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NEW DELHI, FRIDAY FEBRUARY 4, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



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China lost 42 soldiers, not 4, in Galwan

China had nine times more casualties than it acknowledged, says Australian newspaper

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

China lost more than 40 soldiers in the bloody brawl with the Indian troops in the Galwan valley, Ladakh in June 2020. This figure highlighted by an Australian newspaper is many times more than the official Chinese admission of their casualties.

The clash on June 15 was the bloodiest in the last 40 years or so. Twenty Indian personnel, including the commanding officer, were killed. Intelligence reports from the ground indicated that nearly 50 Chinese also died, but Beijing all along refrained from making public the number of casualties. Some months back, it said four of its soldiers died in the clash.

A report by a group of social media researchers quoted by the Australian newspaper "The Klaxon" said China lost 42 soldiers in the June 2020 Galwan Valley clash, at least nine times more than the four it has acknowledged.

At least 38 soldiers alone were killed while attempting to cross the fast-flowing Galwan River in the early stages of the June 15-16 clash, says the report prepared after a year-long investigation. The soldiers were crossing the river in sub-zero temperatures and in



darkness.

Of the four soldiers China confirmed had died, only one - Junior Sergeant Wang Zhuoran - reportedly drowned, the investigative newspaper said, citing the report titled "Galwan Decoded".

The report cited "several Weibo users" and said, "At least 38 PLA (People's Liberation Army) troops along with Wang were washed away and drowned that night...of which only Wang was declared among the four officially dead soldiers".

"Comrades in arms kept slipping and being rushed downstream," the report said, adding, "After the incident, the bodies of the soldiers were first taken to Shiquanhe Martyr Cemetery, followed by local ceremonies at the local towns of the killed soldiers".

It quoted a Weibo user (Qiang) as claiming to have served in the area. The user claimed that the Chinese army was creating infrastructure in the buffer zone, violating the mutual agreement and had

been trying to expand its patrolling limits within the buffer zone since April 2020.

"PLA did not adhere to its promise...and instead of dismantling its own infrastructure as agreed upon, secretly dismantled the river crossing bridge constructed by the Indian army," said the report.

Beijing went to "extreme lengths to silence discussion about the battle" and in particular, any "discussion about the true number of Chinese casualties".

The Klaxon cites the report as saying a division of the Xinjiang Military Region "organized officers and soldiers to go to the Shiquanhe Martyr Cemetery to lay flowers to the revolutionary martyrs, organize party members to take an oath and sweep the tombs for heroes".

The investigation involved "discussions with mainland Chinese bloggers, information obtained from mainland-based Chinese citizens and media reports that have since been deleted by Chinese authorities".

India to skip Olympic ceremonies as China honours Galwan attacker

Galwan clash PLA officer appointed games torchbearer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking strong exception to China's decision to honour its army officer involved in the Galwan valley clash with India in 2020, India on Thursday decided not to send its diplomats for the opening and closing ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Beijing. The Chinese officer has been appointed as the torchbearer for the forthcoming event.

Identified as Qi Fabao, the officer was reportedly injured and captured by the Indian forces during the clash in which 20 Indian personnel, including the commanding officer, were killed on June 15, 2020. The Chinese officer was captured when he tried to mount an attack along with his troops on the Indian forces in the Galwan Valley. His photograph carrying the Olympic torch was put up by the State-owned media *The Global Times*.

Reacting to the development, External Affairs Ministry



Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi described the Chinese action of honouring the commander as "regrettable".

India's chargé d'affaires in the Beijing embassy will not be attending the opening or closing ceremony of the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, he said. However, India will participate in the Games with a lone athlete.

Some other countries, including the US, too have decided not to send their envoys for the Games. Their sports persons, however, will represent their countries in the mega event.

Meanwhile, India has decided not to broadcast the opening and closing ceremonies of the Winter Olympics

being held in Beijing. Prasara Bharati CEO Shashi Shekhar Vempati said on Thursday DD Sports channel will not telecast live the opening and closing ceremonies of the Winter Olympics being held in Beijing. The opening ceremony will be held on February 4 (Friday), and the closing ceremony on February 20.

The announcement came shortly after the Indian Government decided that its envoy will not attend the opening or closing ceremony of the 2022 Winter Olympics as China has chosen a military commander involved in the Galwan Valley clashes as its torchbearer for the mega sporting event.

Continued on Page 2

Schools can open in dists with less than 5% +vity

Centre leaves it to State Govts to take final call

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of growing demand from various stakeholders and educationists, the Centre on Thursday said districts having less than five per cent Covid positivity rate can move in the direction of reopening schools. But it is up to the State Governments to take a call in this regard.

The Education Ministry said schools are though fully open in eleven States, partially opened mainly for higher classes in 16 States and continue to remain closed in nine States.

Noting that the pandemic situation has improved and there has been a consistent decline in new Covid-19 cases, Niti Ayog Member (Health) V K Paul said, "We have more confidence now to go in the direction of reopening schools".

Noting that the nation is concerned that there has been a significant learning loss, Paul said schools should be open at the "earliest opportunity but also appropriate time".



Many international organisations, including the WHO and the UNICEF, advised it is not good to keep the schools closed for so long as it is hampering the secondary education system, he said.

The Union Health Ministry, the Education Ministry, and other stakeholders held several discussions in this regard last week. Sources said they are framing a model for staggered opening of schools for physical classes following all Covid-19 related protocols.

The decision regarding the reopening of the schools for Delhi is likely to be taken by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on Friday. Schools in the city were briefly reopened before being closed again on December 28 last year in view of the third wave of Covid-19 driven by the Omicron variant.

Continued on Page 2

Contraction in spread of Covid, says Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Thursday, for the first time, said the pandemic situation has improved and there is a contraction in the spread of Covid infection.

The peak of the third Covid-19 wave driven by the highly transmissible coronavirus variant Omicron is slightly lower than that of the second wave which proved deadly to many.

Daily Covid cases crossed four lakh when India reached the second wave's peak, Health Ministry's Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal told reporters here. In contrast, the country on Thursday reported 1.72 lakh fresh cases, half the cases recorded on January 21, which was the peak, according to the Government. Cases have been falling since then.

"We are seeing a decline in (Covid) cases. We don't want to use words like wave and peak.



A woman walks past a graffiti painted on a wall to create awareness about coronavirus disease in Mumbai on Thursday

AP

There are still some areas where cases are increasing. Covid management strategies still need to be implemented because overall we are still seeing a high number of cases," Agarwal said, on whether the third wave peak has been reached.

He said a decline in the Covid fatality rate has been noted with an increase in the vaccine doses. Daily Covid cases in the two weeks between

January 21 and February 3 have fallen by 50 per cent from 3,47,254 to 1,72,433.

During the same period, the positivity rate or the number of infections per 100 tests fell by 39 per cent from 17.94 per cent to 10.99 per cent, which shows a clear decline in daily positivity rate indicating the decreased spread of Covid infection.

Continued on Page 2

Only 2 submitted phones: Pegasus panel extends date

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court-appointed Pegasus probe panel on Thursday said only two persons have submitted mobile phones and decided to extend the submission date up to February 8. In an advertisement, the panel said persons can sit along with the technical committee while copying the phone. This is the second advertisement by the Justice RV Raveendran committee.

"In response to it, only two persons have produced their mobile instruments for taking digital images. Therefore, the Technical Committee once again requests those who have reasonable cause to believe their mobile instrument is infected with Pegasus spyware to come forward and contact the Technical Committee with reasons as to why they believe that their mobile instrument may have been infected with Pegasus malware, on or before February 8, 2022, by an email to inquiry@pegasus-india-investigation.in," it said.

Continued on Page 2

HC stays order of 75% quota in pvt sector jobs for locals in Haryana

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Punjab & Haryana High Court on Thursday granted an interim stay on a Haryana Government's law providing 75 per cent reservation in private sector jobs for residents of the State. A bench of Justices Ajay Tewari and Pankaj Jain passed the order on a petition filed by an industries association from Faridabad and other associations from Haryana.

Haryana's Additional Advocate General Jagbir Singh Malik said the State will be filing a Special Leave Petition (SLP) against the order before the Supreme Court.

The interim order has come as a relief for companies in the State which feel that the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act, 2020

would have a bearing on their future business operations and investment. The Act provides 75 per cent reservation in the private sector to job seekers from the state and came into force from January 15.

It applies to jobs offering a maximum gross monthly salary or wages of ₹30,000. Providing 75 per cent reservation in private sector jobs for State domicile in the private sector was a key poll promise of the Jannayak Janta Party at the time of 2019 assembly polls. After the polls, it formed a Government in alliance with the BJP after the saffron party fell short of attaining a simple majority on its own.

After the high court granted interim stay, Deputy Chief Minister and JJP leader Dushyant Chautala tweeted,

Continued on Page 2

SKM urges farmers to punish BJP in UP polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), a joint platform of protesting farmers' unions, on Thursday appealed to farmers in Uttar Pradesh to "punish" the BJP in the upcoming Assembly elections for betraying the farmers by not fulfilling their demands.

The SKM will distribute pamphlets to farmers/voters and will also hold rallies and mahapanchayat in nine cities including Meerut, Kanpur and Gorakhpur, in the run-up to the Assembly polls in UP, not to vote for the BJP. They will also use social media to spread their appeal. The farmers' leaders did the same thing during the West Bengal Assembly polls and campaigned against the BJP last year.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

SIDHU ROAD RAGE: SC HEARING ON FEB 25

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday said it would consider on February 25 the plea seeking review of the sentence awarded by it to cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu in an over 32-year-old road rage case.

TN GUV RETURNS BILL ON NEET EXEMPTION

Chennai: Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi has returned to the State Government, an Assembly bill seeking exemption to the State from the NEET, saying it went against the interests of rural and poor students.

PUNISH DHARMA SANSAD HATE SPEAKERS: RSS

New Delhi: Senior RSS leader Indresh Kumar has condemned the alleged hate speeches against minorities at a recent Dharma Sansad in Haridwar and said all those who make provocative and divisive remarks should be punished as per law without any exception.

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Scindia objects to Tharoor's remark over reply in Hindi

New Delhi: Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Thursday took issue with Congress leader Shashi Tharoor's remarks on giving replies in Hindi in Lok Sabha.

While responding to supplementary questions asked by members from Tamil Nadu in English, Scindia replied in Hindi.

Soon after, Tharoor, who is a member from Kerala, commented that it was an "apman (insult)" that the Minister was responding in Hindi.

The Minister speaks English and let him reply in English, Tharoor said.

"Zara jawab Hindi mein mat dijiye... Ye apman hai logon ka (Please don't give replies in Hindi... It is an insult to people)," Tharoor said during Question Hour.

A visibly peeved Scindia said it was strange for the member to make such a comment. "Mein Hindi bole to eithraaz ho raha hai (If I speak in Hindi, (the member) has objection)," he said, adding that there was also a translator in the House.

Immediately after Tharoor made the remarks, Speaker Om Birla said, "Ye apman nahi hain (this is not an insult)." *PTI*

EC announces biennial polls for 36 UP Council seats

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Election Commission of India (ECI) will issue notification for the first phase of biennial election to the Uttar Pradesh Legislative Council on Friday. The ECI will hold elections for 36 seats from 35 local authorities' constituencies on March 3 and 7.

The present tenure of the members of these 36 seats of the Legislative Council would be expiring on March 7.

Members of gram panchayat and other local bodies, MLAs, MLCs and MPs would vote in the council polls.

The notification for phase one of the biennial polls for 30 seats would be issued on Friday. The last date for filing of nominations will be February 11,

scrutiny of papers will be done on February 14 and the last date for withdrawal of papers will be February 16. The polling for the first phase will be held on March 3. The notification for the second phase of polls for six seats would be issued on February 10.

The counting of votes for both phases will be taken up on March 12. At present all 36 seats have Samajwadi Party representatives.

The seats for which polling will be held in the first phase are Moradabad-Bijnor local authorities, Rampur-Bareilly local authorities, Budaun local authorities, Pilibhit-Shahjahanpur local authorities, Hardoi local authorities, Kheri local authorities, Sitapur local authorities, Lucknow-Unnao local authorities, Rae Bareilly local

authorities, Prataragarh local authorities, Sultanpur local authorities, Barabanki local authorities, Bahraich local authorities, Azamgarh-Mau local authorities, Ghazipur local authorities, Jaunpur local authorities, Varanasi local authorities, Mirzapur-Sonbhadra local authorities, Allahabad local authorities, Banda-Hamirpur local authorities, Jhansi-Jalaun-Lalitpur local authorities, Kanpur-Fatehpur local authorities, Etawah-Farrukhabad local authorities, Agra-Firozabad local authorities, Mathura-Etah-Mainpuri local authorities (two seats), Aligarh local authorities, Bulandshahr local authorities, Meerut-Ghaziabad local authorities and Muzaffarnagar-Saharanpur local authorities.

Yogi to file nomination papers today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will file his nomination papers as a Bharatiya Janata Party candidate from the Gorakhpur Sadar Assembly constituency on Friday.

During the nomination, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Union Minister and party's UP election in-charge Dharmendra Pradhan, and BJP state President Swatantra Dev Singh would also be present.

Later the leaders will also address the nomination meeting. This is for the first time that Yogi Adityanath will contest the assembly election.

Party sources here said on Thursday that Yogi would address a BJP workers' conference in Maharana Pratap Inter College in which 1,000 elected representatives of different sections of the city would attend the public meeting. People from various social organisations, educationists, doctors, social workers, entrepreneurs, businessmen and advocates are likely to attend the meeting.

Auto driver dies after cops beat him up in Agra

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Police brutality yet again resulted in the death of an auto driver in Agra, after the victim was brutally beaten up by cops.

Later, the erring police personnel pressured the deceased's family for an early cremation to hush up the matter. On their part, the local officers denied the charges and claimed it to be a natural death.

As per reports, relatives of a 36-year-old auto driver Bhagwan Das Rathore charged that the victim was nabbed by the police and later brutally assaulted as a result of which fell unconscious. The victim was later admitted to a hospital only to be pronounced 'brought dead' by the doctors.

The victim's family said that Bhagwan Das had bruises all over his body, which was a clear indicator that he was beaten up by the policemen.

His wife Anita said, "When we tried to bring the body home, we were also beaten up. The police forcibly performed the last rites of my husband on Wednesday. He was murdered. We want justice."

Superintendent of Police (City) in Agra, Vikas Kumar, said, "The police team was on patrol in Sanjay Market area, when some people were found gambling there. One of them, Bhagwan Das Rathore, fainted while trying to escape and was taken to the hospital. On reaching the hospital, the doctors pronounced him dead. The post-mortem report did not reveal the cause of death. The doctors have preserved the viscera for further examination. The allegation of death by beating is false."

Earlier in October 2021, Dalit safai karmachari Arun Valmiki had died after being beaten up in police custody in the presence of a senior police officer, after being detained on charges of theft in the police station strong room. Police had claimed that he died of a heart attack, but the incident sparked outrage in the area and a case was registered. Congress general secretary, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also met the family members and provided them financial help.

Ambedkarites should join SP to oust BJP: Akhilesh

Bulandshahr: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday said followers of Dalit icon Dr Bhim Rao Ambedkar should join the party's effort to oust the BJP from power so that democracy could be saved and people's right protected.

Yadav said this during a joint press conference with Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) president Jayant Chaudhary when asked about BSP leader Mayawati, whose party had contested the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in alliance with the Samajwadi Party (SP).

"Ambedkarwadi (followers of Ambedkar) should come with 'samajwadis' (socialists) as we have to save the Constitution and democracy. If these are not saved, just think what will

happen to our rights," Yadav said.

Yadav said his outfit has support of different parties representing varied sections of society.

"We are multi-coloured people. We have red, green, white and blue—all with us," he said seeking the support of followers of the Dalit icon when asked about the BSP going solo this time.

Yadav also mocked Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who in a recent statement said he will "cool down" those hotting up passions after March 10, the date when results of the state Assembly polls will be declared.

"He is our CM and not any compressor that he will cool us down," Yadav said,



adding that the chief minister didn't know what he was saying.

Yadav said if his party forms the government in the state, there will be no "garmi" (tension) but "bharti" (appointment) as the youth will be given jobs.

"Every youth will defeat the BJP this time as they took away their jobs," he said.

Yadav said Adityanath should "take care of himself" as he is not going to be the chief minister again.

Rashtriya Lok Dal chief Jayant Chaudhary alleged

that those in power are "trying to destroy" the unity between both parties.

"A large number of people are joining our caravan. This has increased the anger of the BJP people. The chief minister is using such language which has never been heard before from any person occupying that position," he said.

"It seems Yogi did not understand the mood of western UP. The more he threatens us, the more organised and powerful we will be," he said.

Yadav also criticised the General Budget presented by the Union government in Parliament, saying "I have heard that diamonds will become cheaper. See how much the government has taken care of the poor." *PTI*

Only 2 submitted phones: Pegasus panel extends...

From Page 1

The Pioneer journalist J Gopikrishnan had already submitted a mobile phone to the panel on January 12. Another person who submitted the phone to the panel is Rupesh Kumar Singh, a tribal activist from Jharkhand. He was also a petitioner to the apex court seeking a probe in the Pegasus controversy.

"When an instrument is produced, a digital image will be taken in the presence of the person producing the instrument and immediately thereafter, the instrument will be returned to the person producing it. A digital image copy will also be furnished to the person producing the mobile instrument," said the panel.

Justice Ravendran headed the Pegasus probe panel consisting of Advisers former RAW chief Alok Joshi and technocrat Sundeep Oberoi. The Technical Committee consists of Professors Naveen Kumar Chaudhary, Prabakaran, and Ashwin Gumaste. The Technical Committee has opened an office at the IIT Delhi campus for receiving mobile phones and digital copying.

Cong forms alliance with TDP to fight civic polls in Andaman & Nicobar

Port Blair: The Andaman and Nicobar Islands Congress unit has formed an alliance with the Telugu Desam Party for the municipal and panchayat polls in the union territory.

The Andaman and Nicobar Territorial Congress Committee (ANTCC) president Rangalal Halder and Telugu Desam Party local unit president Manikya Rao Yadav held a meeting at Gandhi Bhawan here on Wednesday and decided to form an alliance.

It has been agreed that TDP will contest from Ward number 2, 5 and 16 of Port Blair Municipal Council (PBMC) election.

"In the interest of development and seeking a democratic rule in A&N Islands, we have formed an alliance comprising Congress and TDP. We will strive for victory and I am confident that this alliance will help Congress in winning PBMC and panchayat election," Halder said. The panchayat and municipal polls in the union territory will be held on March 6.

SKM urges farmers to punish BJP in UP...

From Page 1

The morcha has claimed to have the support of 57 farmers' unions and also clarified that they have nothing to do with seeking votes for any party in the ongoing elections. The SKM declared that if the Government reneged on its written assurance and promises to protesting farmers, "farmers would be left with no option but to resume their agitation."

"The SKM has issued an appeal to farmers in UP to punish the BJP in the upcoming elections for betraying the farmers. The Government has not fulfilled its promises. No committee has been formed yet for Minimum Support Price and neither the cases against farmers have been withdrawn," Swaraj India president Yogendra Yadav said at a Press conference.

The Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait said, "Will give a form to the voters in which there will be many questions, all those seeking votes will answer yes or no in it. In Uttarakhnad also, these pamphlets will be distributed to the people in which we have questions. The answer will be taken from everyone who has come to ask for votes. Based on these answers, the voter himself will decide whom to vote for?" Rakesh has also issued a statement on Twitter. Its headline is, "Punish anti-farmer BJP in this election."

"We will ask voters in UP and Uttarakhnad not to vote for the anti-farmer BJP in the upcoming Assembly elections. We'll not ask whom to vote for. We'll not share stage/platform with any political party," Yadav said.

Schools can open in dists...

From Page 1

A delegation of parents led by Chandrakant Lahariya, an epidemiologist and public policy specialist, had earlier met Delhi Education Minister Manish Sisodia and submitted a memorandum signed by over 1,600 parents demanding that schools be reopened.

"The DDMA, in its meeting on Friday, is likely to discuss lifting of the night curfew, along with other relaxations, including reopening of schools, gyms and spas," Delhi Government sources said.

Sweetie Changan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education, said after taking into account the extensive vaccination coverage, the Ministry had issued revised guidelines to the States in December last year and the decision to ask for parents' consent was left with the States. According to the new advisory, schools may celebrate events and hold gatherings according to SOPs issued by the State. States and UTs have also been advised to evolve SOPs for safe conduct

for group activities and events on the school premises.

Schools continue to remain completely closed in nine States, officials said, adding that all the States have vaccinated at least 95 per cent of the teaching and non-teaching staff, while few States have achieved 100 per cent vaccination coverage for them.

"The pandemic situation has improved. There are States and districts of concern, but overall there is a contraction in the spread of infection which is heartening. There are 268 districts where the positivity is below 5 per cent. And clearly, these districts can move in the direction of non-Covid care and also in the direction of other economic activities as well as school reopening," Paul said at a Press conference.

"The decision for reopening schools rests with the State Governments, the district administrations. But the broad issue is that we would still like to ensure that schools are opened and schools are run, according to protocols, standard operating procedures because we are still in the midst of the pandemic. By implementing SOPs, we can ensure the safe conduct of schools, make physical learning possible, school activities, which lead to interaction development, possible. Teachers can feel safe because now in any case, as they are

vaccine protected. So following the SOPs is the essence of the guidelines that the Union Government has been issuing. And we believe these guidelines are adapted, these are considered directly by the State Governments and decisions are taken for opening the schools," he added.

Further, the revised guidelines issued by the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education, suggested preparing bridge courses and implementing them in classrooms.

"Once school reopens, the grade-related syllabus should be undertaken only after the bridge course is completed, so that students can adjust to the changed school environment and do not feel the stress or being left out, especially students who did not have access to alternate means of education," the guidelines had said.

"In the modified guidelines, the Government has also suggested identification of children based on their learning levels so that teachers can focus on students who need additional support," it added. Sharing the status of closure of schools across the country, the Ministry officials said at least 95 per cent teaching and non-teaching staff in all States has been vaccinated, while some States have even achieved 100 per cent vaccination coverage for the staff in schools.

Contraction in...

From Page 1

Although the number of districts with a positivity rate of over 10 per cent has fallen from over 400 a week ago to less than 300 now, two States - Kerala and Mizoram - are reporting an increase in positivity rate and cases.

The Government said data indicate that unlike in the previous Covid surge, the current coronavirus variant surgery is safe and not associated with higher chances of complications in or deaths of Covid patients. "Patients who need surgery need not be denied surgical intervention presently," the official added.

A higher number of younger patients were admitted to hospitals in the third wave, the Government said, adding treatment showed significantly improved outcomes and lesser complications.

"A comparatively younger population with an average age of 44 years has been infected more in this Covid wave," ICMR DG Balram Bhargava said, adding that there

was significantly less use of drugs for treatment this time. Bhargava said in this Covid wave, sore throats were seen more in the patients.

34 States and UTs including Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu are recording a decline in Covid-19 cases and positivity rate, data shows that 297 districts are still reporting Covid-19 positivity rate of over 10 per cent while 169 districts have a positivity rate between 5-10 per cent. In 268 districts, the positivity rate is below five percent, the official said, adding that just Kerala and Mizoram are witnessing an increase in the number of cases and positivity.

Agarwal said, "India is witnessing a consistent decrease in daily new cases in the last 14 days while the number of daily active cases is also decreasing rapidly. In the week ending February 2, there are 297 districts in India reporting a Covid test positivity rate of more than 10 percent, down from January 26 when there were 406 districts in India.

"During the same period, the number of districts reporting 5-10 per cent test positivity rate meanwhile has increased from 145 to 169. In this period, the number of districts reporting under 5 per cent case positivity rate has also increased from 183 to 268."

According to the data, 16 States/UTs have achieved 100 per

cent first dose vaccination coverage and four States/UTs between 96-99 per cent.

Earlier, the Ministry refuted as "misleading" reports which claimed that 50 lakh unused Covishield doses may go waste by the end of this month. "The Centre had proactively advised all state governments to review the availability of vaccines, right from the start of the vaccination drive against Covid-19, to ensure that the wastage of doses is reduced to a minimum," it said in a statement.

Office of The Chief Engineer (Capital Zone) P.W.D Bhopal (M.P.)

Tender Notice

NIT No. 02/G/1/Mis/C.Z./2019 (Year 2022)

Bhopal, Date 24-01-2022

Online Tender for mentioned below are being invited. The Tender have been uploaded on the e-Procurement system of Public Works Department on the Portal <https://mptenders.gov.in> Tender details are as below:-

S. No.	Tender No.	District	Nature of work	Name of Work	Call No.	Cost of Project (PAC) (Rs. In lack)	Remarks
1	2022_PWDRB_181129_1	Bhopal (Division No 1 Bhopal)	Plan	Cement concrete pavement M-40 grade for conventional white topping thickness 200M on Suraj Nagar to Bishankhedi Road Length 3.80 Km and Bishankhedi to Millennium College Road Length 3.40 Km. Total Length 7.20 Km. under P.W.D. Maint. Dn. No. 1 Bhopal.	1st Call	513.50	EMD/All Document are to be submitted online only.
2	2022_PWDRB_181130_1	Bhopal (Division No 2 Bhopal)	Plan	Construction of Barkhedi Dev to Devapura Road Length 10.720 Km.	1st Call	736.20	EMD/All Document are to be submitted online only.
3	2022_PWDRB_181131_1	HARDA	Plan	CONSTRUCTION OF CHHOTI CHIPHANER BABA BAJRANGDAS CHICHOTKUTEE NARMADA BRIDGE. LENGTH 3. 62 KM	1st Call	572.75	EMD/All Document are to be submitted online only.
Total						1822.45	

The document can only be purchased online from the above website after making online payment. The last date & time for purchase of Document on line is **Dated 15-02-22 up to (17:30.)** Detailed NIT and other details can be viewed on the above mentioned portal. Amendments to NIT, if any, would be published on website only, and not in newspaper.

Chief Engineer (Capital Zone)

P.W.D. Bhopal Madhya Pradesh

G-22257/21

कोरोना में सावधानी हटी, समझो दुर्घटा घटी।

India to skip Olympic...

From Page 1

Taking to Twitter, Prasara Bharati CEO, Shashi Shekhar Vempati tweeted, consequent to the announcement by MEA, DD Sports activities channel won't telecast reside the opening and shutting ceremonies of the Winter Olympics being held in Beijing. Consequent to the announcement by @meaindia, @ddsports-channel won't telecast reside the opening and closing ceremonies of the Winter Olympics being held in Beijing. A senior member of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee has slammed China's choice of an army officer as the torchbearer for the Beijing Winter Olympics. Jim Risch, US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member, tweeted: "It's shameful that Beijing chose a torchbearer for the Olympics who's part of the military command that attacked India in 2022 and is implementing genocide against the Uyghurs. The US will continue to support Uyghur freedoms and the sovereignty of India."

HC stays order of 75% quota...

From Page 1

"We will continue to fight for employment opportunities for Haryanvi youth".

The Act is applicable to employers of private sector companies, societies, trusts, limited liability partnership firms, partnership firms and any person who employs 10 or more persons on salary, wages or other remuneration for the purpose of manufacturing, carrying on business or rendering any service in Haryana.

Advocate Tushar Sharma, counsel for one of the petitioners, said they had challenged the vires of the Act. "I was representing one of the petitioners-- IMT Manesar Association and Manesar Industrial Welfare Association. We were challenging vires of the Act, we were saying this Act is unconstitutional, discriminatory and violative of fundamental rights of our members and were seeking quashing of the Act.

The court admitted the petition," Sharma said over phone.

"The Act has been kept in abeyance in a way," he said. Additional AG, Malik, said while defending the law, the state's stand was "that industries are getting various benefits including plots on concessional rates, then why should our youth not get the benefits in employment". Malik said that earlier 900 industrial units of the state had given their consent in favour of the 75 per cent reservation for local youth in private sector jobs.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This Public notice is being issued on behalf of my clients **Sh. Harish Kohli S/o Late Sh. Keshav Nand Kohli & Smt. Sonia Kohli W/o Harish Kohli Both R/o P-32, Third Floor, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi 110008** to inform the public at large that my client's Daughter **Anoushka Vardhan Kohli** had solemnized marriage with **Sh. Varun Dahiya** against the wishes and acceptance of my clients and she also been misbehaving and harassing my clients and my clients has disowned her and no relationship with both of them. My client's Daughter & her husband **Sh. Varun Dahiya** has no claim in any of my movable and immovable properties and also in my business running under the name & title as **M/s Simtech Computers** at J-39, G.F., West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008. In future, anybody dealing with them shall do so at their own risk and consequences & my clients are not liable for the act or omission in respect of any dealing of both of them with them from public at large.

KSHTIZ MAHPAL (ADVOCATE)

Enrl. No. D-1168/2004. Contact No: 999994372 1304 Lawyers Chambers Rohini Court, New Delhi-95

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that Mr. Hemant Verma (hereinafter referred to as the said Mortgagee/Borrower) is purchasing the Second Floor (Without Roof Rights) built on Property Bearing No. A-2/1, Built on Old Plot No. 29 & 31, area measuring 50 Sq. Yds., i.e. 41.80 Sq. Mtrs., Out of Kharsa No. 7307/7/28, Situated at Village Sidkpur, in the Road of West Jyoti Nagar, Delhi-110094 from Sh. Gaurav Chauhan who became owner of the said floor vide Relinquishment Deed dated 30.11.2021. Sub-Register- IV A Shandera New Delhi, as Doc No. 7580, Book No. 1, Vol No. 3882, Page No. 14-21 or 30.11.2021 executed by Smt. Sudisha Chauhan & Smt. Nancy Chauhan and New, Mr. Hemant Verma has agreed to create mortgage in respect of the said property in favour of our clients **IBFC FIRST BANK Limited**. Further, if any person, body, individual, institution having any claim, title, interest and/or objection in respect of or against or relating to or touching upon said property or part of the property by way of sale, exchange, lease, lien, mortgage, charge, encumbrance, gift, trust, easement, maintenance, inheritance, testamentary disposition or otherwise or having in their custody any title, documents pertaining to the said property shall communicate the same to the undersigned at below mentioned address within 10 days from the publication of this notice with documentary evidence in support thereof, failing which all the claim, of such person shall be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned. Any objections raised after the completion of the 10 days shall not be binding upon the said property or my Client & in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 10 days of this publication to Mr. **Munesh Bhatnagar (Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocate))**, Law Offices, Unit No. 907, 9th Floor, GD-ITL Tower, (B-08), Netaji Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at (M): 9666707172/9818228636

PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that my client Mr. Satyaketu Saurav son of Late Mr. Paranjay Kumar and Mrs. Suman wife of Late Mr. Paranjay Kumar both resident of M-1-6/24, Road Number 11, Rajender Nagar, Vindhya Kala Mandir, Sampachak, Patna, Bihar - 800016 has on dated 15.11.21 entered into an Agreement to Let with Mrs. Anju Gupta wife of Late Mr. Sandeep Gupta resident of House Number 8, 3rd Floor, Chitra Vihar, East Delhi, Delhi-110092 - owner of Flat Unit number JCH-504, on 5th Floor, in the complex known as 'Aditya Celebrity Homes' constructed upon plot number GH-01B, Sector-76, having super area of 1445 Sq. Ft. of 3-BHK Noida, District Gautam Buddh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh for purchasing the same along with allotted parking space and have also advanced her part payment towards the settled sale consideration. Hence general public is hereby advised to refrain not to enter into any agreement with respect to the purchase of the said property as my client shall have the first right over it. Any person doing so shall be deemed to be doing it on his own costs as to risks and consequences.

Vivek Agarwal (Advocate)

E-10, LGF, Lajpat Nagar-II, New Delhi-24

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DDMA likely to review Covid situation today

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) is likely to meet on Friday to review the Covid-19 situation in the national Capital. According to sources in the Delhi Government, the DDMA will take a call on resumption of offline classes for schools in Delhi along with more relaxations of Covid-19 curbs.

The number of daily cases in Delhi has been declining after touching the record high of 28,867 on January 13. The city had recorded a positivity rate of 30.6 per cent on January 14, the highest during the ongoing wave of the pandemic. On Thursday, the positivity rate was recorded below five per cent. It implies that the Covid-19 situation is under control.

The DDMA, in its meeting on Friday, is likely to discuss lifting of the night curfew, along

with other relaxations, including reopening of schools, gyms and spas, sources said.

The DDMA is also likely to review the city Government's order which makes it compulsory to wear a mask while driving alone, after the Delhi High Court termed it as absurd and asked why the decision was still prevailing.

In the last DDMA meeting, the Delhi Government had recommended reopening of schools, saying it was necessary to prevent further damage to the social and economic well-being of children as the Covid-19 situation in the capital had improved.

Asserting that online education can never replace classroom studies, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia had said the Government had closed schools when it was not safe for children, but excessive caution was harming them.

AAP: SDMC looting in name of licence for EV charging stations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) accused the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) of red-tapism, saying that the BJP-ruled MCD is looting crores of rupees in the name of licences for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations despite Prime Minister Narendra Modi having ended the need for licences.

Senior Leader and MCD in-charge Durgesh Pathak said the BJP has made a rate card for giving licences. "If you know a councillor, pay ₹50 lakh and ₹25-30 lakh to any senior BJP leader. The Central Government has ended the licence system and the Kejriwal Government is offering subsidies; yet the BJP has found a way to loot money from the people. AAP demands that the BJP-ruled SDMC immediately end this fraud taking place in the name of red-tapism," he said.

"The biggest proponent of modern tech solutions against pollution was the introduction of EVs. Our country is working to adopt the use of EVs and in

that vein is investing in charging infrastructure too. There is a lack of charging stations across the country and that's why the Prime Minister himself encouraged everyone to develop charging stations in their area. The procedure to set up EV charging stations is supposed to be free of bureaucratic hurdles and licences. Modi himself wants to promote it. But the BJP and its leaders are acting as a boulder in the path of progress against the word of their leader," he said.

Pathak said, "The Central Government has stated that such licences will not be required. It means that the Delhi BJP is only interested in committing corruption and making money. They want to be paid for each licence. Every one of their leaders and councillors is raking in crores of rupees from the licence system. In the next 1-1.5 months, there will be municipal corporation elections and the AAP will win and take control of the corporation and bring an end to this entire system. We will not permit the implementation of such an undemocratic system in Delhi."

Kejriwal urges BJP, Congress supporters to vote for change

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI /GOA

Appealing to the BJP and Congress supporters to vote for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) ahead of the upcoming Assembly election, party national convener Arvind Kejriwal asked them to forget about their political ideology and give a chance to AAP this time.

Targeting the BJP and Congress, Kejriwal said that they have no agenda for Goa's development. "The BJP Government's Ministers have been tainted by accusations of job, power, labour, ventilator scams and sex scandals. Congress faced allegations of corruption to the tune of ₹36,000 crore in mining but the BJP protected them for a whole decade," he said.

"If Goans vote for the BJP or Congress they will only get five more years to loot the public. When the AAP Government is formed every family will get a clear benefit of ₹10 lakh in five years. The AAP Government will provide free electricity-water, free health-



care, ₹3,000 as monthly unemployment allowance and one thousand rupees to every woman every month. Vote for AAP, whatever we do will help uplift every Goan," he said.

Kejriwal further said "Today, we want to appeal to the voters and supporters of BJP, Congress and all other parties of Goa to vote for the AAP for the sake of your children and for the sake of Goa."

"The BJP was voted to power for 15 years to lead the state of Goa. All they did in power was corruption, scams and scandals. One minister of the BJP has been accused of a sex scandal, one of job scam, one of power scam, one of

labour scam, one of ventilator scam and what not. The only other thing they have done is to protect the Congress party," he said.

The AAP leader further accused the BJP of shielding Congress leaders in power scam. "When mining was shut, they (BJP) argued that Congress and its ministers committed a huge scam while in power. The Shah Commission was appointed to investigate it. They were accused of looting ₹36,000 crores. Since then, the BJP Government has completed 10 years, but they have not done anything against the Congress leaders," he added.

Man kills wife on suspicion of affair

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 26-year-old man allegedly killed his wife on early Thursday morning over suspicion of an extra-marital affair in southeast Delhi's Tughlakabad Extension area. Police said that the accused hit her on the head with a cooker and a cylinder.

The accused has been identified as Hasim Khan, a resident of Tughlakabad Extension.

According to police, Hasim came to the police station on early Thursday and informed that he has killed his wife, following which the staff of Govindpuri police station rushed to the spot. They found the woman Shaheen Khan (20) lying on a bed. The accused suspected that the victim was having an affair with one Salman. The cooker and cylinder used as weapon for hitting her head have been seized, a senior police official said.

A case has been registered and the accused has been apprehended. Legal action is being taken, the officer said.

Hasim and Shaheen got married in June 2018.

PIC TALK



Delhiites brave the cold as they visit Connaught Place early in the morning on Thursday

Photo | Ranjan Dimri

Chargesheet asap in Shahdara abduction-gangrape: Asthana

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police Commissioner, Rakesh Asthana, on Thursday said that in connection with the Shahdara incident, the chargesheet will be filed in minimum possible time and will request the court for a speedy and fast track trial in the court. For the first time, Asthana held a candid interaction with public through Twitter in a question-answer session which was hosted by RJ Sharat and his co-host Stutee Ghosh from Fever 104 FM.

Asking about women's safety and the unfortunate incident of Shahdara where a 20-year-old woman was allegedly abducted, gang-raped and paraded by a group of people in Kasturba Nagar, the Commissioner said that within less than three minutes of receiving the call, the police team reached the spot.

"All the accused persons allegedly involved in the crime have been arrested and all possible legal help is being provided to victim. The chargesheet will be filed in minimum possible time while trying for a speedy and fast track trial in the court," he stressed.

He said the force is sensitive towards crimes against women and other weaker sections of the society including children and senior citizens. Pursuing proactive policing, Delhi Police responds promptly and sensitively to such crimes. On viral videos of police brutality, the top cop said that Delhi Police takes immediate action after scrutinising the authenticity of videos which reflect unnecessary police aggression or misbehaviour.

"Corrective actions are taken accordingly against the delinquent police personnel," he added. However, he highlighted the fact that policing is a daunting task and at various

occasions the human and benevolent aspect of police personnel needs to be appreciated by the society at large. On tackling hesitation of women when approaching police, Asthana mentioned that Delhi Police has set up "Pink Booths" where women officers are deployed so that women can freely interact with them and share their concerns and grievances. "Delhi Police is in process to install such 'Pink Booths' in every district, so that women do not feel hesitant in going to police stations," he said. The top cop also mentioned about several women-centric initiatives taken by the force like Sashakti (self-defence program for girls & women) and said that presently six women DCsP and a dozen women Inspectors have been posted as District heads and Station House Officers, respectively. A large number of women personnel have been

deployed in districts to facilitate women in sharing their grievances, he stressed.

When asked on how to deal in case of Police harassment, Asthana said that there is a well oiled mechanism to deal with the complaints of police harassment. Elaborating on the procedure, he said "complainants may lodge their complaints on 112 or contact senior officers of district concerned directly or through email. Such type of complaints are looked into by seniors on priority and action taken under intimation to the complainant."

He also suggested complainants to use the ICMS (Integrated Complaints Monitoring System) portal of Delhi Police to lodge their grievances hassle-free.

When asked about the CCTV coverage in the national capital, Asthana responded that in the coming six months, more than 10,000 CCTV's will

be integrated at Central Command Room under 'Safe City Project' of MHA, Government of India with state of the art technology that can easily compete with any such system globally.

When asked about the issue of drug abuse, by a Twitter user, the Delhi Police Commissioner admitted that Drug peddling is a menace and it affects the public especially the younger generation very badly. He said that the force is working systematically on this front. Police Station-wise hotspots have been identified to crush such elements who are involved in drug trafficking.

"Delhi Police not only helps in rehabilitating the drug addicts but also engages them under YUVA scheme for imparting vocational training so as to prevent them from committing crimes and enable them to engage in employment," he said.

AAP, BJP spar over 'sale' of schools, graft in issue of EC charging station licences

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) accused the BJP-ruled North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NMC) of selling away 40 schools at throwaway prices.

AAP senior leader and MCD In-charge Durgesh Pathak said that the BJP is in a spree of giving away public assets including schools to bogus NGO owned by its own leaders. "BJP shut down 34 schools last year and is now going to shut down 40 more schools this year. North MCD 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 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 so 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.

However, Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said "It is sad to see AAP leader Durgesh Pathak levelling baseless false allegation against South DMC on Electronic Charging Station fees issue.

Delhi BJP Spokesperson said that there is no proposal before South DMC standing committee to level any fees or charge on Electronic Charging Station.

"It is beyond the understanding from where Durgesh Pathak has got this idea that South DMC is proposing fees of lacs of rupees on these Electronic Sub Station. Levelling of this baseless allegation is a proof enough to show that AAP leaders level cooked up allegations against MCDs," he added.

NMC, PayTM tie-up to boost digital payment

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NMC) and PayTM joined hands to boost online digital payment collection through municipal services for a broad range of digital collaborations.

North Commissioner Sanjay Goel said that this historic launching is a landmark initiative by the NMC to facilitate the citizens in the easiest way through PayTM gateway platform.

"It will promote hassle-free digital transactions and is one noble initiative to enhance digital penetration. The move will go a long way to promote transparency and ease of business," he said.

On the occasion, apart from the NMC Commissioner, Sanjay Goel, Additional Director

(IT) Shashanka Ala, officials of PayTM and other senior officials of the NMC were also present.

"The payment gateway will soon be available for payment of taxes, dues of their property tax on other municipal application such as registration of birth, death, e-mutation, health trade license, general trade licence, veterinary trade license, factory license application services, park and community hall booking, renewal of Teh Bazar, hawking, hackney carriage through PayTM payment gateway.

"It provides digital access and to make e-governance services available to the citizens," he said.

The Commissioner further said that this is a step towards 'Digital India Programme' and to provide municipal services to the citizens of North Delhi in a digital way.

Police arrest man for making crank video calls, trying obscene acts with DU Prof

The accused was identified as Dharampal Rai, a high school pass from Ghazipur, who works as an operator in RO plant

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested a 36-year-old man from Jodhpur in Rajasthan for allegedly bothering a Delhi University professor by making repeated video calls and carrying out obscene acts on whatsapp.

The accused has been identified as Dharampal Rai, a high school pass from Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh and he works as an operator in RO plant. He is alcoholic and his wife lives in his village with family.

According to Sagar Singh Kalsi, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), North district, the matter came to light on January 29 when a lady professor of Delhi University lodged a complaint in Timarpur police station in North Delhi wherein she stated that an unknown person was bothering her by making repeated video calls and carrying out obscene acts on the calls.

"A case was registered in this regard and as part of investigation, the team conducted technical probe and collected detail about the suspected mobile number which was later analysed. The suspect was then tracked down in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, said the DCP.

"Police team was sent to Jodhpur, Rajasthan in search of suspect. After consistent man-

ual efforts, the suspect was apprehended from an RO plant located in the agricultural farms of village Salawas, Jodhpur, Rajasthan. He was identified as Dharampal Rai and the mobile used in commission of crime was recovered from his possession," he said.

The accused disclosed that he used to search Facebook profiles of women at random and tried to track their contact numbers and thereafter sent whatsapp messages and made video call through Whatsapp, he added.

"On January 29, he found the profile of the complainant and called her in state of inebriation multiple times and started carrying out obscene acts when the call was picked up by the complainant after she felt it might be an emergency caller," the DCP said.

EDMC finalises 'Cellular on Wheels' policy to improve Net connectivity

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) has finalised the 'Cellular on Wheels' policy to improve the mobile internet connectivity in its jurisdiction.

The Mayor of East Delhi Shyam Sundar Agarwal said on Thursday that the move will also increase the corporation's revenue. He said that under this, 150 'Cellular on Wheels' (COW) will be installed in the jurisdiction of EDMC and will get an income of approx ₹13 crore annually.

Talking about the initiative, the EDMC Commissioner Vikas Anand said that complaints regarding poor signal and call drops are being received while making cellular phone calls.

"Installing cellular towers on the roof of the building also

results in poor signals. The 'Cellular on Wheels' can be installed in the area where complaints of poor signal are being received," he added.

Anand said that the COW is a temporary arrangement which can be set up in a public place i.e. market, park, road side, parking area and open space in department premises where there is connectivity problem.

The Commissioner further said that any telecom company and service provider having valid licence from the Ministry of Telecom, can apply for its establishment.

He informed that the space up to the maximum of 50 square metres will be considered including all these facilities and no excess space will be covered by telecom company/service provider on any pretext.

Youth shot dead in East Delhi's Laxmi Nagar area

Multiple teams have been formed and efforts are being made to apprehend the assailants, police said

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 24-year-old man was shot dead by some persons in east Delhi's Laxmi Nagar area. The deceased has been identified as Mayur Chauhan, a resident of Guru Ramdas Nagar.

According to Priyanka Kashyap, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), East district, a police control room (PCR) call was received on Wednesday at 11.09 pm at Shakarpur police station.

"The caller informed that at Ganesh Nagar Extension, near Government primary school,

10 to 15 people were firing and damaging the vehicles there. At 11.11 pm, another call was received in this regard," said the DCP.

"Police reached the spot where the caller reiterated the same thing and mentioned about two cars, motorcycles and one scooty borne assailants," said the DCP.

At the spot, empty cartridges and one live cartridge was found. The assailants fired bullets in which no one got injured, however, two cars and one scooty got damaged, said the DCP.

A case under appropriate sections has been registered at Shakarpur police station and investigation was taken up, said the DCP.

Multiple teams have been formed and efforts are being made to apprehend the assailants, police said.

Another PCR call was

received at Laxmi Nagar police station at 12.06 am on Thursday mentioning that near Gurudwara, Guru Ramdas Nagar, some persons fired bullets and a man received two to three bullet injuries, the DCP said.

After reaching the spot, police came to know that the friend of the injured took him to the hospital, police said.

During enquiry, it was revealed that the car and motorcycle borne assailants had shot at Mayur Chauhan. Later, Chauhan succumbed to injuries at Max Hospital, Patparganj, the DCP said.

A case under appropriate sections has been registered and teams have been constituted to nab the accused persons, she said.

It seems like the accused in both the cases are same and further investigation is underway, police added.

Delhi HC expresses displeasure over non-payment of salaries to MCD staff

The HC said it cannot set EDMC's house in order for it and remarked that had it been a private company, it would have been asked to wind up

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday expressed displeasure over non-payment of salaries by the East Delhi Municipal Corporation to its employees and said that it should "shut shop" if it cannot manage resources. The high court said it cannot set EDMC's house in order for them and remarked that had it been a private company, it would have been asked to wound up.

The bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh was dealing with a batch of petitions relating to non-payment of salaries and pensions to teachers, hospital staff, sanitation

workers, engineers of the municipal bodies.

When the bench was deferring the hearing till February 28 due to the unavailability of one of the counsels, EDMC lawyer urged the court to give a short date and informed that some of its doctors were on strike over non-payment of salaries.

The EDMC lawyer stated that the corporation was trying to augment its resources and payment to doctors and sanitation workers was their priority but "they are in a jam of sorts". "With what basis can we ask them to come back to work? They are exposing themselves (to Covid-19). You need to set it in order," the court said.

"We can't set your house in order. Two months (backlog) is shocking... If it was a private (company), we would have asked you to be wound up. If you can't manage resources, shut shop. They have families to

take care of," it added.

In response to the court's query if the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner had also not received their salaries, the lawyer said that as per his instructions dues to all employees, except sanitation workers who were paid up-to-date, have been paid till October.

Senior advocate Rahul Mehra, appearing for the Delhi Government, said the Government has released the requisite funds and "there was no reason why salary should not be paid".

Last year, the court had expressed its displeasure at the state of cleanliness and upkeep of the national capital while remarking that it was not obliged to come to the aid of municipal workers and press for payment of their salaries when they were not discharging their functions on ground, leaving the city in a "dismal state"

We are witnessing trailers of future wars: Naravane

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Without directly naming China and Pakistan, Army Chief General MM Naravane on Thursday said the disputed borders with the nuclear-armed neighbours have stretched India's resources.

Making this point, he said India is witnessing trailers of future conflicts and its adversaries will continue with efforts to achieve their strategic aims.

The Army chief said India is facing "unique, substantial and multi-domain" security challenges and that developments on the northern borders have adequately underscored the requirement of ready and capable forces with an optimal component of boots on the ground backed by modern



technology to preserve the country's sovereignty and integrity.

Naravane said the disputed borders with nuclear-capable neighbours coupled with state-sponsored proxy war were stretching the security apparatus and the resources.

In order to meet the new challenge, he said the Army is focusing on "restructuring, rebalancing and reorienting" its forces and the process has already been initiated and that the force is committed to the theaterisation initiative to ensure tri-services integration.

"We are witnessing trailers of future conflicts. These are being enacted daily on the information battlefield, in the networks and in cyberspace. They are also being played along unsettled and active borders," Naravane said.

Highlighting these efforts in a seminar organised by Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), he said, "It is for us now to visualise the battlefield contours of tomorrow based on these trailers. If you look around, you will realise the reality of today."

The seminar was attended by Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, Navy Chief Admiral R Hari Kumar and defence attaches of several countries.

Naravane said the developments in Afghanistan have

again brought to focus the use of proxies and non-state actors to decisive effect.

"These actors thrive on local conditions, innovatively exploit low-cost options to devastating impact and create conditions that limit the full use of sophisticated capabilities which are available to state," he said.

The Army Chief said India's adversaries will continue to make efforts to achieve their goals against the country.

"The events of 2020 have been testimony to the diversity of security threats in all domains and this has brought the spotlight towards non-contact and grey zone warfare. We need to augment capabilities in both non-contact and contact modes of warfare," the Army Chief said referring to the east-

ern Ladakh face-off.

Underlining the changing nature of conflicts, Naravane said the ancient Indian wisdom on statecraft and application of force propounded many centuries ago remained "timeless and pertinent" even today.

He said the armed forces have initiated an exploratory project of examining the ancient Indian wisdom and knowledge for contemporary security challenges.

In an oblique reference to China, he also said some nations are challenging the globally accepted norms and the rules-based order. This has manifested in various forms that included aggression and opportunistic actions to change the "status quo" keeping the threshold below all-out war, he said.

Rahul lays foundation stone of Gandhi Sevagram at Raipur

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/ RAIPUR



From Gandhi Sevagram to implementing the Rajiv Gandhi Nyay scheme to building a new Amar Jawan Jyoti, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel is not only out to revive the Gandhian legacy and project the "safest" Congress Government as a model as envisaged by party leader Rahul Gandhi but also take on the Modi dispensation over sensitive issues.

Amidst his preoccupations with poll campaign in five States and the ongoing Parliament session, Rahul on Thursday visited Raipur where he along with Baghel laid the foundation stone for the Mahatma Gandhi Sevagram which is to be built to "Keep Alive, Nurture, Adapt and Implement Core Tenets of Gandhism for the 21st Century".

A conference of Gandhian ideas was organised by the Chhattisgarh government on this occasion, during which the first cheque for the Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Bhumihin Krishi Majdur Nyay Yojana (also known as the "RG Nyay for Landless" Scheme) was given to a beneficiary of the scheme.

Official sources said around 3,55,000 beneficiaries will receive their first installment of benefits under the scheme Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Bhumihin Krishi Majdur Yojana.

After the Congress and Rahul attacked the Modi government for merging the existing Amar Jawan Jyoti at India Gate with the National War Memorial, the Congress-led Chhattisgarh government announced setting up a Amar Jawan Jyoti memorial in State capital Raipur.

Rahul lauded the Chhattisgarh government for implementing the NYAY scheme, terming it a historic day and promised full support to all the beneficiaries, saying the government was just returning them their money. He also expressed his delight for establishment of Gandhi

Sevagram and construction of Amar Jawan Jyoti.

The NYAY scheme aims at providing relief to over 12 lakh landless labourers, with the provision of Rs 200 crore from the state's budget. As announced in the party's manifesto, it aims to achieve 'Aarthik Nyay' (Economic Justice) by financially supporting the families of more than 12 lakh landless labourers, living with financial hardship, who do not own even a small piece of land, yet are dependent on agricultural labour for their income, sources said.

"While the scheme is focused on covering MGNREGA and contract workers, assistance will also be provided to beneficiaries such as barbers, blacksmiths, dhobis (washer-men and washerwomen) and priests across Chhattisgarh, ensuring their welfare and social security. The aim is to support them with minimum wages so that they can access basic amenities and live a respectable life, gaining freedom from poverty," the Chhattisgarh government said in a Press release.

"We are glad to be able to build this Sevagram in Raipur as Gandhiji's key principles are at the heart of Chhattisgarh's vision for development. In keeping with Gandhiji's tenets, our policies and programmes aim to make every citizen of Chhattisgarh a beneficiary and stakeholder of development in the state, with a focus on last mile delivery for the state's most underprivileged populations. That's why the first cheque for the Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Bhumihin Krishi Majdur Nyay Yojana was given today. We wish to follow Gandhiji not just in principle, but also in practice," Baghel said on the occasion.

Concerned about freedom of speech: Govt in RS after action against TV channels

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday said it was concerned about the freedom of speech and expression, and the country was not in the times of 1975 or the Emergency.

Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting L Murugan told the Rajya Sabha that the Government has initiated action against 160 TV channels and blocked 60 channels on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter pages as their content was against the integrity and safety of the nation.

"Our Government is concerned about the freedom of speech and expression... We are not in 1975. We are not in Emergency..." he said in the House during the Question Hour. Murugan was responding to a question by an opposition member who alleged that the government was misusing model provisions to curb the freedom of speech and expression.

Replying to supplementaries on action against news channels for anti-national content, he said the Press Council of India and a three-tier mechanism is place to check the con-

tent. This, he said, includes self-regulatory mechanism and self-regulatory bodies and if the grievances are not sorted out, only then does the inter-departmental committee takes up and sorts out the issues. "We wish to inform you that we have initiated 160 cases against TV channels," the minister told the House.

Asked about the action against MediaOne channel, he said, "We are not doing anything on MediaOne. Whatever permissions to channels are being given (are) after the Home Ministry gives security clearance. MediaOne matter is sub-judice also."

In a written reply, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said all programmes telecast on private satellite TV channels are required to adhere to the programme code laid down in Cable Television Networks Rules, 1994. The rules inter-alia provide that no programme should be carried in the cable service which is likely to encourage or incite violence or contains anything against maintenance of law and order or which promote anti-national attitudes.

Shake off Cong hangover 'Indira is India & India is Indira': Naqvi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



A day after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi lashed out against the Modi Government in the Lok Sabha, Minister for Minority Affairs Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Thursday urged the Congress to shake off the "hangover of Indira is India and India is Indira".

Asserting this point in the Rajya Sabha, Naqvi refrained from naming Rahul and said the present regime restored the credibility of the Prime Minister. He claimed during the UPA dispensation, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) was run from somewhere else. Moreover, any decision by the government was termed as "nonsense and nuisance," Naqvi said while participating in the debate on motion of thanks on President's address.

The Opposition slammed the government for stoking social unrest and not able to reduce poverty besides failing to provide jobs. The government was also charged with using the investigation agencies for political vendetta.

Slamming the Congress, Naqvi said they have to get out of "Indira is India" belief to understand that there are no

two Indias. "We need to get out of the hangover of thinking of Indira is India and India is Indira and Congress is the country and the country is Congress," he said.

This sharp reaction was in response to Rahul on Wednesday saying the President's speech had no strategic vision and did not touch upon the main challenges that the country is facing currently including the growing gap between the extremely rich and the poor in the country.

Naqvi said Modi-led government has ended the rule of "cuts, commissions, family politics, Article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir, and brought Citizenship Amendment Act to protect religiously persecuted people".

The BJP leader said there are two India; one is of the

sanatani or thinking and the other of samanti or feudal.

Listing 28 changes by the PM Modi government, Naqvi spoke on how the situation has changed since 2014 and the Modi government ended the red beacon culture and the politics of power, he said, adding "We also destroyed political appeasement."

After becoming Prime Minister, Narendra Modi made laws that were needed and removed those in which rules were not framed and these were lying for years without any use, he added. The Minister said a total of 1,500 such unused laws were repealed.

Naqvi further said "week of riots" and "months of terrorist blasts" have come to an end, and "we replied to the neighbouring country by doing surgical strikes against its terrorist activities".

Noting that there was a time when decisions of the Supreme Court were rendered ineffectual, Naqvi said, "The government took steps to make Supreme Court's decision on Triple Talaq effective and brought forth a law to protect the rights of Muslim women."

By passing the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, Naqvi said, "Modi government pro-

vided citizenship rights to people persecuted on the basis of religion and allowed citizenship to six undocumented non-Muslim communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh who entered India on or before December 31, 2014." The Minister also added that the CAA helped in bringing the minorities from Afghanistan after the Taliban took over the country.

Criticising the present government's policies, the Opposition said the idea of India was under threat and the gap between the rich and poor had widened.

Moreover, nearly 20 crore people slipped below the poverty line in the last few years even as the UPA regime had pulled out more than 20 crore people from poverty, the Opposition said.

The disinvestment policy also came under sharp attack with Jawhar Sircar (TMC) saying the government was selling family silver. He also claimed the country was now witnessing "naked capitalism."

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh and Ripun Bora, K Keshava Rao (TRS) and Abdul Wahab also criticised the policies of the government.

Rahul, TN CM Stalin exchange 'bonhomie' on social media

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/CHENNAI

A day after several references to southern Indian States, particularly Tamil Nadu and Kerala, during his speech in Parliament, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and Tamil Nadu CM M K Salin exchanged some "bonhomie" on social media.

Stalin took the platform to thank Rahul Gandhi for voicing concerns for the Tamils. Rahul responded saying together their "shared belief" in the pluralistic, federal and cooperative idea of India will triumph.

"I have no doubt that our shared belief in the pluralistic, federal and cooperative idea of India will triumph," said Rahul, who received an applause from his party, alliance partners and others for what Stalin termed a "rousing" speech in the Lok Sabha. Rahul thanked Stalin for his kind words about him after his speech during the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the president's address on Wednesday. "Dear Rahul Gandhi, I thank you on behalf of all Tamils for your rousing speech in the Parliament, expressing the idea of Indian Constitution in an emphatic manner. You have voiced the arguments of Tamils in the Parliament, which rest on the unique cultural and political roots that value self respect," the DMK president said.

ISRO set to launch Chandrayaan-3 in Aug

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over two years after its second Moon mission had a fatal end on the lunar surface, the Indian Space & Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to launch Chandrayaan-3 in August this year.

According to the Department of Space, the number of missions planned during 2022 (January to December 2022) are 19 — 08 Launch Vehicle Missions, 07 Spacecraft Missions and 04 Technology Demonstrator Missions.

"Based on the learnings from Chandrayaan-2 and suggestions made by the national level experts, the realisation of Chandrayaan-3 is in progress. Many related hardware and their special tests are successfully completed, and the launch is scheduled for August 2022," Union Minister for Space Dr Jitendra Singh said in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha.

The orbiter part of the Chandrayaan-2 mission was successfully inserted into the orbit in August 2019 but the soft-landing of the Vikram lander carrying the Pragyan rover failed. The orbiter is still hovering above the lunar surface and Isro plans to use it with Chandrayaan-3 as

well.

The third moon mission will make another attempt to land Vikram on the lunar surface.

A soft-landing will make India the fourth country to do so and the first country to do near the lunar South Pole.

Dr. Singh also informed that the Department of Space has planned 19 missions to be launched in 2022 as it picks up pace following successive delays.

"With the unlocking space sector reforms, the Department of Space is in the process of reviewing the future requirements of satellites based on the demand-driven model. Discussions with the ministries and probable customers are underway," the minister said.

Responding to questions over the reason behind the continuous delay of the mission, the Minister said that several ongoing missions were impacted due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The list of satellites launched in the last three years' time include EOS-03 launched on August 12, 2021; Amazonia-1 launched on February 28, 2021; Satish Dhawan SAT (SDSAT) on February 28, 2021, and UNITYsat on February 28, 2021.

ED attaches assets worth ₹268.66 crore of Agnite Education under PMLA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached assets worth Rs 268.66 crore of Agnite Education Limited (earlier Teledata Informatics Limited) and others under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), in a bank fraud case.

The ED had initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of FIR registered by CBI's Bank Securities and Fraud Cell, Bangalore against Agnite Education Limited and its Directors K Balasubramaniam and K Padmanabhan, and another FIR registered by CBI, Economic Offences Branch, Chennai against J]Teledata Marine Solutions Limited, and its two Directors also embroiled in the CBI case.

Investigation by ED revealed that Agnite Education Limited and Teledata Marine Solutions Limited availed various credit facilities from State Bank of India and defrauded the bank to the tune of Rs 479 crore, the ED said in a statement.

"Agnite Education Limited, Teledata Marine Solutions Limited and its subsidiaries fraudulently acquired movable properties in the form of five LPG Carrier Ships, one Oil Tanker and bank balances abroad by making sham investments, related party transactions to inflate balance sheets for availing bank loans and expenses for siphoning and diverting funds for promoters' benefit," it said.

Most of such associate companies, according to the agency, have been found to be untraceable on verification. Further, they have parked the funds availed through bank loans in the form of assets in Austria, Thailand and Bangladesh, using this modus operandi.

SC refuses to put off GATE exam to be held tomorrow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to postpone the Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering Exam (GATE), scheduled to be held on February 5 amidst COVID-19 restrictions in many parts of the country.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud, Surya Kant and Vikram Nath dismissed a batch of pleas, saying that postponing GATE just 48 hours before the scheduled examination will result in "chaos and uncertainty" and it cannot play with careers of students, who have prepared for it.

"The plea for postponement of GATE examination barely 48 hours before the scheduled date February 5, 2022, is replete with a potential for chaos and uncertainty, in the lives of students who have registered for the examination. There is no overarching reason

why this court in exercise of jurisdiction under Article 32 of the constitution should supplant the duties and functions of the regulatory authorities, who have taken a decision to hold the examination," the bench said.

"On a considered perspective of the position and consistent with the circumspect which must be exercised by this court in interfering with academic matters, we are not inclined to entertain a petition under Article 32 of the constitution. These petitions are accordingly dismissed," it added.

The bench said, "We cannot start postponing exams like this, everything is opening up now. We cannot play with the careers of the students like this. One of the petitioners before us is a coaching centre". The apex court said that it is a matter of academic policy as to when examination should be held and court cannot enter this arena.

Covid symptoms appear 2 days after virus exposure: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Symptoms of Covid-19 infection appear in 42 hours after being exposed to SARS-CoV-2 virus, much earlier than previously thought, finds a study led by Imperial College London researchers and published on a pre-print server but not yet peer-reviewed. It also underlined the importance of masks in checking spread of Covid-19, as exposure to a single nasal droplet was found to be sufficient to cause the infection.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) says that Covid symptoms take around five to six days to appear after infection. However, UK researchers showed that symptoms start to develop very fast,

on average about two days after contact with the virus.

The infection first appears in the throat; infectious virus peaks about five days into the infection and at that stage is significantly more abundant in the nose than the throat.



The findings also showed that the virus was detected first in the throat, significantly earlier than in the nose (40 hours

in the throat compared to 58 hours in the nose). The levels were lower and peaked sooner in the throat.

Peak levels of virus were

significantly higher in the nose than in the throat, indicating a potentially greater risk of virus being shed from the nose than the mouth.

This highlights the importance of proper face mask use to cover both the mouth and nose, the researchers said. The team also found that lateral

flow tests (LFTs) are a reassuringly reliable indicator of whether infectious virus is present (that is, whether they are likely to be able to transmit

virus to other people).

However, the LFT tests were less effective in picking up lower levels of virus at the very start and end of the infection.

Mechanism revealed behind loss of smell with Covid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

If you have been wondering why many Covid-19 infected people reported loss of smell, then US researchers probably have discovered the answer. They found that infection with the SARS-CoV-2 indirectly dials down the action of olfactory receptors, proteins on the surfaces of nerve cells in the nose that detect the molecules associated with odors.

Published online in the journal

Cell, the study led by researchers from NYU Grossman School of Medicine and Columbia University, also shed light on the effects of COVID-19 on other types of brain cells and other lingering neurological effects of COVID-19 such as "brain fog", headaches, and depression.

Experiments showed that the presence of the virus near nerve cells (neurons) in olfactory tissue brought an rushing of immune cells, microglia, and T cells that sense and counter infec-

tion. Such cells release proteins called cytokines that change the genetic activity of olfactory nerve cells, even though the virus cannot infect them, say the study authors. Where immune cell activity would dissipate quickly in other scenarios, in the brain, according to the team's theory, immune signaling persists in a way that reduces the activity of genes needed for the building of olfactory receptors.

"Our findings provide the first mechanistic explanation of smell loss

in COVID-19 and how this may underlie long COVID-19 biology," said co-corresponding author Benjamin tenOever, professor in the Departments of Medicine and Microbiology at NYU Langone Health.

"The work, in addition to another study from the tenOever group, also suggests how the pandemic virus, which infects less than 1 percent of cells in the human body, can cause such severe damage in so many organs."

Guv returns TN Govt Bill seeking NEET exemption

Bill was passed for admission in medical courses in TN

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi has returned the Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly negating the National Eligibility and Entrance Examination (NEET) for admission to undergraduate medical and dental science courses in the State. A release issued by Raj Bhavan on Thursday said the Governor after a perusal of the Bill found it not in tune with the interests of the students and was sending it back to the Government of Tamil Nadu for reconsideration. “The Hon’ble Governor of Tamil Nadu, after detailed study of the L.A. Bill No.43 of 2021 for admission to Undergraduate Medical Courses seeking exemption from NEET, and the Report of the High Level Committee constituted by the State Government in this regard which is the basis for the Bill

and also examining the pre-NEET status of social justice in Medical admission especially for students coming from socially and economically poor background, is of the opinion that the Bill is against interests of the students specially the rural and economically poor students of the State. Hence, the Hon’ble Governor has returned the Bill to the Hon’ble Speaker, Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly on February 01, 2022, giving detailed reasons, for its re-consideration by the House,” said the Raj Bhavan release.

The release further said that the Supreme Court in Christian Medical College, Vellore Association Vs. Union of India (2020) also has comprehensively examined the issue specially from the Social Justice perspective and upheld NEET as it prevents economic exploitation of poor students and was in furtherance of social justice.

The announcement came within hours of RS Bharati, the DMK MP lambasted the Governor in Rajya Sabha. “Our former chief minister C N Annadurai has pointed out the irrelevance of the post of the Governor stating that a goat does not need beard and similarly there was no need of Governors,” said Bharati taunting the Governor for sitting over the Bill for months.

Though Tamil Nadu has been demanding that the State be exempted from NEET, Nalini Chidambaram, (wife of senior Congress leader P Chidambaram) , who is representing the students in a case in the apex court had told the media that there was no question of exempting Tamil Nadu from the purview of the legislation. “While all other States in the country are for NEET, how Tamil Nadu alone can claim exception from the same,” Nalini Chidambaram asked reporters.

‘Centre didn’t clear Kerala rail project’ Union Railway Min Ashwini Vaishnaw says in reply to question

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Government of India has not given any approval to the 530.6 km long Semi High Speed Rail Project linking Thiruvananthapuram and Kasaragod, according to member of Lok Sabha N K Premachandran.

Premachandran was reacting to the claims made by Kerala’s Finance Minister K N Balagopalan and Rajya Sabha member Elamaram Kareem (CPI-M) that the project has been approved by the Union Government

K Sudhakaran, president, Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee who is also a member of Lok Sabha made it clear on Thursday that there is no change in the stance of his party via-a-viz the High Speed Rail Line. “We are of the view that this is an anti-people project and should never be implemented in the present form,” Sudhakaran told the media.

In a reply to the starred question by Premachandran, Union Minister for Railways, Ashwini Vaishnaw said that though the Kerala Government

MP NK Premachandran reacted to claims made by Kerala’s Finance Minister KN Balagopalan and Rajya Sabha member E Kareem (CPI-M) that the project has been approved by the Union Government

has submitted a detailed project report of the proposed semi speed rail line, the same was incomplete in many respects and no approval has been given.

“Consideration of the Project depends upon techno-economic viability of the project. Sufficient details for technical feasibility are not available in the DPR. Therefore Kerala Government has been advised to provide detailed technical documents such as alignment plan, particulars of railway land and private land, crossings over existing railway network, duly depiction affected railway asset through Zonal Railway for detailed examination of the project and to arrive at conclusion about feasibility of pro-

ject,” Vaishnaw said in reply to the question by Premachandran.

The minister also disclosed that the Centre was aware of the protests and agitations going on in Kerala against the project. “Government of Kerala has issued 4(1) notification for conducting social impact assessment study. The SIA study report will bring out the extent of impact on public in general. Project is not yet sanctioned. Consideration of the Project will depend upon techno-economic viability of the project,” said the Minister.

The Ministry of Railways has 49 per cent stake in the joint venture project while Government of Kerala would hold the remaining 51 per cent. The land acquisition for the project is in limbo following widespread agitation and resistance from people whose lands are to be acquired for the semi high speed rail line.

Many people facing displacement from their houses have threatened self immolation along with family members if the government forcefully tries to take over their

land. A group of BJP leaders from Kerala are camping in New Delhi to request the Union Railway Minister not to give approval to the project which would bring down the travel time between Kasaragod and Thiruvananthapuram to four hours from the present 12 hours.

The project requires 1,383 hectare land for completion of the rail route. C R Neelakantan, engineer-turned-environmentalist said that out of the total land required, 1,200 hectare land was with private people. “The land acquisition would displace 25,000 to 35,000 people from their land. Where will they go? Does the government have alternative arrangements to rehabilitate and resettle these people in this land starved State?” asked Neelakantan.

E Sreedharan, former boss of Delhi Metro, has come put against the proposed rail line terming it would lead to environmental and ecological disaster. Many environmentalists, nature conservationists and farmers unions too have expressed solidarity with those who oppose the project.

Polls for 108 municipal boards on Feb 27 in Bengal

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The much awaited elections to 108 municipal boards of Bengal will take place on February 27. A notification to this effect was issued by the State Election Commission on Thursday. The date of counting will however be declared at a later date, SEC Saurav Das said.

“We will issue a separate notification to announce the date of counting. The entire polling process has to be completed by March 8. Starting today, the Model Code of Conduct comes into force. The last date of filing nomination is February 9,” Das said.

With the SEC notification model code of conduct comes into force from Thursday in all the 21 districts where the elections would take place. Polls to other four corporations including Siliguri in North Bengal and Asansol, Chandannagar and Bidhannagar in South Bengal had already been scheduled for February 12. The counting will be held on February 14.

The Trinamool Congress recorded a thumping victory in the Kolkata Municipal Corporation which was held in December last year. The Left Front came second leaving the BJP in the third position.

The February 27, civic elections will take place about nine months after the Trinamool Congress roared back to power in State Assembly polls winning 212 seats last April-May.

Even as the SEC announced poll dates Opposition Left and BJP demanded simultaneous holding of all the elections including the ones scheduled to take place on February 12 saying the SEC was acting under the influence of the ruling Trinamool Congress which wanted the results of one election to influence the other.

“It is clear that the SEC is taking instructions from the State Government which wants the February 12 elections to influence the results of February 27 elections which is not acceptable,” CPI(M)central committee member Sujan Chakrabarty said.

The civic polls were likely to indicate whether the BJP had still been able to hold its number two position. For the CPI(M)-led Left Front, battle is to retain its main opposition status in most civicboards.

BMC presents ₹45,949 crore budget

Focuses on infrastructure, health, carbon neutrality in sectors, transportation

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Presenting a whopping ₹45,949.21 crore budget 2022-2023, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Thursday laid emphasis on infrastructure, health, carbon neutrality in various sectors, transportation and “ease” and “quality” of living for Mumbaikars, while delivering on the ruling Shiv Sean’s promise of waiving property tax for 16.14 lakh citizens living in flats of the carpet area of 500 square foot or less.

Unveiling the ₹45,949.21 crore BMC budget for 2022-23 - which is larger in terms of outlay than that of many smaller States in the country-- at the civic standing committee, Mumbai Municipal Commissioner I S Chahal announced an allocation of a staggering ₹22646.73 crore for the year which would facilitate speedy completion of major projects like the ambitious Coastal Road Project, Ghatkopar-Mankhurd Link Road (GMLR), STP, major Pipeline works, Mithi River Projects, Rejuvenation of Rivers,

Ashray Yojana and development works of various hospitals.

The BMC budget presented by Chahal shows a 17.70 per cent increase in the annual outlay - from ₹39,039.83 during 2021-22 to ₹45,949.21 crore during 2022-2023. “The share of Capital Expenditure is consistently increasing year by year. The Expenditure on infrastructure projects has increased two-fold recently, for providing better infrastructural facilities and modernized services,” the BMC chief said.

In line with the promise made by the then ruling Shiv Sena-BJP alliance ahead of the 2017 BMC polls in 2017 and the reiteration made by the Sena-led MVA government, the BMC chief announced waiver of property tax for flats measuring up to 500 sq feet in the metropolis. “Around 16.14 lakh citizens get 100 per cent relief from all components of Property Tax payment permanently. The benefit to the citizens is about ₹462 crore per annum,” Chahal said.

Chahal said that the BMC had made 50 per cent progress in the execution of the 29.2 km

Mumbai Coastal Road Project - which will connect Marine Lines in south Mumbai with Kandivli in north Mumbai. “We are determined to complete 90 per cent of the project work by the end of 2022-23 and completion of the 100 per cent project will be achieved by 2024. This project will help a very large number of citizens to save time and fuel. Similarly we expect to complete the GMLR project in 2022”.

Chahal announced that the BMC planned to set up 100 health outlets across the metropolis under the Hinduhridaysamrat Balasaheb Thackeray Health Centre which aims to provide preventive and primary treatment facilities to citizens close to their residence.

“At these health outlets, citizens can get various types of tests and diagnostic tests at nominal rate. These outlets will also facilitate consultation by specialists and super specialists. We have allocated ₹400 crore during 2022022 for the first phase of the project. In addition, We have set aside ₹303.95 crore for upgradation of dispensaries, maternity homes, standardization of 13

dispensaries. We intend to commission two maternity homes at Rawalpada Shivaji Nagar,” Chahal said.

Chahal said that with the help of Nair Hospital and its Alumni, a Genome Sequencing Lab had recently been established in Kasturba Hospital with a capacity to investigate about 350 viral samples at a time.

In another major announced made in the pre-BMC poll budget, Chahal said that the civic body would undertake major flood-control measures using a allocation of ₹1539.79 crore made in the current budget for the revival of the 18-kms long Mithi River and its other branches in the suburbs at Dahisar, Poisar, Oshiwara and their major drainage nullahs, plus 386 chronic flood spots that result in submerging many parts of the city during the monsoons.

“Ninety five percent of the widening and deepening work, 80 percent of retaining wall construction of Mithi River are completed which has doubled the holding capacity and carrying capacity by 3 times, while the plan for development and

pollution control is ready and shall be implemented in four packages,” Chahal said.

Chahal said that ass part of the initiatives being taken to ensure “ease” and “quality” of living for Mumbaikars, the BMC had started the process of empanelment of Urban Space Designers who would study and rework on the roads, foot paths and community spaces to increase the “Ease of Walking”.

He said that a significant 219 kms of roads in the city will be improved during the year, electronic vehicle (EV) charging stations in all the 30 major public parking lots, EVs shall be deployed for garbage collection-segregation, ₹1 crore specifically for ‘electric and electronic waste’ recovery centre in each BMC Ward, more electric crematoria and eco-friendly funeral pyres.

Chahal said that the BMC - which on January 4, 2022 became only the 3rd civic body in the world after Dubai and Singapore, to offer public services via a ChatBot, would provide easy access to about 80 of its services to Mumbaikars through a WhatsApp Chatbot.

BJP, Cong protest Telangana CM’s ‘separate Constitution’ remark

Hyderabad: Opposition parties including the Congress in Telangana on Thursday held protests against Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao’s comments favouring a new Constitution in the country.

State BJP president Bandi Sanjay Kumar and other party MPs held a ‘Bheem Deeksha’ protest near the Ambedkar’s statue at Telangana Bhavan in New Delhi. Speaking on the occasion, Sanjay Kumar said Prime Minister Narendra Modi drew inspiration from B R Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Constitution.

It was BJP which showed due respect to Ambedkar by

awarding Bharat Ratna to him, Kumar said. Rao, who is rejecting the Constitution drafted by Ambedkar, prefers to have his own Constitution where he and his ministers would not go to the Secretariat, he alleged. The CM has not fulfilled promises like distribution of three acres of land to Dalits, jobs for youth and installation of a giant statue of Ambedkar, the BJP leader charged.

BJP OBC Morcha National President K Laxman, party MLA Raja Singh and other leaders held the ‘Bheem Deeksha’ protest at the BJP office in the city, while party leaders and activists held

demonstrations across the State.

Congress leaders also staged protests condemning Rao’s comments seeking a new Constitution. Former MLA Sampath Kumar, who held a demonstration in Jogulamba Gadwal district, demanded that Rao apologize for his remarks.

Finding fault with the criticism against Rao’s remarks, TRS MLA G Balaraju said his party always worked with the spirit of Ambedkar and it was BJP which indulged in communal politics and emotional blackmail for ‘political mileage.’ **PTI**

Tribal girl gang-raped in Gujarat; six held

Ahmedabad: A 16-year-old tribal girl was allegedly gang-raped by six persons, one of them a minor, in Dediapada town of Gujarat’s Narmada district, police said on Thursday.

While the incident took place on January 31, the victim lodged a complaint with the police on Wednesday, following which all the accused were apprehended, Narmada district Superintendent of Police Himkar Singh said.

As per the complaint, the accused took the victim, who is a Class 11 student, to a secluded place near Dediapada bus stop and raped her on Monday evening, the official said.

We registered an FIR after the girl, along with her parents, approached the Dediapada police station on Wednesday,” he said.

The six accused have been booked on the charges of gang-rape under relevant provisions of the IPC and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, Singh said.

Five men were arrested and a minor detained for the attack, he said.

Some of the accused who are non-tribals have also been booked under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the official added.



Children play during a light snowfall, on the outskirts of Srinagar on Thursday. Most parts of Kashmir Valley received fresh snowfall while rain and sleet lashed Srinagar city

Gap between rich and poor has widened under Modi Govt, says Digvijaya Singh

New Delhi: The gap between the rich and the poor has increased under the current government at the Centre, Congress MP Digvijaya Singh said in Rajya Sabha on Thursday, while asking it to impose a “super rich tax” on those whose income has grown even during the Covid pandemic.

Taking part in a debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President’s address, he also alleged that the social fabric and unity in diversity of the country has been disturbed with fanaticism being encouraged.

Singh said when the BJP came to power in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised that black money would be brought back, price rise would be curtailed and employment would be

improved, but nothing has happened.

Claiming that in seven years of this government the gap between the rich and the poor has widened, he said the rich has become richer and the poor has become poorer. Citing tax collection data, Singh said under the UPA regime, the rich were taxed more and the common people less.

However, he said after the “suit-boot” government came, in 2021-22, the direct tax collected from individuals has fallen as a proportion to the total tax collected, while the contribution of indirect tax collected from common people has risen This, Singh said, implied that the BJP-led government has collected less tax from rich people and more from poor people. **PTI**

Maha daily Covid cases drop to 15K; infections in Mumbai dip to 827

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A day after Maharashtra witnessed a moderate increase in the number of Covid-19 infections, the daily pandemic cases dropped to 15,252 on Thursday, even as the daily cases in Mumbai once again went down below 1000 to touch a tally of 827 cases.

On a day when no fresh omicron case was reported in Maharashtra, the daily infections in the state dropped by 2815 - from 18067 cases on Wednesday to 15,252 on Thursday. With the fresh infections, the total number of Covid-19 cases in the state rose from 77,53,548 to 77,68,800.

With 75 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 1,42,784 to 1,42,859.

Mumbai, where the daily infections have been dropping steadily for more than two weeks now, witnessed a drop in the number of cases from 1,128 to 827. With the latest cases, the total number of cases in Mumbai mounted from 10,94,521 to 10,49,348.

As 30,235 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 74,33,633 to 74,83,868. The recovery rate in the state rose from 95.87 per cent to 96.07 per cent.

The number of “active cases” in the state dropped from 1,73,221 to 1,58,151. The fatality rate in the state dropped

from 1.84 per cent to 1.83 per cent.

The active cases in Pune dropped from 52265 on Wednesday to 46710 on Thursday.

The active cases in Mumbai dropped from 8158 to 7601, while the active cases in the neighbouring Thane rose from 11676 on Wednesday to 10,636 on Thursday.

Nagpur accounted for 18,154 active cases, followed by Nashik (12142), Ahmednagar (8357), Aurangabad (5056) and Satara (4165) Of the 7,50,99,654 samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far, 77,68,800 have tested positive (10.34 per cent) for COVID-19 until Thursday.

Currently, 9,05,696 people are in home quarantine while 2,610 people are in institutional quarantine.



A student goes to his classroom after authorities allowed schools to reopen classes for 8-12 standard students, in Kolkata, on Thursday

FIRST COLUMN

AGILE POLICY MAKING FOR NEW INDIA



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The challenge is to get private enterprises excited about the nation’s growth story

The secret key to a good book lie is generally found in the carefully worded preface, where the author summarizes the basic context for the reader to go through the upcoming content. The context to Budget 2022-23 is found in the first two paragraphs of the preface written in the Economic Survey of the past year. It mentions a “waterfall approach” of policy making which is like a giant repository (or cloud storage if you like) of all the possible scenarios and outcomes, pitfalls, benefits etc., of the stated policy and therefore is like a prefilled context setting, for an ever-changing reality, impacted by sudden pandemics, and other such variables. The alternate solution as suggested in the Economic Survey, is an “agile” policy making which depends heavily on the “feedback loops, “monitoring” and course correcting during the journey. Simply put, the premise being put forward is that it is always better to rely on real time data analysis and on the spot, number crunching to assess the impact of a policy and offer alternate course correction measures if needed, depending on external conditions, for more citizens to benefit from a stated policy. The Budget does just that, and more, by sticking to a bunch of announcements and broad context setting, which left many puzzled about the outcomes. Welcome to a tech-heavy, minimalistic Budget for an OTT content-friendly new India. The finance minister chose to restrict the speech to nearly 90 minutes, after having raised the bar to a record setting 160 minutes earlier. The budget itself instead of a hard copy was carried in a traditional and symbolic ‘bahikhata’ on a tablet, and the finance minister did not provide any populist songs for the thousands glued to television sets, closely following her announcements word to word. What she did was to provide a canvas of growth and future Bharat with her emphasis on the words “tech and digital” nearly 100 times and expanded the scope of technology-enabled services for a swathe of sectors ranging from agriculture to banking.

The underlying principle being a quicker, efficient delivery of government or private enterprise services with a thoughtful use of technology, which can be indigenously developed or imported and adapted to provide maximum benefits of governance. Supporting it is a huge amount of real-time feedback loops or data sets which tell you about the actual impact on ground or any need for course correction. That, to me, is the real star of the show which is studiously following the “agile policy making” principle. Possibly, the bureaucracy has woken up to the value of technology in policy making and is not shy of engaging private sector specialists to help them with tricky situations. The Economic Survey highlighted the value of agility by using data from large and varied private sources such as Map my India and Google. The learning has perhaps come from quickly developing a digital platform called CoWin for the gargantuan Covid vaccination program. This also saved huge amounts of research and development money that the government would have otherwise have to spend to develop such an application service. The budget talks about the potential for a huge private sector participation in the next 25 years of India’s growth also termed the “Amrit Kaal”. The challenge would be to get the private enterprises excited about the growth story and remove roadblocks in their journey. This will again take the bureaucrats, specifically those who are interacting with the small and medium sector business to really shed their waterfall approach and adopt an agile course.

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

India needs to check population growth

It is imperative to make national population control laws for the unity and integrity of the entire country and implement these equally

India’s uncontrolled population growth has become the central topic of discussion among common people these days. It is true that the discussion began before independence but due to a lack of determination in the Government, noting positive came out of the debates.

In 1940, the National Planning Committee created a subcommittee, the objective of which was to engage in resolution-centric discussion about the growing population. In 1946, the Health Survey and Development Committee submitted a report, in which the 11th chapter titled ‘The Population Problem’, expressed concern about the unchecked problem of over-population and mentioned several facts regarding it. Hence, when an interim government was formed in 1946, the policymakers agreed that such unchecked population growth could become a problem for the future.

However, even after all these years, some selfish powers want to change the demography of India in a well-planned manner by looking at the population-control debate with a communal lens. Due to this type of thinking a lobby is against population control and opposes it to serve their bigoted political masters.

The family-planning program started in India in 1952. At the time, India became the first country in the world to launch such a program. Starting by allocating ₹15 lakh to the program in the first five-year plan, about ₹300 crore was spent on it in the fourth five-year plan. Further, between 1947 and 2014, the Indian Government spent ₹22 lakh crore to control the population, however, due to the Government’s sectarian views, we did not get any meaningful or suitable results. In fact, due to this there has been shortage of effort, motive, policy and seriousness.

The national commission (NCRP-WC) formed by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2000 also appealed in its report to constitute population-regulation laws. Apart from this, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, along with many other states in India have made efforts regarding population-regulation at their own level and have also made laws regarding it. However, all the states in totality have not yet made any favourable effort at the national level.

The demand for population control measures has been raised from time-to-time in the Indian Parliament as well. In 2018, parliamentarians appealed to the Prime Minister to strictly implement the two-child policy in India. Apart from this, many parliamentarians from both the Houses and from different parties have, till now, proposed 35 private bills; 15 parliamentarians are also from Congress. Now, when it is being discussed once again both in and outside the Parliament, a handful of alleged secular politicians, and columnists and writers inspired by leftist ideologies and historians, are using ‘Saffron Demography’ glossary for it. Their motive



A SECTION OF PEOPLE IN OUR COUNTRY POINTS TOWARDS THE RAPIDLY DECREASING POPULATION IN AMERICA AND EUROPEAN COUNTRIES TO REASON THAT THE GROWING POPULATION IN INDIA IS NOT A PROBLEM, BUT A RESOURCE. AND THAT PEOPLE FROM OUR COUNTRY CAN MAKE A PROFIT IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES BY WORKING AS LABOURERS

(The author is the Vice-President of BJP in Bihar and Member, Bihar Legislative Council. The views expressed are personal.)



is to plan and throw the meaningful discussion and steps regarding population-regulation off the table.

The statement of the Sarsanghchalak of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Mohan Bhagwat, on the occasion of this Vijayadashmi, on this topic is a crisp answer to the proponents of false secularism. These elements also falsely contend that such debate is done with the motive to create a Hindu nation by instilling the fear of being a minority within the mind of Hindus. This in itself is humorous.

In the pre-independence era when the census report came in 1901, Bengal’s Census Commissioner H.H. Risley said in his report, “It seems like Muslims and Christians are rapidly increasing in the society. It raises a question as to whether the Hindu community will be able to save their position?”

Therefore, this initiative is not a ‘Saffron Demography’ but it is ‘Civilizational Demography’, which will prevent the changing character of India’s cultural nationalism, Indianism, culture and civilization.

In 1980, 57 per cent of the people in the world were unable to obtain necessary resources; the number increased to 72 per cent in 2017. In 1992, when the population of the world crossed 300 crore, 1700 scholars, economists and scientists, representing the world, signed a petition to declare that population had become a huge problem for the world.

The whole world is going through an ecological crisis currently. If everyone in the world started

matching the standard of living of an average American, five more planets like the Earth would be needed to fill the stomachs of the world. Likewise, if everyone in the world starts to live like Europeans, three more planets would be needed. It can be understood by this how important it is to save the Earth. To save the Earth also means to save the living beings residing on the planet, so that the environmental balance can be maintained. This task can be done by human beings. Population-regulation laws prove to be crucial for this because every fifth person of this world lives in India.

A section of the people in our country points towards the rapidly decreasing population in America and European countries to reason that the growing population in India is not a problem, but a resource. And that people from our country can make a profit in foreign countries by working as labourers.

Afghanistan, Bahrain, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan and Kuwait are among the 18 Emigration Check Required countries where maximum people go to work as labourers with the motive to earn money. Does it not wound the pride and self-respect of India, the country that was famous for its leadership in the whole world, to say that its people will work as labourers for someone else?

By looking at the figures of census in India, we can understand the increased pace at which this growth took place. The fact to pay attention to is that from 1951 to 2011, the Muslim population has grown from 9.8 per cent in 1951 to 14.23

per cent in 2011. Meanwhile, a sharp decline has been reported in the Hindu population. The population of Hindus was 84.1 per cent in 1951, and it fell to 79.80 per cent in 2011. If we look at the growing population of Muslims district wise, then out of India’s total 748 districts, the Muslim population exceeds by 20p per cent in 116 districts, which includes the 32 districts within 8 states where their population exceeds 50 per cent. Despite this, why have they been given the benefits of a minority in these districts?

We should recall that in 1947, population was the main reason for the partition of India. At present also there is an anti-Indian or ‘tukde-tukde gang’ inside the country, who are plotting to divide the country. During such times, it is imperative to make national population-control laws for the unity and integrity of the country.

India always talks about *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, therefore, to say that the making of population-control laws would harm or benefit a particular religion is not legitimate. Our country is worried about the decreasing population of Parsis. It is the specialty of Indian culture that we are putting efforts via social and cultural methods to ensure that the population of Parsis does not further diminish. Keeping in mind the available resources, future necessities and the problem of population imbalance, it is the need of the hour that population-control laws be created for national benefit, and be implemented equally for every religion and community.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

MODI GOVERNMENT’S ZERO SUM BUDGET HAS NOTHING FOR SALARIED CLASS, MIDDLE CLASS, THE POOR AND DEPRIVED, YOUTH, FARMERS, MSMEs. — CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



WHATEVER RAHUL GANDHI IS PREACHING TO US, HE SHOULD GO AND IMPLEMENT IN THE CONGRESS-RULED STATES. — UNION FINANCE MINISTER NIRMALA SITHARAMAN



World Cancer Day: Closing the Care Gap

People should also eat a balanced diet, practice yoga and exercise, eschew tobacco and alcohol to reduce chances of getting cancer



MANOHAR AGNANI

This year, the theme of ‘World Cancer Day’ on February 4, is ‘Close the Care Gap’. The mere mention of the word ‘cancer’ sends a shiver down the spine. In such a situation, the state of minds of people suffering from cancer and those taking care of cancer patients is indescribable. If there are ‘gaps’ in the various stages of cancer care, such as in diagnosis, surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy, and palliative care, then the enhanced despair becomes unimaginable. In this context, this year’s theme is relevant, as it will take a long time for any health system to completely live up to the ideal standards of care.

There may be a dearth of medical facilities at times or treatment may be too expensive. At times, cancer risk factors in

people’s lifestyles and environments may be excessive, and the general public’s “health-seeking behavior” may be a challenge also. There is also a great need for provision of palliative care for cancer patients in the terminal stage. In effect, there are gaps in expectations and real situations at every stage of cancer care. At times more, at times less.

In this context, it is relevant to mention the National Health Policy (2017), Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres (AB-HWC), Pradhan Mantri-Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), Pradhan Mantri-Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) and the special efforts being made in the field of cancer. AB-HWC is a well thought out strategy by the Government of India to ensure comprehensive primary healthcare.

The Prime Minister has given an ambitious target of converting all the Sub-Health Centres and Primary Health Centres in the country to Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs). Today, there are more than 89,000 HWCs in the country through which preventive, promotive and comprehensive primary healthcare is being provided. ASHAs and ANMs visit door-to-door to identify early symptoms in people above 30

years of age for five major diseases namely hypertension, diabetes and oral, breast and cervical cancer and share information on lifestyle changes to prevent cancer. In effect, it can be said that a tremendous effort is being made to close the gaps at the initial stage of cancer care, which is also showing positive results.

Efforts are also being made in the country to prevent and control the major causes of cancer through the National

Program for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardio-vascular diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS). The objective of this program is to spread public awareness about cancer, encourage people to improve their lifestyle and set-up Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) clinics in Community Health Centres and District Hospitals. By expanding the services of CT-Scan, MRI, Mammography and Histopathology in district hospitals, the gap in early detection of cancer is also being bridged.

Through ‘Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana’, cashless health services are being provided to a large section of the population in selected government and private hospitals. The Prime Minister’s vision of setting up new medical colleges in the country and

upgradation of district hospitals into medical colleges is also helping strengthen secondary care. Similarly, 22 AIIMS are being set up in the country in a phased manner to expand tertiary care. Grants are also given for setting up State Cancer Institutes and Tertiary Cancer Care Centres under the “Tertiary Cancer Care Centres Scheme”, which can be used towards diagnosis and treatment of cancer, conducting tests, research, providing palliative care and for participation in cancer registry programs. A 700-bed National Cancer Institute at Jhajjar, Haryana and a 460-bed Chittaranjan National Cancer Institute in Kolkata have also been started.

All these initiatives are proving useful in closing the gap in the areas of surgery, radiotherapy, chemotherapy,

(The writer is Additional Secretary, Union Health Ministry. The views expressed are personal.)

Russia buildup biggest in 30 years: NATO

AP ■ BRUSSELS

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg expressed concern on Thursday that Russia is continuing its military buildup around Ukraine, and that it has now deployed more troops and military equipment to Belarus that at any time in the last 30 years.

More high-level diplomacy was expected in Moscow and Kyiv amid deep uncertainty of Russia's intentions. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is hosting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for talks in the Ukrainian capital. Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with his Argentine counterpart Alberto Fernandez in Moscow.

Russia now has more than 100,000 troops stationed near Ukraine's northern and eastern borders, raising concern that Moscow might invade again, as it did in 2014, and destabilize the Ukrainian economy. Russian officials deny that an invasion is planned.

"Over the last days, we have seen a significant movement of Russian military forces into Belarus. This is the biggest Russian deployment there since the Cold War," Stoltenberg told reporters at NATO headquarters in Brussels. He said that Russian troop numbers in Belarus are likely to climb to 30,000, with the backing of special forces, high-end fighter jets, Iskander short-range ballistic missiles, and S-400 ground-to-air missile defense systems.

"So, we speak about a wide range of modern military capabilities. All this will be combined with Russia's annual nuclear forces exercise, expected to take place this month," Stoltenberg said. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu



In this photo taken from video and released by the Russian Defense Ministry Press Service on Wednesday, Russian soldiers attend a military training at the Yurginsky training ground in the Kemerovo region, Russia. The Russian military has launched a series of drills across the country amid the tensions with the West over Ukraine (Russian Defense Ministry Press Service via AP)

arrived in Minsk on Thursday to check on preparations for major Russia-Belarus war games scheduled for Feb. 10-20. Shoigu met with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. Speaking about the drills, Lukashenko said the goal was "to reinforce the border with Ukraine."

Stoltenberg called on Russia to "de-escalate," and repeated warnings from the West that "any further Russian aggression would have severe consequences and carry a heavy price."

NATO has no intention of deploying troops to Ukraine should Russia invade, but it has begun to reinforce the defenses of nearby member countries — notably Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. The 30-nation military alliance also plans to beef up its defenses in the Black Sea region near Bulgaria and Romania.

Stoltenberg also welcomed President Joe Biden's decision on Wednesday to send 2,000 U.S.-based troops to Poland and Germany and shifting 1,000 more from Germany to Romania, demonstrating to

both allies and foes Washington's commitment to NATO's eastern flank.

"We are committed to finding a political solution to the crisis, but we have to be prepared for the worst," Stoltenberg said, and he welcomed other recent offers of troops and equipment from several allies. Russia objects to the troop move and has described it as "destructive."

Erdogan, a prominent NATO ally in the Black Sea region, is positioning himself as a possible mediator.

Speaking before departing for Kyiv, he reiterated Turkey's support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and said Ankara was ready to do what it can to reduce tensions. "We are closely following the challenges that Ukraine is faced with as well as the tension in the region," he said. "We express on every platform that we support the territorial integrity and sovereignty of our strategic partner and neighbor, Ukraine." "As a Black Sea nation, we invite all sides to exercise restraint and dialogue in order to bring peace to region," Erdogan said.

Putin heads to China to bolster ties amid Ukraine tensions

AP ■ MOSCOW

American and European officials may be staying away from the Beijing Winter Olympics because of human rights concerns, but Russian President Vladimir Putin will be on hand even as tensions soar over his buildup of troops along his country's border with Ukraine.

Putin's talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday will mark their first in-person meeting since 2019 and are intended to help strengthen Moscow's ties with China and coordinate their policies in the face of Western pressure. After, the two will attend the Games' opening ceremony.

In an article published Thursday by the Chinese news agency Xinhua, Putin wrote that Moscow and Beijing play an "important stabilizing role" in global affairs and help make international affairs "more equitable and inclusive." The Russian president criticized "attempts by some countries to politicize sports to the benefit of their ambitions," an apparent reference to a diplomatic boycott of the Olympics by the U.S. and some of its allies.

EU spokeswoman Nabila Massrali reacted to that by stating that "we are, of course, fully committed to contribute to promoting and protecting sports integrity and to strengthening universal respect for human rights." "Big sports events such as the Olympic

Games often have a universal audience," Massrali said. "They can be instrumental for spreading positive values and promoting freedom and human rights at the global level. However, such platforms should not be used for political propaganda."

Many Western officials are skipping the Beijing Games in protest of China's detention of more than 1 million Uyghur Muslims in the northwestern region of Xinjiang. But leaders of the ex-Soviet Central Asian nations, which have close ties with both Russia and China, all followed Putin's lead and attending.

In an interview with China Media Group also released Thursday, Putin emphasized that "we oppose the attempts to politicize sport or use it as a tool of coercion, unfair competition and discrimination."

Putin's meeting with Xi and attendance at the opening ceremony "announces the further promotion of the China-Russia relationship," said Li Xin, director of the Institute of European and Asian Studies at Shanghai's University of Political Science and Law.

China and Russia have increasingly found common cause over what they believe is a U.S. disregard for their territorial and security concerns, Li said. Both their governments have also taken to mocking U.S. over its domestic travails, from last year's Capitol riot to its struggle to control COVID-19.

Ex-cop who killed Black teen leaving prison: Was it justice?

AP ■ CHICAGO

Ex-Chicago police Officer Jason Van Dyke was set leave prison on Thursday after being locked up less than four years, and in the city that witnessed the historic murder conviction of the first officer for an on-duty shooting in a half century, that release is seen as another chapter in a troubling history of race and policing.

Among many there was hope that Van Dyke's 2018 conviction of second-degree murder and 16 counts of aggravated battery signaled a willingness to hold officers accountable. But they say word that he's being set free after serving about three years and four months of his sentence of six years and nine months has turned Black teenager Laquan McDonald, and them, into victims again.

"This is the ultimate illustration that Black lives don't matter as much as other lives," said the Rev. Marshall Hatch, a prominent minister on the city's West Side. "To get that short amount of time for a murder sends a bad message to the community." Early Thursday, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot made a similar point.

"I understand why this continues to feel like a miscarriage of justice, especially when many Black and brown men get sentenced to so much more prison time for having committed far lesser crimes," she said in a statement. To give the teen and the community the justice it hoped it had with Van Dyke's conviction, the NAACP this week asked U.S. Attorney

General Merrick Garland to bring federal civil rights charges against Van Dyke, who is white. McDonald's grandmother, Tracie Hunter, has asked for the same thing.

Whether those charges are coming is unknown. But what's clear is that Van Dyke's release comes at a perilous time for the city and its police force. Chicago is experiencing a surge in violent crime and had more homicides last year than in any of in the last quarter century.

The city continues to pay multi-million settlements to victims of police abuse. And just this week, prosecutors said they would vacate the convictions of nearly 50 more people who were framed or falsely accused by police of drug crimes.

To be sure, the 2014 shooting eventually led to a court-ordered consent decree that resulted in several reforms, including the creation of a civilian-led police oversight board and new rules governing investigations into police shootings. And after the city refused to release the police video of McDonald's killing for more than a year and only did so after a judge ordered it to do so, it now must release such videos within 60 days.

But, while Lightfoot in her statement pointed to "historic reforms" the city has made, changes have come slower than expected and the city has struggled to meet some of the consent decree's deadlines. Not only that, but just as then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel fought in court the release of the McDonald video.

Biden says US forces killed ISIS leader during raid in Syria

AP ■ ATMEH, SYRIA

The leader of the violent Islamic State group was killed during an overnight raid carried out by U.S. special forces in Syria's northwestern Idlib province, President Joe Biden said Thursday.

The raid targeted Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi, who took over as head of the militant group on Oct. 31, 2019, just days after leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi died during a U.S. raid in the same area.

A U.S. official said al-Qurayshi died as al-Baghdadi did, by exploding a bomb that killed himself and members of his family, including women and children, as U.S. forces approached.

The operation came as IS has been trying for a resurgence, with a series of attacks in the region, including a 10-day assault late last month to seize a prison.

U.S. special forces landed in helicopters and assaulted a house in a rebel-held corner of Syria, clashing for two hours with gunmen, witnesses said. Residents described continuous gunfire and explosions that jolted the town of Atme near the Turkish border, an area dotted with camps for internally displaced people from Syria's civil war.

First responders reported that 13 people had been killed, including six children and four women. Biden said in a statement that he ordered the raid to "protect the American people and our allies, and make the world a safer place." He planned to address the American public later Thursday morning.

ORIENTAL NAGPUR BETUL HIGHWAY LIMITED

Regd. Off: OSE Commercial Block, Asset 5B, Aerocity, Hospitality, District, IGI Airport, New Delhi-110037, Tel: 91-11-46044604, Email: spv.osel@gmail.com CIN: U45400DL2010PLC203649 (UN-AUDITED QUARTERLY FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2021)

(Amount in Lakhs)				
Sl. No.	Particulars	Quater Ended 31.12.2021 (Unaudited)	Quater Ended 31.12.2020 (Unaudited)	Year Ended 31.03.2021 (Audited)
1	Total income from operations (net)	13,232.66	13,877.35	55,600.53
2	Net Profit/(Loss) for the period (before Tax and Exceptional items)	6,018.75	6,430.40	24,860.21
3	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before tax (after Exceptional items)	6,018.75	6,430.40	24,860.21
4	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period after tax (after Exceptional items)	5,933.71	6,299.45	21,608.65
5	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit/(Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive Income (after tax)]	5,933.71	6,299.45	21,608.65
6	Paid up Equity Share Capital	1,813.45	1,813.45	1,813.45
7	Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve)	85,715.77	81,303.65	86,830.03
8	Securities Premium	34,436.55	34,436.55	34,436.55
9	Net Worth	121,965.77	117,553.65	123,080.03
10	Paid up Debt Capital/Outstanding Debt	242,424.23	262,056.89	251,872.64
11	Outstanding Redeemable Preference Shares	0.00	0.00	0.00
12	Debt Equity Ratio	1.99:1	2.23:1	2.05:1
13	Earnings Per Share (of Rs 10/- each)			
	1. Basic:	32.72	34.74	119.16
	2. Diluted:	32.72	34.74	119.16
14	Capital Redemption Reserve	0.00	0.00	0.00
15	Debiture Redemption Reserve	20,235.10	0.00	0.00
16	Debt Service Coverage Ratio	1.32:1	1.38:1	1.36:1
17	Interest Service Coverage Ratio	2.02:1	2.01:1	1.98:1
18	Asset Coverage Ratio:	1.81:1	1.72:1	1.80:1
19	Current Ratio	3.96:1	4.72:1	5.47:1
20	Debtor Turnover Ratio	0.12:1	0.12:1	0.17:1
21	Inventory Turnover Ratio	NA	NA	NA
22	Long Term Debt to Working Capital	2.75:1	2.41:1	2.17:1
23	Bad Debts to Accounts Receivable	NA	NA	NA
24	Current Liabilities Ratio	0.11:1	0.10:1	0.09:1
25	Total Debts to Total Assets	0.65:1	0.68:1	0.66:1
26	Operating Margin	1.04:1	1.07:1	1.06:1
27	Net Profit Margin	0.52:1	0.53:1	0.45:1

Notes:

a) The above is an extract of the detailed format of quarterly un-audited financial results filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulations 52 of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations 2015. The full format of the quarterly un-audited financial results are available on the websites of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and the listed entity (<http://www.nagpurbetulhighway.in>).

b) For the other line items referred to in Regulation 52(4) of the SEBI (Listing and Other Disclosure Requirements) Regulations 2015, pertinent disclosures have been made to the Stock Exchange and are available on the websites of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) and the listed entity (<http://www.nagpurbetulhighway.in>).

c) These quarterly un-audited financial results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors of the Company at their meeting held on February 03, 2022. The Statutory Auditors have carried out limited review of the aforesaid results.

For and on behalf of Board of Directors of
Oriental Nagpur Betul Highway Limited
Sd/-
Nikhil Dhingra
Director
DIN - 07835556

Place: New Delhi
Date: 03.02.2022

15 terrorists, 4 soldiers killed in attacks on security posts in Pakistan

PTI ■ KARACHI

Armed assailants attacked two security forces' camps in Pakistan's restive southwestern Balochistan province, triggering an intense exchange of fire in which at least 15 terrorists and four soldiers were killed, a senior minister said on Thursday, terming it a "great success" against terrorism.

The attacks, claimed later by the banned Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), took place in Panjgur and Noshki districts on Wednesday. In Panjgur, the terrorists tried to enter a security forces' camp from two locations while in Noshki they attempted to get into a Frontier Corps (FC) post which was "promptly responded".

Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed said in a video message that nine terrorists and four soldiers were killed in Noshki while six terrorists were shot dead in Panjgur. "The terrorists were repulsed from both places by the Pakistan Army. A few — four to five people — are surrounded by the army in Panjgur and will be defeated," he said, terming it a "great success" against terrorism.

Prime Minister Imran Khan took to Twitter on Thursday to congratulate the security forces for foiling the terror attacks on their camps in Balochistan. "We salute our brave security forces who repulsed terrorist attacks against security forces' camps in Panjgur & Naushki, Balochistan. The nation stands united behind our security forces who continue to give great sacrifices to protect us," he wrote.

Earlier in a statement, the military's media wing Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said: "both attacks were successfully repulsed, inflicting heavy casualties on terrorists".

A Frontier Corps spokesperson also confirmed that two blasts had taken place near the camps in Panjgur and Noshki which were followed by intense firing.

The BLA claimed responsibility for the attacks in a statement. The separatist outfit has recently stepped up attacks on security forces and installations. The attacks on Wednesday were the latest in a string of such assaults in Balochistan and come a week after ten soldiers were killed in a terrorist attack on a security forces' checkpoint in the province's Kech district.

President Xi Jinping, China's 'chairman of everything'

AP ■ BEIJING

The last time the Olympics came to China, he oversaw the whole endeavor. Now the Games are back, and this time Xi Jinping is running the entire nation.

The Chinese president, hosting a Winter Olympics beleaguered by complaints about human rights abuses, has upended tradition to restore strongman rule in China and tighten Communist Party control over the economy and society.

Xi was in charge of the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing that served as a "coming-out party" for China as an economic and political force.

A second-generation member of the party elite, Xi became general secretary of the party in 2012. He took the ceremonial title of president the next year. Xi spent his first five-year term atop the party mak-

ing himself China's strongest leader at least since Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s. Xi was dubbed "chairman of everything" after he put himself in charge of economic, propaganda and other major functions.

That reversed a consensus for the ruling inner circle to avoid power struggles by sharing decision-making. The party is crushing pro-democracy and other activism and tightening control over business and society. It has expanded surveillance of China's 1.4 billion people and control of business, culture, education and religion.

A "social credit" system tracks every person and company and punishes infractions from pollution to littering. Xi's rise coincides with increased assertiveness abroad following three decades of China keeping its head down to focus on economic development. Xi

wants China to be "the greatest country on Earth, widely admired and therefore followed," said Steve Tsang, a Chinese politics specialist at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. "The world where China is top dog is a world where authoritarianism is safe," Tsang said.

Democracies will "need to know their place." Born in Beijing in 1953, Xi enjoyed a privileged youth as the second son of Xi Zhongxun, a former vice premier and guerrilla commander in the civil war that brought Mao Zedong's communist rebels to power in 1949.

At 15, Xi Jinping was sent to rural Shaanxi province in 1969 as part of Mao's campaign to have educated urban young people learn from peasants. Xi was caught trying to sneak back to the Chinese capital and returned to Shaanxi to dig irrigation ditches.

Turkey: 19 migrants now found dead at border with Greece

ISTANBUL: Turkish authorities on Thursday found seven more dead bodies near Turkey's border with Greece, raising to 19 number of migrants who have frozen to death at frontier. Turkey has blamed Greece for deaths, accusing Greek border guards of illegally pushing migrants back over frontier. Greece has strongly rejected accusation. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed on Thursday to expose what he said was Greece's illegal push-back of migrants at every occa-

UNIDENTIFIED DEAD BODY



General Public is hereby informed that one person **Namely: Suraj, S/o: Unknown, Address: Unknown**, was found dead near Footpath of Gate No. 6, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi on **27.01.2022** in the area of P.S. Sabzi Mandi, Delhi. In this regard a case has been lodged vide

DD No. 10 PP/THC U/s 174 Cr.P.C. dated 27.01.2022 at P.S. Sabzi Mandi, Delhi. The description of the dead person is as under:- **Age:** About 45 years, **Sex:** Male, **Height:** 5'6", **Complexion:** Shallow, **Face:** Round, **Built:** Strong, **Wearing:** Black colour jacket, grey colour pant and barefeet. If any one having any information about this dead person please inform undersigned. **SHO P.S. Sabzi Mandi, Delhi Ph.: 011-23823161, 8750870126**

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that this person **Name:** Unknown, **S/o:** Unknown, **R/o:** Unknown, **Age:** Approx 55 Years, **Sex:** Male, **Height:** 5'8", **Built:** Thin, **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Long, **Wearing:** Green Colour Sweater & Grey Colour Pant & Bare Footed, was found Dead at Metro Foot Over Bridge, Near St. Stephen Hospital, Tis Hazari, Delhi on 31.01.2022.

In this regard a DD No.66-A, Dated 31.01.2022 has been lodged at P.S. Subzi Mandi, Delhi. The Dead Body has been preserved in HRH Mortuary for 72 hours for identification. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out information about this person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this person may kindly inform to the following. **SHO P.S. Subzi Mandi, Delhi Ph.: 011-23823161, 8750870126**

PUBLIC NOTICE

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

Notice U/s. 13(2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 is being issued by ICICI Bank Ltd. (on underlying pool assigned to ICICI Bank by Dewan Housing Finance Ltd.) in relation to the enforcement of security in respect of a housing loan facility granted pursuant to a loan agreement entered into between DHFL and the following borrower(s) who have defaulted in repayment of principal and interest of loans facility obtained by them from secured creditor and loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice was issued to them on their last known addresses, however, it has returned un-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 (DHFL Old LAN & ICICI New LAN) & Address	Property Address of Secured Asset / Asset to be Enforced	Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice	NPA Date
1.	Gulab Singh, Kanchan Singh, RZH-206, Second Floor, Back Side Gali No 7, Raj Nagar-2, Near Palam Colony, Delhi. A/c No:- 9600001932 & QZDEL00005039346	RZ-H-206, 1st Floor (Back Side), KH No-62/202, Vill- Palam Gali No- 7, Raj Nagar-2, New Delhi	06-Jan-2022, Rs. 12,77,225/-	12/07/2021
2.	Parmod Kumar Patro, Namita Patro, Plot No F-107-108, Flat No 6, 1st Floor, Rhs Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar, Delhi. A/c No:- 26600000908 & QZDEL00005019398	F 107 & 108, 1st Flr, Back Side Rhs Pvt No-6, KH No 604, 605,606, Block- F Vill- Nawada, Mohan Garden Extn, Uttam Nagar, Delhi	06-Jan-2022, Rs. 10,62,191/-	31/08/2021
3.	Puran Rawat, Vandana Rawat, RZ-686, F/16E, Gali No 8, Kailash Mansarovar Ashram Marg, Raj Nagar Part 1, Palam City, Delhi. A/c No:- 27300000362 & QZDWA00005008502	RZ 1/ 16, Plot No 16, KH No 59/ 16 /1, 3rd Floor With Roof Right, Village- Palaam, Raj Nagar, New Delhi	06-Jan-2022, Rs. 10,35,236/-	23/09/2021

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: 03 February 04, 2022** **Place: Delhi/NCR** **Authorized Officer ICICI Bank Limited**

Digital warfare tech at sea helping US foes evade sanctions

AP ■ MIAMI

Technology to hide a ship's location previously available only to the world's militaries is spreading fast through the global maritime industry as governments from Iran to Venezuela — and rogue shipping companies they depend on to move their petroleum products — look for stealthier ways to circumvent U.S. sanctions. Windward, a maritime intelligence company whose data is used by U.S. government to investigate sanctions violations, said that since January 2020 it has detected more than 200 vessels involved in over 350 incidents in which they appear to have electronically manipulat-

ed their GPS location. "This is out of hand right now," Matan Peled, co-founder of Windward and a former Israeli naval officer, said in an interview. "It's not driven by countries or superpowers. It's ordinary companies using this technique."

The scale is astonishing," Peled said. U.S. authorities have been slow to catch on to spread of technology that has been part of electronic warfare arsenal for decades but is only now cropping up in commercial shipping, with serious national security, environmental and maritime safety implications. Windward was able to identify suspect ships using technology that detects digital tracks that don't correspond to

actual movements, such as hairpin turns at breakneck speed or drifting in form of perfect crop circles. William Fallon, a retired four-star admiral and former head of the U.S. Pacific Command, said U.S. authorities have been aware for some time of threat from electronic manipulation, one of a growing number of so-called "gray zone" national security challenges that cut across traditional military, commercial and economic lines.

"Any time you can deceive somebody into believing you're somewhere where you're not is concerning," said Fallon, who is now a board member of American Security Project, a Washington think tank.

India's services sector activity slips further in Jan

New Delhi: India's services sector activity moderated further in January as new business rose at a noticeably slower rate amid the escalation of the pandemic, reintroduction of restrictions and inflationary pressures, a monthly survey said on Thursday.

The seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index fell to 51.5 in January, down from 55.5 in December, pointing to the slowest rate of expansion in the current six-

month sequence of growth.

For the sixth straight month, the services sector witnessed an expansion in output. In Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

According to survey participants, demand was restricted by the fast spread of the Omicron variant and the reinstatement of curfews in parts of the country.

"The escalation of the pandemic and reintroduction of curfews had a detrimental impact on growth across the service sector. Both new business and output rose at slight rates that were the weakest in six months," Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at IHS Markit, said.

Companies became increasingly worried that growth would be harmed by the intensification of the pandemic, reintroduction of

restrictions and inflationary pressures. Business sentiment remained positive but slipped to a six-month low.

"Concerns about how long the current wave of COVID-19 will last dampened business confidence and caused job shedding. Firms were also alarmed about price pressures," Lima noted.

Service sector jobs declined for the second month running during January, owing to reduced output requirements

among some businesses and future uncertainty.

Meanwhile, the Composite PMI Output Index -- which measures combined services and manufacturing output -- fell from 56.4 in December to 53.0 in January, signalling the slowest rate of expansion in the current six-month period of growth. Services activity and manufacturing production increased at weaker rates.

The January data pointed to a second successive month-

ly drop in private sector employment. Despite being modest, the rate of job shedding accelerated from December, the survey said.

On the price front, the January data pointed to a stronger increase in expenses among service providers, with the overall rate of inflation climbing to its highest since December 2011. Survey members said there were higher food, fuel, material, staff and transportation costs.

"The latest PMI results brought worrying news as input prices increased at the sharpest rate in over a decade. Charges rose at a faster pace as some firms continued to transfer additional cost burdens to consumers, but the rate of inflation here was moderate as the vast majority of monitored companies left their fees unchanged since December," Lima said. Meanwhile, the monetary policy committee of the Reserve Bank of India

(RBI) is slated to announce its policy on February 9.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during her Budget speech on February 1, announced that the government will borrow about Rs 11.6 lakh crore from the market in 2022-23 to meet its expenditure requirement.

The country's fiscal deficit is projected to be higher at 6.9 per cent this fiscal as against 6.8 per cent estimated earlier, Sitharaman said.

Markets snap 3-day rally as profit-booking hammers IT, finance stocks

Mumbai: The Sensex and Nifty buckled under heavy selling pressure on Thursday as investors pocketed gains in IT, finance and bank stocks after three sessions of robust gains.

Nervousness in European markets ahead of central bank meetings coupled with lacklustre macroeconomic data back home also sapped risk appetite, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex plunged 770.31 points or 1.29 per cent to finish at 58,788.02. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty lost 219.80 points or 1.24 per cent to close at 17,560.20.

HDFC was the top laggard among the Sensex constituents, tumbling 3.23 per cent, followed by Infosys, L&T, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Tech Mahindra and Kotak Bank.

Only five counters closed in the green -- ITC, Maruti, Titan, SBI, and Asian Paints, advancing up to 1.14 per cent.

On the macroeconomic front, India's services sector activity moderated further in January as new business rose at a noticeably slower rate amid the escalation of the pandemic,

reintroduction of restrictions and inflationary pressures, a monthly survey showed.

The seasonally adjusted India Services Business Activity Index fell to 51.5 in January, from 55.5 in December, pointing to the slowest rate of expansion in the current six-month sequence of growth.

"The domestic market extended its losses following broad-based selling as global cues turned in favour of bears. All major sectors succumbed to selling while Auto stocks showed some resistance on the back of sequential growth in auto sales numbers during January.

"US futures were under pressure following weak earnings numbers reported by Meta (Facebook) while European markets fretted about monetary policy tightening ahead of the central bank policy announcement," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Ajit Mishra, VP - Research, Religare Broking, said, "Markets have been experiencing volatile swings despite

the positive bias and we expect this trend to continue... (amid) choppy global markets and prevailing earnings season."

Barring auto and consumer durables, all BSE sectoral indices closed with losses, led by IT, tech, realty, finance, power and energy.

The BSE mid-cap and small-cap gauges shed up to 0.90 per cent.

Global markets slipped ahead of policy meetings of the European Central Bank (ECB) and the Bank of England (BoE) amid fears of rate hikes to control inflation.

In other Asian markets, Tokyo closed in the red, while Seoul was positive.

Several Asian markets, including China and Hong Kong, were shut for the Lunar New Year holidays.

Stock exchanges in Europe were mostly trading in the negative zone in the afternoon session.

International oil benchmark Brent crude slipped 0.65 per cent to USD 88.89 per barrel.

No coal shortage at power plants; supply rises 25 pc in Apr-Dec '21: RK Singh

New Delhi: Power projects in the country do not have any coal shortage currently and these plants have got 25 per cent higher coal supply of 430.6 million tonnes in April-December 2021 compared to a year ago, Parliament was informed on Thursday.

"Presently, there is no shortage of coal for power plants in the country," Union Power Minister R K Singh on Thursday said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

According to the reply, the total quantity of coal despatched to the power sector by Coal India Ltd (CIL) and Singareni Collieries Company Ltd (SCCL) during April-December 2021 stood at about 430.6 million tonnes (MT), against about 344.2 MT in the year-ago period. It was about 375.2 MT during the corresponding period of 2019-20.

The despatch showed a growth of about 25 per cent with respect to the preceding year and by about 15 per cent with respect to 2019-20, it added.

Further, Singh told the House that the coal import has

reduced to 21.4 MT during 2021-22 (April-December) as against 35.1 MT during the same period of 2020-21 and 52.5 MT during the same period of 2019-20.

The shortfall in imported coal has been compensated by supply from domestic coal, he stated.

He also informed the House that as a result of the above measures, the coal stock available at the power plants has increased from 7.2 MT as on October 8, 2021, to about 25 MT as on January 26, 2022.

The Government of India has taken the following measures to increase the coal supply to power plants.

To address the issues of coal supplies to the power sector, an inter-ministerial sub-group meet regularly to take various operational decisions to enhance the supply of coal to thermal power plants (TPPs) as well as for meeting any contingent situations related to the power sector, including to alleviate critical coal stock position in power plants.

Rupee falls for 3rd day, slips 5 paise to 74.88 against USD

Mumbai: The rupee edged lower by 5 paise to log its third straight session of loss against the US dollar on Thursday as stronger greenback against key rivals and muted domestic equities weighed on forex market sentiment.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 74.84 against the American dollar, and later witnessed an intra-day high of 74.75 and a low of 74.92 against the greenback.

The local unit finally ended the day at 74.88, down 5 paise from the previous close of 74.83.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.22 per cent higher at 96.14.

Jateen Trivedi, Senior Research Analyst at LKP Securities, said, "Rupee traded in a muted range around 74.85 as the dollar index and crude prices traded in small range... Rupee has seen resistance at 74.70 and support near 75.00 hence the range between this needs a break for direction of rupee trend."

Gaurang Somaiyaa, Forex & Bullion Analyst, Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said, "Rupee traded in a narrow range and volatility remained low ahead of the important ECB and BoE policy statement that will be released today."

RBI may hike reverse repo rate by 0.25 pc in next week's policy: Report

Mumbai: The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) may go for a hike of up to 0.25 per cent in the reverse repo rate at which the RBI absorbs excess liquidity and leave the repo rate at which it lends, to narrow the policy rate corridor, a British brokerage said on Thursday.

"Growth concerns amid spread of the Omicron variant and relatively benign inflation out-turns provide the RBI with enough room to maintain its growth-supportive monetary policies," analysts at Barclays said, ahead of the resolution announcement next week.

The RBI will hike the reverse repo rate by 0.20-0.25 per cent, given its liquidity management actions, it said.

The brokerage joins a growing list of watchers expecting a reverse repo hike. Other analysts also blame the surprising hike in the government borrowing announced in the budget for the RBI's likely call for policy normalisation.

Barclays said the budget's focus on capital expenditure is expected to provide a back-

loaded fiscal impulse to the economy and does not change the macro backdrop, which includes concerns on inflation.

On the surging global oil prices, which generally play into domestic inflation through corresponding price hikes of fuels locally, the brokerage said the inflationary pressures are unlikely to rise before the state elections finish by March, hinting of no pass-through.

Even though the inflation is benign lately, the RBI needs to be vigilant, it said, pointing to its own forecasts suggesting the headline number staying in the upper end of the 2-6 per cent band and also the crude prices moving higher.

It said till now, the liquidity signals from the RBI have been mixed, which have included shelving of the bond purchasing programme GSAP, an increase in both the quantum and cut-offs for voluntary reverse repo rate auctions and some bond sales in the secondary market last month.

Khadi's exponential growth is result of KVIC's Charkha Kranti

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Khadi's exponential growth, as mentioned by President in his address to the Parliament ahead of the Budget Session, is a recognition of the "Charkha Kranti" initiated by Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) in the last seven years, says KVIC chairman VK Saxena.

Expressing gratitude to the President for taking note of the good work done by the KVIC, Saxena said the Commission built several monumental Charkhas to propagate Gandhian thoughts and symbolism of Charkha in India and abroad which further popularized Khadi.

Khadi's success was acknowledged by the President in his address to the Parliament on January 31, and by Home Minister Amit Shah, a day before at Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad, while unveiling Mahatma Gandhi's 100 sq meter wall mural on his 74th Martyr's Day.

"Khadi and Gandhi were only used for political gains. It was only after the year 2014, that concrete efforts were made by the Narendra Modi government to popularize Khadi and spread the thoughts of Mahatma Gandhi and the symbolism of Charkha across the globe. Be it the birth anniversary or the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi, KVIC organized unique programs to celebrate Gandhian thoughts," he said, adding, "The PM himself is the biggest source of inspiration behind the success of KVIC."

During the last 7 years, KVIC built monuments like world's biggest wooden and steel charkhas, world's smallest charkha on wrist watches, Gandhi ji's world's largest wall mural made of clay Kulhads, world's largest national flag made of Khadi fabric, heritage Charkha museum and many more. Charkha, which was

Gandhi ji's tool in the fight against the British Rule, made its way to a foreign country, for the first time in 2017. Since then, Bapu's Charkha has reached 60 countries of the world, he said.

1956 to 2014 - No significant activity/event

July 5, 2016 - World's largest wooden Charkha installed at IGI Airport, New Delhi, by Shri Amit Shah, the then BJP President and Hon'ble Member of Parliament.

October 18, 2016 - Biggest Ever Charkha distribution in Independent India at Ludhiana by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

May 21, 2017 - World's largest Stainless Steel Charkha

installed at Connaught Place, New Delhi by Shri Amit Shah, the then BJP President and Hon'ble Member of Parliament.

May 21, 2017 - Heritage Charkha Museum Inaugurated at Connaught Place, New Delhi, by Shri Amit Shah, the then BJP President and Hon'ble Member of Parliament.

October 2, 2017 - A big wooden Charkha unveiled in Uganda, for the first time on foreign soil.

April 15, 2018 - Stainless Steel Charkha unveiled by former Agriculture Minister Shri Radha Mohan Singh at Motihari in Bihar to commemorate Champaran Satyagrah centenary celebrations.

Former oil secy Tarun Kapoor to be new oil regulator

New Delhi: Former oil secretary Tarun Kapoor was on Thursday selected to head India's oil and gas regulator PNGRB, sources said.

Kapoor, who superannuated as secretary of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on November 30, 2021, was selected to be chairman of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) after interviews of

over a dozen candidates.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is publically notified that the Flat No V-99, Sector-12, Noida, has been allotted in the name of Meera Joshi D/o K.N. Joshi R/o V-99, Sector-12, Noida presently at 1088, Laxmi Bag Nagar, New Delhi, had sold the said flat, on the basis of SPA to the following persons: A SPA was executed in favour of Vijay Kumar S/o Late Shri Kirpal Singh R/o C-1/179, Lalpat Nagar, New Delhi at SR Delhi Vide Book No. IV Volume No. 2037 on pages 46-47, at Document No. 4520 dated 15.09.1993 and the Agreement to Sell was not registered. So with the help of the notice it is informed the transfer of the above flat goes in favour of Anuj Virendra Singh Kadyan S/o Shri Virendra Singh R/o E-001, Stellar M.I. Citi Homes Omicron-III, Greater Noida if any one has have any objection he/she may submit his/her, objection in the Housing Department of Noida Authority alongwith sufficient proofs within 15 days of the publication this notice. **Vijay Kumar**

SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE FOR ENGINEERING WORKS

Sr. No. (1) E-Tender No.: **DRM-ENG-BSP-T-139-21-22**. Date: **31.01.2022**. Work: Jacketing of Piers and Abutments for rehabilitation of Br. No. 06 UP and 54 UP in JSG - BSP section under the jurisdiction of Assistant Divisional Engineer/Central/Bilaspur. **Tender Value:** ₹ 91,15,675.18. **EMD:** ₹ 1,82,300/- **Completion Period:** 06 Months.

Start Date of Submission of Tender: From 11.00 hours on **08.02.2022**. **Last Date of Submission of Tender:** Upto 11.00 hours on **22.02.2022**.

The complete information of above e-Tender Notice is available over websites: **http://www.ireps.gov.in** Bids other than e-bids shall not be accepted against above Tender.

Divisional Railway Manager(Engg) CPR/10/330 **S.E.C.Rly., Bilaspur.**

South East Central Railway @secrail

**Central Coalfields Limited**

"A Miniratna Company"
(A Subsidiary of Coal India Limited)

NOTICE

"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of Coal India Ltd. **www.coalindia.in/** respective Subsidiary Company (CCL, **www.centralcoalfields.in**). CIL e-procurement portal **https://coalindiatenders.nic.in** and Central Public Procurement Portal **https://eprocure.gov.in** in addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal **https://gem.gov.in**

APPEAL FOR IDENTIFICATION



General public is hereby informed that an unidentified dead body of male **Age: About 70 years, Complexion: Wheatish, Height: 5'4", Built: Thin, Face: Long, was wearing Black colour Jacket only, was found dead at Footpath, in front of Bankhani Mandir Chandni Chowk, Delhi.** In this regard a **DD No. 30A U/S 174 CrPc, dated 30.01.2022, has been lodged at P.S. Kotwali, Delhi.**

Any person having any information or clue about the deceased may kindly inform to the undersigned on the following address or telephone nos.

SHO P.S. Kotwali, Delhi
Ph.: 011-23977100, 23921740

DP/1951/N/2022

FORM NO.5

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
600/1, University Road, Near Hanuman Setu Mandir, Lucknow-226007
(Ares of Jurisdiction-Part of Uttar Pradesh)

Summons for filing & Appearance by Publication

O.A. No. 861/2021
Date: 31/01/2022

(Summons to defendant under section 19(3) of the Recovery of Debts due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 read with Rules 12 and 13 of the Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure Rules, 1993)

Original Application No.861 of 2021

ICICI BANK LTD. ...Applicant
Versus
KANCHAN VERMA & ORS ...Defendant

SUSPECT/WANTED



General public is hereby informed that on **21.11.2021 one Unknown Person** (depicted in the photo) **age about 20-25 years hit the complainant with his Scooty & absconded from the spot but complainant clicked his photo. The person is wanted in the above mentioned case.** In this regard, **FIR No. 444/2021, dated 21.11.2021, U/s 279/337 IPC** has been registered at **P.S. Darya Ganj, Delhi.**

Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the suspect, but no clue has come to light so far. Any persons having any information or clue about these suspect may kindly inform to the following.

SHO P.S. Daryaganj, Delhi
Ph. No.: 011-23279331, 23274683
Mob. No.: 8750870421

DP/1224/CD/2022

SEARCH OF MISSING

General public is hereby informed that this girl (depicted in the photo), **Named: Charu, D/o: Bhajnam, R/o: Village Begusarai, Bihar Aged: 17 years, has been missing from Shelter Home, Karol Bagh, Delhi since 24.12.2016 from the Jurisdiction of P.S. Prasad Nagar, Delhi.** In this regard a case **FIR No. 545/16, u/s 363 IPC** has been registered at **P.S. Prasad Nagar, Delhi.** Her physical description is as under:

Complexion: Fair, Height: 4'5" feet, Face: Round, Built: Normal, Clothing: Blue Colour Coat and foot slippers.

Any person is having any information/clue about this missing girl, may inform **SHO, Prasad Nagar, Delhi** at **E-mail: cbc@cbi.gov.nic.in** or **website : http://cbi.nic.in** **Tele No. : 011-24368638 or 24368641**

S.H.O P.S. Prasad Nagar, Delhi
Ph.: 011-25751048, 25725652

DP/1218/CD/2022



Charu

PUBLIC NOTICE: LOST ID CARD

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, Sec-8, Rohini, Delhi-110085

This is to bring to the notice of the general public that one ID Card of **Mr. MANNU SHARMA** issued by ICICI Bank Ltd. having ID card no. **2137414** has been found missing and/or lost on 2nd Feb 2022. Anyone, who finds the said ID card, is requested to return the said ID card to the Manager Debt Services & Management Group, ICICI Bank Limited, SD Tower, Rohini Sector-8 Delhi-85.

Therefore, all the customers of ICICI Bank Limited are hereby notified not to make any payment to any unauthorised person holding the said ID card no **2137414**.

Please take further notice that anybody making payment to any person holding the said ID card shall do so at his/her own costs, risk and peril and ICICI Bank shall not be bound and/or responsible for any payment.

Date : February 04, 2020
Place: Delhi

Sd/- For ICICI Bank Ltd.

CUBICAL FINANCIAL SERVICES LIMITED

Regd. Office-456, Aggarwal Metro Height, Netaji Subhash Place, Pitam Pura, Delhi-110034
CIN-L65993DL1990PLC040101
website:- **www.cubicalrealitors.com** E-mail:- cubfinser@yahoo.com

Extract of the statement of Unaudited Financial Results for the Quarter ended December 31, 2021 (Rs. in Lacs)

Sl.	Particulars	QTR ENDED 12/31/2021 (Un-audited)	QTR ENDED 12/31/2020 (Un-audited)	YEAR ENDED 31-03-2021 (Audited)
1	Total Income from operations	19.73	45.04	131.19
2	Profit/ (Loss) for the period before tax	-1.19	18.12	27.99
3	Net Profit / Loss for the period after tax	-3.52	16.27	20.52
4	Equity Share Capital	1303.40	1303.40	1303.40
5	Reserves excluding Revaluation Reserve	-	-	14.99
6	Earnings Per Share (EPS) (of Rs. 2/- each)	-	-	-
Basic		-0.01	0.02	0.03
Diluted		-0.01	0.02	0.03

Note:- The above is an Extract of the Detailed Format of Quarterly Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The Full Format of the Quarterly Financial Results is available on the Website of Bombay Stock Exchange at **www.bseindia.com** & on Company website at **www.cubicalrealitors.com**.

By Order of the Board of Directors for **CUBICAL FINANCIAL SERVICES LIMITED**
Sd/-
DATED : 3RD FEBRUARY, 2022 **MANJU GOYAL (DIRECTOR)**
PLACE : DELHI. **DIN-07143651**

BEFORE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-I DELHI

4th FLOOR, JEEVAN TARA BUILDING, PARLIAMENT STREET, NEW DELHI-110001

O.A.No. 148/2020 **Bank of India (Applicant) Versus M/s Saini Flour Mills & Ors. (Defendants)**

To, (1) M/S Saini Flour Mills, Through it's prop. Sh. Mukesh Kumar, 629, Dev Nagar Colony, 2 KM Stone, Hajjar Road, Bahadurgarh, Haryana - 124507

(2) Mr. Mukesh Kumar s/o Sh. Vijay Singh R/o 22/632, Dev Nagar, Near I.T.I., Hajjar Road, Bahadurgarh, Haryana - 124507

also at : R/o 22/629, Dev Nagar, Near I.T.I., Hajjar Road, Bahadurgarh, Haryana - 124507

(3) Mrs. Indra Devi w/o Sh. Mukesh Kumar R/o 22/632, Dev Nagar, Near I.T.I., Hajjar Road, Bahadurgarh, Haryana - 124507

Whereas the above named applicant has instituted a case for recovery of **Rs. 96,77,928.61 (Rupees Ninty six lakh seventy seven thousand nine hundred twenty eight and sixty one paise only)** against you and whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the Tribunal that it is not possible to serve you in ordinary way. Therefore, this notice is given by advertisement directing you to make appearance before LD. Registrar on 24.03.2022 at 10:30 A.M. (for further details kindly visit DRT website **www.tribunal.gov.in** Phone Number : 011-23748473)

Take notice that in case of your failure to appear on the above mentioned day before this Tribunal, the case will be heard and decided in your absence.

Due to ongoing **pandemic situation**, all the matters will be taken up through Video Conferencing and for that purpose :- (1) All the advocates/ litigants shall download the **Cisco Webex** application/software; (2) **Meeting ID and password** for the next date of hearing qua cases to be taken by Registrar/Recovery Officer-1 and recovery officer-2 shall be available one day prior to the next date at DRT official portal i.e. **drt.gov.in** under the public notice head. (3) In any exigency qua the case, the advocates/ litigants can contact the concerned official at **Ph. No. 011-23748473**. Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal on this 21st day of January, 2022.

By order of the Tribunal **Asst. Registrar, DRT-I, New Delhi**
Respondent may contact under mention phone number for further enquiry : Mr. Amit K. Dar, Ld. Registrar, DRT-I, New Delhi Phone No. 011-23748473 E mail : **drtldelhi@nic.in**

TO MEAT OR NOT TO...

Veganism is rising on the popularity charts of food choices for a variety of reasons

Swear off meat' was a popular New Year's resolution among millennials and Generation Z. They are more aware of the consequences of excessive meat consumption and are voluntarily attempting to reduce it. Today, mock meat, a sustainable lifestyle, and empathy for all are driving veganism forward.

Veganism, a seemingly innocent word has become an important tool in the fight against degrading environmental conditions, and it has done so in style. It is more than just a diet. It is about choosing a way of life that excludes animal-based products, particularly food. It is a philosophy that vehemently opposes the use of animals as commodities. Perhaps this is why celebrities like Lewis Hamilton and Tom Ford are so adamantly in favour of a plant-based, eco-friendly diet.

But the question remains, why is the world suddenly blitzed by veganism?

VEGANISM IS THE KEY TO PROMOTING GOOD HEALTH

Many people believe that the only reason they eat meat is for its nutritional value. It's high in protein, essential nutrients like iodine, iron and zinc, as well as vitamins like B12 and essential fatty acids. What if you could get all of these nutrients from a plant-based diet? Processed meats, such as bacon and sausages, are high in cholesterol, making them extremely dangerous in terms of causing cardiovascular disease and cancer.

According to research, eating animal flesh, milk and eggs may be as harmful as smoking. Another study found that strict vegans have the lowest cancer rates, followed by vegetarians who don't eat meat but do consume animal-based products like eggs or milk. Concluding that, while a high BMI and smoking habits are important factors, dietary choices play a significant role in determining health.

GOOD ENOUGH REASONS TO SWITCH TO A VEGAN DIET?

But are your taste buds preventing you from committing to veganism? Don't be concerned. A plant-based diet has it all covered, from vegan milk, ice cream, and pasta sauce to eco-friendly chicken, mutton, tuna, eggs and all kinds of meat that look, taste and even cook like traditional meat items.

VEGANISM HELPS ENVIRONMENTAL REJUVENATION

Leading organisations have



repeatedly stated that the meat industry is a major source of pollution, food scarcity and ocean depletion. According to a recent paper published in Nature Food, global greenhouse gas emissions from animal-based foods are twice as high as those from plant-based foods.

Having said that, one can effectively reduce their carbon footprint by reducing their consumption of animal-based products such as meat, dairy and eggs and adopting a vegan lifestyle. Indeed, the United Nations has stated unequivocally that a global shift toward plant-based foods and veganism are critical components in combating the worst effects of climate change. Do you need any more reasons to go vegan?

VEGANISM IS EQUAL TO TASTE PLUS THE SUSTAINABILITY

Do you think it's dramatic that animal agriculture is being described as 'dark and horrifying'? It is, in fact, and you don't have to travel far to witness people's heinous actions. Snatching infant male calves from their mothers, sending innocent animals to slaughterhouses or worse, and treating animals like machines to produce milk, eggs and a variety of meat, the stench of industrial



farming will never leave humankind.

We won't be able to wash our hands of the blood of innocent animals, but we can put a stop to these atrocities. Consider for a moment that in order for you to have a tasty snack, a happy and pure soul must be sacrificed.

People today can easily adopt veganism without compromising their palate, thanks to the introduction of vegetarian meat

and healthy advances in plant-based food recipes. You can still eat your favourite chicken wings or pork sausages with a plant-based meat twist. These environmentally friendly meat alternatives taste, feel and even cook like traditional meats and can be added to a regular diet as a sustainable alternative.

VEGANUARY: STEPS TOWARDS A BETTER TOMORROW

While veganism has its roots in environmental concerns and animal welfare, its numerous health benefits have also drawn a large number of followers. And, given that most people begin the new year with food-related resolutions, the term 'Veganuary' has gained popularity in recent years. Following the 21-day rule is said to turn any personal or professional goal into a habit.

—IANS



The nutrients we need, in the candies we love

Candycеuticals are the new way to tank up on your body's nutritional requirements, says NIKITA WATERWALLA

A healthy mix of nutrients and vitamins leading to a healthy body is greatly desirable but we are barely able to manage that. Is it solely our fault? Not really. Modern-day lifestyle, stress, and time constraints almost always mean we do not pay enough attention to the food we put into our bodies. Fruits and vegetables are no longer the powerhouses that they once used to be. Add to it genetic modification, insecticides, and pesticides on that list. Rich in nutrients, our ancestors had the best products available that are in stark contrast with what we get today.

That means our bodies are deprived of essentials that would otherwise help them thrive. This, in turn, leads us to consume supplements and pills that sooner or later cease to be a part of our daily routine. At some point in our lives, all of us have taken pills that claim to give us everything we need, hated them, and just accepted our fates.

Humankind has a very specific deficiency that only specific nutrients digested in exact quantities can resolve — not more, not less. Synthetic vitamins and minerals in amounts that are not ideal can never be absorbed correctly by your body. They end up doing more harm than good in addition to putting stress on your liver. It is also important to mention here that the body absorbs nutrients better when you feed it what you enjoy and love eating. If you are one of those nutrition martyrs who eat foods that you do not relish, just because they are 'healthy' for your body, most likely, you are not absorbing as much of the nutrients from those foods. The brain is a powerful thing, and your body is a work of art. A big part of the digestion mechanism is in response to the neurotransmitters or the signals sent by the brain to the rest of your body to ready it for the food it is about to receive. When

you like how your food tastes, your brain is more eager to send messages to the organs to secrete the right proportions of digestive juices to process and absorb it. Think about it, how often do you need to pick up that glass of water to chase down the food that you enjoy eating?

Now that you know that your body absorbs essentials from foods that it enjoys the most, can you imagine what happens when you eat pills? They get washed down with water, diluting your stomach enzymes and thereby diluting their bioavailability. What if we could reimagine daily supplements? What if we could take all these supplements and add them to something that we love to eat?

This is exactly where candycеuticals come into the picture. A revolutionary way to feed your body not only what you enjoy eating, but also what your body can absorb effectively. If we have to put nutritional supplements into the body for absorption, then it should be in the form of something enjoyable. And is there anything more soul-satisfying than confectionery? We think not. Imagine eating a piece of mouth-melting chocolate while getting all those micro and macronutrients that you otherwise would not get. Absolute guilt-free pleasure and stress-free health. Right?

With gummies, chocolate bars, and such, it is easier to give your body all the love that it needs. Being happy and healthy all at the same time is a possibility with these yummy inventions. Although there are a plethora of supplements available in the market, it is important to opt for those that give you your daily dose of vitamins and minerals in monitored and well-researched quantities, in formulations that your body will love eating, so you can truly enjoy the process of making your body whole again.

(The author is the founder, Caim by Årelang™.)

R E C I P E S

KESARI MEETHA RICE

WHAT YOU NEED

- Cashew nut whole: 50 gm
- Almond: 50 gm
- Raisins: 50 gm
- Cardamom powder: 10 gm
- Saffron: 1 gm
- Basmati rice: 1 kg
- Sugar: 300 gm
- Desi ghee: 200 gm

METHOD

- In a *lagan* heat ghee and roast the cashew, almond, raisins.
- Roast to golden brown on low flame and keep aside. In the remaining ghee, add cardamom powder and saffron water.
- Further, add soaked basmati rice and water, cover and cook on medium flame.

- Mix gently, when the rice is half cooked, add sugar, ghee and roasted dry fruits.
- Mix gently, cover and simmer.
- Stir in between to prevent it from burning, cook until the rice is cooked completely, and do not overcook as rice turns mushy.
- Serve hot

Courtesy: Chef Vivek Rana at The Claridges, New Delhi



INDIAN CONSOMME

WHAT YOU NEED

- Vegetable stock: 500 ml
- Ginger: 20 gm
- Garlic: 15 gm
- Cloves: 2 gm
- Cinnamon stick: 2 gm
- Lemon: 1
- Black pepper: 5 gm
- Basil (*tulsi*): 5 gm
- Salt to taste
- Coriander seeds: 2 gm
- Caraway seeds (*ajwain*): 2 gm
- Cumin seeds: 2 gm

METHOD

- Take a soup pot, put it on the stove and keep it on medium flame. First add vegetable stock to it followed by adding chopped ginger, roasted garlic, cloves and cinnamon.
- After 30 seconds, add cinnamon, black pepper, *ajwain* and cumin seeds to the pot. Let all the spices boil on low flame for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Add basil and let it boil for five more minutes. Later, add salt as per your taste preference.
- Strain the liquid and serve hot.

KOBARI KORALU PAYASAM

WHAT YOU NEED

- Koralu (fox tail millets): 125 gm
- Fresh coconut milk: 300 ml
- Jaggery: 125 gm
- Pistachio: 20 gm
- Almond: 20 gm
- Cinnamon stick: 5 gm
- Ghee: 30 ml

METHOD

- Take a bowl. Add the foxtail millets to



it and soak for one hour.

- Strain the millets, take a pot and add

ghee to it. Cook the ghee on medium flame.

- Add cinnamon stick and millets to it. Cook it for another 10 minutes.
- Add water and cook it on low flame for 30 minutes
- Add jaggery to it and cook it until the mixture becomes thick.
- Add pistachio and almond to the mixture.
- Add coconut milk and cook the mixture for five minutes and serve hot.

MILLETS STEW (CHIRU DHANYALU JAVA)

WHAT YOU NEED

- Ragi (finger millet): 50 gm
- Jonnalalu (great millet): 50 gm
- Koralu (browntop millet): 50 gm
- Gantlu (pearl millet): 50 gm
- Lemon: 1
- Ghee: 50 ml
- Cashew nuts: 30 gm
- Salt to taste

METHOD

- Take a pan. Add all millets to it and roast them on low heat for 10 to 15



minutes.

- Once the millets are roasted transfer them to a bowl for cooling.

- When the roasted mixture has reached room temperature, grind and make a fine powder
- Now, take a pot and add water and salt.
- Once the water has reached the boiling point, add the powder to it and mix well to avoid any lumps on a low flame.
- Take another pan, add ghee and cashews. Roast and mix until the mixture turns golden brown.
- Cook all together for 10 more minutes and serve hot with lemon.

Courtesy: G. Ravi Kiran, sous chef at The Bheemili Resort managed by Accor

A B O U T T O W N

SUNDAY BRUNCH AT 1911

The Sunday brunch at 1911 Restaurant is back, featuring a bouquet of global flavours at The Imperial New Delhi. As

family eating-out tradition slowly sees revival, the brunch features classic international cuisines in a historic setting, overlooking verdant gardens. Lazy Sunday afternoons filled with some heartwarming conversations with loved ones over a delicious spread is what the brunch offers to the guests. The Sunday Brunch at 1911 restaurant includes individually done starters and salads in small dainty portions and specially crafted healthy delights. There are home-

cured and preserved cold meats, home-smoked duck, hand-made pasta made live and filled with the goodness of whole wheat, sugar-free desserts, dainty French pastry — eclairs, mille-feuille and more. It also features a selection of antipasti, Mediterranean mezze selection/shawarma, live Sunday roast carvery, live grills, barbecue (seasonal), international cheese selection, international breads including gluten-free options, international selection of hot delicacies including French and Italian classics and a selection of hot Indian dishes from pan India.

Price: ₹3,499/- All inclusive per person without alcohol
Date and Timings: Every Sunday, 12 pm-3 pm
Venue: 1911 Restaurant, The Imperial New Delhi





AP ■ BARCELONA

New-look Barcelona attack takes on Atlético's shaky defense

Struggling to score since the exits of Lionel Messi and Antoine Griezmann last summer, Barcelona went shopping during the January transfer window and brought in three forwards from the English Premier League

Barcelona's revamped attack will host an Atlético Madrid side seeking to restore its once vaunted defense on Sunday in the Spanish league at Camp Nou.

Struggling to score since the exits of Lionel Messi and Antoine Griezmann last summer, Barcelona went shopping during the January transfer window and brought in three forwards from the English Premier League.

In came former Arsenal striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang as a free agent. Adama Traoré came back to his boyhood club on loan from Wolverhampton, and Ferran Torres was secured on a transfer from Manchester City.

Torres has already played three matches for Barcelona, while Aubameyang and Traoré could make their debut against Atlético.

"I hope on Sunday I can show all my talent on the field," said Traoré, who came up through Barcelona's youth academy.

"I have grown physically, I have more experience, and I have played in another league that is more physical and faster. But I have never lost the essence of Barça."

Now it falls on coach Xavi Hernández to figure out how to fit his new players into an already large squad that earlier in the season featured Memphis Depay and Ansu Fati in attack before they were injured.

Barcelona is used to dueling with Real Madrid for the league's most potent attack but ranks seventh for scoring this season.

Xavi has had to be creative in forming his front lines.

Depay, who leads Barcelona with eight goals, and the 19-year-old Fati, the player the club is hoping can be a future star, are both out with nagging muscle injuries. In their place have been a mix of youths from Barcelona's reserve team including Ferran Jutglà, Abde Ezzalzouli and Ilias Akhomach and



the scarcely used Luuk de Jong.

De Jong took full advantage of finally getting a chance to play, scoring three goals in four appearances.

Even so, the club wanted to give Xavi more weapons up front, especially after contract renewal negotiations broke

down with star signing Ousmane Dembélé.

Xavi hoped to rely heavily on Dembélé until the winger and club fell out over his refusal to accept its offer of a new contract before his current deal expires in June. The club told Dembélé

to seek a transfer during January but he declined all offers. Now Xavi has to decide whether to play a player who looks certain to leave come summer.

The arrivals of Torres and Traoré, who can both play on the right wing, could mean Dembélé's days as a Barcelona player are effectively over.

When Barcelona and Atlético met late last season at Camp Nou it was a key clash in the title fight that was won by the visitor.

This time, the top prize appears to be simply qualifying for next season's Champions League. Atlético is in fourth place, the last qualifying berth, while Barcelona is just one point back in fifth.

Atlético acquired versatile midfielder Daniel Wass from Valencia and left back Reinildo Mandava from Lille in the winter window.

They will try to help Atlético reinforce a defense that normally ranks as the best in Spain but has proven brittle lately. Atlético has only the 11th-best defense of the 20-team league in goals allowed.

Real Madrid has opened up a 14-point gap over defending champion Atlético and the only rival in striking distance is Sevilla, which is four points back in second place.

Madrid hosts Granada on Sunday, a day after Sevilla is at Osasuna.

Sania, Bopanna included in TOPS core group till Asiad

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian tennis stars Sania Mirza, Rohan Bopanna, Ankita Raina and Ramkumar Ramanathan were on Thursday included in the core group of athletes under the Sports Ministry's Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) till the Hangzhou Asian Games later this year.

The decision to include quartet for support under TOPS was taken at a meeting of the Sports Ministry's Mission Olympic Cell after receiving a request from the All India Tennis Association (AITA).

Besides, the MOC also approved Rs 3.62 lakh to teenage archer Manjiri Alone for purchase of a recurve bow set. She won bronze in the 2021 World Archery Youth Championships in Wroclaw, Poland in August



last year. The MOC also sanctioned a proposal worth Rs 4.31 lakh for para pistol shooter Singhraj Adhana, who won a silver

ver and a bronze in the Paralympic Games in Tokyo, to stay and train at the Karni Singh Shooting Ranges from February 10 to March 25.

The cost includes Rs 2.26 lakh for ammunition for the 25m and 50m events.

According to a statement issued by SAI, coach JP Nautiyal, who is already with Manish Narwal in the Tughlakabad range, will extend his stay by 10 days to assist Singhraj Adhana.

Skeet shooter Gurjot Singh's proposal for ammunition and clay targets worth Rs 2.68 lakh was approved as also teenage air rifle shooter Rudranksh Patil's proposal for equipment worth Rs 1.03 lakh.

Sports Ministry releases financial help of ₹2.54 crore



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Sports Ministry has released financial assistance to the tune of Rs 2.54 crore (2,54,03,910) for athletes and coaches during the period April 2020 till January 2022 under the 'Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Fund for Sportspersons' (PDUNWFS).

The scheme provides for grant of suitable financial assistance to outstanding sportspersons now living in indigent condition, medical treatment, procurement of

sports equipments, participation in national and international events etc. In a written reply in Rajya Sabha on Thursday, Sports Minister Anurag Thakur said the financial assistance has been provided to 78 athletes, former athletes and coaches, which also includes sportspersons, who have been facing financial difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assistance under this fund is demand driven and financial help is provided to eligible players based on applications.



India's Winter Olympic contingent COVID-free after manager found negative in retests

PTI ■ BEIJING

A day after testing positive for COVID-19, the manager of India's Winter Olympics contingent, Mohammad Abbas Wani, has returned negative results in two retests conducted in the last 24 hours, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) said on Thursday.

Wani was found COVID-19 positive upon his arrival at the Beijing Airport here on Wednesday. IOA president Narinder Batra said the official has now returned negative in the last two tests.

"The manager of Indian team Mr Abbas Wani tested negative in the 2 tests done on him in last 24 hours. Hence, the entire Indian contingent in Beijing is Covid free," Batra said.

"Thank you Mr Harjinder Singh (Chef de Mission), the Indian Embassy in China and Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports for taking care of everyone." 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 to be held from February 4 to 20. The contingent also includes alpine coach Ludar Chand Thakur, technician Puran Chand and team official Roop Chand Negi.

An asymptomatic Wani stayed in quarantine in his hotel room before the retests confirmed that he is not infected.

Singh expressed surprise over Wani testing positive after landing as he had taken two vaccine doses besides a booster and obtained a green QR Code to travel to Beijing after clearing the tests before boarding the flight.

Now that the entire contingent has been cleared, the team will take part in Friday's opening ceremony to be held at the Bird's Nest stadium here and focus on the main event, he said.

Djokovic describes his Australia visa ordeal as unfortunate

AP ■ BELGRADE

Novak Djokovic described his detention and deportation from Australia that prevented him from defending his Australian Open title as an "unfortunate event" and thanked the Serbian president for his support.

An 11-day saga over Djokovic's entry visa ended with the Serb being deported for failing to meet Australia's strict COVID-19 vaccination requirements.

The top-ranked tennis star met with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic on Thursday and described the events in Australia as "unexpected, to say the least."

"I wanted to meet with you today because, primarily as a citizen of Serbia, I felt a great need to thank you for great support that you, as the president of Serbia, gave me, as well as all state institutions during the unfortunate events in Australia," Djokovic said.

"Although I was alone in detention, and faced with many problems and challenges, I wasn't feeling lonely. I had huge



support primarily from my family, all of the close people in my life, entire Serbian nation, many people with good intentions from the region and the world."

He did not speak about details of the events in Australia, promising to give his

"I WANTED TO MEET WITH YOU TODAY BECAUSE, PRIMARILY AS A CITIZEN OF SERBIA, I FELT A GREAT NEED TO THANK YOU FOR GREAT SUPPORT THAT YOU, AS THE PRESIDENT OF SERBIA, GAVE ME, AS WELL AS ALL STATE INSTITUTIONS DURING THE UNFORTUNATE EVENTS IN AUSTRALIA," DJOKOVIC SAID.

to boost his popularity ahead of general elections scheduled for April.

The meeting happened a day after Serbia's state prosecutors rejected suggestions voiced by some Western media that Djokovic used a fake positive test for COVID-19 to try to enter Australia.

To enter Australia, Djokovic submitted a positive test issued in Serbia on Dec. 16 for a visa exemption on the grounds that he had recently recovered from the virus.

He is not vaccinated, and the Australian government later decided to cancel his visa and deport Djokovic, saying his presence in Australia could stir anti-vaccination sentiments.

Djokovic's rival, Rafael Nadal, won the Australian Open for a record 21st men's Grand Slam singles title. Djokovic and Roger Federer have 20 major titles.

Vucic praised Djokovic and said he was certain he will beat Nadal and Federer at the coming French Open and Wimbledon — the Grand Slams where Djokovic could also face restrictions if he doesn't get vaccinated

McKennie goal gets US going in frigid 3-0 win

PTI ■ ST PAUL

Weston McKennie and Walker Zimmerman had first-half goals to give the U.S. An early spark on a frigid night and a fresh Christian Pulisic scored after entering in the second half to lead the Americans over Honduras 3-0 in a World Cup qualifying match.

Goalkeeper Matt Turner didn't have to make a single save for the Americans, who emerged from the pandemic-prompted winter session in second place with three matches remaining.

The kickoff temperature was 3 degrees (minus-16 Celsius) with a minus-14 wind chill at a site picked by the U.S. Soccer Federation along with Columbus, Ohio, for optimal home-field advantage over opponents from tropical countries.

The Americans beat El Salvador 1-0 on Thursday, when it was 29 degrees in Ohio and lost 2-0 to host Canada on Sunday in Hamilton, Ontario, when it was 22. The weather in Minnesota was a another

Canada leads North and Central America and the Caribbean with 22 points, followed by the U.S. (21), Mexico (18), Panama (17) and Costa Rica (16), with Canada at El Salvador later Wednesday and Mexico hosting Panama.



level of cold, the coldest in U.S. Team history and violating USSF guidelines for safe outdoor play and ending with a 1-degree temperature.

"It was freezing out here. I'm looking forward to getting into the locker room," Pulisic said.

Still, the match was a sellout — an announced crowd of 19,202 — with red-white-and-blue-clad fans clutching their complimentary hand warmers and however many layers they could find in their closets.

Players wore skin-tight thermal tops and black gloves, but most of

them had bare skin exposed on their knees as they jogged and jumped around on the grass at 3-year-old Allianz Field.

McKennie had on two sets of gloves, peeling off one pair as he came to the bench after being replaced in the 84th minute. The star midfielder scored on a header in the eighth minute, fittingly after joking on a video interview the day before that his big head ought to minimize any discomfort from a frozen ball in the February chill.

That was McKennie's ninth international goal, his second in World Cup qualifying, and it would prove to be enough.

Canada leads North and Central America and the Caribbean with 22 points, followed by the U.S. (21), Mexico (18), Panama (17) and Costa Rica (16), with Canada at El Salvador later Wednesday and Mexico hosting Panama. The top three nations qualify for this year's tournament in Qatar and fourth place advances to a playoff against the Oceania champion, likely New Zealand.

If Panama failed to win at Mexico later, the U.S. Would be in position to clinch with a win over Panama at Orlando, Florida, on March 27 as long as Costa Rica doesn't win its final three games. The Americans also have road games at Mexico on March 24 at Costa Rica on March 30, two places where the U.S. Has never won a qualifier.

After scoring no goals off set pieces in the first 10 qualifiers, the U.S. Scored three.

The second goal developed from a free kick by Kellyn Acosta, who started in the defensive midfield for the first time since the October loss at Panama, whizzed past the head of a leaping Jordan Morris, Zimmerman pivoted around defender Denil Maldonado in the 37th minute.

The ball glanced off Zimmerman's left leg, and he kicked it in with his right from 5 yards for his third international goal. Zimmerman wore the captain's armband for the night.



Skipper Dhull leads India to U-19 World Cup final

PTI ■ OSBOURN

Skipper Yash Dhull gave a glimpse of his rare talent with a well-paced hundred as powerhouse India reached their fourth consecutive U-19 World Cup final with an emphatic 96-run win over Australia here on Wednesday.

Dhull struck a sublime 110 in as many balls and shared a game-changing 204-run stand with his deputy Shaik Rasheed (94 off 108 balls) to fire India to a formidable 290 for five after opting to bat.

Indian bowlers then performed their roles to perfection to bowl Australia out for 194 in 41.5 overs. Lachlan Shaw's fine 51 came too late in the day for Australia.

Pacers Rajvardhan Hangargekar (0/26) and Ravi Kumar (2/37) were impressive in the first powerplay before spinners Nishant Sindhu (2/25), Vicky Ostwal (3/42) and Kaushal Tambe (1/32) dominated the opposition in the middle overs.

The professional bowling performance came after a remarkably

mature knocks from Dhulll and Rasheed who was unfortunate to miss out on a hundred.

Record four-time champions India face England in the final on Saturday and will be aiming to extend their dominance in the competition.

Dhull became the third Indian captain to hit a hundred in the tournament history after the illustrious Virat Kohli (2008) and the prodigious Unmukt Chand (2012), who also hail from Delhi.

India, the most successful team in tournament history, were hit by COVID-19 at the start of the competition, losing the likes of Dhull and Rasheed for two games but the depth in the squad ensured that they sailed to the knock-outs.

Chasing a record target, Australia lost their in-form opener Teague Wyllie cheaply with Ravi Kumar trapping him in front off his first legitimate ball with a late inswinger into the right-hander.

Campbell Kellaway (30) and Corey Miller (38) forged a fluent

68-run stand before perishing in a space of six balls, leaving Australia at 73 for three.

Left-arm spinner Ostwal took a return catch for his second wicket to make it 119 for six in 30 overs, shutting the door on the opposition.

Dhull was not just impressive with the bat but also his captaincy.

He introduced part-time offie Raghuvanshi ahead of left-arm spinners.

Raghuvanshi delivered the breakthrough by trapping Miller.

Earlier, India opted to put runs on the board after wining the toss, knowing it wasn't the easiest of pitches to bat on.

Australian pacers bowled well in the opening powerplay and the fact that Indian openers Angkrish Raghuvanshi (6 off 30) and Harnoor Singh (16 off 30) were also overtly cautious, helped them build pressure.

William Salzmann rocked Raghuvanshi's off-stump with a beauty that straightened after

pitching.

Harnoor, who has not met the high expectations he set for himself, tried to pull a rising ball on leg stump from Tobia Snell only to glove it back to the wicketkeeper, leaving India at 37 for two in the 13th over.

India's two best batters, Dhull and Rasheed, then got together to lift the team out of a spot of bother. Playing only their third game of the tournament after missing two due to COVID-19, Rasheed and Dhull showed maturity beyond their age to build the innings.

Dhull got a lot of runs square and behind the square with deft late-cuts off spinners being one of his pet shots.

Rasheed, whose first boundary was an aerial straight drive, ended up with eight fours and a six.

The straight six he hit late in his innings off Jack Nisbet took him into the 90s. His punch shot through the cover off Salzmann was the most attractive shot he played.

The highly rated Dhull played

another sublime knock. The pitch was on the slower side but he rotated the strike at ease before accelerating to pick boundaries at will, collecting 10 fours and a six in total.

He got to three figures with a two in the 45th over and next ball was a pull shot off Tom Whitney for the second six of the innings.

After Dhull's departure, Rasheed could not get to a deserving hundred after being caught at backward point off Nisbet.

Australia were sloppy in the field through the innings. Rasheed was dropped on 24 and missed an easy run out chance of Dhull who was batting on 74.

With two set batters gone in quick succession, the flow of the innings was slightly disrupted before Nishant Sindhu (12 not out off 10), Dinesh Bana (20 not out off 4 balls) and Rajvardhan Hangargekar (13 off 10) came up with the big shots in the death overs.

Australia leaked as many as 108 runs in the last 10 overs with the 50th over bowled by Tom Whitney going for 27.

Team India starts training, Mayank in mandatory three-day quarantine

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

The Indian team's playing squad save the trio of Shikhar Dhawan, Ruturaj Gaikwad and Shreyas Iyer started training at the Narendra Modi Stadium after their RT-PCR tests came negative on Thursday.

While Mayank Agarwal has joined the squad, he will only be available on the match day as his mandatory three-day quarantine has started, the team management has kept Ishan Kishan in scheme of things for the ODIs.

India is set to play a three-match ODI series against West Indies here, beginning February 6.

"Today is a light session where the players have been accompanied by trainers," a veteran official in know of things told PTI.

It is also learnt that wicket-keeper batsman Ishan Kishan, who is a specialist opener, has been added to the ODI squad.

A COVID-19 outbreak had hit the Indian cricket team on Wednesday as three main players -- senior opener



Dhawan, reserve opener Gaikwad and middle-order batter Shreyas had tested positive for the virus during their mandatory isolation period before the start of West Indies series.

Four other persons, including net bowler Navdeep Saini, have also tested positive for COVID-19. Saini is also on the standby list.

The remaining three who tested positive for the virus are non-playing members -- fielding coach T Dilip, security liaison officer B Lokesh and masseur Rajeev Kumar

The Indian team assembled in Ahmedabad on January 31 for the upcoming white-ball series against the West Indies and were going through a three-day isolation period post their break from the South Africa series.

The series starts in Ahmedabad on February 6 with India's 1000th ODI match but it is now a foregone conclusion that the trio -- Dhawan, Ruturaj and Shreyas -- will be missing the series as they will have to undergo a week-long isolation and then return with two negative RT-PCR tests.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Members of the Indian women's cricket team are able to exercise and "breathe" during the mandatory Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) in New Zealand.

The team members, who had to undergo a punishing 14-day hard quarantine in Australia back in September-October, are finding the MIQ in Christchurch much more comfortable.

The quarantine facility has rooms big enough to accommodate fitness equipment and some of them also have balconies.

The players were put up in tiny rooms of a quarantine hotel in Australia. The team had undergone a week of hard quarantine in Mumbai before its departure for New Zealand on January 24.

"The players are comfortable in MIQ. The team will start training in the nets after the completion of quarantine on Saturday.



The fact there are balconies attached with the rooms make a huge difference," said a BCCI official.

"The food served in rooms is also good but the players are not allowed to meet each other," the official added.

To reduce the COVID-19 risk, one off T20 and five ODIs between India and New Zealand have been moved to Queenstown.

The series begins February 9 with the T20 and has been scheduled ahead of the ODI World Cup in March-April.

The series against New Zealand before the World Cup will give India valuable time to get used to the "windy conditions".

India, who finished runners-up in the last edition five years ago, are expected to go all way this time.



Australia retains women's Ashes with 2 ODIs to spare

AP ■ CANBERRA

Australia retained the women's Ashes after beating England in the first one-day international of the multi-format series on Thursday.

England required victories in all three ODIs to win the Ashes but lost by 27 runs in Canberra after getting dismissed for 178, needing 206 to win.

Australia took an 8-4 points lead in the series and cannot be beaten, with each of the remaining two ODIs earning two points for the winner.

The Australians have held the Ashes since the 2013-14 winter.

Australia won the only match to be completed of the scheduled three Twenty20s. The one-off test was drawn. England can still draw the series with two wins in the remaining ODIs.

Australia also won the men's Ashes last month.

Pujara-Rahane set to get Ranji Trophy lifeline

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The February 10 start for Ranji Trophy has offered a lifeline to veterans Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane to get their Test career back on track.

With Test series against Sri Lanka set to be played from first week of March after the T20s starting February 25, a big hundred in the Ranji Trophy will provide the confidence that they need and probably ensure that they retain their place in the Indian team.

The Elite group games will start from February 16 after the Plate group matches begin from February 10 and both under-fire seniors will get two matches at least to convince the selectors.

Both seasoned batters have already started training with the Mumbai and Saurashtra squad respectively and are determined to score the big runs that are expected of them.

In fact, both will be in opposite teams if they are part of the crucial Saurashtra-Mumbai fixture in Ahmedabad.

"Ajinkya is definitely looking forward to it. We have met a few times now, he has been practising with the Mumbai



team. He has had about couple of sessions already. Looked absolutely in fine touch," Mumbai coach Amol Mujumdar told PTI.

"We don't have to look too much into the future but what is lying ahead of us is Ranji Trophy. They both are due for a big one. I feel it is just a question of confidence. Sometimes batting is nothing but confidence.

"If you can regain that confidence somehow. It will come only if you score a big hundred," added Mujumdar.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly also expects Pujara and Rahane to pile on the runs in the premier domestic competition.

Their prolonged inconsistent run has divided opinions with many saying it is time for the younger lot to replace

them in the middle-order.

The calls have only gotten louder following the loss in South Africa.

While Rahane has been working hard in the Mumbai nets, Pujara on Thursday had his first session with defending champions Saurashtra at the SCA Stadium in Rajkot.

Pujara batted for 90 minutes in the nets besides undergoing fitness training.

Giles steps down from England role after Ashes series



AP ■ LONDON

executive.

One of the leaders of English cricket has stepped down following the humiliating Ashes series in Australia.

Ashley Giles, managing director of the England men's team, is leaving after three years in the role. Former test captain Andrew Strauss will take over on an interim basis.

England lost 4-0 in the Ashes series.

"Off the back of a disappointing men's Ashes this winter, we must ensure we put in place the conditions across our game to enable our test team to succeed," said Tom Harrison, the England and Wales Cricket Board's chief

Under Giles, England won the 50-over Cricket World Cup for the first time but has had a turbulent time in the test format, with the ECB's focus seemingly having been on white-ball cricket. "The past couple of years have been incredibly challenging and

I'm proud of what we've been able to deliver in the toughest of circumstances," said Giles, a former England test spinner.

"This has undoubtedly protected the future of the game in England and Wales."

Giles said he was "looking forward to spending some time with my family before looking at the next challenge."

Ranji Trophy first phase from Feb 10, knockouts from May 30

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The first phase of the much-anticipated Ranji Trophy will take place from February 10 to March 15 before the premier domestic event takes a break during the IPL and resumes from May 30 to June 26 for the knockouts. BCCI secretary Jay Shah informed state units on Thursday.

Shah's letter made it clear that it is set to be one of the shortest first-class seasons with most teams getting to play only three matches which effectively means that increased match fees will not have an impact on most of the teams that will be ousted at the group league stage.

As PTI reported earlier, four

teams each have been divided into eight elite groups while the remaining six form the plate division.

The new pay slabs offer those who have played 40-plus games Rs 60,000 per day, a significant hike from the previous Rs 35,000 per day scale.

Those with experience of 21 to 40 matches will get Rs 50,000 per day.

The tournament will have 64 games in 62 days with the first phase comprising 57 matches and the second stage having seven knockout games, including four quarter-finals, two semi-finals and the final.

The elite group matches will be played in Rajkot, Cuttack, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Trivandrum, Delhi, Haryana and Guwahati. Plate league

matches will be held in Kolkata, requiring nine bio-secure bubbles for nine venues.

Each team from elite group, barring one, will qualify for the quarter-finals.

The lowest ranked qualified team from elite group will play the plate toppers in the sole pre-quarterfinal.

The tournament was cancelled for the first time ever last season and this year, the third wave of COVID-19 forced the BCCI to postpone the scheduled start of January 13.

The last red ball game in the country took place in March 2020.

In his letter to state units, Shah wrote: "I am pleased to share that we are now truly set to resume both international and domestic cricket



with full thrust. We have waited patiently for the grip of the pandemic to loosen and the time has come

for our cricketers to take centre stage all over again.

"The structure of revised Ranji

Trophy format is now ready. We have spread out the Ranji Trophy to nine different venues across the country

to mitigate any cross transmission risk while also ensuring that bio-bubbles are not overburdened."

The bubbles have been breached in the past including during the IPL but Shah said the board has contingency plans in place.

"While the persistent virus has still breached the bubble, we have factored in contingency plans drawing from out past experience while formulating this structure," Shah wrote.

Two stadiums will be used in each of the venues in elite groups while three stadiums will be used in Kolkata for the plate group.

Delhi has been clubbed in Elite H group also comprising Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh with the games to be held in Guwahati.