, can

Director (LAB) Housing or Director (H) Block-D, Third Floor, DDA, Vikas Sadan,

INA. New Delhi-110023

Place: Noida

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is known to all that the allottee of Residential LIG Flat No.119, Block-A, Sector-22, NOIDA, Sh. Naveen Bhalla S/o Sh. Kailash Bhalla, R/o 1-B/13A, Ashok Vihar, Phase-1, Delhi, has sold the above flat on GPA basis as under:

1. A G.P.A. was executed on dt. 25.05.2021 in favour of Smt. Saroi Bala Thukral Wio Sh. Surendra Thukral [D/o Sh. Remal Das], R/o U-B/10, Phase-III, Gurugram, Haryana, which is regd. in the office of S.R. NOIDA, and the Agreement to Sell was not executed in favour of any person. Because the Agreement to Sell was not executed/regd., so with the help of this notice, it is informed that the transfer of the above flat on the basis of GPA goes in favour of Sh. Bhupendra Kumar Sharma S/o Late B.D. Sharma R/o C-1801, Express Zenith, Sector-77, Noida. If anyone has any objection, he/she will submit his/her objection in the Residential (Housing). Section of Noida Authority within 15 days of the publication of this notice. SAROJ BALA THUKRAL

OK PLAY INDIA LIMITED

egd. Office: 17-18, Roz-Ka-Meo Industrial Estat

Pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47of the SEBI (Listing Obligation and

Financial Results of the Company for the quarterended 31st December, 2021. For OK PLAY INDIA LIMITED Date: 02.02.2022

CIN No: L28219HR1988PLC030347

Tehsil Nuh, District Mewat, Haryana. - 122103 Website: www.okplav.in Email: info@okplav.ir Tel: +91 124 2362335-36 Fax: +91 124 2362326

Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 Notice is hereby given that a Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company is being convened on Monday, the 14th day of February, 2022, to consider and approve, inter - alia, the Un-Audited (Standalone and Consolidated)

Place: New Delhi Managing Director

PUBLIC NOTICE

Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd. 4/10, Mythree Tower, Bommanhalli Hosur Main Road Bangalore 560068

FICICI Bank The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from the Bank and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset/ Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
	Sunny Malik/ Prerna Mishra-C 605 Kumar I Life Apts Devarabisanahalli Bangalore Bangalore- 560103/ LBBNG00002390407	(As described in the Loan document/ property document covering Ajnara Ambrosia Apartment/ Unit Id: AM0G007001 Unit no AM-G-701 Along with usage right of Car Parking: Covered Car Park Floor: 7th Floor Tower/ Block Tower-g Type: 2 Bhk + 2 Toi+kids Room Super Area: 1255 Square Feet (sq. ft.) Approx. Built-up Area: 979 Square Feet (sq. ft.) Approx. Phase: I situted in Gautam Bodh Nagar Sector 118 Noida		04.08 2021

applicable) are advised to make the payments of outstanding within period of 60 days from the date of publication of this notice else further steps will be taken as per the provisions of Securitisation and Re construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. Date: February 03, 2022

Authorized Officer

BOARD. SECTOR-10/A, GANDHINAGAR

This information is also available on the website of the Company and website of BSE.

For ANS Industries Limited (Manoj Mishra)

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION

General public is hereby informed that an unidentified deadbody of male Age: About 45-50 years, Height: 5'5", Face: Long, Build: Medium, Complexion: Shallow, wearing black colour jacket, green colour jersey, blue colour jeans and blue colour sports shoes in feet, was found dead on 30.01.2022 in train accident at K.M. Pole No. 04/01, South Line Railway Track, Hallan Chowk,

dated 30.01.2022 u/s 174 Cr.P.C. has been lodged at P.S. Old Delhi Railway Station, Delhi. The dead body was preserved for identification in the mortuary of GTB Hospital, Any person having any information or clue about the deceased

Near Old Seelampur, Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 17-A

may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos SHO - P.S. Old Delhi Railway Station, Delhi

Tel. No.: 011-23961522, 23980685, 9968318499

APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE

Mohd. Faizan @ Bhura S/o Shamim Ahmad R/o H.No. 12-A/156, Gali No. 13, Near Shahdiya Masjid, Maujpur, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence FIR 553/21 u/s 365/328/406/34 IPC PS Welcom, Delhi and it has been written to the warrants of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person Mohd. Faizan @ Bhura cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Mohd. Faizan @ Bhura has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrants). Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused person Mohd. Faizan @ Bhura of FIR 553/21 u/s 365/328/406/34 IPC PS Welcom, Delhi is

Sh. Animesh Bhaskar Mani Tripathi Metropolitan Magistrate-03, Room No. 19, Karkardooma Court, Delhi

DP/1315/NE/22

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused

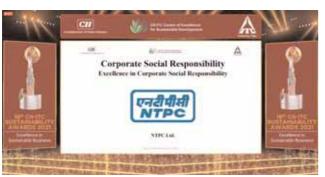
required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before 25.04.2022. By Order:



EXCELLENCE IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR NTPC

power utility in the country, has been conferred 'Excellence in Corporate Social Responsibility' in the prestigious CII-ITC Sustainability Awards 2021, for a consecutive second time in a row. This is the highest award conferred by CII-ITC and recognises companies that have positively impacted both business and society by taking a strategic approach to CSR through collaborative programmes with government and

civil society.
Shri Dillip Kumar Patel, director (HR) received this ward on January 31 in an online cer-



emony for NTPC. The chief guest on the occasion was Shri Rao Inderjeet Singh, Union Minister of State, (Independent

Charges) Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, Ministry of Planning & Union Minister of State, Ministry of

Corporate Affairs.

Addressing the august presence, director (HR) shared NTPC's commitment towards sustainable CSR practises with its value proposition towards society and its empowerment.

The journey to 'Excellence' is due to the strategic vision of NTPC management and its commitment towards CSR implementation.

NTPC Sipat, NTPC Tanda,
NTPC Talcher, NTPC Kudgi NTPC Rihand and NTPC Aravali were also awarded by CII-ITC for their significant efforts towards sustainable development on the occasion.

NTPC recognised as India's Best Workplaces in Manufacturing 2022

Ltd. was bestowed with the 'India's Best Workplaces in Manufacturing 2022 – Top 30' recognition by the Great Place to Work Institute. This is the fifth year in a row, NTPC has been bestowed with the recognition. In the fifth edition of

India's Best Workplaces in Manufacturing, 132 organisations in the Manufacturing sector undertook the assessment. Based on a rigorous evaluation, Great Place to Work has identified the Top 30 organisations among India's Best Workplaces in Manufacturing 2022. These organisations excel both on people practices that they have designed for their employees and act on the feedback to create a high

This recognition from the Great Place to Work India mirrors NTPC's commitment to creating and sustaining an ideal environment for its employees, associates and partners. It is also a testimony of the maturity of the HR Policies at NTPC and the commitment of the senior management of NTPC towards achieving the holistic development and well-being of its employees and stake-

*To reaffirm its commitment towards diversity and inclusion, NTPC has recruited an all-Female Engineers batch recently, a pioneering move in the sector. GPTW commended NTPC for its practices and for creating a high trust culture amongst its to improve its HR practices and policies so that employee engagement levels in the award by CII. company are consistently high. NTPC regularly participates in Best Employer Surveys and Benchmarking Exercises (like the CII

with the best companies in It is worthwhile to mention here that NTPC Ltd had been conferred the prestigious 'Role Model' Award at the prestigious 11th CII National HR Excellence Award 2020-21. Importantly, this was only the second time when the award of Role

Model has been conferred to

National HR Excellence

Award) to assess itself, and the

participation in such exercis-

es has revealed that people practices at NTPC are at par

NTPC is the only PSU to have received this prestigious

As a global authority on workplace culture, the Great Place to Work has been studying employee experience and people practices across organisations for over three decades. Every year, more than 10,000 organisations from over 60 countries partner with Great Place to Work Institute for assessment, benchmarking, and planning of actions to strengthen their workplace culture. In 2021, NTPC was

recognised as a Great Place to Work for the 15th year in a row by the Great Place to Work İnstitute and it was the only PSU to consistently feature in India's Top 50 Best

GENERAL MANAGER REVIEWS PERFORMANCE OF NORTHERN RAILWAY

Shri Ashutosh Gangal, general manager of Northern Railway held a review meeting with the departmental heads of the Northern Railway through video conferencing. Deliberations were held on focussing on passenger amenities at stations like an extension of platforms, an increase of the level of plat-forms, washable aprons, provision of the second entry, foot overbridges, escala-tors, lifts for Divayangjans, improvement of station building including façade etc. He also reviewed the progress of mobility enhancement and other developmental infrastructure works and Freight

He instructed for maintaining the

punctuality of trains and expediting the works related to mobility enhance-ment and conducting drives to check the progress. He stressed upon curbing any kind of obstruction during the operation of trains. He reviewed the work done over the zone in improving the maintenance standard of track, welds and removal of scrap lying near the

He also emphasised on completion of the projects on time. The GM also took stock of the tree cutting activity and removal of vegetation alongside the

He further emphasised that railway working should be transparent. He

stressed upon maximum use of technology so that human intervention can be minimised and transparency in all spheres of railway working may be established. He told the efforts should be enhanced to minimise human failure in train operations.

Shri Gangal also reviewed the per-formance of Business Development Units. He directed that the efforts should be enhanced to increase the share of the freight business of railways, customer mapping and engagement, and exploring new business opportunities.

Northern Railway is committed to providing safe, smooth and efficient services to its customers



Employees important for implementing schemes:CM

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said that our government has always been ready to take decisions in the interest of the employees. Government officers and employees are an integral part of the State Government and they are an important link in the effective implementation of the Government's public welfare schemes up to the grassroots level.

Shri Gehlot was addressing pre-budget dialogue with the representatives of various employee federations through video conference from his official residence on Tuesday. He said that the State Government is taking suggestions from every section of the society to make the budget inclusive and public welfare-oriented, thus the employee federations have been invited to give their important suggestions. This will help the Government to take decisions in the interest of employees based on these sug-

Continuous dialogue is necessary to resolve problems

The Chief Minister said that if a continuous dialogue is maintained between the State Government and employee organisations then various problems can be solved easily. Decisions can be taken on various demands by holding talks on time. He suggested that various employee organisations should form a coordination committee to prepare a platform for a dialogue with the Government. He said that the delegation of employees can put up their valid demands before the Chief Secretary, Principal Secretary Finance and Principal Secretary DoP. The State Government is making efforts to fulfill the announcements made earlier on priority, he said.

Commendable work done during the corona infection

Shri Gehlot appreciated representatives of the employee organisations for putting forward their points effective-

ly. As far as possible, the State Government will make efforts to include the positive suggestions in the budget, he said. He highly praised the cooperation extended by the officers and employees during the Covid-19 infection and said that the employees have done commendable work in fulfilling our motto 'Koi Bhooka Na Soye' (no one sleeps hungry).

Extended gratitude for the steps taken in the interest of employees

Representatives of various employee unions praised the initiative of the Chief Minister for inviting them for the pre-budget dialogue. These representatives extended their gratitude to the Chief Minister for the decisions taken in the interest of employees including new recruitment of ministerial employees and steps taken towards resolving their problems, for paving the way for the promotion of officers by removing the anomaly in the rules of Rajasthan Gramin Vikas Seva (Rajasthan Rural Development Service), for changing the designation of Nurse Grade-II to Nursing Officer and Nurse Grade-I to Senior Nursing Officer, for creating 11,353 posts of Vice-Principal in Government Senior Secondary Schools and for providing a better opportunity of promotion to lecturers by creating new posts of principal at Government Secondary Schools.

Principal Secretary DoP Shri Hemant Gera said that guidelines have been issued from time to time for amendment in various service rules and for timely promotions. Suggestions are being taken from various sections of the society to make the State budget peoplecentric.

In such a situation, suggestions from the representatives of employee organisations will also prove useful, he added. Chief secretary Smt. Usha Sharma, principal secretary Finance Shri Akhil Arora and other senior officers were present in the meeting.

GAIL starts India's maiden project of blending hydrogen into CGD network

AIL (India) Limited has commenced India's first-of-its-kind project of mixing hydrogen into the natural gas system at Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The hydrogen blended natural gas will be supplied to Avantika Gas Limited, one of GAIL's Joint Venture (JV) companies with HPCL, operating in Indore.

In line with the National Hydrogen Mission, GAIL has started hydrogen blending as a pilot project to establish the techno-commercial feasibility of blending hydrogen in the City Gas Distribution (CGD) network. This project marks the stepping stone of India's journey towards a

hydrogen-based and carbon-neutral future. gen at City Gate Station (CGS), Indore. This grey hydrogen would subsequently be replaced by green hydrogen. GAIL has already obtained the necessary regulatory permissions to commence the project. GAIL has also engaged domain experts to carry out the impact assessment of the blending of hydrogen in natural gas.

GAIL has always been committed to the growth of a gas-based economy in India and India's vision of a greener and cleaner environment. As our country is moving forward with the ambitious goal of achieving a carbon-neutral and self-reliant future, this project is a significant step in that direction.

It is expected that this pilot project would help in the creation of a robust standard and regulatory framework in India to cover the aspects of injecting hydrogen into natural gas. This will pave the path for carrying out more similar projects in India

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS **CLW produces record 50 locomotives** in the month of January 2022. 60 50 50 40 No. of locomotives 30 20 2017-18 2018-19 2020-21 2019-20 2021-22 Financial years facebook.com/clwrailways twitter.com/clwrailindia instagram.com/clwrailways

CLW turns out record 50 locos in January

Thittaranjan Locomotive

Works once again proved capacity and commitment of history by turning out record 50 locos in only 24 working days in the month of January of Works once again proved its capacity and commitment towards the production of locomotives for the Indian Railway. CLW has scripted another page

FY 21-22. This is the best production figure in the month of January in any FY. This note-

worthy feat was achieved under the leadership & able guidance of Shri Satish Kumar Kashyup, General Manager, with his continuous motivation and encouragement to the CLW workforce. loco production.

Shri Satish Kumar Kashyup congratulated the entire team of CLW for the record outturn and appreciated their dedicated efforts in

A GROWTH - ORIENTED BUDGET

PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Rajasthan Chapter organised a Budget Viewing Session at PHD House, Jaipur wherein a large number of members participated and analysed the various Budget announcements and welcomed the estimated economic growth of 9.2 per

Chair, PHD Chamber, Rajasthan Chapter said that the Budget for FY-2022-23 presented by Union Finance Minister was balanced and growth-oriented. Welcoming the various announcements for different sectors of the economy more importantly for PM Gatishakti Yojana, adding of 25,000 km new National Highways, the establishment of 100 new Cargo Terminals, plying of 400 Vande Bharat trains, focus on Agri Startups, extension ECLG Scheme by another one year up to March-23 with an additional outlay of ₹50,000 crore focus on affordable housing with a budget provision of ₹48,000 crore and making mandatory the payment of 75 per cent of running bills of MSMEs within 10 days would be a game-changer for MSMEs and fuel the growth of the economy, creating a lot of investment and employment opportunities in the country.

On this occasion, Amit Choudhary, cochair, PHD Chamber, Rajasthan Chapter, welcoming various provisions of Budget, said that move to strengthen Digital Health Eco-system in the Country and opening 23





Mental Health and Depression related Tele Medicine Health Centers under the supervision of NIMHANS would go a long way in addressing mental health-related issues, especially in the post COVID period.



Usha Sharma takes over as the chief secretary, Rajasthan



ENGLAND BEAT AFGHANISTAN TO ENTER U-19 WORLD CUP FINAL

Pancied England kept their nerve to reach the ICC U-19 World Cup final after prevailing over Afghanistan by 15 runs in an exciting last-four clash here, ending a 24-year wait for the side.

Spinner Rehan Ahmed became the hero for the Young Lions, taking three wickets in the penultimate over at a crucial point when their opponents needed just 18 runs from the last 10 balls on Tuesday. It was a remarkable turnaround for England from the previous tournament just

England from the previous tournament just two years ago in South Africa when they finished ninth.

As for Afghanistan, they will head to the Coolidge Cricket Ground for the third-place playoff.

Rain delayed the first of the two super league semi-finals at the Sir Vivian Richards Cricket Ground after England won the toss

Once both sides were eventually able to take to the field here, it was Afghanistan who made the stronger start.

Jacob Bethell, who lit up the quarterfinal tie with 88 against South Africa last week, was trapped LBW by Naveed Zadran, an early sign that England faced

captain Bethell in making an early departure, reducing them to 2-56, as the Young

Lions struggled to command with the bat.

George Thomas did steady the ship with an excellent 50 after a slightly nervy introduction at the crease, but was later beaten by a fine delivery from Noor Ahmad.

And when William Luxton was clean bowled by Izharulhaq Naveed, Prest's team were five wickets down having barely put 100 runs on the board.

However, the rain came again to delay play for a further half hour and led to revised conditions of 47 overs per side.

England's back-end partnership of 95 from George Bell and Alex Horton then managed to put a different dynamic on

The duo attacked the Afghanistan seamers fiercely which managed to lift the

The earlier interruptions from the weather meant Afghanistan had a revised DLS target to match this score and chasing their first ever U-19 World Cup final, they knew a good start was needed to seize control of the game.

Opener Nangeyalia Kharote was unable to provide it when English seamer

the third ball of the innings.

But Kharote's replacement Allah Noor,

smashed a huge six to get off the mark and quickly gave his team a platform.

The 18-year-old produced a marvellous knock, which featured eight boundaries as the momentum of the semifinal swung back Afghonistan's way.

Along with wicketkeeper Mohammad Ishaq, the pair got their team past 90, with Noor making a valuable half-century. England's crucial breakthrough came

back Afghanistan's way.

after some wonderful fielding led to a runout for Ishaq with wicketkeeper Horton reacting quickly to a loose throw at the striker's end.

Noor remained stubborn but eventually went for 60, with Thomas Aspinwall claiming a vital wicket. That set-up a frantic-finish that could have gone either way.

The 44th over for England appeared to have turned the game when two no balls in a row gifted their opponents eight runs, before Abdul Hadi (37 not out) smashed a huge six to take them to 200.

But Ahmed's late flurry and a nerveless final over from Boyden carried England over the line to their first first U-19 World Cup final since 1998 in South Africa, when they lifted the trophy.

Blow for SA as rising star

Keegan Petersen ruled out

WI arrive for limited over series against India

On a high after beating England in a T20I rubber, the visiting West Indies team arrived here this morning for its upcoming limited overs series against Índia.

The 'Men in Maroon' will be playing three ODIs at the Narendra Modi Stadium here, beginning February 6, followed by three T20 Internationals at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata.

"After a long couple days of travel from Barbados, the Men İn Maroon have arrived in India!" posted Windies Cricket, the official Twitter account of Cricket West Indies, on Wednesday morning. "WI arrive safely in Ahmadabad! The Men In Maroon have a quick turnaround, as WI get ready to play @BCCI in 3 ODI's here, starting on February 6," it wrote in another tweet. The Windies Cricket also posted a video of the players arriving at the Ahmedabad airport. The Gujarat Cricket Association

(GCA), which will be hosting the three ODIs, has already stated that the matches will be played behind closed doors due to the current COVID-19



situation. The West Bengal government, on the other hand, has given permission to allow 75 per crowd for the three T20I matches

The three T20Is will be played in Kolkata on February 16, 18 and 20, following the three-match ODI Series which will be played in Ahmedabad on

February 6, 9 and 11

West Indies recently beat England in a closely fought T20 series in the



Lanka pacer Lakmal to retire from international cricket

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Senior Sri Lanka pacer Suranga Lakmal will retire from all forms of international cricket after the tour of India which begins later this month. The 34-year-old Lakmal, a former Test captain, has played 68 Tests, 86 ODIs and 11 T20s.

"Former Sri Lanka Test Captain Suranga Lakmal has informed Sri Lanka Cricket that he will retire from all forms of International Cricket following the completion of the upcoming Sri Lanka Tour of India 2022," Sri Lanka Cricket said in a statement.

Lakmal thanked SLC for for its support.

"I'm indebted to SLC for giving me this astonishing opportunity and having faith in me to bring back my mother land honour as it has been absolute pleasure to be associatedsaid Lakmal

12 crore) and Sunil Narine (Rs 6 crore)

along with Indian duo of Venkatesh

Iyer (Rs 8 crore) and Varun

which will see 590 players go under

hammer in the two-day auction in

shift in the IPL auction with so many

premium fast bowlers out there for

Bengaluru on February 12 and 13.

KKR are now left with a purse of Rs 48 crores for the mega auction

He further said they may see a

"I sincerely think so, because even though a lot of people think cricket is inclined towards the batsman, I would

"I would say that therein lies an

Chakravarthy (Rs 8 crore).



PTI JOHANNESBURG

Keegan Petersen, the hero of South Africa's home Test series win over India, was on Wednesday ruled out of their tour of New Zealand after testing positive for COVID-19, dealing a blow to the team's prospects.

The batter has been replaced by Zubayr

Cricket South Africa (CSA) said in a state-

ment that Peterson was doing "well" and is 'asymptomatic".

'Cricket South Africa's medical team will physical and mental well-being," the statement

The Proteas will depart South Africa for New Zealand on Wednesday. In the preceding three-match Test series against a formidable Indian side, the 28-year-old Petersen topped the run charts with 276 runs from six innings at an

He was the only player to score three halfcenturies in the series, registering scores of 72, 82 and 62, while also impressing with his field-

South Africa lost the first Test by 113 runs in Centurion, before fighting back strongly with successive seven-wicket victories in Johannesburg and Cape Town to claim the

South Africa are scheduled to play two Tests

Meanwhile, according to a report in Stuff.Co.Nz, New Zealand captain and its premier batter Kane Williamson is likely to miss the Tests against South Africa as he continues

The New Zealand squad for the two Tests

in New Zealand, starting February 17.

his rehabilitation from an elbow injury.

is expected to be named $\bar{l}ater$ this week.

New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell wins ICC's 'Spirit of Cricket' award

 N^{ew} Zealand's Daryl Mitchell is the recipient of the ICC 'Spirit of Cricket' award for 2021 due to his sportsmanlike gesture in the T20 World Cup semi-final against England in Abu Dhabi.

Mitchell won the award for refusing to take what was an easy single after coming in the way of bowler Adil Rashid in the highpressure World Cup semi-final against England in Abu Dhabi on November 10 last

Mitchell is the fourth New Zealand player to win the award, following the footsteps of Daniel Vettori, Brendon McCullum and Kane Williamson.

"It's an honour to receive the ICC Spirit of Cricket Award," Mitchell said.

'To be part of that T20 World Cup in UAE was an amazing experience, and to receive an award like this is pretty cool.

"It's something that we pride ourselves on as New Zealanders, the way we go about playing our cricket, and yes, the Spirit of Cricket side. "Personally, I felt I got in the way and

we wanted to win on our own terms, and didn't want to be controversial in such a big It paid off in the long run that we won

the game. Looking back, it all happened The incident occurred on the first ball

of the 18th over bowled by Adil Rashid, with

the score at 133/4 and James Neesham on

Neesham smashed the ball down the ground and it would have been an easy single. But Mitchell, at the non-striker's end, refused to take the run, conceding that he had impeded Rashid in a high-pressure chase, with a place in the World Cup final

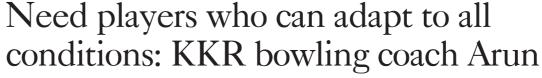
Nasser Hussain, who was live on commentary during the contest, was full of praise for Mitchell saying, "That is very good. That is so New Zealand, it really is. So easy to take a run there. But the non-strike said, 'No, I've got in the way of Adil.' Anything sums up New Zealand cricket - it was that.

Mitchell, explaining why he refused to take the single, added:

"It was a pretty tight game against England in that semi-final, with only a few overs to go. Neesh (Jimmy Neesham) hit a single down to long-off I think it was, and I felt like I'd obstructed Rashid from getting to the ball.

"The game that we play, we play it because we love it. Yes, we want to win as much as we can, but we don't want that to come about from doing things that go against the values of cricket. Spirit of Cricket is vitally important. It sets a platform for kids in the future, who will go about playing the game in the right way.

"At the end of the day, it is a game, it's something that we love. So obviously we're so lucky to do that.'



PTI ■ KOLKATA

olkata Knight Riders newly Kappointed bowling coach Bharat Arun said that the franchise would look to pick players who can adapt to all conditions during the upcoming IPL mega auction.

As things stand now, the venue of the tournament slated to be held in the last week of March is yet to be decided and with 10 days left for the auction the KKR think tank are busy preparing their strategy.
"You need to pick players who can

adapt to different conditions. Even before the pandemic, when you picked bowlers for home conditions, you still needed them to play seven away games in the IPL," former India bowling coach Arun told kkr.In.

Arun said having seen most of the international players his experience would come in handy.

CSA disciplinary

hearing on Mark

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

Boucher postponed

The disciplinary hearing against South Africa head coach Mark

Boucher, who faces charges of racism

and possible sacking from the post by

the country's cricket board (CSA), has

This was announced by the chairper-

son of the hearing on Tuesday.

Advocate Terry Motau, who is chairing the disciplinary hearing, in a

statement said he has agreed to

Boucher's request for dates in May that

will allow him to call current South

African players to testify on his behalf. "CSA (Cricket South Africa)

argued for expediency and a speedy

commencement and finalisation of the

proceedings, given that some of the

allegations occurred some time ago,"

the statement from Motau read accord-

ing to 'Sport24'. "On behalf of Mr

Boucher, it was indicated that he

intends to call some of the players to

of the Tour of New Zealand

has been postponed until May.

"Having watched most of the top



last edition, have retained the West Indies all-rounders Andre Russell (Rs

players around the world up close, you have a fair idea as to what they can do. And it helps you to prepare and take your calls better, and also plan more effectively during the matches," he said. The two-time former champions, who finished runners-up in the

look at it differently.

opportunity for me as a bowler to excel. Yes, there are limitations for bowlers. But again, they know that if they execute and if they can build a little more guile around their bowling, they have a chance to be a hero," he

England's decision to pull out of Pakistan tour made zero sense: Alex Hales

PTI ■ KARACHI

Acquainted with playing in Pakistan, English batter Alex Hales says the England and Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) decision to pull out of the country's tour last year made "zero sense" to

Hales, who is playing for Islamabad United in the Pakistan Super League (PSL), did not agree with ECB'S move to withdraw weeks before the tour scheduled for October last year, citing security concerns. That decision to cancel

that tour made absolutely no sense," Hales, a white ball specialist, told Geo TV.

"Especially after Pakistan came to England during COVID and helped out the ECB massively. So for them to cancel that tour made absolutely zero sense to me.



after really well," Hales said. only a few T20s so it made no

"Every time we come here, Now in his fifth season at the people are very hospitable the PSL, including two seaand cricket is always really good. The fans here are crazy sons disrupted by the pandemic, Hales has more expefor it. So, it's a great place to rience of playing in Pakistan come and play cricket, than most English cricketers. absolutely feel safe.' "I've been here four or

Hales is in his second

stint with Islamabad United, having won the league once with Karachi Kings in the past. He has been one of the league's standout openers, averaging over 44 at a strike rate close to 150. The ECB and Pakistan

Cricket Board (PCB) have since rescheduled that tour and England are now slated to visit Pakistan twice later this They are first scheduled to

arrive in September for a seven-match

T20I series, in the lead-up to the T20 World Cup in Australia, following which they will visit again for a three-Test series in November-December.

Hales is not a certainty in the England T20 squad for that tour but he is contend at the moment, saying his stats are up there with the best in

NEERAJ CHOPRA NOMINATED FOR LAUREUS WORLD BREAKTHR

lympic gold medal-winning javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra was on Wednesday nominated for the prestigious Laureus 'World Breakthrough of the Year' award, making him the first Indian to be featured in the short-list for this cat-

egory.

He was clubbed alongside tennis stars Daniil Medvedev and

Emma Raducanu among others. The 23-year-old Chopra last year became only the second Indian to win an individual Olympic gold medal and first in track and field in Tokyo with a throw of 87.58 metres in his second attempt. The performance catapulted him to superstar status in India and also brought him worldwide acclaim.

"...It's a great honour for me to be recognised in the wider sporting world for what I achieved in Tokyo. From being a kid in a small village in rural India who only took up

sport to get fit, to standing on top of an Olympic podium, it's been quite an eventful journey so far," Chopra said in a statement issued by The Laureus Academy.

"I feel privileged to be able to represent my country and win India medals at the global stage, and now to have this recognition from Laureus and be considered along-side such exceptional athletes is a really special feeling."

He is now only the third Indian

to fetch a Laureus nomination after cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar and wrestler Vinesh Phogat.

Phogat was nominated in the 'Laureus World Sporting Comeback' category for the year 2019, while Tendulkar won the 'Laureus best sporting moment in the last 20 years' The moment in consideration

was Tendulkar's teammates lifting him on their shoulders after India won the 2011 ODI World Cup at

A panel of more than 1,300



of the world have selected the nominees in each of the seven categories for this year's Laureus World Sports

The winners will be revealed in April, following a vote by the Laureus World Sports Academy, the world's ultimate sports jury, made up of 71 of the greatest sporting legends of all time.

At the 2016 World Under-20 Championships, Chopra won the gold medal.

Also nominated with Chopra for the Breakthrough Award are FC Barcelona's football prodigy Pedri, the 19-year-old who was voted best young player at the Ballon d'Or, Yulimar Rojas, who broke the 26-year old triple jump world record year-old triple jump world record, and swimmer Ariarne Titmus, who twice beat champion Katie Ledecky at 200 and 400m in Tokyo.

The battle for the Laureus World Sportsman of the Year Award will be one of the most competitive ever. The short-list features NFL star

goal-scorer Robert Lewandowski, new Formula One world champion Max Verstappen, tennis world no.1 Novak Djokovic, and two of the greatest Olympians -- swimmer Caeleb Dressel, who won five gold medals in Tokyo, and Eliud Kipchoge, who won back-toback marathon gold medals.

Several top-notch Olympic performances dominate the Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year cat-

Elaine Thompson-Herah matched fellow Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt with gold medals in the 100, 200 and 4x100 metres relay; Allyson Felix passed Carl Lewis as the most decorated track and field US Olympian; Australian swimmer Emma McKeon's four gold and three bronze tied the record for the most medals ever won by a woman in a single Olympic Games; and American swimmer Katie Ledecky won two more gold and two silver

Revised fixtures for remainder of ISL season unveiled



PTI MARGAO

The Indian Super League I on Wednesday unveiled the revised fixture list for the ongoing event with the organisers incorporating all the matches that were postponed due to COVID-19 outbreaks last month in the schedule that begins February 9

ATK Mohun Bagan will face Jamshedpur FC in the final match of the regular season at the PJN Stadium here on March 7, according to the revised fixture drawn by the league organisers

Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL).

"Football Development Limited (FSDL) today released the revised fixture list for 25 matches, from February 9 onwards, for the Hero Indian Super League (ISL) 2021-22 season. The League has incorporated the matches that were postponed in January into the redrawn calendar," the ISL said in a statement.

There will be three additional double-headers, all on Saturdays (February 19, February 26, and March 5) to accommodate the six games that were suspended.

The matches were earlier suspended due to multiple COVID-19 cases in the teams with the worst hit being Kerala Blasters, ATK Mohun Bagan and Jamshedpur FC.

In the final five weeks of the league season, multiple teams will be fighting for the top spot and for the reward of representing India in the 2023 AFC Champions

League.
The eighth season (2021-22) of the ISL kicked off on November 19 with ATK Mohun Bagan taking on Kerala Blasters.

The matches postponed due to the COVID outbreak were Jamshedpur FC vs Mumbai City FC, ATK Mohun Bagan vs Odisha FC, Kerala Blasters FC vs ATK Mohun Bagan, Hyderabad FC vs Jamshedpur FC, Kerala Blasters vs Mumbai City FC and ATK Mohun Bagan vs Bengaluru FC.

Some of the affected sides were struggling to even field a playing XI for their

Nagal dropped, Yuki returns for Davis Cup tie against Denmark

Sumit Nagal has been dropped from the five-member Indian Davis Cup team for the World Group 1 play-off tie against Denmark here next month, the national tennis federation said on Wednesday

Nagal (world ranked 222) made way for Yuki Bhambri (863) in the squad which also has Ramkumar Ramanathan (182) and Prajnesh Gunneswaran (228) as other singles players.

The team has been selected keeping in mind the playing surface as both India's top-ranked singles player — Ramkumar and comeback man Yuki — are comfortable playing on grass courts. Gunneswaran and Nagal, on the other hand, are not grass court players.

Besides, doubles specialist Rohan Bopanna has retained his place in the squad alongside Divij Sharan, the All India Tennis Association (AITA) said. Saketh Myneni and Digvijay Pratap Singh are the two reserve players in the squad, to be coached by Zeeshan Ali, and has Rohit Rajpal as non-playing captain.

The tie will be held at the grass courts of Delhi Gymkhana Club on March 4 and 5, inside a bio-security bubble.

The team was handpicked after a virtual meeting of the Professional Selection Committee of AITĂ on January 29.

According to a statement issued by AITA, the meeting was attended by chairman Nandan Bal, members Balram Singh, Mustafa Ghouse, Sai Jayalakshmy, Rajpal, Zeeshan Ali and AITA secretary general Anil Dhupar.

Spotlight on Nassiri as ATKMB look to continue winning momentum

All the spotlight will be on Kiyan Nassiri when ATK Mohun Bagan take on Mumbai City FC, hoping to break into the top-four again in the Indian Super League here on Thursday. Son of East Bengal legend Jamshid Nassiri, the 21-year-old Kiyan became the youngest ever hat-trick scorer in

the youngest ever hat-trick scorer in the ISL after his second-half treble against SC East Bengal hurtled him into the limelight in the Kolkata derby.

The youngster broke a couple of more records on the way to his treble. He became the first player in ISL to score a hat-trick after coming on as a substitute. He also became the youngest ever goal-scorer for ATK Mohun Bagan in the league. ATKMB are placed fifth in the

points table and a win against Mumbai would take them into the top-four and help them close the gap on league leaders Hyderabad FC with two games in ATKMB were not at their best in

the last game but did just enough to secure three points, underlining their might yet again as one of the con-Head coach Juan Ferrando also made the right changes and upped the ante the moment they conceded the

opening goal of the game, pressing

deeper and also keeping more of the "It is not necessary to think about

the past. In football nothing is constant. Every game is different," said Ferrando addressing ATK Mohun Bagan's winless record against Mumbai City.

Mumbai, on the other hand,

haven't won in six games and have slipped to sixth place in the table having a sixth place in the sale having a sixth place in the sale having a sixth from 12 months for the sale having a sixth from 12 months for the sale having a sixth for the sale havi ing 18 points from 12 matches. They too have matches in hand like

ATKMB but goals have dried up for the defending champions and that is a cause of worry for Des Buckingham. Buckingham has said that they will

stick to their style of playing football keeping more of the ball but against ATKMB, who have Liston Colaco and Manvir Singh bombing down the flanks with Hugo Boumous and David Williams to support upfront, their fullbacks and defenders will have their task

Barcelona president says Dembélé rejected 2 offers to leave

AP MADRID

 $B_{\text{ing}}^{\text{arcelona}}$ came agonisingly close to losing Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang. It never really had a chance of getting rid of Ousmane Dembélé.

Barcelona president Joan Laporta said on Tuesday the deal to sign Aubameyang was sealed a minute before the transfer window deadline ended on Monday night, and that Dembélé inexplicably rejected two good offers to leave the club. The club did not want Dembélé to stay

after the French player's agents turned down several offers to extend his contract in negotiations that lasted nearly six months. "We had made a good offer for him to

renew his contract and stay, but it became a financial issue and he wanted more,"

Laporta said.

"We showed him two good offers (at the transfer deadline) for him to play with another club during these last six months, the last one from an English club, and he didn't accept them and preferred to stay here. We were surprised.'



Dembélé's contract ends in June and he will be able to leave for free. Barcelona broke its own record to sign the young forward from Borussia Dortmund in 2017 in a deal worth up to 147 million euros (then USD 175 million), including add-ons.

"It's hard to understand," said Laporta, who last year called Dembélé better than Kylian Mbappé. "We think he may already have a deal with another club. That's what

his agent hinted." Laporta said Dembélé's permanence was "not good for him or the club." He didn't say if the player would be reinstated to the squad of coach Xavi Hernández, saying the decision would be made taking the club's best interest into account. Dembélé was marred by health problems this season and throughout his first years with the Catalan club.

Dembélé's departure would have cleared more salary cap space and made the addition of Aubameyang much easier, Laporta said.

He said the documents needed to seal the deal with the Gabon striker arrived one minute before Monday's midnight deadline. The president raised his fist in celebration as he left the club's headquarters after closing the deal, and he was followed by Aubameyang and his representatives a few moments later.

The documents from Arsenal allowed the player to become a free agent, and gave Barcelona extra time to make the deal official, which should happen in the coming days, Laporta said.

Manager of India's Winter Olympics contingent tests COVID positive

PTI ■ BEIJING

The manager of India's Winter l Olympics contingent, Mohammad Abbas Wani, has tested positive for COVID-19 upon arrival at the Beijing Airport here.

Abbas Wani is a part of the six-member Indian delegation at the Winter Olympics where Jammu and Kashmir skier Arif Khan is the only athlete from the country to have qualified this time. Arif will be competing in Slalom and Giant Slalom events during the Games.

The contingent also includes Harjinder Singh as its chef de mission, Ludar Chand Thakur as alpine coach, Puran Chand as technician and Roop Chand Negi as team official. "I am in quarantine in my hotel room

at Olympic village & have been asked to restrict my movement within the room only until the results of my 2nd Covid test. I am completely fine & asymptomatic," he tweeted. Indian Olympic Association (IOA)

president Narinder Batra informed about



Abbas Wani's positive COVID result and said chef de mission Harjinder is coordinating with the Winter Olympics organisers for a re-test.

"The manager of the Indian contingent Mr. Abbas Wani tested COVID pos-

itive at Beijing Airport. The chef de mission Mr. Harjinder Singh is coordinating for a re-test.

The athlete and his coach have been shifted to another flat to avoid any interaction," Batra said.

The Winter Olympics will be held from February 4 to 20.

Meanwhile, China on Wednesday fielded Qi Fabao, the regimental commander of the People's Liberation Army, who was injured during the June 2020 border skirmish with Indian soldiers in the Galwan Valley in eastern Ladakh, as a torchbearer for the Games Torch

Qi took the flame from Wang Meng, China's four-time Olympic short track speed skating champion, at Winter Olympic Park, the state-run Global

Times newspaper reported.
On February 4, the Olympic flame, after being relayed by about 1,200 torchbearers, will light the main cauldron at the National Stadium to mark the beginning of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympic

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea qualified for a 10th successive World Cup after beating Syria 2-0 in Dubai

Jin-su and Kwon Chang-hoon on Tuesday gave the Koreans a comfortable victory over the bottom team in Asia Group A qualifying. South Korea, the 15th nation to

Second-half goals from Kim

qualify for the 32-team field, moved 11 points clear of third-place United Arab Emirates with two games remaining.
Iran, which has already quali-

fied, beat the UAE 1-0 to remain atop Group A. Iran last week became the first team from Asia to qualify for Qatar when it beat Iraq 1-0.

The top two teams from both groups automatically qualify. The third-place teams advance to play-

on the way to beating Saudi Arabia 2-0 at Saitama Stadium and keeping the host on course for a seventh successive World Cup appearance. Minamino's goal from close

South Korea qualifies for World Cup; costly draw for Aussies range after 31 minutes was created by Junya Ito. The Belgian-based winger then added the second soon

after the restart with a fierce shot

from the edge of the area to seal a first defeat for the Saudis in the Saudi Arabia, which would have qualified for a sixth World Cup with a victory, still leads the group

with 19 points, one more than Japan. Australia allowed a late goal and settled for a 2-2 draw with Oman in Muscat. Australia stays third in Group B though moves onto 15

points. In Group B, a first-half goal from Takumi Minamino set Japan lead through Jamie Maclaren's penalty but Abdullah Fawaz equalized for the host soon after the

> While Aaron Mooy restored Australia's lead with 13 minutes



remaining, Fawaz earned Oman a point with a spot kick after 89 min-

Last-placed Vietnam, which had previously lost all of its seven games in Group B, defeated China 3-1 in Hanoi. The defeat ended China's chances of qualifying for the World Cup for only the second

ARGENTINA PUTS COLOMBIA FARTHER FROM WC SPOT

Colombia will need a miracle to play in the next World Cup after its 1-0 loss to Argentina in South American qualifying.

Lautaro Martinez scored the only goal of the match in Cordoba in the 29th minute on Tuesday after he was left alone in the penalty box by two Colombia defenders. Goalkeeper Camilo Vargas made several important saves, including

three shots by veteran Ángel di Maria. Argentina did not count on superstar Lionel Messi, who is still recovering from COVID-19. But the team - and Brazil - have already secured their places in the

World Cup.
Colombia is in seventh place with 17 points. Peru, currently in fifth place with 20 points, will play later against Ecuador in Lima.

If the Peruvians win, the closest rival to Colombia in a qualifying position will be Uruguay, with 22 points.

Uruguay has two games left: Peru at home and Chile away. Colombia's last rivals are less dangerous, Bolivia at home and enezuela away.

This is not over, we want to go at it until the end," Colombia coach Reinaldo Rueda said in a news con-

"Maybe we need more clarity in the midfield and also in our finish-

spots in the World Cup. The fifth

position will play an international

playoff against an Asian team for a

We miss that energy. South America has four direct

Leader Brazil thrashed Paraguay 4-0 at home with goals scored by Raphinha, Philippe Coutinho, Antony and Rodrygo. Coach Tite did not count on an injured Neymar playing, and also used the game to test out other play-

ers like Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni did. Earlier, Chile beat Bolivia 3-2 in the altitude of La Paz thanks to two goals by Alexis Sánchez and another by Marcelino Núñez. The result kept the Chileans in contention in sixth place with 19 points and nearly ended the chances of the hosts, who remain with 15 points.

The Bolivian goals came from Marc Enoumba and Marcelo

"This was a reward to our efforts, but it doesn't finish here," Chile striker Sánchez said.