

OPINION 6
'SPORTSWASHING'
BY CHINA ON THIN ICE**WORLD 8**
US SENDS MORE TROOPS
AMID UKRAINE ROW**MONEY 9**
'BUDGET LAYS FOUNDATION
FOR GROWTH IN NEXT 25 YRS'

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



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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

PTI

"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.

"Out of this, most of the

houses are in the name of women. We have made women 'maalikins' (owners)," he said, adding the Budget has kept in mind empowerment of the poor with social justice.

The Budget, Modi said, is giving 80 lakh pakka houses to poor earmarking ₹48,000 crore

for the purpose.

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

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

he said.

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 "to fulfil new aspirations and it is important that India becomes self-reliant and on that pillar, a modern India is created."

Don't rush to lift Covid curbs as deaths on rise, says WHO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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 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 Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a Press briefing on Wednesday that since the Omicron variant was first identified just 10 weeks ago, almost 90 million cases have been reported to the WHO, more than were reported in the whole of 2020. "We are now starting to see a very worrying increase in deaths in most regions of the world."

He reiterated his concern over the narrative taking hold in some countries that "because of vaccines, and because of Omicron's high transmissibility and lower severity, preventing transmission is no longer possible and no longer necessary".



"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 alone," he said.

"It's premature for any country either to surrender or to declare victory." According to Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, technical lead of the WHO's Health Emergencies Programme, more than 22 million cases have been reported to the WHO in the past seven 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 coronavirus-related deaths around the world, which "shouldn't be happening at the present time when we have tools that can actually prevent this".

Commenting on reports that 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 blamed the Government for "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

PTI

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 poverty.

"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.

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I was popular pick for CM post, but Cong rejected it over my religion: Jakhar

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

While the Congress high command is busy gathering Punjab voters' response via televoting to zero in on its Chief Ministerial face for February 20 polls, senior party leader Sunil Jakhar's claims 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 his Abohar constituency. The gathering was amused when Jakhar revealed that only two MLAs took Channi's name.

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 as a popular choice as CM face...I didn't want anything else. Otherwise, what 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".

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Shah evokes Kalyan's memories in Aligarh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

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 ji (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

PTI

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 project is also stalled," Shah said.

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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 been governed are — one is flagrant corruption. Goa's Government is one of 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 politicians."

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KCR mocks PM; BJP says CM facing identity crisis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A major controversy broke-out on Wednesday when Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara 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".

"Upur Shervani, andar pareshani" (style outside, no substance inside), the Chief Minister said, mocking the "Gujarat model", which, he said, the BJP flaunts as an example of Modi's governance. Rao said the Prime Minister "dresses for elections" and his Budget exemplifies "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 the launch of a statue of Saint



Ramanujacharya, said to be the world's second tallest and built at a cost of ₹1,000 crore.

But Rao said he won't hesitate 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 division," said the CM.

"If it is election time, he has to grow a beard and appear like Rabinindranath 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-

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 no-holds-barred acerbic comments.

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 qualitative change in the nation," Rao told reporters on his meeting with Uddhav Thackeray.

In a sharp riposte, Telangana BJP chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar said Rao is running a smear campaign.

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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 department 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



transfer of any virtual digital 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-year-old 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 indigenously-developed 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 Umar Ishaq 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

After substantial drop in the Covid-19 infections during the 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

Maharashtra, the daily infections 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 1,42,784.

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.

As 36,281 Covid-19 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

the neighbouring Thane rose from 13296 on Tuesday to 11676.

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

PTI

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 Belur, Halebid and Somnathapura in the State, as India's nomination for World Heritage List for 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 Belur, 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. **PTI**

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 other State/Central Governments for the below mentioned work:-
Name of Work:- Servicing/Overhauling of 158 CFM Reciprocating Air Compressor (CP make PX30) installed at Govt. Dental College, Srinagar.
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 Rupees) :- 7500

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 website **www.jktenders.gov.in** from **31-01-2022 (18.00 hrs).**
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 (02) cover.**
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 of Executive Engineer, MHCHD, Srinagar.**

No. DIPK-17412/22
Dated:- 01.02.2022

Sd/- Executive Engineer,
MHCHD, Srinagar

AAP candidates signed affidavit...

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“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...

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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.

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 somebody else, then the con-

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 government'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-T Act.

Also, no deduction in respect of any expenditure or allowance shall be allowed.

“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 the country and the annual

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 probabilities.

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 various other varieties, he said.

“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 losses,” he said.

KCR...

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“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.

“The language used by the Chief Minister is uncalled for,” he said, adding, “Why is it that KCR did not write letters to the Centre seeking support for the State in the last few years, why is he talking about it now?”, he asked.

The State BJP president said, “Rao is running a smear campaign against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP-led Central Government as he is ‘depressed and going through an identity crisis.’”

The Karimnagar MP objected to the Chief Minister's claim that the BJP is using social media to spread the message 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.

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 anyone's name — virtually pushing Jakhar out of the race.

As of now, Congress has all 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 three-time 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 first-timer. 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 India.

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.

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, भोपाल
यात्रिक विभाग (मुख्यालय) गोविंदपुरा (बी.एच.ई.एल.)
निविदा आमंत्रण घोषणा-पत्र

क्र. 198/यां.वि./2022 **भोपाल, दिनांक 01.02.2022**

निम्नलिखित निर्माण कार्य हेतु दो लिफाफा पद्धति के अनुसार म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में केन्द्रीकृत व्यवस्था के अंतर्गत पंजीकृत टेकेदार परसेन्टेज मोहर बंद निविदायें निर्धारित प्रपत्र पर ऑनलाईन आमंत्रित की जाती है।

S. No.	Tender ID	Name of Work	Probable Amount of Contract (Rs. in lakh)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (In Rs.)	Cost of Bid Document (In Rs.)	Period of Completion (in Months)	SOR
1	2022_UAD_182496_1	ANNUAL TENDER FOR (ON EMPANELMENT BASIS) CONSTRUCTION OR MAINTENANCE OF ROAD AT VARIOUS PLACES BY ASHPHALTING OF BHOPAL CITY ZONE 01 TO 19	892.85	446429	20000	12 months (including rainy season)	MPUADD ISSR 2021

1. Interested bidders can view the NIT on website **https://mptenders.gov.in/**
2. The Bid Document can be purchased only online from **10:30 A.M. (time) 02.02.2022 (date) to 17.30 P.M. (time) 03.03.2022 (date).**
3. Amendments to NIT, if any, would be published on website **https://mptenders.gov.in/** only, and not in newspaper.

In. Chief Engineer
Municipal Corporation Bhopal
District Bhopal

नि.क्र. 1134/021/022

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:

Sl. 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 02.08.2022 (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.

Sd/-
Director
Youth Affairs & Sports
Govt. of Tripura

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

King George's Medical University
U.P., Lucknow

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

Customized E-Bid Inviting Notice

Online e-bids are invited latest by **24.02.2022** 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 https://gem.gov.in/**

(Medical Superintendent)

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

S. N.	Tender No.	Description of Item	Quantity	Tender closing date & times
1	SECRHQTm212241	Grease, Hydraulic Oil & transmission Oil	As per tender	11.00 Hours of 10.02.2022
2	SECRHQTm212242	Wheel, Axle & Axle Box Assembly for UTV Track Machine	01 Nos	
3	SECRHQTm212243	Motor GP-ELE (self starter)	01 Nos	
4	SECRHQTm212244	06 types of Hydraulic Pump	As per tender	
5	SECRHQTm212245	Chain Guide	01 Nos	11.00 Hours of 22.02.2022
6	SECRHQTm212246	12 types of Mechanical Spares	As per tender	
7	SECRHQTm212247	Universal Joint & Anti vibration Mounting Pad	As per tender	
8	SECRHQTm212248	Nylon Sheet & Side Rubber	As per tender	

For full details of tender notice and tender documents, tenderer may login to the website : **www.ireps.gov.in**. No manual tenders will be entertained against E-Tender.

Dy. Chief Engineer/TML/HQ S.E.C. Railway, Bilaspur

CPR/10/331

Govt inducts 30 junior environmental engineers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on 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 one-of-a-kind initiative of the Government for young, motivated professionals to innovatively and creatively support Delhi's environmental gover-

nance. DPCC, too, has been further strengthened by hiring 30 Junior Environmental Engineers for the first time in almost three decades."

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

work, empirical research among 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 subject-specific 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 of selling schools at throwaway prices

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (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 teach," he said.

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.

DTC to raise 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 towers.

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.

DTC has been working on

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

The city transporter that runs a fleet of nearly 3,900 low-floor 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 Delhi for multi-level bus parking depots, redevelopment of residential colonies of DTC and more commercial facilities.

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 milk booths on its land.

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 DLF Phase-3 of Gurugram. The officials said during a survey of EWS plots in DLF 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. Bhat 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 Bajjal, 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 Society.

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



theme of this year was "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, IP College etc have participated. Dr. Rajiv Kumar Tiwari, Principal Commissioner, DDA also joined the webinar.

Dr Faiyaz A. Khudsar, Professor and Scientists in-charge, 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 now 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 lakes.

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 risk.

In the Concluding 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

Bhindawas of Haryana already got the status of the Ramsar site. Now the number of Ramsar sites in India has become the largest among South Asian countries.

Meanwhile, 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 stay.

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 the Pond Authority, next year, the work of 2500 ponds will be carried out. Thereby all the ponds of the State will be rejuvenated by removing the dirt from these ponds," he said.

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 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

The '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 2019. More than 60 per cent 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 with 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 45 percent and pedestrians 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 riders.

"Road crash fatalities 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.

Police nab woman for allegedly travelling on fake Oman visa

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

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

According to Sanjay Tyagi, 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.

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

that she procured the fake Oman visa from an agent 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 DCP.

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 woman agent Tabassum. Keethadth also disclosed the address of Tabassum in Bengaluru, but she was not found there, police said.

During further course of investigation, Tabassum 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 case is in progress.

L-G to chair virtual meet of DDMA on February 4

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal will chair a virtual meeting of Delhi Disaster Management 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 have been allowed to operate.

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 restaurants have been allowed to operate.

ately send a proposal in this regard to Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal.

"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 per cent capacity. Why is discrimination being done only with gyms and spas?" the BJP leader asked.

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

cinema halls to operate with 50 per cent capacity whereas gyms and schools in the city are still shut.

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 cases have come down significantly 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 infection.

Road rage: Three men booked for opening fire

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi 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 Delhi.

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 scooter and fired upon the public to escape from the spot, police

said.

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 danger.

A case of attempt to murder (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 Kalsi, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), North district.

"The country made pistol, a mobile phone and two two-wheelers 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, accidentally 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. 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.

Centre abolishes 2K posts of ACIO-II in IB cadre shake-up

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

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 ranks.

The decision was among

the reasons for an over 13 per cent increase to an outlay of Rs 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 was approved by the Department of Expenditure,

Union Finance Ministry on January 28 this year and the 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 under the relevant head of account for the current finan-

cial year 2021-22 and subsequent years.

"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

on Monday.

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

(DCIO) have been sanctioned to the existing strength of 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

been added in the rank of Security Assistant (Level-3 Pay 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

Director and Joint Director.

After the revision, the combined strength of the agency will stand at a little over 20,000 posts in different ranks as earlier.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major boost to the Ayush 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 value-added 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 establishment 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 added.

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

allotted Rs 1,870.1 crore. These 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 the sector.

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

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.

Ayush 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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/DEHRADUN

Uttar Pradesh general secretary in charge 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 annoyance over the way senior leaders of the party including



heavyweight Harish Rawat washed dirty lines in public.

"Priyanka has been active in politics and she has been accepted by the party workers as a good leader. She was instrumental in resolving the crisis in Rajasthan and Punjab 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 Priyanka is taking on bigger responsibilities by the time country gears up for 2024 General Elections.

Speed up vaccination coverage for teens: Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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 one month.



The vaccination drive for this age bracket was started nationwide from

January 3.

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 district level as well", the letter

said.

"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 dose vaccine on 3rd January have become eligible for the second dose from January 31", the letter read.

A tailored communication strategy focused on adoles-

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 the world", it said.

Saffron fragrance all set to waft up to North East

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Saffron fragrance is all set to sail 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 (NECTAR), an autonomous body under 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, Mawmsai, 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

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 said.

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

Saffron - a unique agricultural product and a cash crop is well known for its therapeutic value, aroma and taste value, and multipurpose usages. The best quality is grown in the Kashmir valley and in Kishtwar in Jammu region. Saffron is cultivated mainly in Pulwama, Srinagar and Budgam. Pampore, a township in Pulwama district with around 3,200 hectares of land under cultivation, produces the most saffron in the Valley.

Though the National Saffron Mission (NSM) was launched in 2010-11 with an aim to boost the income of the saffron growers, it was applicable only for the cultivation of saffron in Jammu and Kashmir. However, in 2020, the Modi Government decided to revive the mission and expand the cultivation of saffron to the north 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) with 51 candidates and 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 them.

"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, All 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 croropatists. There are 104 candidates having assets five crore and more and 87 candidates have assets between Rs two crore 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 than Rs 1 crore," the ADR report said.

SC collegium recommends elevation of 6 judicial officers as Delhi HC judges

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium, headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana, has recommended to the 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 recommended the names of Poonam A Bamba, Neena Bansal Krishna, Dinesh Kumar Sharma, Anoop Kumar Mendiratta, Swarana Kanta Sharma and Sudhir Kumar Jain.

There are three women judicial officers whose names have been recommended for judgeship of the Delhi High Court which is functioning with 30 judges as against the sanctioned

strength of 60 judges. The Supreme Court Collegium has also resolved to reiterate its earlier recommendation for elevation of five Judicial Officers as judges at different High Courts.

While names of two judicial officers -- 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 Court have been recommended.

The two Judicial Officers -- U S Joshi Phalke and B P Deshpande-- have been reiterated as judges of the 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 recom-

mendation for elevation of two advocates -- 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.

It has approved the proposal for elevation of five judicial officers and seven advocates as judges of the Telangana High Court. The judicial officers whose names have been proposed are -- G. Anupama Chakravarthy, M.G. Priyadarshini, Sambasivarao Naidu, A Santosh Reddy and D Nagarjun. The advocates whose names have been proposed include Kasoju Surendhar, Chada Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy, Surepalli Nanda, Mummneni Sudheer Kumar, Juvvadi Sridevi, Mirza Safiulla Baig and Natcharaju Shrvan Kumar Venkat.

Opp attacks Govt on rising prices, unemployment

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 transgressions.

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 hounded.

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. Tiruchi 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 spheres.

Not advisable to condemn every man as rapist: Irani

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

It is not advisable to view every 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, Irani said during the Question Hour replying to a question by Binoy Visamw(CPI).

He sought to know if the 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 rape.

"...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 Rajya Sabha disallows elaboration on a subject that is currently sub judice.

Sushil Modi(BJP) asked if the government was in favour of criminalising 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 elaborate.

"However, I would like to highlight to him for research purposes, it finds a reflection in



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 women in collaboration with 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 Code.

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.

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 Urban 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 to 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 137-year-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 terror attacks. However, he said the party would not be cowed down by such measures and will continue to stand by the people. 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 locations.” “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 affiliation,” he said. He accused officers

involved in providing security to the political activists of taking “unilateral and wrong” decisions purely on partisan bias. “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. **PTI**

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 horse. 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 governance ... 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 have blocked 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



West Bengal CM and TMC’s re-elected chairperson Mamata Banerjee interacts with party workers after the party’s organisational election in Kolkata on Wednesday **PTI**

constitutional duties,” the Governor said wondering whether a Chief Minister was constitutionally correct in not receiving a 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-ron outfit. 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 united 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 united 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

Amit Shah addressed the rally for Assembly seat of BJP candidate from Atrauli, Sandeep Singh, the grandson of former Chief Minister Kalyan Singh. 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 Gujarat, I had no idea what to do, I asked Babuji for time and had food with Babuji. Babu ji 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 2019. 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 in every house. 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

wave? 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 and 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 state. 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 Modi.

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

Modi addresses country’s working class through virtual mode

PNS ■ ALIGARH

In the virtual rally organized on Wednesday on the self-reliant 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. I 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 very well. 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-

nized in the Hathras Sadar, Sikandrau and Sadabad State constituencies of the district, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, without naming the Congress and other governments, said that the economy was dependent on other countries. Things have changed after 2014. We are trying to make the farmer like Annadatta, 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 entrepreneurs 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.

Mumbai court summons Bengal CM for insulting national anthem

Mamata has to appear before court on March 2

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A Mumbai court has summoned 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. Initially, Gupta filed a 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 complaint. 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. In his complaint, Gupta said that Banerjee’s act was ‘an 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 the Chief Minister of West Bengal, she was not discharging her official duties (during the event in Mumbai). Thereby, this act of the accused, though she is the chief minister of West Bengal, does not come under her official duty. Therefore, sanction is not required and there is no bar to proceed against the accused,” the Magistrate noted.



An artist prepares an idol of the goddess Saraswati ahead of the upcoming festival of Sarasvati Puja in his workshop in Guwahati on Wednesday **PTI**

Kerala snake catcher bitten by Cobra, in ICU

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The whole of Kerala is praying for the speedy recovery of Vava Suresh, the 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-



vate citizen following the citing 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

to the Medical College Hospital 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 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 reptiles. 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.

Rane’s son surrenders in attempt to murder case

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A day after a Sindhudurg District court rejected 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 seeking bail. 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 trial 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 (atempt 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 Sindhudurg district which is Rane’s 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 Gotta 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 anticipatory bail to Nitesh and another accused Sandesh alias Gotta 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 Gotta 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 Kankavali 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 investigations 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 investigation. 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 breaching in 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 Pune.

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.

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

New Delhi: Asserting that the Union Budget lays the foundation for the country's long-term 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

public sector enterprises) have 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 interview.

Stressing that the Budget 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 investment 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. And, in any case, Kumar 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 year after year, Kumar said the reason seems to be the

complicated process of privatisation. 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.

Asked why the middle class 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 taxable income level is rather misplaced, he said.

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

ation, we will never be able to 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," he said.

Observing that those who 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 stagflation.

BRIEFS

FIRM REPLIES ON DIRECTORS' EXIT

New Delhi: The exodus of independent directors at PTC India Financial 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 PSUs.

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 (CEA) products and services through its network of more than 4 lakh Village Level Entrepreneurs across the country.

Elaborating on this partnership, 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 stimulates consumption demand has a very limited

multiplier effect, whereas capital investment has a much larger, very strong multiplier effect, which lasts more than one year.

"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 interview.

In view of the hardship caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the government provided direct support to people through various schemes like Jan Dhan, PM 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 there."

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

Sensex surges over 400 pts in early trade; Nifty breaches 17,650-level

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

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 two-wheeler 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 passenger 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 equipment manufacturers (OEMs), ICRA said in a statement.

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.

The low year-on-year two-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 premium motorcycles also persisted, he said, the reinstatement of localised restrictions, to contain the third wave of pandemic, constrained retail sales and led to an 11 per cent sequential (14 per cent year-on-year) fall in volumes, to 10.2 lakh units.

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.

In contrast to the domestic sales environment, steady 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.

Gupta also noted that the domestic electric two-wheeler sales continued to have a dream-run in the April-January period of FY2022, posting a 5 times year-on-year growth at 1.49 lakh unit sales.

In January 2022, the high-speed e-two-wheelers saw an 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.

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 its last stage.

"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

investment is being planned 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, it is up to the industry and entrepreneurs to take up the challenge and take India 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.

the stake sale is being planned in the current March quarter.

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PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform general public that Ms. Sangeeta Arora Wife Late Mr. Ravinder Kumar Arora (25% undivided share), Mr. Rajender Kumar Khurana S/o Mr. Rani Datta 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) have acquired Property No. A1 13, 2nd Floor, Krishan Nagar, Delhi, New Delhi, DELHI 110051 vide Relinquishment Deed dated 04.08.2022 and Sale Deed dated 10.10.2018 and Now, Ms. Sangeeta Arora Wife Late Mr. Ravinder Kumar Arora (25% undivided share), Mr. Rajender Kumar Khurana S/o Mr. Rani Datta 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) are intending to sell the above said property/Floor to Mr. Kush Aggarwal & Mr. Satish Aggarwal vide Sale Deed. Further Mr. Kush Aggarwal & Mr. Satish Aggarwal are mortgaging the above said property/floors with PNB Housing Finance Ltd. & in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 07 days of this publication to Mr. Muneesh Dhanwan/ Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Veritas, Unit no 907, 5th Floor, GD-II Tower, (B-08), Netaji Subhash Place Delhi-110034 or contact at 906670172/9618226836 (M).

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Mr. Prashant i.e. (Mrs. Lalita W/o Mr. Ramesh Chandwani is purchasing) the PLOT AREA MEASURING 40 SQ. YRDS. OUT OF KHEWAT NO. 03/03, KHATOONI NO. 05, MUS. NO. 561, KILLA NO. 1218-91 SITUATED IN VILLAGE AGWANPUR, TEHSIL & DISTT. 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 any type of claim/right/title/interest over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned 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.

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

Public Notice

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

The society hereby invites claims or 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 received during this period the society shall be free to issue duplicate share certificate.

Date : 26/01/22 For & Behalf of
Jai Diba Maa CGHS Ltd. (H. Secretary)

Place - New Delhi

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that I, Veena Khosla W/o Late Sh. Vijay Kumar Khosla R/o DDA LIC Flat No.35-A, Ground Floor, Pocket-A, Sidhartha Extension, New Delhi purchaser of DDA LIC 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 personally inform or write to Deputy Director (LAB) Housing or Director (H) Block-D, Third Floor, DDA, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi-110023

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. Kalash Bhalla, R/o 1-B/13A, Ashok Vihar, Phase-I, 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. Saroj Bala Thakral W/o Sh. Surendra Thakral (D/o Sh. Remal Das), R/o U-8/10, Phase-II, 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 THAKRAL

OK PLAY INDIA LIMITED

CIN No: L28219HR1988PLC030347
Regd. Office: 17-18, Roz-Ka-Meo Industrial Estate, Tensli Nuh, District Meowat, Haryana - 122103
Website: www.okplay.in Email: info@okplay.in
Tel: +91 124 2362335-36 Fax: +91 124 2362326

Notice

Pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47of the SEBI (Listing Obligation and 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) Financial Results of the Company for the quarter ended 31st December, 2021.

For OK PLAY INDIA LIMITED
Sd/-
Date : 02.02.2022 Rajan Handa
Place : New Delhi Managing Director

SEARCH FOR MISSING GIRL

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, Build: Medium, Wearing: Brown Colour Top, Pink Colour Skirt, Blue Colour Jeans and Slippers in Feet** has been missing since 20.01.2022 from the area of P.S. Karawal Nagar, Delhi.

In this regard a DD No. 37-A, dated 23.01.2022 has been lodged at P.S. Karawal Nagar, Delhi.

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this girl but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information or clue about this girl kindly inform to the following.

SHO
E-Mail: cic@cbl.gov.in
Website: <http://cbl.nic.in>
P.S. Karawal Nagar Delhi
Fax: 011-24368639 Ph. 011-22137761, 8750870730
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 DP/1329/NE/2022

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

Danapur, Dated: 31.01.2022
No. DNR/S&T/Tele/2022/4

Divisional Railway Manager (Signal & Telecom), East Central Railway, Danapur Division, for and on behalf of President of India invites tenders on web portal www.iireps.gov.in for the following work:

1. Name of work with its location: Provision of Replacement of over aged Telephone Exchange at PNBE and Upgradation to IP based Telephone Exchange at BXR, ARA, BKP, MKA, JAJ & KEU under Danapur division.

2. Approximate cost of work: Rs. 86,60,238.38/- 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.iireps.gov.in 7. Address of the office from where detail information can be obtained: Sr. Divnl. Signal & Telecommunication Engineer, East Central Railway, Danapur

Note: Any corrigendum if required will be uploaded on above website before 14 days.

Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer
East Central Railway/Danapur
PR01604/DNR/S&T/21-2236

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

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

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number) & Address	Property Address/ Secured Asset/ Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Sunny Malik/ Prerna Mishra- C 605 Kumar 1 Life Apts Devarabisanahalli Bangalore Bangalore- 560103/ LBBNG00002390407	(As described in the Loan document/ property document covering Anjara 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 situated in Gautam Bodh Nagar Sector 118 Noida	15.11.2021 Rs. 45,09,685.00/-	04.08.2021

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 Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002.

Date : February 03, 2022
Place: Noida

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON

See Section 82 Cr.P.C.

Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Mohd. Faizan @ Bhura S/o** Shamim Ahmad R/o H.No. 12-A/156, Gali No. 13, Near Shahdviya Masjid, Majupur, 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 required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **25.04.2022**.

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

DP/1315/NE/22



EXCELLENCE IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR NTPC

NTPC Limited, the largest 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 award on January 31 in an online ceremony 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

India's largest integrated energy producer, NTPC 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

trust culture.

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 stakeholders.

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 employees.

NTPC is always looking to improve its HR practices and policies so that employee engagement levels in the company are consistently high. NTPC regularly participates in Best Employer Surveys and Benchmarking Exercises (like the CII National HR Excellence Award) to assess itself, and the participation in such exercises has revealed that people practices at NTPC are at par with the best companies in India.

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

any organisation. Further, NTPC is the only PSU to have received this prestigious award by CII.

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 Institute and it was the only PSU to consistently feature in India's Top 50 Best Workplaces.

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 platforms, washable aprons, provision of the second entry, foot overbridges, escalators, lifts for Divyangians, improvement of station building including façade etc. He also reviewed the progress of mobility enhancement and other developmental infrastructure works and Freight loading.

He instructed for maintaining the

punctuality of trains and expediting the works related to mobility enhancement 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 tracks.

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 tracks.

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 performance 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 suggestions.

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 people-centric.

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

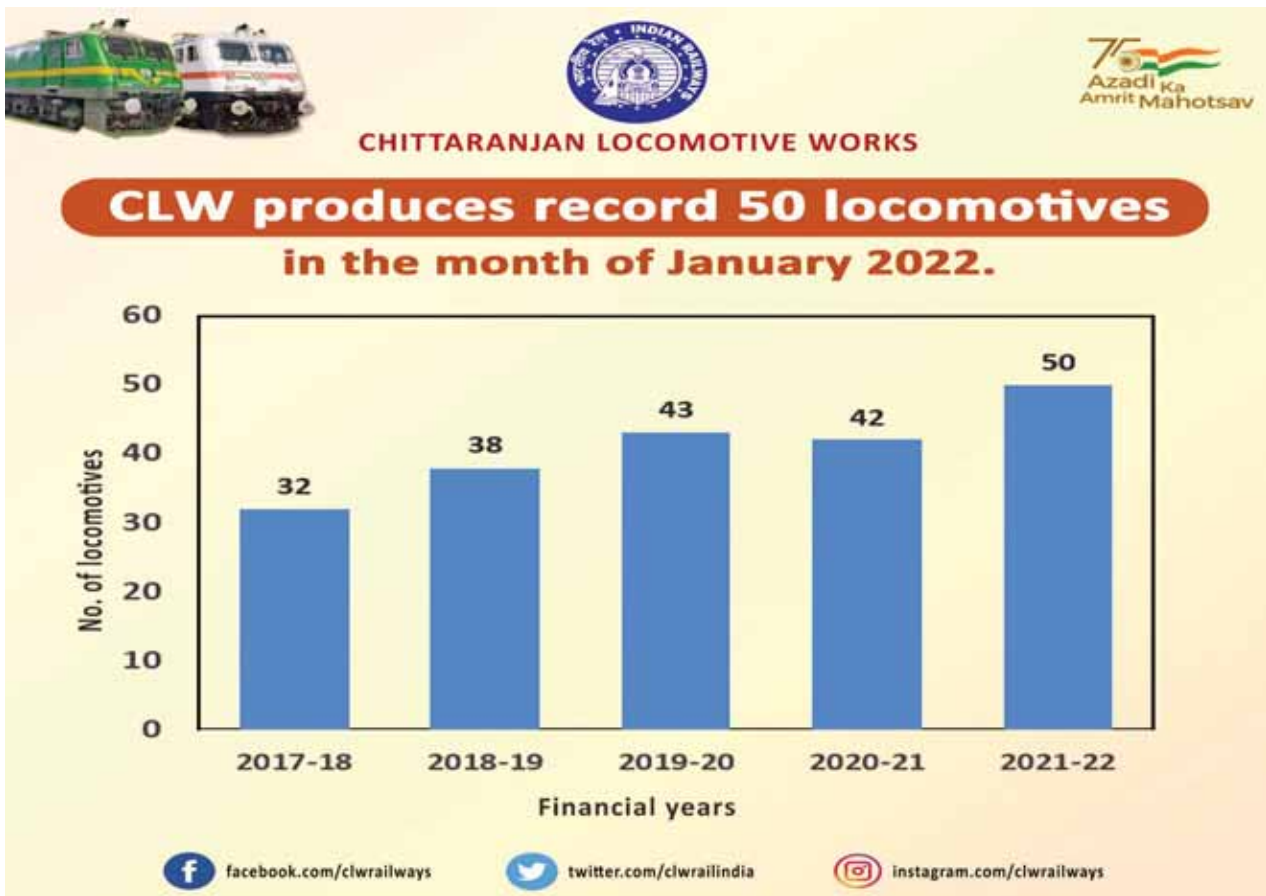
GAIL (India) Limited has commenced India's first-of-its-kind project of mixing hydrogen into the natural gas system at Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The hydrogen blended natural gas will be supplied to Avantika Gas Limited, one of GAIL's Joint Venture (JV) companies with HPCL, operating in Indore.

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.

GAIL started injection of grey hydrogen 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.



CLW turns out record 50 locos in January

Chittaranjan Locomotive Works once again proved its capacity and commitment towards the production of locomotives for the Indian Railway. CLW has scripted another page

of history by turning out record 50 locos in only 24 working days in the month of January of FY 21-22. This is the best production figure in the month of January in any FY. This noteworthy 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.

Shri Satish Kumar Kashyup congratulated the entire team of CLW for the record output and appreciated their dedicated efforts in loco production.

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 cent.

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, co-chair, 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

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

Fancied 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 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 and chose to bat.

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 quarter-final tie with 88 against South Africa last week, was trapped LBW by Naveed Zadran, an early sign that England faced a difficult task.

Skipper Tom Prest then joined vice-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 their innings.

The duo attacked the Afghanistan seamers fiercely which managed to lift the final total to 231.

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

Josh Boyden claimed his wicket with just 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 Afghanistan'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 after some wonderful fielding led to a run-out 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 U-19 World Cup final since 1998 in South Africa, when they lifted the trophy.

WI arrive for limited over series against India

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

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 India.

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 In Maroon have arrived in India!" posted Windies Cricket, the official Twitter account of Cricket West Indies, on Wednesday morning. "WI arrive safely in Ahmedabad! 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 Caribbean.



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 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 associated said Lakmal

Blow for SA as rising star Keegan Petersen ruled out of NZ tour with COVID



PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

Keegan Petersen, the hero of South Africa's Khome 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 Hamza.

Cricket South Africa (CSA) said in a statement that Peterson was doing "well" and is "asymptomatic".

"Cricket South Africa's medical team will keep in close contact with him to ensure his physical and mental well-being," the statement read.

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 average of 46.00.

He was the only player to score three half-centuries in the series, registering scores of 72, 82 and 62, while also impressing with his fielding skills.

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 series.

South Africa are scheduled to play two Tests in New Zealand, starting February 17.

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 his rehabilitation from an elbow injury.

The New Zealand squad for the two Tests is expected to be named later this week.



New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell wins ICC's 'Spirit of Cricket' award

PTI ■ DUBAI

New 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 high-pressure World Cup semi-final against England in Abu Dhabi on November 10 last year.

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 game."

It paid off in the long run that we won the game. Looking back, it all happened pretty quickly."

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 strike.

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 at stake.

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-striker 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."

Need players who can adapt to all conditions: KKR bowling coach Arun

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders newly appointed 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.

"Having watched most of the top



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 last edition, have retained the West Indies all-rounders Andre Russell (Rs

12 crore) and Sunil Narine (Rs 6 crore) along with Indian duo of Venkatesh Iyer (Rs 8 crore) and Varun Chakravarthy (Rs 8 crore).

KKR are now left with a purse of Rs 48 crores for the mega auction which will see 590 players go under hammer in the two-day auction in Bengaluru on February 12 and 13.

He further said they may see a shift in the IPL auction with so many premium fast bowlers out there for grabs.

"I sincerely think so, because even though a lot of people think cricket is inclined towards the batsman, I would look at it differently."

"I would say that therein lies an 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 added.

CSA disciplinary hearing on Mark Boucher postponed

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

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 been postponed until May.

This was announced by the chairperson 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 according 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."

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 him.

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."



"It was only a short tour, only a few T20s so it made no sense."

Now in his fifth season at the PSL, including two seasons disrupted by the pandemic, Hales has more experience of playing in Pakistan than most English cricketers. "I've been here four or

five times now and get looked after really well," Hales said.

"Every time we come here, the people are very hospitable and cricket is always really good. The fans here are crazy for it. So, it's a great place to come and play cricket, I absolutely feel safe."

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 year.

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 the world.

NEERAJ CHOPRA NOMINATED FOR LAUREUS WORLD BREAKTHROUGH

PTI ■ LONDON

Olympic 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 category.

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 alongside 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' in 2020.

The moment in consideration was Tendulkar's teammates lifting him on their shoulders after India won the 2011 ODI World Cup at home.

A panel of more than 1,300



sports journalists and broadcasters of the world have selected the nominees in each of the seven categories for this year's Laureus World Sports Awards.

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, 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

Tom Brady, Bayern Munich's prolific 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-to-back marathon gold medals.

Several top-notch Olympic performances dominate the Laureus World Sportswoman of the Year category.

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 medals.

Revised fixtures for remainder of ISL season unveiled



PTI ■ MARGAO

The Indian Super League 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 P.J.N Stadium here on March 7, according to the revised fixture drawn by the league organisers

Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL).

"Football Sports 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 matches.v

Nagal dropped, Yuki returns for Davis Cup tie against Denmark

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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 AITA 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

PTI ■ MARGAO

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 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 hand.

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 contenders.

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 ball.

"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 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 full-backs and defenders will have their task cut out.

Barcelona president says Dembélé rejected 2 offers to leave

AP ■ MADRID

Barcelona 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 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 Relay.

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 Games.

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea qualified for a 10th successive World Cup after beating Syria 2-0 in Dubai.

Second-half goals from Kim 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 qualify for the 32-team field, moved 11 points clear of third-place United Arab Emirates with two games remaining.

Iran, which has already qualified, 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-offs.

In Group B, a first-half goal from Takumi Minamino set Japan 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

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 group.

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.

The Socceroos took an early lead through Jamie Maclaren's penalty but Abdullah Fawaz equalized for the host soon after the restart.

While Aaron Mooy restored Australia's lead with 13 minutes



remaining, Fawaz earned Oman a point with a spot kick after 89 minutes.

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 time.

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 Venezuela away.

"This is not over, we want to go at it until the end," Colombia coach Reinaldo Rueda said in a news conference.

"Maybe we need more clarity in the midfield and also in our finishing."

"We miss that energy."

South America has four direct spots in the World Cup. The fifth position will play an international playoff against an Asian team for a berth.

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 players 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 Martins.

"This was a reward to our efforts, but it doesn't finish here," Chile striker Sánchez said.

WORLD CUP UPDATES

South Korea qualifies for World Cup; costly draw for Aussies