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# India's nightingale Lata falls silent

Eldest Mangeshkar  
sister breathes her  
last in Mumbai  
hospital

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Lata Mangeshkar — who learned the sobriquet of the 'Nightingale of India' and whose mellifluous voice will remain as immortal as her iconic song "Naam gum jaayegaa, Chehara ye badal jayegaa, Meri aavaaz hi pahachaan hai..." — is no more.

Considered blessed by Goddess Saraswati herself, 92-year-old Lata didi — as Lata Mangeshkar was known fondly by one and all — breathed her last after battling with pneumonia, Covid-19 and post-recovery complications for nearly a month, at the Breach Candy Hospital south Mumbai on Sunday morning, ironically a day after the nation invoked the blessings of the goddess of learning, thus bringing down curtains on her illustrious 79-year-long music career.

Lata, whose iconic song "Aye mere vatan ke logon, zara aankh mein bhar lo paani jo shaheed hue hain unki zara yaad karo qurbani" continues to arouse patriotic fervour across the country, was cremated with full State honours at the Shivaji Park here. Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself flew down to Mumbai to pay his last

28 September 1929-6 February 2022



respects to her and bid adieu to the "Queen of Melody" who ruled the hearts and minds of film-goers across the country after she sang her first song for a Marathi film 79 years ago. Earlier in the day, Modi captured the mood of the country when he said that Lata had left "a void in our nation that cannot be filled."

A recipient of the Bharat Ratna, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, Dadasaheb Phalke Awards and three National Film Awards, Lata had sung more than 15,000 songs in 36 languages and was considered a rare unifying force in the country. Born in Indore in 1929 in a family steeped in classical music, Lata was the

eldest daughter of Marathi and Konkani musician Deenanath Mangeshkar and wielded a microphone at the age of 12 after the death of her father. She got a break in her career when she rendered her first Hindi song "Mata ek sapoot ki duniya badal de tu" for the Marathi film Gajabhaau (1943).

Lata, who was the eldest among five singing siblings (Meena, Asha, Usha and Hridaynath) all accomplished singers and musicians, moved to Mumbai in 1945 along with master Vinayak's company. After landing in Mumbai, she took lessons in Hindustani classical music from Ustad Aman Ali Khan of Bhendi Bazaar gharana. **Continued on p2**

## Cremation with full State honours held at Shivaji Park

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In what marked the end of an era in India's music industry, the mortal remains of legendary singer and recipient of the Bharat Ratna, Lata Mangeshkar were consigned to flames at a public funeral held amid full State honours at historic Shivaji Park in north-central Mumbai on Sunday evening in the presence of a

host of dignitaries, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

After Modi landed in Mumbai and reached Shivaji Park, Lata's younger brother Hridaynath Mangeshkar lit the funeral pyre amid chanting of hymns by priests. Mangeshkar's family members including Lata's sisters Meena, Asha, Usha, grandchildren, and other family members were present

at a specially-created enclosure at the funeral venue. Ahead of the cremation, the Prime Minister met the family members of Lata and offered his condolences to them.

Lata's was the second public funeral held at Shivaji Park after a gap of ten years. Earlier on November 18, 2012, Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray had been cremated at the same Shivaji Park. **Continued on p2**



Personnel of the Defence forces carry the body of Lata Mangeshkar during her funeral, in Mumbai on Sunday.

AP

## World mourns loss of India's melody queen

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Culture transcends boundaries. Reinforcing this point, condolences poured in from across the world to mourn the demise of legendary playback singer and Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar. Social networking platforms were flooded with messages of grief from the US, Portugal, France, UK, Congo, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Russia, Japan and even Pakistan. Her millions of fans are shattered across the world, but the most intense and heartfelt condolences came from various parts of Pakistan.

"End of an era", "RIP Lataji" and "Lata Mangeshkar" were trending on Twitter as thousands of social media users took to the microblogging platform to express their sentiments over the loss of the beloved icon whose melodious voice had the magical power to capture the imagination of the people, halt them in their tracks, and melt their hearts.

A Twitter user from Karachi wrote, "Today, the golden era of Asian music ended RIP." Another user in Pakistan wrote,



"The sweetest voice in the world has left us sad". Mazari Minhaz from Sadikabad wrote "The legend will stay with us through her legacy."

Likewise, Pakistani celebrities such as cricket stars Babar Azam and Ramiz Raja also expressed their condolences. Azam tweeted, "End of a golden era. Her magical voice and legacy will continue to live in the hearts of millions worldwide. An unparalleled icon! RIP Smt. Lata Mangeshkar."

PCB chief Ramiz Raja also felt sad on her passing away saying, "Lata Mangeshkar was the epitome of grace, humility, and simplicity, and therefore greatness... a lesson for all. Kishore Kumar and now her death has left me music broken."

Imran from Lahore expressed himself by saying, "Legends live for eternity! No one will ever be like her!"

**Continued on p2**

# Nation grieves end of an era

President, PM lead  
the nation in  
paying tributes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Led by the President and the Prime Minister, the nation on Sunday mourned the death of the "nightingale" Lata Mangeshkar, who mesmerised generation of music lovers with her lilting songs and gifted voice. President Ram Nath Kovind said the passing away of iconic singer Mangeshkar is heartbreaking for him, as for millions the world over.

"The divine voice has gone quiet forever but her melodies will remain immortal. Lata's demise is heart-breaking for me, as it is for millions the world over. In her vast range of songs, rendering the essence and beauty of India, genera-



tions found expression of their inner-most emotions. A Bharat Ratna, Lata-ji's accomplishments will remain incomparable," Kovind tweeted. "An artist born but once in centuries, Lata-didi was an exceptional human being, full of warmth, as I found whenever I met her. The divine voice has gone quiet forever but her melodies will remain immortal, echoing in eternity. My condolences to her family and admirers every-

where," he said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, too, expressed deep grief over the passing away of Mangeshkar. The Prime Minister spoke to her family and expressed his condolences.

He also said the coming generations will remember her as a stalwart of Indian culture, whose melodious voice had an unparalleled ability to mesmerise people.

In a series of tweets, he said, "I

am anguished beyond words. The kind and caring Lata didi has left us. She leaves a void in our nation that cannot be filled. The coming generations will remember her as a stalwart of Indian culture, whose melodious voice had an unparalleled ability to mesmerise people."

"Lata didi's songs brought out a variety of emotions. She closely witnessed the transitions of the Indian film world for decades. Beyond films, she was always passionate about India's growth. She always wanted to see a strong and developed India."

"I consider it my honour that I have always received immense affection from Lata didi. My interactions with her will remain unforgettable. I grieve with my fellow Indians on the passing away of Lata didi. Spoke to her family and expressed condolences. Om Shanti," said Modi.

**Continued on p2**

## CAPSULE

### PM BATS FOR YOGI AS UP'S NEXT CM

**Lucknow:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday indicated that Yogi Adityanath is the BJP's choice as the next Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, saying if his Government is formed again he would make up for the time lost by the state due to the coronavirus pandemic.

### EC NOTICE TO BJP FOR MORPHED PICTURE

**New Delhi:** The Election Commission has issued a notice to the Uttarakhand BJP for alleged violation of the model code and asked it to reply within 24 hours for tweeting a morphed image of former Chief Minister and Congress leader Harish Rawat, in which he has been shown as a Muslim cleric. The ECI sought a reply from the BJP state unit chief Madan Kaushik within 24 hours.

### IIT-G MAKES SEA WATER POTABLE

**New Delhi:** Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar, have developed a cost-effective and environment-friendly water desalination technique to make seawater potable by removing over 99% of salt ions and other impurities with natural processing.

## EC extends ban on roadshows for Assembly polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Sunday said the ban on rallies and roadshows will continue to remain in effect in poll-bound States but granted more relaxations for smaller physical public meetings in halls and outdoors.

For indoor rallies, a 50 per cent crowd of the capacity of the hall is allowed, while for outdoor rallies, 30 per cent of the capacity is permitted. The new relaxations will help political parties hold bigger physical campaigning events in the run-up to the polls in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa, Punjab, and Manipur. The campaigning for phase one of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections on February 10 ends on February 8 evening.

This comes after the EC held a meeting with the secretary of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Saturday to assess the Coronavirus pandemic situation in the country and inputs from chief secretaries and chief electoral officers of the poll-bound States.

The Chief Secretaries had told the EC that there had been a "significant improvement" in the Covid-19 situation and a "considerable decrease" in positive cases and hospitalisation.

**Continued on p2**

## Channi CM face, understands poor: Rahul in Punjab

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

The Congress on Sunday declared incumbent Charanjit Singh Channi as its Chief Ministerial face for February 20 elections.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, during the party's "Awaaz Punjab Di" virtual rally at Ludhiana, announced Channi's name for coronation if the party comes to power in the forthcoming polls — virtually putting a lid over the power struggle within the Congress' Punjab unit.

"It is not a decision of Rahul Gandhi but of Punjab. I can have an opinion but I can't decide. People of Punjab said that we want a *gareeb ghar ka* CM who understands poor, and I agreed to it," said Rahul after making the announcement in the presence of Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu, who trailed behind Channi in the race for the CM's face.

Thanking the people after the announcement, Channi said: "This is a big battle which I can't fight alone. I don't have the money, courage to fight it. The people of Punjab will fight this battle."

**Never lived for any post: Sidhu**

**Ludhiana:** Punjab Congress president Navjot Singh Sidhu on Sunday said he never lived for any post and hailed the decision of making Charanjit Singh Channi as the CM candidate of the State.

**Continued on p2**

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# UP polls: Sonia not in star campaigners' list

Manmohan Singh, Raj Babbar don't figure either

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress president Sonia Gandhi, who represents Rae Bareilly in the Lok Sabha, does not figure among the party's star campaigners for the fourth phase of Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh.

The fourth phase poll on February 23 will see elections in five Assembly constituencies of Bachhrawan (SC), Harchandpur, Rae Bareilly, Sareni and Unchahar that come under the Rae Bareilly Lok Sabha constituency represented by Sonia Gandhi.

While party's interim chief Sonia Gandhi and former Prime Minister Manmohan

Singh have not been included in the list for the fourth phase of UP polls, sources cited health issues as the reason for omitting their names.

Congress has also dropped actor-turned-politician and former Uttar Pradesh party president Raj Babbar from the fourth phase campaign. This comes days after it left Lok Sabha MP Manish Tewari from its Punjab list. There were speculations of Babbar leaving the Congress and joining the Samajwadi Party. He was listed as a star campaigner along with Ghulam Nabi Azad in the first phase of UP polls.

Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad and former party chief Rahul Gandhi and AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra are among the 30 star campaigners that the party has named for the fourth phase of Uttar Pradesh assembly polls.

Azad, the former leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha, is a prominent leader of the 'Group of 23' who sought organisational overhaul and has been critical of the party leadership.

The Congress on Sunday released its list of star campaigners for the fourth phase of assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh on February 23.

Among the other star campaigners include Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel. Former Rajasthan deputy chief minister Sachin Pilot, who had rebelled against the Congress government in the state, is also among the star campaigners for the fourth phase of Uttar Pradesh assembly elections.

Party leaders from Uttar Pradesh, Salman Khurshid, Pramod Tiwari, PL Punia, Rajiv

Shukla, Ajay Kumar Lallu and Aradhana Mishra 'Mona' have also been named as star campaigners by the party. Besides, former cricketer Mohd Azharuddin, Maharashtra cabinet minister Varsha Gaekwad, Gujarat PCC working president Hardik Patel and Rajya Sabha member Deepinder Singh Hooda are also in the list of party's star campaigners. AICC minorities cell head Imran Pratapgarhi has also been named the star campaigner besides party spokesperson Supriya Shrinete among others.

Meanwhile, the Uttar Pradesh Congress has suspended four of its office-bearers, including party's Balrampur district chief Anuj Singh, for six years over charges of indiscipline. The other three suspended members are party's Balrampur district vice-president Akhtar Hussain, district general secretary Vinay Mishra

and Deepak Mishra. The four accused party members allegedly attempted to assault All India Congress Committee national secretary Satyanarayan Patel during a party meeting in Balrampur district last Friday. It is believed that the meeting was regarding ticket distribution for the upcoming Uttar Pradesh assembly elections.

Satyanarayan Patel is a former MLA and is considered close to the party high command. When asked about the matter, Congress party's Balrampur district chief Anuj Singh said that the allegations against him were baseless.

"I have been a disciplined soldier of the party for 30 years. There was no assault. Some people were behaving indecently and we only tried to stop that. I will put my point across and also communicate the same to Sonia Gandhi," he said.

# Sri Lankan Foreign Min in India on 3-day visit

To hold talks with Indian counterpart

**New Delhi:** Sri Lankan Foreign Minister GL Peiris will hold talks with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar here on Monday, days after India extended a USD 500 million credit line to the island nation.

Peiris arrived in Delhi on Sunday on a three-day official visit. According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla will also call on the visiting dignitary on Monday. "Foreign Minister of Sri

Lanka Prof. G. L. Peiris arrives in Delhi on an official visit," MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi tweeted.

India on Wednesday extended a USD 500 million credit line to Sri Lanka to help it purchase petroleum products.

Sri Lanka has been reeling under a severe foreign exchange and energy crisis.

In their talks, the two foreign ministers are expected to delve into ways to further expand bilateral cooperation in diverse areas, including trade and investment.

The contentious fishermen issue is also likely to figure in the talks. On January 25, Sri Lanka had released 56 Indian fishermen.

India's assistance of USD 500 million to Colombo came

over two weeks after a virtual meeting between Jaishankar and Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa.

Last month, the island nation signed a deal with the Sri Lankan chapter of Indian Oil Corporation (LIOC), Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) and the Joint Venture between LIOC and CPC to redevelop around 75 oil tanks in Trincomalee. The deal is expected to assist Sri Lanka in the development of Trincomalee as an energy and transport hub to further bolster its energy security.

During Peiris's visit, India is also likely to convey to him the need for fulfilling the expectations of the Tamil people living in that country for equality within a united Sri Lanka. **PTI**

# Cremation with full...

**From Page 1**  
Thackeray's was the first-ever funeral held in full public view at the Shivaji Park.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) had barricaded a 2,000 sq feet area at the Shivaji Park for the funeral. The BMC had also made available 25 kilograms of sandalwood for the funeral.

Earlier in the evening, the body of the singer - who died at the Breach Candy Hospital at 8.12 am was brought from the hospital to the Mangeshkar residence Prabhu Kunj at Pedder Road residence in south Mumbai around noon and was kept on the premises of the residence for public darshan for a couple of hours.

Several Bollywood personalities, politicians, and industrialists visited the residence to pay respects to her.

Lata's mortal remains -- wrapped in the Tricolour -- was taken to the Shivaji Park in a flower-decked cortege that carried a huge photo of a smiling Lata Didi

The band of Indian armed forces and Mumbai Police sounded the Last Post and rifle shots were fired in the air as a mark of respect to the departed soul.

The funeral procession began from Prabhu Kunj and headed slowly on a 10 km final journey to Shivaji Park. Several VIPs like Minister Aditya Thackeray and Leader of Opposition Devendra Fadnis in the Assembly, Mumbai Municipal Commissioner IS Chahal and others joined the funeral procession on foot.

On its part, the Maharashtra Government has announced a 3-day State Mourning and declared Monday (February 7) as a public holiday as a mark of respect to Lata.

Thousands of teary-eyed people had lined up along the 10-km long route from Pedder Road to Shivaji Park to have a last glimpse of the "Nightingale of India". Chants like "Lata Didi, Amar Rahe", "Lata Didi Zindabad" rent the air as a flower-decked cortege moved slowly towards Shivaji Park.



People light candles to pay tribute to veteran singer Lata Mangeshkar, in Balurghat (L). The old house where music composer V.Balsara lived around the year 1954 and was frequently visited by Lata Mangeshkar, in Kolkata (R)



PTI

# India's...

**From Page 1**

Her early popular song "Aayega Aanevala" was from the film Mahal, starring Madhubala. That song gave her a foothold in the Hindi film industry and her voice and career soared from there to the greatest of heights. She sang raga-based compositions by Naushad in films like Baiju Bawra, Mother India and Mughal-E-Azam and Shankar-Jaikishan's melodic hits in Barsaat and Shree 420.

Naushad Ali's composition "Uthaye Ja Unke Sitam" (Andaz - 1949) helped her scale new heights in her singing career. She sang with top music directors like Shankar-Jaikishan, SD Burman, Hunsalian-Bhagatram, C Ramchandra, Salik Chowdhury, Khayyam, Ravi, Sajjad Hussain, Roshan, Kalyanji-Anandji, Madan Mohan, Vasant Desai, Sudhir Phadke, Laxmikant-Pyarelal and Usha Khanna. She did playback singing for almost of all actresses of the sixties, seventies, eighties and even the nineties.

Lata sang memorable duets with GM Durrani, Mohammed Rafi, Kishore Kumar, Mukesh, Mahendra Kapoor, Manna De, SP Balasubrahmanyam, Shmashad Begum, Nitin Mukesh, Anwar, Shabbir Kumar and Asha Bhosale.

Hindi film aficionados will never forget iconic songs like "Chale Jaana Nahin Nain Milake" (Hava Mein Uda Jaaye) (Barsaat), (Badi Bahen both 1949), "Raja Ki Aayegi Baraat" (Aah-1953), "Man Dole Mera Tan Dole" (Nagin-1954), "Rasik Balmaa" (Chori Chori-1956), "Nagari Nagari, Dware Dware" (Mother India-1957), "Aaja Re Pardesi" (Madhumati), "Unko Ye Shikayat Hai Ki Hum" (Aadaalat-both 1958), "Tere Sur Aur Mere Geet" (Goonj Uthi Shehnai-1959).

The songs from Mughal-E-Azam (1960) that continue to remain in the hearts of film-goers include: "Pyaar kiya toh darna kya", "Mohabbat ki jhoothi kahani pe roye", "Hamein kaash tumse mohabbat na hoti", "Khuda nigehbaan ho tumhara", "Bekas pe karam kijiye", songs like "Ajeeb dastan hai ye" (Dil Apna Aur Preet Parayi), "O sajana, barkha bahar aayi" (Parakh), "Tera mera pyaar amar" (Asli Naqli - all 1960), "Allah tero naam, Ishwar tero naam" (Hum Dono), "Do hanson ka joda" (Ganga Jamuna), "Jyoti kalash chhalke" (Bhabhi Ki Chudiyen 1961), "Tere pyar me dildar" (Mere Mehboob-1963), "Aaja aayi bahar" (Rajkumar), "Main kya karu Ram, mujhe budhha mil gaya" (Sangam), "Lag jaa gale se" (Woh Kaun Thi 1964).

How can anyone forget her immortal song from Guide

"Kaanto se kheench ke ye aanchal" or "Ye samaa, sama hai ye pyaar ka" (Jab Jab Phool Khile 1965) or "Tu jahan, jahan chalega", "Nainon me bhadra chhaye" (Mera Saaya).

Similarly, songs like "Rahe na rahe hum" (Mamta), "Neel gagan ki chhaon mein" (Amrapali 1966), "Raar aur din, diya jale" (Raar Aur Din 1967), "Main to bhool chali babul ka des" (Sarawatichandra 1968) and "Bindiya chamkegi, chudi khankegi" (Intaqam 1969) remain etched in the memory of film lovers.

Her other popular hits from the seventies and eighties included, the Pakeezah blockbusters of 1972 - "Chalte, chalte", "Inhi logon ne", "Mausam hai aashiquana", "Thare rahiyo", "Aaj socha to aansoo bhar aaye" (Hanste Zakhm 1973), "Yeh raatein naye purani" (Julie) "Aa, jab tak hai jaan" (Sholay), "Dil toh hai dil" (Muqaddar Ka Sikandar), "Satyam Shivam Sundaram" (Satyam Shivam Sundaram 1978), "Mere naseeb me" (Naseeb1980), "Tune O rangeele kaisa jaadu kiya" (Kudrat-1981), "Dikhayi diye yun" (Bazaar 1982), "Ae Dil-e-Naadan" (Razia Sultan 1983), "Sun Sahiba sun" (Ram Teri Ganga Maili 1985), "Patzhar Saavan, Basant Bahar" (Sindoor-1987).

Lata had a special love for cricket and admiration for cricketers. One of her favourites

was the legendary cricketer and fellow Bharat Ratna recipient Sachin Tendulkar. She had seen several matches on the ground whether it was in Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai or Lord's Cricket Ground in London. She also helped raise funds for the World Cup-winning Indian team that defeated West Indies in 1983.

Tendulkar was a regular visitor to Prabhu Kunj, the residence of then Mangeshkars and called Lata "Aai", meaning mother. For Lata, Sachin was already a Bharat Ratna even before he received in 2014. "For me, he is the real Bharat Ratna for years. Whatever he has done for the country, very few people can do. He deserves this honour. He has made all of us feel proud," she had said after the Government announced the award.

Lata was a self-confessed food lover. In fact, she also liked spicy food. "I had 75 per cent natural talent...rest is riyaz and mehenat....and discipline....but I love chilies, I love curd, I love achar...my father told me that you must continue what you do...and I kept singing," she had said in a television interview.

Lata would normally take dal, rice and sabji or fulka, but had a special love for seafood. She also loved gajar ka halwa and pani puri, shami kababs. She loved all kinds of cuisines and also enjoyed cooking Kolhapuri mutton also.

# EC extends ban on...

**From Page 1**

The EC said most of the chief secretaries and the special observers appointed for the polls had recommended easing restrictions. It said the health secretary informed the commission that the number of cases was on the decline in the country and the maximum cases being reported were from non-poll-going States.

In a statement, the EC said the ban on roadshows, padayatra, cycle/bike/vehicle rallies and processions will remain as before. The maximum number of persons permissible for door-to-door campaigning fixed at 20 will also remain as before. Ban on campaigns between 8 PM and 8 AM will also continue as before. On January 31, the EC had further extended the ban on physical rallies and roadshows till February 11.

The EC said that restrictions regarding "outdoor meetings, indoor meetings, rallies" will be further relaxed subject to the condition that the number of persons attending these events will be limited to a maximum of 50 per cent of the capacity of indoor halls and 30 per cent of the open ground capacity or as fixed by district election officer as per the requirement of the

social distancing norms, and whichever is less.

"If the State disaster management authority has set the ceiling limits or percentage of the capacity for a number of persons attending indoor hall or open ground and they are stricter, SDMA guidelines will prevail," the EC said.

"Open ground rallies" can be held only on the grounds specifically designated by the district authorities and subject to compliance with all the conditions of SDMA. The organisers of the rallies need to set up seating arrangements to ensure adequate physical distancing, and the use of masks has been made mandatory at all times. The EC has stated that all entrances to rallies must have provisions for hand hygiene and thermal screening. "An adequate number of hand sanitizers should be kept at the entrance as well as within the rally area," the EC stated. Capacities of these grounds will be fixed by the district administration well in advance and notified to all the parties.

"There should be multiple entry and exit points so that there is no crowding as people are coming and leaving the venue. All entrances must have adequate hand hygiene and thermal screening provisions," it said.

According to the EC, chief secretaries of poll going States have written to the commission and have apprised that there

has been significant improvement in the prevailing Covid situation, a considerable decrease in the number of positive cases of Covid, and also decrease in cases of hospitalisation. "Most of them have recommended to the commission to consider for relaxation and allow an increased number of persons in the indoor/outdoor campaign meetings," the EC said. "The poll-going States are contributing a very small proportion of the total reported cases in the country. The union health secretary briefed the commission that the peak of Covid had been reached on January 21/22 and after that all-India figures of Covid cases are fast receding from around 2.93 lakh to 1.72 lakh," the EC said.

In the poll-going States - Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand - the total number of cases had gone down from the peak of 32,000 on January 22 to around 7,000 on Saturday, the EC said. The health secretary also informed the commission that vaccination coverage was satisfactory.

The commission had also appointed 228 expenditure observers and 15 former bureaucrats as special observers for the poll-bound States. "Many special observers have sent their reports and have stated that the Covid situation has improved substantially and the positivity rate has come down significantly," the EC said.

# Nation grieves...

**From Page 1**

Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu said, "I am extremely saddened by the demise of Mangeshkar, the nightingale of Indian cinema and legendary singer. India has lost its voice in the death of Lata, who has enthralled music lovers in India & across the globe with her mellifluous & sublime voice for many decades."

In his condolence Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said, "I am extremely saddened by the demise of Mangeshkar, the nightingale of Indian Cinema and legendary singer. India has lost its voice in the death of Lata, who has enthralled music lovers in India & across the globe with her mellifluous & sublime voice for many decades." Her songs connected people all over the world with India, breaking the bar-

riers of language. Her demise is an irreparable loss for the whole nation," said Birla. Union Home Minister Amit Shah tweeted in Hindi, "Not only music industry but India has lost its soul today. This is truly a tragic news that the queen of melodies and Bharat Ratna has left us. Rest in Peace Lata Mangeshkar. Om Shanti". The BJP National president Jagat Prakash Nadda on said that the demise of Mangeshkar is an irreparable loss to the entire art world. He tweeted, "The demise of 'Swarkokila' Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar, who resides in the heart of every music lover, is heartbreaking. It is an irreparable loss to the entire art world." Film actress Hema Malini and the BJP MP for whom Lata sang many memorable songs said, "Feb 6 is a dark day for us - the legend who has given us a treasure trove of lilting songs, the nightingale of India, Lata, has left us to continue her divine music in heaven. It is a personal loss for me as our affection & admiration for each other was mutual."

# Channi CM face...

**From Page 1**

In a sudden change of events, three-time MLA Channi went on to become Punjab's first Dalit Chief Minister in September last, after the internal revolt led to the ouster of Capt Amarinder Singh.

Channi, after his elevation, had always claimed that he was never in the race. On the other hand, State Congress chief Sidhu has all along been projecting himself as the "suitable" choice as the party's CM face, while popularizing his 'Punjab Model' right for the betterment of the state.

Visibly disappointed, Sidhu put up a strong face and acted graciously on the stage. Channi too touched his feet, after which Sidhu raised his hand in jubilation. "Sidhu ji, Jo tusi karna chahte ho, tusi karoge (whatever you want to do,

you'll do). "Your model will be implemented," Channi assured Sidhu in his first comments after accepting the responsibility. Initially, the Congress had decided to go to the 2022 polls under a "collective leadership", projecting Channi, Sidhu and the former State unit president Sunil Jakhar as the face of the party.

However, when Sidhu started questioning the decision, and pressuring the high command to announce "dulha of the baraat" (referring to CM face), Channi too threw his hat in the ring seeking "ikk hor mauka" (one more chance) on the basis of his performance as the Chief Minister for 111 days, before the polls were announced.

Before Rahul Gandhi made the formal announcement, he held a closed-door meeting that stretched for more than two hours at a hotel near the rally venue in Ludhiana, attended by Channi, Sidhu, Jakhar, Punjab affairs in-charge Harish Chaudhary, and KC Venugopal.

# Goa-based Mangeshkar family in grief over Lata's death

**Mangueshi:** Prasanna Mangeshkar, whose family is related to that of Lata Mangeshkar, was overwhelmed with grief when he read on social media the news of the legendary singer's death on Sunday morning, and rushed back home abandoning his daily chores at the Mangueshi Temple in Goa to mourn her demise.

Lata Mangeshkar along with her sister and noted singer Asha Bhosle, whose family has routes in the Mangueshi village of North Goa district, had come to the temple in 1982 and offered prayers, Prasanna Mangeshkar recalled. **PTI**



# DU to offer students who couldn't complete their degree chance to do so

**New Delhi:** Delhi University (DU) will now give a "centenary" chance to students who could not complete their degree for some reason to return to the university and take their exams.

A proposal for this was approved at a special Executive Council meeting held here on January 28 to discuss the centenary celebrations of the university.

The celebrations to mark DU's centenary year will begin from May 1 and will see year-long events planned by the university which will continue till May 1, 2023.

"The Executive Council has approved the proposal. We are calling it a 'centenary' chance. Students who could not complete their degree for some reason can come and give their

papers and earn their degree from the university," DU Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Singh told PTI.

Explaining the details, he said two chances would be given to such students between May 1, 2022 and March 1, 2023 – the first being around September and October, and the second, somewhere around March – wherein they can take their examinations.

"There will be separate registration for them, and students who could not take two-three papers can sit for their exams," Singh said.

Professor D S Rawat, Dean of Examinations, has been tasked with working out the modalities of the initiative, he added.

According to Executive Council member Rajpal Singh



Panwar, there was a discussion on this aspect in the special meeting held in the last week of January.

The celebrations to mark DU's centenary year will begin from May 1 and will see year-long events planned by the university which will continue till May 1, 2023

was a discussion on the fact that now the papers are held under the semester system. Earlier, the semester system was not there.

Also, the syllabus has changed, and even some teach-

ers are not there. We can do it for those students who have been at DU in the last four-five years," Panwar said.

He said something similar was done in 2012, and there was a discussion that maybe the backlog from 2012 could be cleared, but there could be some issues.

"It doesn't mean that someone who left the course in their first year will be able to complete their remaining two years through this. It is for those who could not take a couple of papers, and they will be given one chance to take those exams again," he said.

The Delhi University has allocated Rs 10 crore for its centenary year celebrations and has plans to bring out a coffee table book to mark the occasion. PTI

## Student bodies to hold demonstrations seeking reopening of DU

**New Delhi:** Various students organisations will stage protests to demand the reopening of the Delhi University (DU), after the Delhi Disaster Management Authority's (DDMA) gave a go-ahead to resumption of offline teaching in higher educational institutions from Monday.

The student outfits said the campus has been closed for almost two years now and as a result, the "standard of education has gone down".

Despite the DDMA giving a go-ahead to the reopening of higher educational institutions from Monday, the DU has not issued any notification for the reopening of the campus. Officials have said the university will open in a few days and they will formulate a strategy in this

regard. The student unions, including the right-wing Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and the Left-affiliated All India Students' Association (AISA), have said they will protest against the DU authorities for not opening the campus immediately.

In a statement, the RSS-affiliated ABVP announced that it will organise a massive movement for the reopening of DU.

It said every college unit of the organisation will submit a memorandum to the respective principals on February 7, demanding the opening of the colleges immediately.

The ABVP announced that it will also hold a full-day sit-in protest at the South Campus on Tuesday. **PTI**

## AAP protests over MCD land transfer to Councillor's kin

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
NEW DELHI

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) took out padyatras in all wards of Delhi against BJP Councillor's move to give away MCD land to her husband.

All of AAP's LOPs and Councillors led padyatras in their wards to inform the people about rampant corruption in the BJP-ruled MCD.

"The party reinforces that the MCD's constitution forbids the act of a Councillor leveraging their post to their family's benefit.

Despite constant protests from AAP, the BJP ruled MCD has not taken any action on the matter, said Leader of Opposition in North MCD Vikas Goel.

"BJP Councillor Manju Khandelwal handed over land in Ashok Nagar to her own



husband Rajendra Khandelwal. The land is worth 50 crores in market value but was given to him free of charge.

The AAP raised this issue in the North MCD session, but it was not given any heed," he

said.

The AAP leader also said "We protested numerous times and demanded that BJP return the land to the MCD, but instead of taking action, they stated flatly that there is no

harm in doing so because the land was given in the name of an NGO."

AAP will not back down and keep protesting till action is not taken against the councillor, said South MCD LOP

## Delhi BJP seals Moti Nagar booze shop situated near a temple

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi BJP on Sunday symbolically sealed a liquor shop situated near a temple in Moti Nagar by putting a lock on the premises and demanded that the Kejriwal Government shut all illegal liquor vends in the national Capital.

This comes two days after the state unit of BJP threatened to seal liquor vends situated in residential areas, near schools and religious places if the Arvind Kejriwal government fails to shut down these shops within the next 48 hours.

Addressing the media in front of the liquor shop in west Delhi, BJP's Delhi unit president Adesh Gupta accused Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of supporting the liquor mafia. "I want to tell Kejriwal that he should shut down all the liquor



shops that he has opened to benefit the liquor mafia immediately," he said.

"If you will not take any action, the BJP workers and leaders would seal these shops situated near residential areas," he added. Taking a jibe on Arvind Kejriwal's book 'Swaraj', the BJP leader said Kejriwal wrote something which he conveniently forgot after coming to power.

"He himself says when a new liquor shop comes up

both officials and leaders get money for that and crores of rupees are involved. Now Kejriwal himself should tell Delhiites how much cut money he and his people have taken for these 850 shops," said Gupta.

He added Delhi youth are being pushed towards alcoholism, women are feeling unsafe as when it's night time there is an atmosphere of fear.

He said, "Kejriwal talked of giving clean water and clean Yamuna River so that one could take dip into that but he is now talking of Delhiites taking a dip into alcohol."

Kuljeet Singh Chahal said because of alcoholism, Kejriwal has created a kind of a jungle raj in Delhi. But we will help Delhiites get rid of this. "In the name of increasing revenue he is in the grip of the liquor mafia only to fill his own pockets," he charged.



A Delhi Metro train runs on a foggy winter morning in Gurugram on Sunday

**PTI**

## Shallow fog likely today in Capital

**New Delhi:** It was a sunny and pleasant Sunday in the national Capital as the maximum temperature settled at 24.2 degrees Celsius, a notch above the season's average, the Met office said.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), similar weather is likely on Monday with shallow fog in the morning and clear sky through the day.

The maximum and minimum temperatures would hover around 25 and 6 degrees Celsius. On Sunday morning, several parts of the city witnessed dense fog and the minimum temperature settled at 5.4 degrees Celsius, four notches below the normal. Delhi's air quality was recorded in the "poor" category. The air quality index (AQI) read 284 at 7 pm, according to the Central Pollution Control Board data.

The AQI in neighbouring Faridabad stood at 294, Ghaziabad 336, Greater Noida 258, Gurgaon 238 and Noida 256, it said.

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

On Saturday, the minimum temperature in Delhi was recorded at 6.9 degrees Celsius, two notches below normal while the maximum settled at 19.5 degrees Celsius, four notches below the season's average. On Thursday,

Delhi saw its maximum temperature go down by eight notches to 14.4 degrees Celsius, the coldest for the month of February in 19 years. On February 1, 2003, the national capital had recorded a high of 14.3 degrees Celsius. **PTI**

## 2 police stations in Delhi to highlight contributions of Bhagat Singh, Gandhi to freedom struggle

**New Delhi:** Delhi's Parliament Street and Tughlak Road police stations will soon be revamped to highlight their historical significance and connections to freedom fighter Bhagat Singh and Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi, officials said on Sunday.

The two police stations, which are drenched in multicolour lights every night, will soon have posters with quotes of Singh and Gandhi, reminding people about their contributions to the Indian freedom struggle.

Police officials said the idea is to celebrate the two legends and create awareness among people about their history associated with the police stations.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Deepak Yadav said, "Two of our police stations in the district -- Parliament Street and Tughlak Road are heritage buildings. We have already started facade lighting at these stations. However, taking it forward, we are now in the process of putting up posters with quotes on the walls of the stations to commemorate memories of our freedom fighter Bhagat Singh and Gandhiji."

"As part of the initiative, we have also planned to make arrangements to play 'bhajans' and patriotic songs within the available open premises of the two police stations," he said. Yadav said the work has already

begun.

"At Parliament Street police station, we have already put up a huge board with lighting in the background with pictures and quotes of Singh and other related information in the gallery area," he said.

"At Tughlak Road police station, facade lighting has been put up but we are yet to put up posters with quotes of Gandhi ji. We are in the process of doing that," he added.

At the entrance of Parliament Street police station, a huge board with a photo of Singh on the right reads: "It is easy to kill individuals but you cannot kill the ideas. Great empires crumbled, while the ideas survived - Bhagat Singh." Singh was lodged in a lock-up at this police station in connection with the Assembly Bombing case in April 1929.

Elaborating why Singh was chosen, a senior police officer said at 12.30 pm on April 8, 1929, Singh along with freedom fighter Batukeshwar Dutt hurled two bombs inside the Central Legislative Assembly in the jurisdiction of Parliament Street police station. "They raised the slogans of 'Inquilab Zindabad' there and threw pamphlets into the hall. They did not flee and courted arrest.

"An FIR was registered at Parliament Street police station and both of them were kept in the

lock-up of this police station. This act of Bhagat Singh is considered to be a part of one of the most illustrious chapters of the freedom struggle," the officer said.

The trial of the Assembly Bombing case began in the first week of June 1929. On June 12, both Singh and Dutt were sentenced to life imprisonment. In the meantime, they were connected to the 1928 John Saunders murder case in Lahore and arrested in that as well, the officer said.

Singh was taken to Lahore. After the trial, he was executed along with Rajguru and Sukhdev on March 23, 1931, he said.

Besides Singh's detention during the freedom struggle, the station is also known for the Bandit Queen case, the officer said. In 2014, Congress leaders Manmohan Singh, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi were also detained at the police station for protesting against the BJP government.

The officer said Parliament Street police station was built in 1913 to protect the Raisina Hills encompassing the President House, North and South blocks as well as Parliament.

According to police, Tughlak Road police station, which was built in the 1930s and set up in 1941, is where the FIR of Gandhiji's assassination was registered. **PTI**

### Single-window facility — First private EV charging point installed at Munirka resident's home

**New Delhi:** Under the AAP Government's single-window facility, the first private electric vehicle charging point has been installed at a south Delhi resident's home under BSES discom BRPL area, a company spokesperson on Sunday.

The single-window facility seeks to facilitate the rapid expansion of charging infrastructure for electric vehicles at private and semi-public places like apartments, group housing societies, hospitals, malls and theatres in the city.

The first private charging point was installed earlier this week at DDA Flats in south Delhi's Munirka, while the second one was installed next to it in east Delhi's Vivek Vihar, the BSES spokesperson said.

"Consumers of BSES discoms BRPL and BYPL can get a private EV charging point installed through an online single-window portal (Switch Delhi) at their homes, group housing societies, multi-storey apartment complexes, RWA offices, commercial shops etc., through the empanelled vendors," he said.

Twelve vendors have been empanelled by the Transport Department for the installation of charging points. For the promotion and expansion of the private charging network, the government is providing a one-time subsidy of Rs 6,000 for the first 30,000 charging points. EV chargers can be purchased by consumers from the empanelled vendors through the single-window portal as per capex or subscription model. Under the capex model, the consumer makes the complete payment upfront to the empanelled vendor. Under the subscription model, the total cost to the vendor is paid by the consumer as equal monthly instalments over three years after which the charger gets transferred to him.

The private charging infrastructure development programme aims to create an enabling environment for the provision of private as well as public charging infrastructure. **PTI**

## HC junks plea by farmers' society to restrain DDA from taking over land on Yamuna banks



**New Delhi:** Dismissing a farmers' society's plea seeking to restrain DDA from taking over the land on the banks of the Yamuna river, the Delhi High Court said it was an attempting to cling on to the land while they have been held to be unauthorised occupants.

It said since records show that members of the petitioner society, Yamuna Bank Kishan Bachao Morcha, are in unlawful occupation, the relief for compensation on the ground of DDA damaging the crop is not maintainable.

The high court said the society's members have violated the undertaking given to the Supreme Court that they would vacate the area by December 2019. "This writ petition is nothing but an abuse of the process of law and another attempt by the members of the petitioner society to cling on to the land while they have already been held to be unauthorised occupants and encroachers," Justice Subramonium Prasad said.

The high court said since the society claimed its members are farmers, the court was not imposing costs on the petitioner and dismissed the petition. It said the petition showed the petitioners are growing crops in the land which is prohibited by a 2015 order of the

National Green Tribunal. The society, in its plea, said it consists of farmers who had inhabited on the banks of the Yamuna river for over 100 years cultivating about 15,000 bighas of land.

It said the members have proof of 'lagaan' being since 1932 till 2012, that the farmers were growing radish, brinjal, potato and onion and they cannot be deprived of the land without following the procedure as laid down under the law.

The plea said on November 8, 2020, DDA officials gathered at the Bela Estate with earth-moving machines and with police to evict the members of the society with an "intent to grab the land".

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA), represented through advocate Prabhsahay Kaur, said the NGT had held that Yamuna Plains are to be protected and no encroachment of any kind is permitted there.

It said DDA has been entrusted with an affirmative duty to protect the river, its morphology and its flood plains. In a bid to fulfil this mandate and keep the Yamuna floodplains encroachment free, the DDA undertakes regular demolition and removal actions, it said. **PTI**



GOODBYE TO GREAT SINGER

# Parl to be adjourned for 1 hr in mark of respect

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Parliament is likely to be adjourned for an hour on Monday as a mark of respect to legendary singer Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar, who was an ex member of the Raya Sabha.

With a two-day national mourning announced, both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha are likely to be adjourned for some time keeping in view the precedent of adjournment for an hour when former President and an ex member of the upper House Pranab Mukherjee died.

Sources said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to reply to the debate on the motion of thanks to the President's speech in the Lok Sabha on Monday evening and in Rajya Sabha likely on Tuesday and in this regard all the parties have issued whips to their Parliamentarians to be present in the house.

While the upper house proceedings are conducted till 3pm Lok Sabha begins at 4pm as per the arrangements due to covid pandemic.

Despite disruptions over Pegasus snooping issue, both

the houses functioned very smoothly with Parliament recording 100 percent productivity.

Significantly, the Rajya Sabha recorded hundred per cent productivity in the first week of the budget session during which the debate on the motion of thanks to the President's address was taken up.

The smooth functioning of the House was acknowledged and appreciated by Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu, who urged the members to continue with this spirit for the remainder of this session.

The upper house made full use of the available 15 hours and 17 minutes during the first week of the budget session, clocking 100 percent productivity for the week, not witnessed often, officials said.

There were no adjournments due to disruptions during the week, unlike in the previous winter and monsoon sessions last year which witnessed frequent disruptions and adjournments.

After the Prime Minister's reply, the Union Budget for 2022-23 will be discussed for 11 hours and Finance Minister

Nirmala Sitharaman will reply on Friday.

To enable this, Private Members' Business on Friday has been dispensed with.

During the first week in Rajya Sabha, 25 of the listed starred questions have been replied to orally in three days of Question Hour and 31 Zero Hour and 14 Special Mentions were made by members during Zero Hour, reduced by half an hour per sitting, the officials claimed.

Rajya Sabha witnessed functioning for three consecutive days during the week without forced adjournments after a year, the last time being March 15-17, 2021, during the Budget session last year, officials in the Rajya Sabha Secretariat have said.

The productivity of Rajya Sabha has been 100 percent or more for four consecutive Budget sessions of 2014 to 2017 and of regular Budget session in 2019, officials said.

It was 28.90 percent in 2018 and 6.80 percent during 2019 (Interim Budget session) and productivity was 76.10 percent in 2020 and 93.50 percent during the Budget session last year, the RS Secretariat said.



People pay floral tribute to singer Lata Mangeshkar, in Agartala on Sunday

PTI

## Didi declares half-day leave in Bengal in honour of Lata Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a show of respect for departed legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar the Bengal Government on Sunday decided to declare a half-day closure on Monday besides remembering the melody queen by playing her songs in all the government programmes for the coming fortnight.

The State Government has also arranged for a special programme at Rabindra Sadan on Monday for the people to come and pay their respect to the legendary singer from 10 am to 5 pm, Government sources said.

In her condolence Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said, "I pay my heart-felt tribute to the departed icon of India, Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar. While offering my sincerest condolences to her family and the billions of admirers that she leaves behind all over the world, I express my deepest sadness at the demise of the genius that the Nightingale of India truly was...Like all her fans and followers across the planet, I was also mesmerized by her voice and renderings, and felt grateful that she held Bengal and the artistes of the East so dear to her heart and so integral to her magnificent world of music."

Further she remembered having offered her the highest Bengal Government honour. "I offered her the highest Government honour of Bengal but she could not come to Kolkata as she was unwell," Banerjee said.

State Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar said "Anguished at the passing of Bharat Ratna all-time greatest Lata Mangeshkar. The void she leaves is difficult to fill. Generations will ever remember the legend of culture for her immortalised melodious voice that would ever mesmerise people."

The singer has sung scores of songs for Bengali films including those in Amanush, Anand Ashram featuring legendary actors like Uttam Kumar, Sharmila Tagore, Tanuja and others.

Incidentally another legendary Bengali singer, the 93-year-old Sandhya Mukhopadhyay who was a friend of the departed should too is fighting corona in a Kolkata hospital.

## Union Ministers pay tributes

**New Delhi:** Several Union Ministers on Sunday paid tributes to singing legend Lata Mangeshkar and said India has lost its voice with the demise of the "singing nightingale".

Mangeshkar died at a hospital in Mumbai earlier in the day.

In a series of tweets, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Mangeshkar's songs were heard by many generations in India.

Describing Mangeshkar as a "singing nightingale", Singh said with her passing away, India has lost its voice.

Minister Amit Shah said Mangeshkar's death is a personal loss for him. With her melodious and mesmerising voice, she filled the lives of people across the world with the sweetness of Indian music. It is very difficult to describe in words her contribution to the music and art world, Shah said. Echoing similar sentiments, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said generations of Indians loved listening to Mangeshkar's songs, which are evergreen. She led a life dedicated to music.

Sitharaman extended her condolences to Mangeshkar's family and all lovers of music.

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari hailed Mangeshkar as not only a singing legend but a true patriot. Gadkari said Mangeshkar's life is an inspiration for all to do good deeds.

Mangeshkar, 92, had tested positive for COVID-19 with mild symptoms and was admitted on January 8 to Breach Candy Hospital's intensive care unit (ICU).

PTI

## End of an era in music in India: Kejriwal

**New Delhi:** Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said with the demise of singing legend Lata Mangeshkar, an era of music in India has ended.

Mangeshkar (92), one of the biggest music icons of the country, died due to multiple organ failure at a Mumbai hospital earlier in the day, according to her sister Usha Mangeshkar and doctors treating her.

"The demise of 'swar kokila' of India Lata Mangeshkar is the end of an era of music in India. Her melodious voice will remain immortalised among us and in the entire world. I pray to God to give the departed soul a place at his feet," Kejriwal



tweeted in Hindi.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and other members of the Kejriwal cabinet also took to Twitter to pay homage to Mangeshkar. "Lata ji's demise has left a void that can never be filled. India has lost its Nightingale today. May her soul rest in peace,"

Sisodia said. Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said he was shocked by the news of the passing away of Mangeshkar.

Mangeshkar had tested positive for Covid with mild symptoms and was admitted on January 8 to Breach Candy Hospital's intensive care unit (ICU).

PTI

## 'Maa Saraswati took her child on Saraswati Puja'

PNS ■ KOLKATA

How will you explain this? ... Maa Saraswati took her child along with her during the Visarjan day of Saraswati Puja... this is no coincidence". That is how Ustad Rashid Khan on Sunday remembered legendary melody queen Lata Mangeshkar. "I met her last time at Goa where she stayed back to attend my concert...", he said adding "no one can will fill this void."

Classical vocalist Pandit Ajay Chakrabarty remembering his old association with the departed soul too demanded setting up of a dedicated Lata Mangeshkar research institute: "Even it means spending of some crores of rupees."

Another legendary Bengali singer Hoimanti Shukla said "Lata didi was my most favourite singer and we were all inspired by her ... She was Goddess Saraswati to us ... her death is a loss for us..." Singer Kumar Shanu said, "Deeply saddened to hear that Lata Didi passed away! No words. She was Maa Saraswati for me and all the singers. She was a blessing for the music industry."

## Lata Mangeshkar's voice will continue to live on: Gadkari

**Mumbai:** Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Sunday said melody queen Lata Mangeshkar's demise was a big shock for everyone, but her voice will continue to live on.

NCP president Sharad Pawar also paid homage to the singing legend, and in a tweet said she will continue to live on through her melodious and immortal voice.

Leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra Assembly Devendra Fadnavis said with Mangeshkar's death, the country has not only lost a voice, but the soul of Indian music.

The 92-year-old singer died at a Mumbai hospital on Sunday morning due to multiple organ failure.

Gadkari in the morning visited the Mumbai-based Breach Candy Hospital, where Lata Mangeshkar breathed her last after undergoing treatment since last month.

Speaking to reporters outside the hospital, Gadkari said Lata Mangeshkar was the "pride of India" and her voice gave pride and respect to the country in the world.

Her voice was considered the "seventh wonder of the world" and she held a record of singing maximum songs in several languages, the Union transport minister said. "Her death is a tremendous loss to the country and the field of music...The vacuum will never

be filled," he said.

Gadkari recalled that the Mangeshkar family, comprising the singer and her siblings, had lent their voices to "Sagara Pran Talmalala", a composition of social reformer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. He said Lata Mangeshkar was proud of the country's heritage and those who fought for its independence.

Later, Gadkari in a series of tweets said Bharat Ratna and nation's pride Lata Mangeshkar was an inspiration to all music lovers. "Lata Didi was a patriot. She had deep faith in the ideology of Swantra veer Savarkar. Her life was filled with many achievements. Her contribution to the Indian music is incomparable," the BJP leader said in a post on the micro-blogging site. "Like all countrymen, her music has been very dear to me, I listen to her songs whenever I get time. May the Almighty give her peace and strength to her family. Om Shantii," he said in another tweet.

Senior BJP leader Fadnavis said with Lata Mangeshkar's death, the country has not only lost a voice, but the soul of Indian music. "God took back its beautiful gift to all of us. We lost Goddess of Indian Music. Hard to believe she's not with us. We have lost an integral part of our life," Fadnavis tweeted.

## AP Governor, CM mourn Lata's death

**Amaravati:** Andhra Pradesh Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy, Leader of Opposition N Chandrababu Naidu and a host of others expressed grief over legendary singer and Bharat Ratna awardee Lata Mangeshkar's demise on Sunday.

Mangeshkar died at a Mumbai hospital on Sunday morning due to multiple organ failure. She was 92. "Lata Mangeshkar was the greatest singer the country has ever produced. She was popularly known as the queen of melody and the Nightingale of India. The void created by her demise can never be filled," the Governor said in a message.

Stating that Mangeshkar would be remembered by generations to come for her contribution to music, Harichandan offered condolences to the bereaved family.

The Chief Minister called Lata Mangeshkar "the notation to melody of Indian music. "The motif of classical and film songs, Lata Mangeshkar was music to the ears for over seven generations and remained the undisputed and indispensable voice of the nation," Reddy said in a condolence message. She held her uniqueness till the last stanza of her career and her passing away was a great loss to Indian music, the Chief Minister said.

PTI

## TN Guv, CM, other leaders condole singer's demise

**Chennai:** Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi, Chief Minister M K Stalin and a host of leaders on Sunday expressed condolences over the death of singer Lata Mangeshkar in Mumbai.

"Deeply anguished on the demise of Bharat Ratna @mangeshkarlata, Governor R N Ravi expressed his heartfelt condolences to the family, all the Bharatiya and the melody lovers in whose heart she will live forever," said a press release from Raj Bhavan, the official residence

of the Governor.

Chief Minister M K Stalin, in his message, said she touched the heart of everyone with her renditions.

"Deeply pained to know that the 'Nightingale of India' Lata Mangeshkar has passed away. With a career spanning eight decades, she has touched the heart of every India with her mellifluous renditions in various languages. I convey my heartfelt condolences to her family and fans," he said in a tweet.



People light candles to pay tribute to veteran singer Lata Mangeshkar at Sant Pashupatinath Vedic School, in Patna on Sunday

PTI

## EC notice to U'khand BJP for tweeting morphed photo of Harish Rawat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) has issued a notice to the Uttarakhand BJP for alleged violation of the model code and asked it to reply within 24 hours for tweeting a morphed image of former chief minister and Congress leader Harish Rawat. He has been shown as a Muslim cleric in the image.

The action comes after the Congress complained to the poll body on Friday, alleging that the BJP Uttarakhand from its official Twitter handle on February 3 at 9.34 PM tweeted a morphed image of Rawat, wherein he has been falsely depicted as belonging to a particular community.

Congress leader Randeep Surjewala had spoken to the CEC on Saturday and demanded the registration of an FIR against the BJP, while alleging that it has violated the model code and other provisions of the law, as it seeks to create disharmony on religious grounds between people of diverse faith. The said tweet has since been removed.

"Whereas, the Commission has carefully considered the matter and is of the considered view that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Uttarakhand has in violation of the clauses (1) & (2) laid down in the part 'General Conduct' of the Model Code of Conduct...Of Section-123 of the Representation of the People Act,

1951 and sub-section (1)(a) of Section 153(A) of the Indian Penal Code 1860, made statements that are provocative and can seriously incite the emotions and lead to breakdown of law & order situation thereby adversely affecting the election process," the EC said in its notice sent last on February 5.

"Now, therefore, the Commission gives an opportunity to the BJP Uttarakhand to explain its stand on putting the morphed image of Shri Harish Rawat on its official Twitter handle as alleged by AICC," the poll body also said. The explanation, the EC said, should reach the Commission within 24 hours of receipt of this notice, failing which the Commission shall take appropriate decision in the matter without further reference to BJP Uttarakhand.

The Congress has also demanded that the said tweet be taken down immediately and the official Twitter handle of BJP Uttarakhand be suspended till the completion of the Assembly Elections in the State of Uttarakhand.

The Congress urged the Election Commission that it is vested with vast powers to ensure a level playing field amongst the political parties during elections and in a healthy and a peace loving democracy, use of religion to create divisiveness and disharmony has always been eschewed by the Commission.

## Air India: A name chosen through opinion poll more than 75 years ago by Tata

**New Delhi:** Do you know how India's first airline 'Air India' got named? Air India was named via an opinion poll among Tata Sons employees over 75 years ago, in 1946. The Tata group also shared its monthly bulletin letter issued back in 1946, which stated that "to the innately democratic mind of the head of the Tata organisation, it seemed a good idea to let the selection be made by popular opinion in Bombay House through a sort of Gallup Poll or Sample Opinion Survey".

While sharing this information via social media, 10 days after the state-owned airline was handed over to the group, the Tata Group also shared two pictures, including an excerpt from the Tata Monthly Bulletin of 1946. Air India retweeted the tweets. The first tweet mentioned 'WHONAMED AIR INDIA?' in a box with the background of an old Air India aircraft. It was followed by a tweet saying, "But who made the final decision? Read this excerpt from the Tata Monthly Bulletin of 1946 to know. #AirIndiaOnBoard #WingsOfChange #ThisIsTata" along with excerpt from the bulletin. "The choice for India's first airline company came down to Indian Airlines, Pan-Indian Airlines, Trans-Indian Airlines & Air India. #AirIndiaOnBoard#WingsOfChange," Tata Group said.

According to the bulletin, Tatas were faced with the problem of finding a name for the new Airline Company which they were forming to take over and extend the activities of the Tata Airlines which had hitherto functioned as a department of Tata Sons Limited.

Voting papers were distributed to ascertain the views of representative sections of opinion among Tata employees and they were requested to indicate their first and second preferences.

"The first count revealed 64 votes for Air-India, 51 for Indian Air Lines, 28 for Trans-Indian Air Lines and 19 for Pan-Indian Air Lines. When the less favoured names had been eliminated, the final count showed 72 votes for Air-India and 58 for Indian Air Lines.

"Thus, the name of the new company comes to be 'AIR-INDIA'," the bulletin said.

## Experts suggest 3-pronged tobacco control strategy: Public awareness, strengthening legislation, hiking taxes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As tobacco-induced cancer is emerging as a major public health threat in the country, top medical experts have suggested a three-pronged tobacco control strategy— public awareness, strengthening legislation and hiking taxes -- to make the cancerous item out of reach of the common man, especially kids. India reports at least 14 lakh new cancer cases and 8 lakh mortalities due to cancer every year. With at least 27 per cent cancer cases due to use of tobacco-related products like cigarettes, gutka and khaini, the oncologists felt that passage of the proposed amendments for a stricter tobacco-control law, COTPA, will help reduce the menace.

"Tobacco products are major reason for various cancers and other diseases. In India, tobacco-related cancers (TRCs) contribute nearly half of the total cancers in males and one-fifth in females. This is scary," Dr GK Rath, former Head, National Cancer Institute, said at a webinar organised on the World Cancer Day on February 4.

Equating tobacco with poison, he said that it kills slowly given that tobacco consumption causes 17 types of cancers of which many are preventable. He also criticized tobacco firms for targeting children as young as ten years old by adopting various marketing strategies.

Dr Rath was equally dismayed at some Bollywood celebrities engaged in surrogate advertisements of health hazardous items like gutka, luring impressionable minds to adopt the suicidal

addiction.

"This is very unfortunate. We have been writing to them that how their action is harming the children and youth who take them as a role model," he said at the event.

Dr Alok Thakar, Professor of head-neck surgery and otorhinolaryngology at AIIMS, New Delhi, flagged the concern of rising oral cancer cases due to unabated sale and consumption of tobacco products like cigarette, beedi, khaini, tambaku, gutka and zarda.

"Since these are yet to be regulated in true sense and not many people are aware about its ill-effects, it will increase the country's health burden dramatically," he said.

Dr Rahul Bhargava, leading hematologist-oncologist from Gurugram-based Fortis Hospital, echoed similar views and asserted that as long as tobacco products were easily available and affordable for poor and children, achieving "Tobacco Free India" mission will remain a dream.

While stressing on strengthening the population-based cancer screening under the NPCDCS programme, Dr Bhargava pointed out that the burden from tobacco use amounted to Rs. 177,341 crores in 2017-18 which is 1 percent of India's GDP. He also suggested that reforming tobacco taxes provides an easy way for the government to raise much needed revenue.

According to an ICMR report, tobacco contains at least 69 cancer-causing agents. Yet another report by the National Cancer Registry Programme (NCRP), the number of new cancer cases in India is likely to increase from 13.9 lakh in 2020

to 15.7 lakh by 2025, a rise of nearly 20 per cent.

Dr Rambha Pandey, Additional Professor, radiation oncologist, AIIMS, New Delhi lamented that women too are increasingly taking up tobacco consumption, viewing it as a fashion symbol. "This is a very disturbing trend. The habit of smoking and chewing start at the age of 10-12 years among kids and once they get into the habit it is difficult to shun."

Dr Pandey hoped that the stringent COTPA amendments having provisions such as ban on designated smoking zones (DSA) will help in cutting down tobacco consumption and thus cancer cases. People must be told that tobacco has no single benefit, she said.

"The link between tobacco consumption and cancer is very clear. There is a need to look into the financial toxicity caused by tobacco consumption resulting in cancer. A multi-pronged strategy focussing on awareness, higher taxes and stringent laws is needed to make these killer products unaffordable and inaccessible to make India healthy," emphasized Dr Rakesh Garg, Additional Professor of Anaesthesiology, Critical Care, Pain and Palliative Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi.

According to the health experts, tobacco-induced cancers impact lungs, mouth, pharynx (upper throat), nose and sinuses, larynx (voice box), oesophagus (food pipe), liver, pancreas, stomach, kidney, ovary, bladder, cervix, and some types of leukaemia. Smoking causes other diseases too, such as heart disease and various lung diseases.



# SP has trouble with bulldozers: Yogi

Our works visible, work has been done on seven hundred temples: UP CM

PNS ■ ALIGARH

For BJP, which had won all seats in the last Assembly, this time the election remains a question of prestige. And to remain in the same position, CM Yogi Adityanath addressed a public meeting at Nanau Painth Maidan in Akarabad on Sunday.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that SP has got more trouble with bulldozers. Socialist leaders should tell that our works are visible. In the BJP Government, work has been done on seven hundred temples. Ayodhya is developing. Kashi is being made state-of-the-art. How come Mathura is left behind. Must the bulldozer run there also?

Our Government started the construction of the university in the name of Raja

Mahendra Pratap Singh. When the students coming from Aligarh and its surroundings will get the degree and will read the name on that degree as Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh, Then they will be interested to know about his name, then only it will be known that Mahendra Pratap had formed the interim government of India in 1915 by staying in Afghanistan. Why the university could not be established earlier in the name of Mahendra Pratap? Why was there no stone plaque in the name of Raja Mahendra Pratap inside the Aligarh Muslim University for which he had donated his land. The reason is clear, there was no respect for the great men of the country. Sometimes Raja Mahendra Pratap Singh is forgotten and sometimes Iron Man Sardar Vallabhvai Patel is forgotten.

CM Yogi said that our government has carried forward the name of Raja Mahendra Pratap. Not only this, our government has named the cancer research center of one thousand crore in Lucknow after the name of Kalyan Singh. Riots don't happen in BJP's double engine government. There was no chaos. There can be no hooliganism. No one can play with the safety of sisters and daughters. Because everyone knows that if they riot, play with the safety of daughters, then there will be incidents like what happened to Duryodhan and Dushashan. The riots were inherited from the SP government. There should be a work of security environment in the state.

The development works are progressing continuously. These things could have been done before. At the time of the

SP government, their condolences were not for the protection of the poor, farmers, daughters. His condolences were for the rioters. To the professional mafia. What kind of chaos these people created by patronizing the mafia is not hidden from anyone.

He said that examples of how loot used to happen in development work are in front of you. The development money was spent on the family or on the development of a friend. This proves that dacoity was used in the development work under the SP government. Free treatment, vaccine, food were found under the leadership of the Prime Minister. Vaccines are protective shields. One hundred percent have taken the first dose. Seventy percent have taken the second dose. By the time the elections

come, it will become ninety-nine percent. Those with double doses will respond to those who oppose the vaccine. Double doses of food grains have also been found in the government of double engine. If there was a government of sister-in-law, the elephant's stomach would never have been filled. When samajwadi leaders met, they said development is visible in here, but what is the meaning of this bulldozer. I said you will understand.

He further added What did Lord Krishna say? Sastra in one and Shastra in the other. Shashtra to pave the way for the welfare of the people, for development and to take the evils to their end. Development will happen for welfare and bulldozers (sasta) will be run on mafia's chest to demolish their illegal encampments.

# Nari shakti of UP to make Yogi CM once again: PM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that Uttar Pradesh is now safe for women and they could step out of their homes without fear and pursue their ambitions.

Addressing a virtual rally in Mathura, Agra and Bulandshahr, the Prime Minister said the 'nari shakti' of Uttar Pradesh had decided to make Yogi Adityanath the Chief Minister once again.

"Uttar Pradesh is the heart of India; it is the heartbeat. Uttar Pradesh has always shown direction to the country. And today again Uttar Pradesh is showing a new path to the country. Only they will get the blessings of the people, who will serve the people of the state by becoming a worker with the

spirit of service and improve the condition of the people," Modi said.

"Today in UP, sisters and daughters are saying that earlier they used to feel afraid to leave their homes, but now criminals shiver under the Bharatiya Janata Party government. UP is now safe for girls and women. Young women can now step out without fear and pursue their ambitions," he added.

The prime minister further said that the people of Bulandshahr know very well what used to happen to women and daughters on these highways. Back then, the illegal occupation of houses and shops were common in Uttar Pradesh. People were forced to leave their homes and migrate. You know very well who patronised the perpetrators of the Agra riots," the prime minister said.

Modi further said that the people of the state were clear in their minds that no matter how much politics some people do on the basis of wealth, muscle power, casteism, communalism etc, they cannot get their love.

"Places of religious interest were forgotten by the previous regime and after BJP's development works, they are now seeing Gods in their dreams. The earlier governments were engaged in creating fear because it suited them.



Tourists visit the Taj Mahal in Agra on Sunday

PTI

# BSF guns down 3 Pak smugglers, seizes 36 kg heroin

PNS ■ JAMMU

A group of three Pakistani intruders were gunned down by the alert jawans of the Border Security Force in the wee hours of Sunday while they were attempting to smuggle a huge consignment of narcotics along the International border in Samba sector of Jammu frontier.

The BSF said around 36 kgs of narcotics (possibly heroin) worth 180 crores in the International market was recovered during the operation. According to BSF the intruders were trying to smuggle narcotics through the border fencing using a plastic pipe.

This was the fourth narcotic smuggling bid foiled by the BSF troops along the border this year, while a total of nine Pakistani intruders were eliminated in various such attempts in the past one year.

Senior BSF officers of the Jammu frontier along with the Inspector General of Border Security Force (BSF), Jammu frontier, D K Boora visited the border area and interacted with the local team of BSF jawans and officers.

Addressing media persons IG BSF DK Boora said, "We had a very good operation the previous night when the alert troops eliminated a narcotic smuggling attempt from Pakistan.

The smugglers tried to take advantage of the darkness and foggy conditions to smuggle the huge quantity of narcotics into this side".

Patting back of the BSF jawans IG BSF DK Boora said over the past one year, not a single attempt from Pakistan had gone unnoticed and every single attempt was successfully foiled by the border guards."It is a big achievement for the



BSF...We have been getting specific inputs about possible attempts of narcotic smuggling over the past 10 days," he said, adding the BSF remains on high

alert and never lowers its guard.

Asked whether the slain smugglers were also affiliated with any terrorist organisation, he said it is a matter of

investigation."The operation is on and so is the investigation. We will share further detail when we reach some conclusion," he said.

# Bihar to reopen schools, lift night curfew, curbs

**Patna:** With the Covid-19 surge showing a significant drop in Bihar, the Nitish Kumar Government on Sunday decided to reopen schools, lift night curfew and relax many other restrictions which have been in place for a month.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the crisis management group which was chaired by the chief minister.

Later, Kumar announced on social media that from Monday onwards, schools will be allowed to hold physical classes with 50 per cent attendance for up to class 8. For classes 9 upwards, there will be no restrictions.

According to Chaitanya Prasad, Additional Chief

Secretary, Home, night curfews, in force since January 6 whereby people were asked to stay indoors from 10 PM to 5 AM, was also being done away with. Cinema halls, gymnasiums, shopping malls, clubs and swimming pools will be allowed to reopen with 50 per cent capacity.

Shops will not be required to down the shutters by 8 PM though strict adherence to Covid-19 protocol will be expected. The number of attendees allowed at weddings and funerals has been raised from 50 to 200.

Other religious, social, cultural and political gatherings may be held but with prior permission of district administra-

tion. Government offices, functioning with 50 per cent attendance, will now run normally and other visitors to these premises will also be allowed, though entry will be given to only those who have been vaccinated.

The guidelines, which came into force from February 7, will continue till February 13 when the situation will be reviewed afresh.

The state has seen a marked decline in its active caseload, which had shot past 35,000 a month ago, but had fallen below 3,000 on Saturday.

For nearly a week, the daily spike in cases across 38 districts of Bihar has remained in three digits. **PTI**

# Withdrawn posts to be re-advertised for transparent recruitment: J&K admin

**Jammu:** Facing criticism over the withdrawal of vacancies referred to the Public Service Commission (PSC) and Service Selection Board (SSB) before October 31, 2019, the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Sunday said the posts would be advertised again for transparent recruitment.

"All the vacancies recalled by a recent decision of the administrative council would be referred again to recruitment agencies for fast-track recruitment as per the new domicile reservation and recruitment rules providing equal opportunity to all. A free, fair and merit-based selection shall be quickly ensured," an official spokesperson said. He said it is also clarified that the withdrawal of posts referred to the PSC and SSB before October 31, 2019 was done for those where selections were not made and results not declared. "It is important to note that a number of posts referred to PSC/SSB by various departments have remained stuck for a long time, in some cases, since 2004. Some of these posts could not have been advertised as they were against the recruitment rules," the spokesperson said. "Therefore, selection against these posts could not have been made. Withdrawing these posts was essential to ensure that they can be filled up as per rules in vogue and opening opportunities for youth of Jammu and Kashmir," he added. **PTI**

# Andhra employees agitating against pay revision withdraw strike

**Amaravati:** Marathon talks between agitating employees and Andhra Pradesh Government ended on a fruitful note late Saturday night, following which the former withdrew their call for an indefinite strike.

Thousands of Andhra Pradesh Government employees and teachers had marched on the streets of Vijayawada city on Thursday, in protest against the recent pay revision. They had threatened to launch an indefinite strike from Sunday midnight. The government conceded to the employees' demands and agreed to enhance certain benefits, including the house rent allowance (HRA), and also to undertake pay revision every five years.

The government committee comprising ministers and others was engaged in talks with the Pay Revision Commission Struggle Committee for over seven hours on Saturday, a follow-up to the seven-hour talks late Friday night.

The government said there would be no change in the 23 per cent fitment announced last month. Also, there would be no immediate adjustment of the interim relief dues for the period July 1, 2019 to March 30,

2020. The amount would be adjusted in the retirement benefits of the employees. Addressing a press conference at the end of the talks, government advisor (public affairs) S R K Reddy said the talks with the employees' leaders ended on a fruitful note as the government agreed to revise the HRA slabs as per the population (of a location).

Government employees in all the district headquarters would now get a 16 per cent HRA. State Secretariat and Heads of Departments staff, who relocated from Hyderabad after the state bifurcation, would get a 24 per cent HRA till June 2024. This is, however, six per cent less than what they have been getting so far.

"The revised HRA slabs will be applicable from January this year. Similarly, retired employees in the 70-74 age group will get a seven per cent additional quantum of pension and those in the 75-79 age group will get 12 per cent," Reddy announced.

The City Compensatory Allowance that was abolished as per the January 17 pay revision orders would now be restored. **PTI**

# CAs play crucial role in nation building: Gehlot

**Jaipur:** Chartered accountants play an important role in nation-building, and they owe it to the people to spread financial awareness among them and make them understand various aspects of the economy, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot said on Saturday.

Gehlot said that although former CAG Vinod Rai was not a CA, his statement had created a wave against the UPA regime, and so chartered accountants need to maintain their credibility in the interest of the country.

Referring to the former CAG, Gehlot said the whole world accepts the intellect of former prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, but Rai counted various scams. Rai earlier spoke of a scam of Rs 1.76 lakh crores and now, has apologised in writing to Sanjay Nirupam for this, Gehlot said.

Even after being in such a high position, he spoke without facts, the chief minister said during an online address to the inaugural session of the sub-regional conference of the Central India Regional Council of ICAL. Rai's statements created a wind against the UPA Government, he said. **PTI**

# Full office attendance of Central employees will resume from today: Union Min

Decision taken in view of dip in Covid-19 cases

**New Delhi:** Union Minister Jitendra Singh has said full office attendance will be resumed for all Central Government employees from Monday.

The decision was taken in view of a decline in the number of coronavirus cases, he said on Sunday.

"A review of the pandemic situation was done today and in view of a decline in the number of Covid cases as well as a decline in the positivity rate, it has been decided that full office attendance shall be resumed from tomorrow and employees at all levels, without any exemption, shall attend office on a regular basis with effect from February 7, 2022," the minister of state for personnel said.

He said the heads of the

departments shall, however, ensure that the employees wear face masks at all times and continue to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour. The Centre had, on January 31, extended the work-from-home arrangement for 50 per cent of its employees below the level of under secretary till February 15.

"But after obtaining inputs from the relevant quarters and a review of the situation, a fresh office memorandum has been issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), informing that all the employees at all levels, without any exemption, will report to office from tomorrow, that is, February 7," Singh said.

There will be no "work-from-home" option for any employee anymore, he added.

The personnel ministry had, on January 3, issued an order allowing work from home for 50 per cent of the employees below the level of under secretary till January 31 in view of a spike in the number of coronavirus cases. **PTI**

# Lab urges DCGI to register Sputnik as booster dose

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug major Dr Reddy's Laboratories has submitted a proposal to the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) to register Sputnik Light vaccine as a booster dose against Covid-19, a top company official has said.

The Hyderabad-based drug major had partnered with the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) to conduct the clinical trials of Sputnik V and distribute the vaccine in India in September 2020. Last year, the company received permission from the DCGI to import the Sputnik vaccine into India for restricted use in emergency situations in April.

"As regards to Sputnik, we are now ready with capacities in India. We are working actively with the Government of India for registering Sputnik Light as a vaccine and as a booster dose of Sputnik V," Dr Reddy's Laboratories CEO Erez Israeli said in an analyst call.

The drug maker has also submitted a proposal to DCGI to conduct a trial to test Sputnik Light as a booster to other vaccines, he added, according to a news agency.

# IHBAS Director bags award for efforts in Sc & Tech

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Dr RK Dhamija, newly appointed director of Delhi-based Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences (IHBAS), the country's well-known mental health and neurosciences research institute, has bagged the national award for outstanding efforts in science and technology communication in the electronic medium for 2021.

Dr Dhamija will be conferred with the prestigious award consisting of Rs two lakhs, a memento and a citation during an award distribution event to be organized as part of National Science Day (NSD) Celebration on February 28 here.

The award is presented every year to an individual for outstanding contribution in the field of science and technology communication and promoting scientific temper, which has created a significant impact in the country during the last five years by the National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC),



Department of Science and Technology, Union Ministry of Science and Technology.

Prior to joining IHBAS, Dhamija was heading the Neurology Department at Lady Hardinge Medical College in New Delhi. An advisor for Royal College of Physicians (London) and Chair of Movement Disorders at World Federation of Neurorehabilitation and health talks host, Dr Dhamija has a string of publications and prestigious awards to his credit with 33rd S Radhakrishnan Memorial National Medical Teacher Award in 2017, Dr B C Bansal, Uma Bansal Oration in 2019 being a few of them. He is WHO expert in Parkinson's Disease Rehabilitation.








FIRST COLUMN

NATIONAL EVENTS AND SYMBOLS


They are also national symbols of joy or solidarity



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

There was a time when elections to Parliament and State assemblies used to be held together. Hence the election season used to come once in five years and the whole country was in an election mood. Gradually for various reasons, one State assembly or another got dissolved and for that State a mid-term election became necessary. With the states reorganisation becoming an oft practised intervention, some assemblies had to be reconstituted into more than one.

The results were simple. The election season was no longer a five-yearly affair. Ever so often, an election had to be called in some state. There have been instances where for one reason or another, the Lok Sabha term got curtailed and fresh elections to the Lok Sabha became a necessity. As a consequence, therefore the frequency of elections increased and the Election Commission had to be almost continually at work.



The constancy of the election season created its own syndrome. Occasionally there has been talk of restoring the election schedule to its old cadence. The consensus on this is still to emerge.

One thing which, however, comes out from all this is that change is the order in anything alive.

This applies to rituals also. Rituals include say, the Republic Day-related celebrations and the symbolic events which accompany it. They are also national symbols of joy or solidarity. The canopy which stands today at Rajpath, New Delhi sans the Statue of the British Emperor, which was installed there to begin with, would be an example. Examples such as this have their contradictions. Many agreed that the Statue needed to be removed from the canopy in free India and so it was. There were some suggestions on whose statue should be installed there instead. Now finally the Government has decided that the statue of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose will be installed there. However, the major landmark in Kolkata continues to be the Victoria Memorial. With its exquisite marble and architecture, it is an eyeful. No one seems to particularly bother that it is a relic of a colonial past where enslavement was celebrated with grand monuments. Such are the contradictions of life!

To get back to the Republic Day story, not many recall that the initial Republic Day celebrations were in what is now the Dhyanchand Stadium. Gradually, Republic Day Parade became a display of India's cultural richness and military preparedness, so the Rajpath was chosen. No one particularly bothered about the India Gate relic, perhaps because it was such a grand landmark. Not many noticed that literally thousands upon thousands of Indian soldiers who lost their lives in World War I did so, under orders, essentially in defence of an imperial power under whose yoke Indian was groaning. That too is another story.

In a strange fusion of history, the relic of imperial wars got fused with celebration of the 1971 event and an Amar Jawan Jyoti was installed near Indian Gate in memory of 'The unknown soldier'. The then Prime Minister 'stole' as it were, the Republic Day opening focus, from the Head of the State by beginning the celebrations by a drive to the Amar Jawan Jyoti.

In the meanwhile, the political climate changed and many latent urges which had been quasi-dormant came to life. A National War Memorial was built near India Gate and the Amar Jawan Jyoti was merged with the National War Memorial. There followed the announcement of dropping of the hymn 'Abide with me' from the Beating of the Retreat ceremony of January 29th. A natural expression of Indian identity with 'Indianness' at its core needs, to be accepted with joy and satisfaction.

*(The writer is an acclaimed management consultant. The views expressed are personal.)*

# Air India sale: More unanswered questions



VEERIAH KONDURI

What is the cost of the national carrier's deal to the nation's exchequer, is the real question?

Reams of writings attempted to understand the advaita of disinvestment as an economic policy instrument. For the last three decades, we are told that the disinvestment is a strategic weapon the governments deploy across the world to reduce the burdens on exchequer and realise the proceeds for larger public good. Anything that is government except the government itself is approached with suspicion, be it infrastructure, service, education, or even health. Most of the vocal and otherwise thinking minds ate the fruit from Eden and started perceiving Satan in every public sector employee. A new breed of intellectuals made their careers with well-oiled arguments defending the philosophy of disinvestment and joined chorus 'business is not the business of the governments.'

The policy of disinvestment under Modi dispensation reached its pinnacle. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's oratory attributed the disinvestment with an amazing ability to resolve the problems of governance. Given the way things are happening in India at present only shows that even this government has to prostrate before the market demi-gods. Whatever you may name it, the ultimate aim of policy prescription is to benefit the private capital at the expense of nation's wealth. There are two examples before the country whose rationale cannot be defended even by Adi Sankara, the demigod of advaita philosophy. Let us consider those two examples.

Vodafone Idea, the third biggest cellular network in India is reeling under Rs. 1.95 lakh crore debt burden, including Rs. 16000 crores interest payable to government of India. Vodafone offered to allot 35 per cent equity share to government in lieu of the interest burden. The Central government is happy to do it. That too this happened when one of the country's monopoly capitalist group Mahindra declared that it cannot set the Vodafone's financial record straight and walked out of the joint venture.

The second case in question is Air India sale. As it is clear by now, the firm floated by Tata paid cash of Rs. 2700 crores to acquire full ownership of the nation's premier flying company, Air India. The reserve price fixed for this sale is a mere Rs. 12906 crores for a firm that had 112 wide-winged aircraft, 24 narrow-winged aircraft, 4400 domestic and 1800 international flight landing and parking slots at various airports across the country and abroad. The central government wanted us to believe that only seven companies thought of participating in the bidding process of whom five were disqualified due to technical reasons. Only Tata's business development team could catch the imagination of the policy makers and stood out as the successful bidder. For this and several other reasons, the Air India sale is filled with an air of suspi-



ON THE COMPLETION OF THIS SALE, ALMOST ALL COMMENTATORS SAID THAT THE PRODIGAL SON RETURNED HOME. THIS IS TO REMIND THE READERS THAT IT WAS OWNED BY JRD TATA AND LATER NATIONALISED. MISSING IN THIS NARRATION IS THE FACT THAT THE GOVT NATIONALISED IT ONLY AFTER PAYING DUE COMPENSATION TO THE PROMOTERS

*(The writer is freelance writer, former member, central working committee, All India Agricultural Workers Union. The views expressed are personal.)*



cion. If one goes by the government's written reply to parliament on July 21, we have to believe that through this sale, the government realised the full cost through this sale process. What is the cost of this deal to the nation's exchequer is the question.

On the completion of this sale, almost all the news makers commented that the prodigal son finally returned home. This is to remind the readers that Air India was originally owned by JRD Tata and later it was nationalised in independent India. Missing in this narration is the fact that the Nehru government nationalised Air India only after paying due compensation to the promoters.

There are enough clues available in the public domain that the central government, since 2018, consistently relaxed and revised the conditions of sale to suit the interests of a selected bidder. Under whose behest these relaxations were granted is the core question the nation warrants transparent answers. Even before the commencement of sale process, while fixing the eligibility criteria, the committee of secretaries opined, as reported by Business Standard, that the government should not insist on negative net worth of bidders, if they are already in airlines business. It should be reminded that including Vistara, owned by Tatas, all the airlines' net worth was showing negative growth only. In 2018, the Air India's outstanding debt was Rs. 33392 crore. Surprisingly, within the span of an year and a

half, the outstanding debt rose to Rs. 61562 crores by August 2021. That means, Air India's accumulated debt for about 68 years was only Rs. 33392 crore and in just two years it accumulated additional debt burden of Rs. 28170 crore. This single point itself proves who is best manager of the public assets.

What the nation is told that once the sale is affected, the government will realise a handsome amount which will be useful to offset the debts, if not making outright profit from the sale.

As on sale date, the outstanding debt stood at Rs. 61562 crore by August 2021. Surprisingly, once the decision to sell is finalised, on the pretext of making the bid attractive for the prospective bidders, the government simply floated an Air India Asset Holding Company and transferred 50 per cent of Air India's consolidated debt to this asset holding company. This simply reduced the amount to be realised from the sale deed to half the actual amount.

When the sale process was initially conceived, it was decided by the Cabinet committee on Economic Affairs that the government will retain 26 per cent stake in the company and only 74 per cent is proposed to put up for sale. It was also decided that the successful bidder has to take over 70 per cent of Air India's debt. Stating no bidder expressed interest, the government altered the conditions of sale. Firstly, government put up 100 per cent stakes sale. Secondly, it gave discretion to the

bidder to choose to what extent it would take the quantum of debt. After giving these two key concessions, the qualified bidders were asked to present their financial plan. And also, the government got parliamentary nod to spend Rs. 62,057 crores to clear all outstanding dues and liabilities of the Air India. That means, the share at stake has gone up by 25 per cent but the cost of the bid stands same.

This brings us full circle. First, the government reduced the cost of the bid by half, there by imposing a burden of about Rs. 30000 crores on the exchequer. On the other hand, instead of repaying the outstanding dues from sale proceeds, the government cleared all dues by spending Rs. 62057 crores from the exchequer. If we add both these, to off-load Air India to Tata, the government had holes in its pockets to the tune of a staggering Rs. 92000 crores. The story does not end here. The Tata's have got a commitment from the public sector banks consortium a loan approximating Rs. 33000 crores at the interest rate of mere 4 -5 per cent. It is to remind us that the Air India till now paid 9 per cent interest rate on its outstanding debts. But the public sector banks are willing to grant loans at half the servicing charge they charged from the public sector undertaking. Thus, the series of concessions offered to the successful bidder is nothing short of a scam which needs to be thoroughly and impartially looked into by nothing short of a Joint Parliamentary Committee.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

DISTURBED BY BENGAL GOVERNOR JAGDEEP DHANKHAR'S TWEETS, I HAVE BLOCKED HIM ON THE MICROBLOGGING PLATFORM.

—WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER

MAMATA BANERJEE



MAMATA BANERJEE DOESN'T WANT TO FACE QUESTIONS FROM THE GOVERNOR AND HAS, THEREFORE, BLOCKED HIM.

—BJP BENGAL PRESIDENT

SUKANTA MAJUMDAR


# Uttarakhand: Focus on unemployment, migration

As high as 40 per cent of the graduate labour force is unemployed in the State of Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand is in the midst of heavy campaigning for the assembly elections. Addressing unemployment is on most political agendas. It is a real crisis. According to Periodic Labour Force Survey 2019-20, over 7 per cent of labour force is unemployed in Uttarakhand, which is almost double than the national average of 4.8 per cent. The number of unemployed persons in Uttarakhand more than doubled from 1.39 lakh in 2011-12 to 3.23 lakh in 2020-21.

Nearly 70 per cent unemployed are youth and well educated. Joblessness among youth in Uttarakhand is a high 20 per cent as compared to the national average of 15 per cent. As high as 40 per cent of the graduate labour force is unemployed.

Youth in mountain regions




RAJENDRA P MAMGAIN

*(The writer is Professor & Head, Department of Economics, Doon University, Dehradun. The views expressed are personal.)*

suffer from a higher incidence of unemployment (24 per cent) as compared to three plain districts of Hardwar, Dehradun and Udham Singh Nagar (16.4 per cent). Gender-wise, nearly 30 per cent of young male labour force in hill areas is unemployed. The corresponding figure is about half in plain areas. The incidence of unemployment is comparatively least among young female labour force in hills (13.6 per cent) as compared to their counterparts in plain areas (24.3 per cent).

The annual growth in the number of unemployed young men in mountain region has been highest over 16 per cent between 2011-12 and 2019-20. The proportion of unemployed youth is disproportionately high in hill districts accounting for over 54 per cent of total youth



unemployed in the state. The latest CMIE data also records a jump of over three-times in unemployment rate.

It merits mention here that the mountain region is confronting huge out-migration and the related situation of depopulation. According to Uttarakhand Human Development Report, every third rural household in the hill districts reported out-migra-

tion. Lack of remunerative employment opportunities, access to quality education and health services are forcing many to out-migrate at a rising rate.

As regards the employment scenario, among the workforce of 40.8 million persons in the state in 2019-20, over 47 per cent are employed in agriculture, which contributes less than one-tenth in the GSDP of the state. The next important sectors are manufacturing, construction and trade contributing one-tenth each to total employment in the state. In the plains, however, non-agriculture sector is the dominant source of livelihood, providing employment to over 72 per cent of workforce therein. Surprisingly, dependence on agriculture as a source of employment in hill region tended to increase between

2011-12 and 2019-20, whereas it decreased by almost ten percentage points in plain regions.

The situation of rising unemployment in general and outmigration from hill region in particular needs serious attention of politicians and development practitioners at the earliest. It requires the implementation of Uttarakhand Vision 2030 prepared by the government of Uttarakhand in 2018, which identified high value agri-business based livelihoods, tourism, green energy, eco-services and forestry as major drivers of employment and economic growth.

This necessitates reorienting government spending for creation of technology support for developing livelihoods and related credit and marketing support on a large scale, particularly

focused on mountain-centric development. The Hill Development Policy needs to be prepared for creating balanced regional development. Towards this end, block headquarters need to be developed as growth centres by provisioning quality infrastructure and attracting private investment for micro, small and medium enterprises development in a big way. The Industrial Policy of the state needs to be rejigged to promote private investment employment intensive light industries and services in mountain regions.

The Government can create employment opportunities by creating an Eco-Task Force with due social security benefits, which will help in conserving forests and environment and could generate revenues for

their sustainability. The expansion of education needs to be strongly supported with the intensive efforts of skill development in local resource-based occupations and also in broader skill sets in emerging occupations to compete outside the region/state.

The Uttarakhand government has to make its development strategy more mountain-centric and act fast to reduce the vulnerability of households to natural disasters, manmade disasters like Covid-19, push-out migration and unacceptable regional economic inequalities. This would require a visionary political leadership and dedicated bureaucracy to transform the migration-prone hill region into a destination of employment and income opportunities for local youths.



# US troops land in Poland amid Ukraine tension

AP ■ RZESZOW-JASIONKA, POLAND

Hundreds of elite U.S troops landed Sunday in south-eastern Poland near the border with Ukraine on President Joe Biden's orders to deploy 1,700 soldiers there amid fears of a Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The airborne infantry troops of the 82nd Airborne Division arrived at the Rzeszow-Jasionka airport on a U.S. Army Boeing C-17 Globemaster plane.

Their commander is Maj. Gen. Christopher Donahue, who on August 30 was the last American soldier to leave Afghanistan.

Biden ordered additional U.S. troops deployed to Poland, Romania and Germany to demonstrate to both allies and foes America's commitment to NATO's eastern flank amid rising tensions between Russia and Ukraine.

NATO's eastern member Poland borders both Russia and Ukraine. Romania borders Ukraine.



US Army officers after arrival at the Rzeszow-Jasionka airport in southeastern Poland, on Saturday.

AP Photo

The division can rapidly deploy within 18 hours and conduct parachute assaults to secure key objectives. Based in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the division's history goes back to 1917.

Earlier in the week, U.S. planes brought equipment and logistics troops in preparation for the arrival of elements of the division to the airport, located 90 kilometers (56

miles) from Poland's border with Ukraine. Polish soldiers have previously worked together with the U.S. division on missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to Major Przemyslaw Lipczynski, a spokesman for the Polish Army's 18th Mechanized Division. Some 4,000 American troops have been stationed in Poland since 2017 on a rotating basis.

# Imran Khan offers 'role in resolving' US, China dispute

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Pakistan Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain said that Prime Minister Imran Khan as saying that Pakistan was ready to play its role in resolving the dispute between the US and China, The News reported.

During his meetings with think tanks, Khan stressed that the world could not afford another Cold War, said Fawad.

The Prime Minister, he added, would have a one-on-one meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday. During meetings with the Chinese leadership, the bilateral relations between the two countries would be discussed, Fawad added.

He said water projects in Karachi and Faisalabad were discussed during Khan's meetings with Chinese investors. "The water supply project for Karachi (K-4),

Hub Canal and water treatment plant in Faisalabad came under discussion in the meetings," Fawad said in a media talk.

He would also meet UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang in the evening, he added.

The Information Minister said the Pakistani sportsmen were participating in the Chinese Winter Olympics for the first time.

The Pakistani contingent was warmly welcomed by the people of China on its entry in the stadium, which was manifestation of the deep-rooted bilateral relations between the two countries.

Fawad said Pakistan-China friendship was based on the expression of love between the people of the two countries, adding that Chinese investors were showing interest in investing in Pakistan.

# Afghan women face violence & repression under Taliban after global spotlight fades

PTI ■ ATLANTA

The Taliban reportedly captured 40 people in Mazar-e-Sharif, a medium-sized city in Afghanistan, at the end of January 2022. Taliban members then allegedly gang-raped eight of the women. The women who survived the gang rape were subsequently killed by their families. The fact that the women had been raped violated a societal honor code called Pashtunwali, which prohibits women from engaging in sex outside of marriage. Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid tweeted that some of the women they arrested "remain detained because their male relatives have not yet come to escort them." News of the attack is circulating among various Afghan communities and some local media, according to several Afghan women's rights activists who are part of my academic network. These colleagues cannot be named because of security concerns. Women's rights activists marched in Kabul on Jan. 16, 2022, asking where the women of the Mazar-e-Sharif attack have gone. But a careful online news search in English will not reveal details about these recent kidnappings and gang rapes – a common form of aggression by the Taliban in the 1990s. No Western media has covered the attacks. Afghanistan made Western headlines in July and August 2021, as the US withdrew the last troops from the country. Under the Taliban's latest rule, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Afghanistan are facing "grave threats" of violence and death, according to new findings by the research and advocacy nonprofit organization Human Rights Watch.

Violence against women in Afghanistan also appears to again be worsening, according to local Afghan colleagues I know. But these reports are not eliciting international political concern. During a major peace and conflict conference I attended with Alexia Cervello San Vicente, a masters student at Columbia University, in January 2022, participants shelved questions about Afghan women's gender-based violence in favour of discussing trade agreements and foreign aid.

Alexia assisted in the research and writing of this story. As an expert on terrorism and violence against women, I find that the current situation for women and girls in Afghanistan is reminiscent of the Taliban's last restrictive regime in the 1990s. Women's rights in Afghanistan then and today When the Taliban first rose to power in 1996, it famously banned Afghan women from holding jobs, or even leaving home without a male guardian or chaperone. Womens' rights violations in Afghanistan were a major topic of public concern in the 1990s.

## Afghan journalists face increasing harassment under Taliban: Media body

IAN S ■ KABUL

The Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said that journalists and media workers in Afghanistan are facing increasing "harassment" under the Taliban regime.

RSF said the threats, interrogations and arbitrary arrests of journalists have increased and these actions are in violation of Afghanistan's press law, TOLO News reported.

According to RSF, since the Taliban came to power in August last year, at least 50 journalists and media workers have been detained, lasting from several hours to nearly a week.

"Threatening to rip out journalists' tongues in order to prevent them from covering certain subjects is completely unacceptable," said Reza Moini, the head of RSF's Iran-Afghanistan desk.

"Journalists must be able to practice their profession without being under a permanent threat of arrest and torture. These unlawful threats, which violate Afghanistan's media legislation, are all the more horrifying for coming at a time of growing harassment and increasingly restrictive rules for the right to news and information."

According to the RSF, the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice had also issued a decree in November last year defining certain rules for media in Afghanistan.

On February 3, the International Federation of Journalists also raised concerns on the status of media in Afghanistan, saying at least 318 media outlets have closed since the fall of the Western-backed government in 33 of 34 provinces in Afghanistan.

"The crisis has hit newspapers the hardest with just 20 out of 114 continuing to publish," the report read.

## Over 1 million Afghans migrated in 4 months: Report

IAN S ■ KABUL

More than one million Afghans have migrated over the past four months and most of them have crossed border areas into Iran and Pakistan, a media report claimed.

The head of a private transportation industry said that around 4,000 people are heading to Iran on daily basis, TOLO News quoted The New York Times report.

Many of the migrants entering Iran are seeking to cross the borders of Turkey and from there go on to Europe for asylum.

The New York Times said the mass migration has raised alarms in the region as well as Europe about a repeat of the 2015 migrant crisis, when more than a million people, mostly Syrians, sought asylum in Europe.

"Though many are choosing to leave because of the immediate economic crisis, the prospect of long-term Taliban governance – including restrictions on women and fears of retribution – has only added to their urgency," the report said.

Refugee rights defenders in Iran expressed concerns over the status of Afghan refugees in Iran. "The Afghan refugees in Iran are facing various challenges such as lack of access to work and refugee identification cards. A refugee is always at risk of being back deported," Naqibullah Rasikh, a refugee rights activist, told TOLO News.

Meanwhile, the Taliban government has said that efforts were underway to tackle the economic and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

"The statistics of the Islamic Emirate show that between 1,500 to 2,000 people are going to Iran from Afghanistan on a daily basis," said Bilal Karimi, the government's deputy spokesman.

## PLO central council to discuss crucial issues

IAN S ■ RAMALLAH

The central council of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) will convene on Sunday in the West Bank city of Ramallah to discuss crucial issues related to the internal situation and the relationship with Israel and the US.

The meeting is scheduled to elect a new secretary general for the PLO's executive committee to succeed late Saeb Erekat, who died from Covid-19 in November 2020.

Ahmad Majdalani, a member of the PLO's executive committee, told Xinhua news agency that representatives of seven Palestinian factions will participate in the Palestinian Central Council (PCC) meetings.

The Palestinians, he said, are facing a complicated situation due to the obstruction of peace with Israel, "which coincides with the failure of the US to fill the existing political vacuum, whether by proposing a political initiative, moving the peace process, or appointing an envoy for the peace process".

Direct peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, sponsored by the US for nine months, once stopped in 2014 following deep differences over the borders of the future Palestinian state, settlement, and security issues.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian left-wing Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the second faction in the PLO after the Fatah Party, said that it decided not to join the PCC meetings in Ramallah.

## Iran eyeing 'real' economic benefits in nuclear talks

IAN S ■ TEHRAN

Ali Shamkhani, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, has called for the removal of US sanctions that could benefit Iran economically.

"Real, effective and verifiable economic benefit for Iran is a necessary condition for the formation of an agreement" in the ongoing Vienna talks, Shamkhani tweeted on Saturday.

"A show of lifting sanctions is not considered constructive," he said in response to Friday's restoration of a sanction waiver by Washington, which allows civilian nuclear cooperation projects between Iran and the international community, Xinhua news agency reported.

Earlier on Saturday, Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said the recent US sanction waiver on Iran is "insufficient" for the revival of the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The JCPOA was signed in 2015. However, former US President Donald Trump pulled Washington out of the pact in May 2018 and reimposed unilateral sanctions on Tehran, which prompted the latter to breach some of the deal's restrictions one year later, and advance its once-halted nuclear programs. Since April 2021, eight rounds of talks have been held between

## German leader's stance on Russia looms over first visit to US

(AP ■ BERLIN —

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is flying to Washington this week on a mission to reassure Americans that his country stands alongside the United States and other NATO partners in opposing any Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Scholz has said that Moscow would pay a "high price" in the event of an attack, but his government's refusal to supply lethal weapons to Ukraine, bolster its troop presence in eastern Europe or spell out which sanctions it would support against Russia has drawn criticism abroad and at home.

"The Germans are right now missing in action. They are doing far less than they need to do," Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a Democrat and member of the Armed Services Committee, recently told an audience of Ukrainian Americans in his state, Connecticut.

This sentiment was echoed by Republican Sen. Rob Portman, who questioned why Berlin hadn't yet approved a request to let NATO member Estonia pass over old German howitzers to Ukraine.

"That makes no sense to me, and I've made that very clear in conversations with the Germans and others," Portman told NBC. Publicly, German officials insist their country is

doing its part. Germany's ambassador in Washington, Emily Haber, appeared on Fox News last month to defend Berlin's restrictive stance on arms exports and highlight the generous economic support provided to Ukraine. Yet in a confidential diplomatic cable beginning "Berlin, we have a problem," Haber warned that Germany risks being portrayed as an unreliable partner in Washington, the respected German news weekly Der Spiegel reported.

Much criticism has also focused on Germany's heavy reliance on Russian supplies of natural gas and the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline bringing that gas to Germany under the Baltic Sea, bypassing Ukraine.

The project has long been opposed by the United States, but is strongly supported by Scholz's center-left Social Democratic Party, most prominently its last chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder.

The 77-year-old Schroeder is close to Russian President Vladimir Putin and already heads the shareholders' committee of Nord Stream AG and the board of directors of Nord Stream 2.

In a move likely to embarrass Scholz ahead of his first trip to Washington, the Russian state-owned gas company Gazprom announced Friday that Schroeder — who has accused Ukraine of "saber-rattling" in its standoff with Russia

## N Korea cashes in on cyber attacks, upgrades nuke, missile prog: UN

IAN S ■ SEOUL

North Korea continued to advance its nuclear and missile programs last year as it gained significant profits from cyberattacks, a UN reports said.

According to a member state, DPRK cyberactors stole more than \$50 million between 2020 and mid-2021 from at least three cryptocurrency exchanges in North America, Europe and Asia," Yonhap News Agency quoted the confidential report by the UN panel of experts monitoring the implementation of sanctions on Pyongyang.

DPRK is the acronym for the North's official name, Democratic People's Republic of Korea. North Korea carried out at least seven attacks on cryptocurrency platforms that extracted nearly \$400 million worth of digital assets in 2021, it added. The annual report noted that the North kept developing its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities.

"Although no nuclear tests or launches of ICBMs (intercontinental ballistic missiles) were reported, DPRK continued to develop its capability for production of nuclear fissile materials," the report, submitted to the UN Security Council North Korea sanctions committee, stated.

"DPRK demonstrated increased capabilities for rapid deployment, wide mobility (including at sea), and improved resilience of its missile forces."

# Xi meets Poland, Pakistan leaders in Olympic diplomacy

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping met

Sunday with leaders from Poland and Pakistan in a flurry

of diplomacy on the sidelines of the Beijing Winter Olympic Games. Xi told President Andrzej Duda that China seeks to further improve ties with Poland, whose warm relationship with Beijing has not sat well with main rival the United States.

Poland was the only European Union nation to send an elected leader to the Games despite a U.S.-led diplomatic boycott. The meeting also comes amid concerns over a Russian attack on Ukraine, with which NATO member Poland shares a lengthy border.

Xi, who has not left China since 2019, has met a range of world leaders over recent days, including President Vladimir Putin of Russia, with which China is building a closer informal alliance.

The meetings highlight Xi's moves to elevate himself as a major player in world diplomacy, while positioning China's single party authoritarian political model as an alternative to the long-dominant liberal world order led by the United States. Xi told Duda the two countries should "respect and accommodate each other's core interests and major concerns," Communist Party newspaper Global Times reported. AP

# S Korean prez candidates to register with election body on February 13-14

IAN S ■ SEOUL

With the South Korean presidential election fast approaching, the country's National Election Commission is hastening its preparations for the March 9 vote amid a surge in daily Covid-19 infections driven by the highly contagious Omicron variant.

According to the NEC, political parties' presidential candidates have to formally register on February 13 and 14, reports Yonhap News Agency.

The candidates' official 22-day campaign period is set to kick off on February 15. Three rounds of TV debate among candidates have been scheduled during the official campaign period. Starting from Monday, gatherings of political party members will be banned under an election law.

Overseas Korean citizens who are registered as absentee voters will cast their votes on February 23-28. Sailors will cast their votes aboard their ships from March 1-4. Advance voting will take place

from March 4-5. It is not the first South Korean election to be held during the pandemic, but the upcoming vote comes as the nation grapples with a surge in daily Covid-19 cases.

The NEC has said it is looking for solutions that allow people who have contracted the virus after the early voting period to cast their ballots in the March election.

Meanwhile, Yoon Suk-yeol, the presidential nominee of the main opposition People Power Party, is still neck and neck with ruling Democratic Party candidate Lee Jae-myung, two surveys revealed on Sunday.

According to a survey by the Korea Society Opinion Institute (KSOP), Yoon is leading Lee with 37.2 per cent support against 35.1 per cent.

Another survey conducted by Realmeter, showed that Yoon is leading Lee with 43.3 per cent support against 41.8 per cent. Ahn Cheol-soo, the presidential candidate of the minor opposition People's Party, came third in both the surveys.

# Russia hits new daily Covid record of 180,000 cases

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia is reporting a record daily count of new coronavirus infections of 180,071, a tenfold spike from a month ago as the highly contagious omicron variant spreads through the country.

The figure reported by the state coronavirus task force on Sunday was about 2,800 cases more than recorded the previous day and continued a surge that began in mid-January, when daily new cases were around 17,000.

Although the number of infections has increased dramatically in recent weeks, the task force reported that daily deaths from COVID-19 are holding steady or marginally declining: 661 deaths were recorded over the past 24 hours, compared with 796 on Jan. 6.

For the entire course of the pandemic, the task force has reported 12.8 million infections and 335,414 deaths. Despite the soaring infections, President Vladimir Putin told Russia's business association last week that authorities are not plan-

ning any lockdowns or other additional restrictions because of surge. Moreover, the government lifted seven-day self-isolation restrictions for those who come into contact with COVID-19 patients. Faced with biggest virus surge yet, Russian authorities have generally resisted imposing any major restrictions and repeatedly rejected idea of introducing a lockdown. Russia had only one, six-week lockdown in 2020, and in October 2021 many people were also ordered to stay off work for about a week.

But beside that, life in most of the country remained largely normal, with even mask mandates being loosely enforced.

In recent weeks, a growing number of Russian regions have started introducing restrictions for those under 18, as officials noted that current surge affects children much more than previous ones. In many areas, schools have either switched to remote learning or extended holidays for students. In St. Petersburg, Russia's second largest city, minors have been temporarily barred from most public places.

# Apartment purchases by S Korean youth hit record high

IAN S ■ SEOUL

The proportion of apartments bought by South Koreans in their 30s or younger reached an all-time high last year amid "panic buying" over soaring housing prices, data showed on Sunday.

The buyers of this age group accounted for 31 per cent of the country's total apartment sales in 2021, up from 29.2 per cent in 2020, according to the data compiled by the Korea Real Estate Board. The agency began compiling the related data in 2019, and the figure for the year came to 28.3 per cent, reports Yonhap News Agency.

In Seoul, 41.7 per cent of the total apartment purchases last year were made by those in their 30s or younger, compared with 37.3 per cent in 2020 and 31.8 per cent in 2019. The surrounding Gyeonggi Province and the western port city of Incheon also saw the proportion rise about 6 per cent, each, on-year to 36.3 per cent and 33.2 per cent, respectively, the data showed. The country's housing prices have skyrocketed over the past couple of years.

Government of Jammu & Kashmir Union Territory  
**Mechanical Division, Srinagar.**  
Tel:- 0194-2497056 Email:- xemnds@gmail.com

**Date Extension Notice**

Subject: Supply of Variable Snow Ploughs for various snow clearances Machines of MED Kashmir under Capex Budget and UDRF.

Reference: 1. This office NO. MDS/TS/2021-22/149e-tendering ; DATE: - 18.01.2022. (Tender Id: 2022\_PWDJK\_157575\_1).

In view of representations received from firms requesting for extension of dates and subsequent discussions held with the Chief Engineer, MED, Kashmir, the critical dates of above referred eNIT are extended as under:

Last date of uploading of bids	Extended upto 07.02.2022 (18:55 PM)
Date of opening of bids online	On 08.02.2022 at 14:00 Hrs

All other terms, conditions and technical specifications of the NIT shall remain same.

Sd/-  
No:-DIPK-17547/21  
Dated :- 04.02.2022  
(Er. Rajesh Sharma)  
Executive Engineer

**UJVN LIMITED**  
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dohradun-248006  
Telephone:- 0135-2763508, 22763808 Fax:- 0135-2763508  
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866

RO No. 51

**TENDER TIME EXTENSION NOTICE-1**

Date: 05.02.2022

Due to unavoidable circumstances the date of submission and opening of following tender invited by the office of the Executive Engineer (Test), MB-II, Chinyalisaur (Uttarkashi) is hereby extended as follows: -

**Tender No:** NIT - 03/EE(T)/MB-II/21-22

**Name of work / Supply/Services :** Up Keeping and Maintenance Of GM (BV)/ DGM (HGC) Offices, Officers Club, JE Club and 11kv/0.4kv Substation in Shaktipuram Colony, Chinyalisaur.

**Last date for submission of tender:** - 11.03.2022 up to 16:00 Hrs.

**Due date for opening of tender:** - 14.03.2022 at 11:00 Hrs

For fuller & further details, kindly visit our website. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam's website "www.ujvn.com"

**Executive Engineer (Test)**

"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"



# Govt prepared to deal with any global development: FM

**In a post-Budget interaction with industry body Ficci, she urged corporates to take advantage of the recovery in the economy and step up investment**

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India is prepared to deal with any situation arising out of global developments, including the US Federal Reserve's decision to roll back monetary easing, and will not allow the economy to suffer, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman asserted on Sunday.

In a post-Budget interaction with industry body Ficci, she urged corporates to take advantage of the recovery in the economy and step up investment.

"It's time now for us as Team India to rise. We are at such a juncture where revival of the economy is very

clear...This recovery is therefore going to place India as the fastest growing economy among the larger economies and that would continue even in the next fiscal," the minister said.

Post pandemic, the world order has changed and industry leadership should ensure that India doesn't miss the bus this time, she said. Recalling that India missed an opportunity post the global financial crisis, she said the taper tantrum was not absolutely well addressed and as a result, India missed out on one big opportunity that was available at the time.

"Now with the RBI and the government working together and very much keenly observing what is going on in the global financial ecosystem...We have also learnt the lessons of the last crisis which the government of India faced in 2012-13 and 2013-14.

"We are fairly watchful of what is happening as regards

the global strategic developments, as regards the Fed decision, and as also regards the global inflationary pressures, we are keeping a very close watch, and I can assure the leadership here that we shall not allow the Indian economy to suffer for want of preparations," she said.

She exuded confidence that India would definitely leap forward and reach such sustained growth levels and before 2047 it would stand out as one of those well developed, absolutely endowed countries.

The US Federal Reserve has decided to end its bond purchasing programme in March and increase interest rates thereafter to control high inflation. Emerging economies like India have been beneficiaries of increased liquidity and have attracted huge foreign fund inflows.

However, they will face the threat of huge fund outflows as the US Fed will taper off buying of assets.

# Green bonds to be rupee-denominated with long tenure, says DEA Secy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that the issuance of sovereign green bonds is part of the Government's overall borrowing programme, Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth has said these rupee-denominated papers will have long tenure to suit the requirement of green infrastructure projects.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her Budget Speech announced that the Government proposes to issue sovereign green bonds to mobilise resources for green infrastructure.

"The proceeds will be deployed in public sector projects which help in reducing the carbon intensity of the economy," she said in the Budget 2022-23.

In a post-Budget interview with PTI, Seth said this is part of the overall borrowing for the next financial year.

"At this point of time, we are looking at the domestic markets and rupee-denomi-

nated...The tenure would be normal like any G-sec tenure. It would be medium to long term but not short term. Fund mobilised will be used in the infrastructure sector, which has a requirement of long term finances," Seth said.

Before taking a decision on quantum, Seth said the RBI will come out with a framework, which will have details about projects or sectors that would qualify for funding under the sovereign green bonds.

Besides, he said the guidelines will have details related to the monitoring of fund usage in green or less carbon-emitting areas and assurances for investors.

"This is not a general-purpose borrowing. These are going to be purpose-oriented borrowing. We will come out with a framework in the coming months. It's not a one year instrument but there will be more need for such an investment, and more eagerness of the investors in the area in the

coming years," he said.

During 2022-23, the government plans to borrow a record ₹11.6 lakh crore from the market to meet its expenditure requirement to prop up the economy hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Seth, however, assured that the government will execute the market borrowing programme in the next financial year in a non-disruptive manner without crowding out the private sector.

This is nearly ₹2 lakh crore higher than the current year's Budget estimate of ₹9.7 lakh crore. Even the gross borrowing for the next financial year will be the highest-ever at ₹14,95,000 crore as against ₹12,05,500 crore Budget Estimate (BE) for 2021-22.

However, the gross borrowing has been revised downwards by nearly ₹2 lakh crore to ₹10,46,500 crore for the current financial year helped by an improvement in revenues.

# RBI likely to maintain status quo in policy rate next week, say experts

PTI ■ MUMBAI

In view of inflationary concerns, the Reserve Bank is likely to maintain the status quo on key policy rates in its next bi-monthly economic policy, which will be the first after the presentation of the Union Budget for 2022-23.

Experts, however, are of the opinion that RBI's monetary policy committee (MPC) may change the policy stance from 'accommodative' to 'neutral' and tinker with the reverse-repo rate as part of the liquidity normalisation process.

The next bi-monthly monetary policy is scheduled to be announced on Wednesday at the end of three-day deliberations of the MPC beginning Monday.

Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda, said given the assurance on growth as per the budget and the possibility of inflation rising mainly due to crude oil, "we

expect the RBI to start the process of normalisation by increasing the reverse repo rate by 25 bps".

There will be no change in the repo rate this time even though a 50 basis points hike is expected next year, Sabnavis said adding there could be a slight downward revision in the GDP growth rate for FY22.

"Will there be a change in stance? Probably not this time though the hike in reverse repo rate will send signal of future direction of rates," Sabnavis opined.

Shanti Ekambaram, Group President, Consumer Banking, Kotak Mahindra Bank, said amidst global inflation pressures, tightening monetary policies by global central banks, high oil prices, domestic inflation, and the sharp rise in domestic yields, the MPC will have a tight rope-walk as they discuss the monetary policy stance and interest rates in the coming week.

# Massive capex outlay to crowd in pvt investment by creating demand, boosting eco activity: Fin Secy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government's massive capital spending programme outlined in the Budget 2022 will help crowd-in private investment by reinvigorating economic activities and creating demand, Finance Secretary T V Somanathan said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman raised capital expenditure (capex) by 35.4 per cent for the financial year 2022-23 to ₹7.5 lakh crore to continue the public investment-led recovery of the pandemic-battered economy. The capex this year is pegged at Rs 5.5 lakh crore.

The spending on building multimodal logistics parks, metro systems, highways, and trains is expected to create demand for the private sector as all the projects are to be implemented through contractors.

In an interview to PTI, Somanathan said over the last two years physical restrictions due to Covid pandemic has

dented demand and delayed private investment.

"The hope is that because of the heavy capital expenditure programme by the end of this financial year, hopefully, private capital investments will begin to come in a big way. That is our hope," Somanathan said..

Low private investment is a non-economic problem, which can't be solved by economic remedies, he said, adding it would be solved when activities start and demand picks up.

The economic Survey has pegged India's economic growth between 8-8.5 per cent in the current fiscal, while Budget has estimated nominal GDP growth of 11.1 per cent.

In her post Budget interaction with industry leaders, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had on Saturday exhorted India Inc to take advantage of announcements made in Budget and "quickly" step up spending.

# ADB gave record loans worth \$4.6 bn to India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Sunday said it provided a record \$4.6 billion loans to India in 2021, including \$1.8 billion towards coronavirus response.

"The Asian Development Bank committed a record \$4.6 billion in sovereign lending to India in 2021 for 17 loans, including \$1.8 billion for the country's coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic response," the multilateral funding agency said in a statement.

Of the COVID-19-related assistance, \$1.5 billion was towards vaccine procurement and \$300 million to strengthen primary health care in urban areas and the country's future pandemic preparedness.

The ADB's regular funding programme to India is made to support transport, urban development, finance, agriculture, and skills building.

ADB Country Director for India Takeo Konishi said, "The ADB's operations continue to

support the Government of India's fight against COVID-19 and its other development priorities such as managing urbanisation, raising industrial competitiveness to create more jobs, improving connectivity and enhancing skills."

Konishi added that to maximise the development impact of its operations, ADB adopts a multidisciplinary approach and incorporates Finance Plus elements based on its comparative advantage, knowledge base and value addition.

He said the ADB will continue to support less-developed states through the provision of basic infrastructure and institutional capacity building while pursuing transformative investments in the more economically advanced states.

The agency extended a \$2.2-billion support for 12 state projects, committed to its geographically balanced programming.

The funding body said its strategic engagement with states will include knowledge

support to navigate their emerging development challenges.

The ADB's project portfolio in 2021 reflected the Indian government's focus on transforming cities into economically vibrant and sustainable communities.

This included financing for India's national urban flagship missions to enhance access to water, sanitation, and affordable housing and promote performance-based fiscal transfer to urban local bodies; enhancing mobility through metro network expansion in Bengaluru; and strengthening flood-risk management in Chennai's urban areas.

Support to the Government's National Industrial Corridor Development Programme will help enhance the country's manufacturing competitiveness while a connectivity improvement project will stimulate industrial development in the ADB-supported Chennai-Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor.

# Centre will bring ATF inclusion in GST for discussion in next Council meet: FM

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre will bring for discussion in the next meeting of the GST Council the issue of bringing aviation turbine fuel (ATF) into the goods and services tax regime, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Sunday, as she noted that rising global fuel prices is a "concern".

When the GST was introduced on July 1, 2017, amalgamating over a dozen central and state levies, five commodities – crude oil, natural gas, petrol, diesel and ATF – were kept out of its purview given the revenue dependence of the central and state governments on this sector.

Sitharaman, in a post-Budget discussion with industry chamber Assocham, said a final decision of inclusion of ATF in GST will be taken by the Council, which comprise finance ministers from Central and state governments.

"It is not with ... (the Centre) alone, it has got to go to the GST Council. The next

time we meet in the Council, I will put it on the table for them to discuss it," she said.

The minister was responding to views expressed by SpiceJet Founder Ajay Singh where he sought the support of the Union finance minister in bringing ATF into the GST regime.

"Oil is at \$90, the rupee is at 75 to a dollar and, therefore, the civil aviation sector has become chronically ill. Your kind support (in bringing ATF into GST) in this process will be extremely helpful," Singh said.

Currently, the central government levies excise duty on ATF while State Governments charge VAT. These taxes, with excise duty, in particular, have been raised periodically with rising oil prices.

Including oil products in GST will not just help companies set off tax that they paid on input but will also bring about uniformity in taxation on the fuels in the country.

"Of course just not for the airline but the global price of

fuel is now a concern for all of us, more so for airlines which have not seen a complete head-up post the pandemic," Sitharaman said.

She said she will speak with the banks to see what best we can be done for the airline sector. "You also spoke about the industry status to be given so that can help to attain better banking assistance. I will have a word with banks on that," she said.

Singh in his remark had said banks instead of being supportive to stressed sectors are withdrawing facilities from these sectors.

"So, I request that there should be a message of support from the Government.

"If for a period of 2/3 years these sectors could be put under priority lending or infra category that would help because today the banks are not there when we need them, they are in sectors which are doing well and that's creating a great deal of stress," Singh added.

# Highway construction speed to be enhanced to meet next fiscal target: Road Transport Secy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Terming the recent budget a "development oriented" exercise, Union Road Transport and Highways Secretary Giridhar Aramane on Sunday said the pace of road construction will be further increased to achieve the target of expansion of national highways in the next fiscal.

In the ongoing fiscal so far, he said, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) have so far constructed 7,500 km of national highways, and in the remaining two months, at least 2,500 km of highway construction is expected.

In an interview with PTI, Aramane said, "The Budget for 2022-2 is development ori-

ented. The large focus on infrastructure development is going to help the country reap the dividends in the coming decades."

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman while presenting the Budget for 2022-23 had said national highways will be expanded by 25,000 kilometres (km) during 2022-23.

The Secretary said the target of construction of 25,000 km of national highways in the next fiscal year will be met under the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan, under which the government will have to provide connectivity to all the economic nodes in the country.

"We will increase the pace of highways construction. Existing ones will be made into bigger ones, stronger ones; and new ones to reach these economic nodes. So, together, it

will be 25,000 km," he explained.

According to the Economic Survey, there has been a consistent increase in the construction of national highways/roads since 2013-14, with 13,327 km constructed in 2020-21 as compared to 10,237 km in 2019-20.

The Road Transport and Highways Ministry had targeted to construct 12,000 km national highways in the current fiscal.

Aramane said infrastructure development has been made cheaper by pumping in resources and the large focus on PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan is going to help faster execution of the infrastructure projects.

He pointed out that while there are 810 economic nodes, out of them 730 are already connected in one way or the

other.

"We need to provide multiple connectivity to economic centres, such as Mumbai, or Nasik or Delhi or Varanasi and places where a large number of commuters are there, large segments of goods, transport originate, and find its destination," Aramane said.

Replying to a question on rising debt of NHAI, which is primarily responsible for development of national highways and expressways across the country, he said the main feature of the Budget 2022-23 is extraordinary allocations to the infrastructure sector.

"In fact, the Road Transport and Highways Ministry has been given a very big sum of ₹1.99 lakh crore for construction of highways and for improvement of the transport sector," the Secretary noted.

# India's digital currency to debut by early 2023

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's very own official digital currency is likely to debut by early 2023, which will mirror any of the currently available private company-operated electronic wallets, but with a change that it will be a sovereign-backed facility, a top government source said.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her budget speech last week talked about launching a central bank-backed 'digital rupee' soon.

A top government source, who wished not to be identified, said, the digital currency issued by the RBI would be numbered in units, just like every fiat currency has a unique number.

"The units issued in digital rupee would be included in the currency in circulation. It would not be very different from fiat currency. It would be

more like an electronic form of fiat currency, so in a sense it would be a government-mandated electronic wallet," the source said.

The RBI has indicated that the digital rupee would be ready by the end of next financial year, the source added.

The digital rupee blockchain, being developed by the Reserve Bank, would be able to trace all transactions, unlike the current system of mobile wallet offered by private companies.

Explaining further, the source said that using electronic wallet offered by private companies, people currently transfer money to the private company who holds the money on his/her behalf and pays to a merchant when there is any transaction.

"In the case of a digital rupee instead of holding a note you will be holding a digital

currency in your phone and it would be with the central bank and from there it would be transferred to any merchant. It is fully backed by the sovereign," the source said.

If the money is transferred to the e-wallet of a private company, then credit risk of that company is also attached to the money besides charges levied by such companies.

"Instead of carrying this wallet, I will carry money on the phone," the source said.

In the 2022-23 Budget, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that introduction of Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) will give a big boost to digital economy.

"Digital currency will also lead to a more efficient and cheaper currency management system. It is, therefore,

proposed to introduce Digital Rupee, using blockchain and other technologies, to be issued by the Reserve Bank of India starting 2022-23," the minister had said.

The exact regulation governing this Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) is yet to be finalised.

CBDC is a digital or virtual currency but it is not comparable to the private virtual currencies or cryptocurrency that have mushroomed over the last decade. Private virtual currencies do not represent any person's debt or liabilities as there is no issuer.

The government has already said that private cryptocurrencies will never be a legal tender. The RBI has been strongly opposing private cryptocurrencies as they could have implications on national security and financial stability.

# Audi weighing local production of EVs in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

German luxury carmaker Audi is evaluating the feasibility of producing electric vehicles locally in India while it seeks to reach threshold volumes for such a step to be successful, according to a senior company official.

With the company deciding to go all-electric globally from 2033, it is a matter of time for local production of its electric cars, which has so far received a robust response in India.

"It's a continuous evaluation at this point in time...We are evaluating the acceptability of electric mobility in India," Audi India Head Balbir Singh Dhillion told PTI when asked about the company's plans with rival Mercedes-Benz announcing to locally assemble all-electric EQS sedan in India from this year.

He further said, "But you have to also understand (that) we have, as Audi India or Audi AG, already decided that by 2033 we will become an all-electric car company. So, it's a matter of time. It's a question of when, not if that whether we will do it."

In the last seven months, he said Audi India has launched five electric cars in India and will continue to sell these throughout these 12 months.

Audi's five electric cars in India are the e-tron 50, e-tron 55, e-tron Sportback 55, e-tron GT, RS e-tron GT. These have played a key role, along with its petrol powered Q-range and with A-sedans in the company recording a two-fold jump in retail sales at 3,293 units in India in 2021 as compared to 1,639 units in 2020.

"So far, it has been extremely successful. This is

one segment, which actually has performed even better than what we initially anticipated," Dhillion said.

However, as far as the local assembly is concerned, he said, "We are evaluating. We need to reach those threshold volumes before we can take a call that we start making these cars locally."

At the moment, he said Audi India's product portfolio in the EV segment is "strong enough to cater to the customer needs for next coming years and the network is strong enough to cater to what our requirements today are".

Audi's German counterpart Mercedes-Benz has announced that it would locally assemble its EQS electric sedan in India and would be launched in the market in the fourth quarter of 2022.

# Panel to choose new chairman of ONGC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eight months after its headhunter failed to find any suitable candidate for top job at ONGC, the Government will deploy a sparingly used committee approach to find a new chairman and managing director of India's top oil and gas producer.

Most board level appointments at public sector companies are done on the basis of recommendations of the Public Enterprise Selection Board (PESB) but the Government headhunter had in June last year did not find anyone suitable from nine candidates, including two serving IAS officers, to head Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC).

"Keeping in view the strategic importance and vision for the company and its future, the Board did not recommend any candidate and decided to constitute a Search Committee," PESB had said in a notice after interviews on June 5, 2021.

The panel was constituted after eight months of that recommendation on February 4.

"The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved selection to the post of Chairman & Managing Director, ONGC through a Search-cum-Selection Committee," an official order said.

The panel will comprise of Chairperson of PESB, Oil Secretary, and B Ashok, former chairman of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), it said adding Ashok is the outside expert of eminence on the panel.

The ACC also approved "consideration of Central Government officers including those of the Armed Forces of the Union and the All India Services for the post on im-

mediate absorption basis."

As per the practice, PESB recommends a name for a board level position at least 3 months prior to arising of the vacancy. However, in the case of ONGC, PESB advertised and interviewed candidates after the retirement of Shashi Shanker on March 31, 2021.

The committee route for appointment of PSU board members has very sparingly been used in the past. In 2016, current NTPC chairman Gurdeep Singh was appointed through the route. Last appointment using the route was that of Sanjeev Kumar as the chairman of Telecommunications Consultants India Limited (TCIL).

PESB had on June 5, 2021, interviewed nine out of the 10 candidates who had applied for the post of Chairman and Managing Director of ONGC.

# MCap of eight of top-10 most valued firms jumps over ₹1.51 lakh cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Eight of the top-10 most valued firms together added ₹1,51,456.45 crore in market valuation last week, with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) emerging as the biggest gainer.

Last week, the 30-share BSE Sensex gained 1,444.59 points or 2.52 per cent.

On the top 10 chart, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL) and HDFC were the only two companies that saw an erosion in their market valuation.

The market valuation of TCS jumped ₹46,016.2 crore to reach ₹14,11,058.63 crore.

HDFC Bank's valuation zoomed ₹33,861.41 crore to ₹8,44,922.53 crore.

Infosys added ₹23,425.29 crore, taking its valuation to ₹7,32,177.06 crore.

The market capitalisation

(mcap) of Bajaj Finance gained ₹17,226.59 crore to ₹4,31,926.08 crore and that of ICICI Bank went higher by ₹16,601.55 crore to ₹5,59,009.41 crore. The valuation of State Bank of India (SBI) grew by ₹6,113.36 crore to ₹4,73,182.90 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL) jumped ₹5,850.48 crore to ₹5,42,262.17 crore. Bharti Airtel added ₹2,361.57 crore to ₹3,95,535.80 crore in its valuation.

In contrast, the market valuation of HDFC diminished by ₹2,870.45 crore to ₹4,53,231.97 crore and that of RIL dipped by ₹2,396.57 crore to ₹15,77,382.90 crore.

In the ranking of top-10 firms, RIL remained the most valued firm followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Infosys, ICICI Bank, HUL, SBI, HDFC, Bajaj Finance and Bharti Airtel.



Lata Mangeshkar (1929-2022)

# MORTAL SINGER, IMMORTAL VOICE

Being asked to choose the best Lata Mangeshkar song is a difficult, nay an impossible task. Not surprising, if you consider that she had sung 5,025 Hindi songs besides 35 other Indian languages and a few foreign languages. Her first released Marathi song was *Natali Chaitraachi Navalaai* in the Marathi film *Pahili Mangalaa-gaur* (1942) and her last recorded number *Saugandh Muihe Is Mitti Ki* was released in 2019. So narrowing down 77 years of her working career to 12 of her best numbers is somewhat daunting. Suffice it to say that there is a number to suit every mood and emotion as well with singers and composers from several generations. Team Viva attempts to do the impossible.

**Lag Ja Gale:** The gem by Madan Mohan, written by Raja Mehdi Ali Khan for *Woh Kaun Thi?* (1964), gives a peek into her brilliant modulations and control over higher octaves. If love and longing had a song, this is certainly it.

**Aaj Phir Jeene Ki Tamanna Hai:** Lataji's voice bubbles and rises like an irreverent cloud. If breaking from the past, making your own path could be summed up, this number from *Guide* (1965) put to tune by S D Burman and penned by Shailendra is the one.

**Aayega Aanewala:** Her first hit from the film, *Mahal* (1949), with music by Khemchand Prakash and lyrics Nakshab Jaarchavi. Don't miss how each rendition of *aayega* is different from the other.

**Piya Tose Naina Laage Re:** *Guide* certainly added a particular sparkle to her shining career. Shailendra's lyrics and S D Burman wove magic into the song which personifies the heady rush of first love.

**Bahon Mein Chale Aao:** This romantic song by the Lata-RD Burman



duo for the film *Anamika* (1973), is another popular composition. Her voice in this song has a unique playfulness, proof of her versatility.

**Luka Chuppi:** Another number on Waheeda Rehman, but this time not as a lover but a mother. As soon as the news of Lataji's passing away was confirmed, this song trending on Twitter was adequate proof of its continued popularity. Who cannot feel the depth of emotions in her voice in this A R Rahman number from *Rang de Basanti* (2006)?

**Jiya Jale:** Lataji and Rahman had earlier created magic in this song from

the *Dil Se* (1998). The emphatic Malayalam lyrics contrast with the softness of her voice making the song unique and memorable.

**Ajeeb Dastan Hai Ye:** Don't you find yourself humming the song when faced with the twists and turns of life? Written by Shailendra and put to tune by Shankar Jaikishan for the film *Dil Apna Aur Preet Parai*, Lataji's rendition conveys the quiet stoicism of the character.

**Dil Hoom Hoom Kare:** This song by Bhupen Hazarika and Gulzar for *Rudaali* (1993) is magic. The pauses, the high notes, the emotional depth in Lataji's

voice immortalised this song.

**Aye Dil-e-Nadan:** Kamal Amrohi's magnum opus *Razia Sultan* (1983) might have tanked at the box office but the haunting quality of this song written by Jan Nisar Akhtar and put to tune by Khayyam refuses to fade away.

**Mausam Hai Aashiqana:** *Pakeezah* (1972) boasts of several stellar numbers but this one is different from the other courtesan song by the singer. The lilting quality imparted by Lataji to the music of Ghulam Mohammad and the words of Syed Amir Haider Kamal Naqvi is unparalleled.

**Tere Mere Milan Ki Yeh Raina:** Given that Abhimaan (1973) rested on the premise of the excellent voice of the female lead, Lataji did not disappoint. This duet alongside Kishore Kumar with music by S.D.Burman and lyrics by Majrooh Sultanpuri is a classic.

And one more to epitomise what she is for music lovers...

**Rahen Na Rahen Hum:** An underrated gem that does sum up the journey from here. Yes, her songs will continue to perfume our paths and that of generations to come.

## Philosophy of life

Politics should learn lessons about ethics and economics of people's welfare and use the power it has gained, towards the common goal of purity, peace and prosperity, says RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JJ

According to the well-established political practise, every elected government in a country has to present its annual budget to the legislature to which it is responsible. Following this practise, the government of India also has been presenting its annual Budget, year after year. This time, the government presented it after curiosity had been raised about a new approach on account of statements issued by the Prime Minister with regards to the pandemic situation worldwide. After the budget was presented to the Parliament, different political parties and different sections of the society reacted to it in a varied manner. While offering their comments, most of the political parties or persons generally recognise that the budget proposals presented by the party in power are based on the socio-economic philosophy, politico-economic policy and fiscal strategy of the

leaders of the party, particularly its finance minister and the Prime Minister. It is, however, hardly recognised that the socio-economic philosophy or the fiscal policy, in turn, is based on the philosophy of life, the world-view and the system of ethical values reflected by the Constitution of the party or made manifest in the aims and objects of the party as interpreted by its present leaders in the light of their world-view or their conception of personal and social ethics. Thus, a budget presented by the finance minister of a political party, having a particular ideology, will be formulated with their party ethics, philosophy of life, the economic interpretation of history and socialistic view of society and also of the means of production and distribution. This will further be influenced by the finance minister's worldview and his/her personal choice of an idol or leader as his guiding star from among all the luminaries.

Compared to this, the budget presented by the finance minister of some other country in some other continent will have a different philosophy of life and society and a different ethical and world-view as its motivating force. Considered in this light, it can be understood that economics or finance cannot be divorced from the philosophy of life and system of ethics, or, to put it in more clear words, it cannot be alienated from spirituality and morality. It, therefore, brings out the necessity of having a proper world-view, a correct philosophy of life and a right ethical system. This is as much in one's own interest as it is beneficial for society as a whole and is of added significance if an individual is devoted to social service. In the context of the budget and the formulation of the financial policy of a nation, it becomes all the more important than the one who has his mind anchored in moral values and has cultivated a spiritual outlook, he alone should formulate the budget for he alone would be able to formulate one that reflects such values as compassion for the weak, and overall welfare of the country. Today we are witnessing the fall of many governments, empires, kingships, democracies across the world. The reason behind their collapse is that the values and aims of both the leaders and people are not fair. The seed of difficulties in our system is the lack of awareness and practice of values such as cooperation, honesty, serving, self-examination and self-discipline. This is mainly because since childhood we have been taught to compete fiercely to succeed rather than to develop individual talents to complement each other; to possess and accumulate more as a means of security rather than sharing our resources and realising that security comes when there is unity, a sense of belonging among everyone in the society. This ignorance towards values brings sufferings to humanity due to which vices are created bringing further misery to our lives. It would thus be wrong for politics to use religion, culture and economics for selfish ends or to satisfy one's hunger for power. Instead, it should learn its lessons from the ethics and economics of people's welfare and use the power it has gained, towards the common goal of purity, peace and prosperity.

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# The nightingale will not sing again

Celebrities across the different film industries united in their tribute to the legendary singer, LATA MANGESHKAR



**A.R.Rahman:** Love, respect and prayers.  
@mangeshkarlata

**Kajol:** If we play her songs one by one, we could hear her for a month and never hear the same song again. Prolific and profound. I mourn with the rest of the country for our nightingale...

My deepest condolences to the family.  
#LataMangeshkar



**Salman Khan:** U will be missed our nightingale. But ur voice shall live with us forever...  
#RIPLataji

**Akshay Kumar:** *Meri Awaaz Hi Pehchaan Hain, Gar Yaad Rahe...* and how can one forget such a voice!

Deeply saddened by the passing away of Lata Mangeshkar ji, my sincere condolences and prayers. Om Shanti.

**Anushka Sharma:** God speaks through beautiful voices. Sad sad day for India as our nightingale leaves her mortal body. Lataji's voice has immortalised her

for ever. She will live in our hearts through her music. My deepest condolences to her family, friends and fans. RIP Lataji.

**Sushmita Sen:** Godspeed Shri Lata Mangeshkar ji. Truly a Bharat Ratna. Our forever love & Pride!!! #Respect #DuggaDugga

**Shreya Ghoshal:** Feeling numb. Devastated. Yesterday was Saraswati Puja & today Ma took her blessed one with her. Somehow it feels that even the birds, trees & wind are silent today.

Swar Kokila Bharat Ratna #LataMangeshkar ji your divine voice will echo till eternity. Rest in peace. Om Shanti.

**Allu Arjun:** It's a sad day. End of an era as the Nightingale of India #LataMangeshkar ji is no more. She will continue to live in the hearts of people through her songs forever. My deepest condolences to the near and dear. May her great soul rest in peace.

**Mahesh Babu:** Deeply saddened by Lata Mangeshkar ji's demise. A voice that defined Indian music for generations... Her legacy is truly unparalleled.

Heartfelt condolences to the family, loved ones and all her admirers. Rest in peace Lataji. There will never be another.

**Mohanlal:** Deeply saddened to hear about the passing of the musical phenomenon, Bharat Ratna Lata Mangeshkar. May she live on through her music. Sending condolences to her loved ones.

**Sanjay Dutt:** We lost a legend... Lata Mangeshkar ji your music, personality, humility will always stay with us for generations... My condolences to the family.  
#LataMangeshkar

**Abhishek Bachchan:** Today, we have lost the greatest of all time! We are all left heartbroken and speechless. An irreplaceable loss. Rest in glory Lata ji. Thank you for blessing us with your voice, talent and compassion. We are privileged to have lived in the times of the great Lata Mangeshkar.



**Sunny Deol:** So sad to hear that Lataji is no more, going to miss her so much. End of an Era! Lataji, Nightingale of India, whose voice has made generations sing, dance & cry will forever feed our emotion. Heartfelt condolences to Ashaji, family & friends. Nation will miss her. Om Shanti.  
#LataMangeshkar

**Amaal Mallik:** 1929-forever

#LataMangeshkar the reason people will continue to respect our country and it's music... Truly the end of an era.

**Farah Khan:** Legends remain immortal.. #RIP #LataMangeshkar thank you for the songs.

**Boney Kapoor:** Deeply saddened by the news of @mangeshkarlata ji's passing away. She leaves behind a huge legacy of songs which will be treasured for generations to come. May her soul rest in peace. Condolences to the family.  
#NightingaleofIndia #LataMangeshkar

**Daler Mehndi:** She merges with the Light.. the Universe sprinkles her gifts of Music on everyone, she reigns as the Queen now and forever. Love you Lata Didi.. Ma Saraswati Incarnate.

## A HOSPITAL TOO FAR

The lack of medical facilities in several remote villages in the Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir has made the lives of its residents difficult, says SHAFQAT SHEIKH



Expressing the difficulty faced while catering to the needs of the patients, Dr Haroon Rashid Bhat, the medical officer of PHC Nali, said, "With the current strength of staff members and accommodation, it is difficult to run the PHC at night and during sudden emergencies. Moreover, the rise of Covid-19 has further highlighted the gaps in the PHC's operations."

Noor Din, a local from the region, recalls how as a young child he would visit the PHC with his parents. "Today, I bring my child to this centre but, unfortunately, nothing has changed. In 2012-13, the administration had announced to provide a 20-bed hospital while also improving the existing health centres in Bunjwah on a priority basis. But to our dismay, nothing has happened," he rued.

Social activist, Ashiq Wani, informed that during 2010-11, 10 kanal of land was acquired for the construction of a separate block, but, to

date, no action has been taken. Moreover, according to him, the district administration has been requested to upgrade the PHC to a Community Health Centre and to add more staff, separate blocks, X-rays, ECG, blood bank, and other health facilities.

"During the Covid-19 pandemic, the shortage of space, medicine, and oxygen cylinders hampered the life of a common public in rural regions, as they were at the mercy of God," Wani further added.

Complaints are regularly made by the people, social activists and NGOs, but the concerned administration is yet to address the issue. During disasters, people need immediate treatment, but without any proper medical arrangements, their lives are often at stake. Moreover, the unwillingness of health professionals to work in remote areas also affects the functioning of an adequate health centre. This requires the administration to take appropriate steps to improve the healthcare facilities of people living in far-flung areas of Bunjwah. Locals should also be consulted while strategising the action plan to address the issue.

(The author is a freelance journalist, columnist and socio-political activist from Kishtwar, Jammu and Kashmir.)  
—Charkha Features



# BOPANNA-RAMKUMAR PAIR LIFT TATA OPEN TROPHY



PTI ■ PUNE

India's Rohan Bopanna and Ramkumar Ramanathan won their second ATP World Tour title together after pipping the top seeded Australian pair of Luke Saville and John-Patrick Smith in the final of the Tata Open Maharashtra, here on Sunday.

The second-seeded Indians erased the first set deficit to win 6-7(10) 6-3 10-6 in one hour and 44 minutes.

Bopanna and Ramkumar had combined as a team on the ATP Tour for the first time at the Adelaide event last month in the run-up to the Australian Open and won the trophy.

For Bopanna, it was his 21st ATP doubles title while for Ramkumar it is his second trophy at this level and it will push him inside doubles top-100 for the first time in his career.

They split USD 16370 as prize money and earned 250 ranking points each.

Bopanna had won this event with compatriot Divij Sharan in 2019.

Still going strong at an age of 41, Bopanna said it's his years of playing experience that is helping him out in the circuit.

"A lot is to do with experience, which you really bring in, years and

"It has made a difference and that really shows as long as I am playing matches, competing and doing something that is physically appealing. May be at the practice court I may not be giving my 100% but as long as I am feeling good and go out their and enjoying the pace as currently right now."

years of experience and the biggest thing is my body is feeling very very good at the moment," Bopanna said after the match.

"I did a lot of yoga which has helped me tremendously and I am very thankful to my Yoga Teacher (Mohan) in Bangalore which has made such a difference for me and I can try something new at this age.

"It has made a difference and that really shows as long as I am playing matches, competing and doing something that is physically appealing. May be at the practice court I may not be giving my 100% but as long as I am feeling good and go out their and enjoying the pace as currently right now."

Asked to compare the two titles that they have won together, Bopanna said performing before the home crowd was tough while in Adelaide no one watched them. "Both are extremely special but anytime you win a title at home it's lot more pressures. In Adelaide no one was really watching, but here there were lot more expectations and especially coming here with a win people expected an automatic win which wasn't easy but at that tie break the crowd really helped.

"You just get that extra boost, that extra energy. Even if your legs are feel-

ing tired that's the energy you need to hit the serve especially for me. Winning in India is always especial and especially with an Indian partner is truly truly great."

Ramkumar said everyone believed in his game and that gave him confidence in this tournament.

"Coming from Bops (Bopanna) who always believes in me, my coaches and every one who have always believe in me and said you play well and that just keeps me going.

"I just have to work on a few thing on court and just keep competing at this level as much as I can which will improve my game and automatically the ranking," he said.

Big serves marked the beginning of the contest with only Ramkumar and Luke losing a point each in the first four games. Bopanna's volley error on a return from Luke made it 30-all in the fifth game but Ramkumar pulled off an ace and followed that up with another huge serve to hold for a 3-2 lead.

## Lewandowski ends 1-game scoring drought, Bayern extends lead

AP ■ BERLIN

Robert Lewandowski ended his one-game scoring drought.

The Poland star scored his 24th goal in 21 games to help Bayern Munich stretch its Bundesliga lead to nine points with a 3-2 win over visiting Leipzig on Saturday.

Lewandowski, who hadn't scored in the 4-1 win at Hertha Berlin before the international break, met Kingsley Coman's precise cross with a thumping header to give Bayern a 2-1 lead over Leipzig before the break.

It was typical Bayern, replying when it needed to against a spirited Leipzig team. Thomas Müller opened the scoring in the 12th minute, finishing off the rebound after Péter Gulácsi saved Lewandowski's initial effort.

André Silva equalized in the 27th, squeezing the ball over the line after good work from Konrad Laimer and Christopher Nkunku.



Müller had a goal ruled out through VAR for a foul by Lewandowski in the buildup, but Lewandowski atoned by restoring Bayern's lead in the 44th. Laimer set up Nkunku for the equalizer in the

53rd with a brilliant through ball on the left. Nkunku stayed cool before shooting through Manuel Neuer's legs.

Bayern answered again in the 58th when Josko Gvardiol deflected Serge Gnabry's cross into his own net.

Bayern also had Neuer to thank for five good saves to keep Leipzig out. The 35-year-old Neuer matched former Bayern goalkeeper Oliver Kahn's Bundesliga record of 310 wins and has 13 more rounds this season to beat it.

"I thought he might leave me a record," joked Kahn, who is now Bayern's CEO. Borussia Dortmund can restore the six-point gap with a win against visiting Bayer Leverkusen on Sunday. Bayern's stadium was illuminated in lilac to commemorate victims of the Holocaust. Up to 10,000 fans were permitted after authorities on Wednesday relaxed national coronavirus restrictions for large open-air events. Borussia Mönchengladbach's dismal spell continued with a 1-1 draw at Arminia Bielefeld. Gladbach at least ended its three-game losing run across all competitions, but coach Adi Hütter remains under pressure with the team just two points above the relegation zone.

## Olympic organisers address complaints about isolation hotels

AP ■ BEIJING

Olympic organisers say they're addressing complaints about isolation conditions for athletes

who test positive for the coronavirus and are working to ensure they have clean rooms, better food and access to training equipment and the internet. "These are exactly the kind of things we have to address. It's a duty. It's a responsibility. We have to make sure that the expectations are met," said Christophe Dubi, the International Olympic Committee's executive director for the games. Dubi said on Sunday that organisers will work to ensure "everything is perfect" for athletes waiting to be released. Han Zhirong of the Beijing Organizing Committee also noted that athletes who test positive will now be able to order food from the Olympic Village and have it delivered to their isolation rooms. As part of China's efforts to prevent the virus from spreading during the Games, everyone in the so-called Olympic bubble has to take daily PCR tests.



## Vietnam beat Chinese Taipei to qualify for maiden FIFA Women's World Cup

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Vietnam on Sunday scripted history as they booked a place in the FIFA Women's World Cup for the first time after defeating Chinese Taipei 2-1 in their playoff tie here on Sunday.

In a physically draining tie, Nguyen Thi Bich Thuy scored the winner after Su Hy-Ysuan had cancelled out Chuong Thi Kieu's first half opener as Vietnam confirmed their berth for the 2023 FIFA World Cup to be held in Australia and New Zealand.

Vietnam, Chinese Taipei and Thailand featured in a playOff round after they lost their respective quarterfinal matches of the AFC Asian Cup here.

The triumph completed a remarkable journey as Vietnam overcame a COVID-19 outbreak prior to the AFC Women's Asian Cup to book their place in the global showpiece in 2023.

Defeat for Chinese Taipei means they join Thailand in the Inter-Confederation Playoffs where a win will take them into their first FIFA Women's World Cup in 31 years.

Having beaten Thailand 3-0 on Friday, Chinese Taipei entered the tie only needing a draw with Vietnam having defeated their Southeast Asian rivals 2-0 in their encounter on Wednesday. That played a part in Vietnam's aggressive start as they immediately dominated possession, forcing Chinese Taipei to defend deep. Chinese Taipei found Vietnam's crosses hard to deal with and it cost them as early as the seventh minute as Chuong rose almost unchallenged to nod home Nguyen Thi Tuyet Dung's corner.

Buoyed by the goal, Vietnam pressed forward but it nearly proved to be their undoing in the 19th minute when Su Hy-Ysuan latched onto a loose ball and raced into the penalty box before relaying it to a surging Chen Yen-Ping. Chen slotted home but to Chinese Taipei's dismay, the ball had crossed the touchline before Su had played it back.

Neither side found a way through in the remaining minutes of the first half but Chinese Taipei started the second in spectacular fashion as Su drew them level in the 49th minute

## Beijing Olympics may get points for boosting China's international reputation



PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The 2022 Winter Games in Beijing provide many benefits for China, and really don't have any downsides for the country.

For China's leader, Xi Jinping, the most important result of the Games will likely be their impact on his domestic audience, as Chinese media coverage of the Games will be highly nationalistic and laudatory, aimed at impressing the Chinese people. To this home audience, the spectacle of the Games reinforces government propaganda about China's success and progress toward achieving the "Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

But I don't predict the 2022 Games will have the same effect, either domestically or internationally, that the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics had, partially because the Winter Olympics are smaller and the weather is harsher, and partially because 2008 was the first time China hosted the Olympics.

In 2008, stunning opening ceremonies including 5,000 synopacted dancers telling a stylised story of 5,000 years of Chinese history astonished the international audience. The power of that first time cannot be repeated.

Nonetheless, China has spared no expense to prepare, with a report from Insider pegging the total cost "in excess of US\$38.5 billion, 24 times the country's initial budget of \$1.6 billion." As with everything China does, when it wants to occupy the center stage internationally, it will put on a big show.

The domestic payoff of the Olympics matters because China will face a trying year in 2022. Xi is seeking an unprecedented third term as general-secretary of the Communist Party. The nation's economy is slowing.

International opposition to China's human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Hong Kong and to its aggressive foreign policy is growing. Xi is hoping that the "bread and circuses" diversionary aspect of the Games will help him overcome the stresses of this year and advance his political standing.

Chinese leaders care about improving the nation's international status, but they're already working from a position of relative strength.

China's rise internationally, especially since 2008, is undeniable.

Its status as the number two power in the world is almost universally acknowledged.

As a scholar of Chinese politics and foreign policy, I believe that Xi wants the Games to impress the world.

But that is less important to him than the domestic effect of the Games.

China is not traditionally strong in winter sports. But the country has invested heavily in preparing increasingly competitive teams for these Games. The success of Chinese athletes at the Games will enhance China's reputation and thus Chinese citizens' sense of pride.

In turn, this will mute competition from Xi's opposition within the Chinese Communist Party.

FreeSki world champion Eileen Gu chose to compete for China - her mother is Chinese - and not the U.S., where she was born and is a citizen. Her choice may yield golds in areas where China is not a strong competitor.

Her decision also reverberates with Xi's call on all ethnic Chinese worldwide to aid China's development. Chinese domestic propaganda will highlight how she chose China over the U.S., and implicitly urge others to do the same.

## CONFIDENT EAST BENGAL FACES STRUGGLING ODISHA

PTI ■ VASCO

A comeback that should revitalise the dropping shoulders, SC East Bengal would look to continue their fight and bag a win when they take on Odisha FC in their Indian Super League match here on Monday. The red and golds conceded two early goals against Chennaiyin FC in their last engagement, but showed grit to come back for a draw. The 18-year old Lalrinliana Hnamte scored the equaliser after a superb free-kick from Darren Sidoel had brought them back in the game.

The result helped them move to 10th spot in the table with 10 points from 15 games. More importantly, it



was a gritty performance especially in the second half where the team showed spirit of the highest order, something that was missing in the previous games.

"In the dugout at half-time in the Chennaiyan FC match, I asked the players to be braver. I asked them to play freely and they delivered," said head coach

Mario Rivera who has one win and a draw apart from the two losses in his four matches in charge. "The performance against Chennaiyan FC in the second half was one of our best. It will be right up the list along with the first half of the 2nd leg of Kolkata Derby," he added. Dutch midfielder Sidoel has looked

good for SC East Bengal, scoring three goals in nine matches this season, including two goals in his last two appearances. Besides, the defensive midfielder played as part of a back three in the last game and controlled the defence for the Kolkata side underlining his versatility across the pitch. Rivera dropped a back three with two wing-backs after leaking two goals in the first half and it remains to be seen whether the Spaniard goes with the same strategy in the Odisha game as well.

For Odisha, they have not won a game in the last three matches and coach Kino Garcia will hope they get back to winning ways to keep their semifinal hopes alive.

## China clinch AFC Women's Asian Cup

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

China came back from two goals down to defeat Korea 3-2 in a dramatic final and clinch their record-extending ninth title of the AFC Women's Asian Cup here on Sunday.

Korea looked to be cruising to their maiden crown after taking a 2-0 lead at half-time but China fought back after the break through goals from Tang Jiali, Zhang Linyan and Xiao Yuyi, who netted the winner deep into added time to seal her side the title at the DY Patil Stadium. China entered the final chasing a record-extending ninth AFC Women's Asian Cup title against a Korea side who had never laid their hands on the coveted trophy.

China, unbeaten in seven previous meetings with Korea, started the game brightly and had the first look at goal within seconds when Wu Chengshu played the ball to Tang Jiali just above the area, but the midfield-



er's effort was easily dealt with by Korea goalkeeper Kim Jung-mi.

China continued to press

with Zhang Xin trying from 35 yards out while Wang Shuang saw her effort in the 10th minute saved by Kim.

Korea began to see more of the ball as the half progressed and were rewarded with their first look at goal in the 27th

minute, with Lee Geum-min breaking into the box before sending a cross to Choe Yu-Ri to score the 100th goal of the tournament. With Korea in the ascendancy, China survived a scare at the half-hour mark, goalkeeper Zhou Yu pulling off a point-blank save to deny Lim Seon-joo's header off a free-kick.

China, however, suffered more woe in the closing stages of the first half when a VAR review saw Korea awarded a penalty following Yao Lingwei's handball, with Ji So-yun converting from the spot.

China head coach Shui Qingxia sent on Xiao Yuyi and Zhang Rui at the start of the second half to force their way back into the game but Korea Republic gave them little room to operate in the early stages.

China, however, received a lifeline when they were awarded a penalty after Lee Young-ju's handball, with Tang Jiali netting from the spot in the 68th minute.



# INDIA WIN FIFTH U-19 WORLD CUP TITLE

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND (ANTIGUA)

An utterly dominant India won a record-extending fifth U-19 World Cup title here on Saturday, beating England by four wickets in the final of an extraordinary campaign that was almost derailed by a COVID-19 outbreak.

The triumph bore resemblance to the exploits of world-class Indian U-19 teams of the past.

Intrepid and industrious in their approach, the starry-eyed Indian players' success stories also gave a glimpse into the world's most perfectly calibrated youth structure, which is capable of consistently producing world-class cricketers who are ever ready to take on the biggest of challenges.

In a reflection of India's dominance, wicketkeeper Dinesh Bana finished the chase of 190 with two sixes and 14 balls to spare.

On winning the toss in the big final, England captain Tom Prest rightly chose to bat first to avoid the "scoreboard pressure" during the chase. India did the next best thing: bowl out the opposition for a total -- 189 in this case, in 44.5 overs -- that failed to put them under pressure.

India were all over England before a gritty 95 by James Rew saved his team the blushes.

Bowling his medium pacers to deadly effect, Raj Bawa (5/31) ran through the English middle-order after the in-from left-arm seamer Ravi Kumar (4/34) laid the opposition low with two early blows.

India kept taking wickets at regular intervals but not for once did the intensity of the team dropped.

For close to 19 overs, Rew and James Sales (34 not out) defied India with their 93-run eight-wicket stand, ensuring the 1998 edition winners recover from a horror 61 for six and then 91 for seven.



In response, India lost Angkrish Raghuvanshi without a run on the board but the extremely talented Shaik Rasheed shone with a composed 50 off 84 balls.

Coming off his magnificent century in the semifinal against Australia, skipper Yash Dhull fell for 17, but the duo of Nishant Sindhu (50 not out) and Bawa (35) took the team within striking distance of victory with a 67-run partnership for the fifth wicket.

It has been an extremely challenging ride for the Indian team in this edition of the tournament as multiple players from the side were infected by the coronavirus and at one stage even struggled to field eleven fit personnel. However, despite the huge setback that almost derailed their

campaign, India came back a stronger unit focussed on correctly doing the things that were within its control.

Their clinical on-field performance told a very different story, a story far removed from all the troubles that the team went through off it, when as many as seven players were infected with the virus. India struck as early as the second over when Ravi sent back the dangerous Jacob Bethell (2) cheaply. The man from Bengal darted one in and then got it to hold its line as Bethell missed it completely after playing across the line.

The early blow did not have any impact on George Thomas as he smashed Rajvardhan Hangargekar for 14 runs, including two fours and a six over deep

midwicket, in the very next over.

However, Ravi struck again, this time bowling out Prest who dragged the ball on to his stumps, putting the Indians on the top at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

Having failed to execute his pull shot, thanks to a bottom edge, Prest, who had earlier won a good toss, walked back dejected with his team in a spot of bother at 18 for two in the fourth over.

Ravi had 2/2 in the first two overs.

Notwithstanding the situation his team found itself early into the big final, Thomas continued to attack and collected two boundaries against Ravi.

With Hangargekar going for 19 runs in his first spell, Dhull effected a bowling change and it worked almost immediate-

ly, but Kaushal Tamble could not hold on to Thomas' thick edge off Raj Bawa in the slip. England needed a partnership at that stage but that was not going to be. Medium pacer Bawa got the well-set Thomas to play an irresponsible shot that got a thick outside edge and landed in the hands of Dhull at cover.

In all sorts of trouble at 37 for three at the start of the 11th over, England's desperate quest for a partnership was not answered, with William Luxton edging Bawa to be out caught behind before England could reach 50 runs.

Bawa was on a hat-trick as George Bell had no answer to an excellent delivery that kicked up and took a deflection on its way to the wicketkeeper Dinesh Bana.

## PM HAILS U-19 CRICKET TEAM'S WC WIN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hailed Indian U-19 cricket team's record-extending fifth World Cup title win, saying

their stellar performance at the highest level shows that the future of Indian cricket is in safe hands.

An utterly dominant India

won a record-extending fifth U-19 World Cup title here on Saturday, beating England by four wickets in the final of an extraordinary cam-

paign that was almost derailed by a COVID-19 outbreak.

"Extremely proud of our young cricketers. Congratulations to the

Indian team for winning the ICC U19 World Cup," Modi tweeted. "They have shown great fortitude through the tournament.

Their stellar performance at the highest level shows that the future of Indian cricket is in safe and able hands," the prime minister said.

## Lata ji and her love for cricket



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

When Kapil Dev lifted the World Cup at the Lord's balcony, the erstwhile BCCI president and one of the powerful ministers in the Indira Gandhi cabinet, late NKP Salve had a different worry.

It was still some years to go for economic liberalization and an astute businessman like Jagmohan Dalmiya's foresight to turn cricket into an industry.

Kapil's Devils needed to be celebrated but the BCCI, which currently is looking at USD 5 billion television contract, barely paid its cricketers a daily allowance of 20 pounds.

Salve had to turn to his 'Man Friday' and Indian cricket's 'one stop Encyclopedia' Raj Singh Dungarpur for a solution to be able to reward the players for such an achievement.

"Raj bhai", as Dungarpur was known in Indian cricket circle, decided that the

only way was to request his close friend and one of country's biggest cricket fans Lata Mangeshkar to do a pro-bono concert in the national capital's Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium.

The IG was packed to capacity as 'Lata ji' did a near two hour programme.

The event ensured that BCCI collected enough money and each of the 14 members got Rs 1 lakh each as cash award. "It was a very decent sum in those days. We would otherwise save up tour money and daily allowance for that month and it came to barely Rs 60,000," Sunil Valsol recollected while speaking to PTI.

"I remember some people said we will give you Rs 5000, some said Rs 10,000 and it was very disrespectful at times. But then Lata ji sang in that concert. What a function it was and one of the most memorable evenings to watch her sing live," Valsol said.

## BCCI announces ₹40 lakh for U-19 team members

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI on Sunday announced cash reward of Rs 40 lakh for each member of the victorious Indian U-19 team.

The support staff will be paid Rs 25 lakh each.

India beat England in the U-19 World cup final in Antigua on Saturday for a record extending fifth title.

"They were impressive across departments and sealed India's fifth World Cup. While their on-field performances were fantastic, the team also showed grit, determination and courage to bounce back strongly despite the Covid-19 cases in the camp," said BCCI president Sourav Ganguly in a



statement.

"I must also appreciate the efforts put in by the Head Coach Hrishikesh Kanitkar along with

his members of the coaching group, support staff and VVS Laxman - Head Cricket at the National Cricket Academy - for

the way they kept the team in good spirits and guided them to victory. "We have the best structure in place for our age-group cricketers and some of the best coaches work closely with the boys." Six India players, including captain Yash Dhull, had tested positive for COVID-19 during the group stages of the tournament but the team overcame the crisis to lift the trophy. "They had very little cricket in the run-up to the World Cup this time and despite that, India remained unbeaten," Ganguly said. "This is truly remarkable. The selectors have done an excellent job in picking the right team from a wide pool of cricketers. The boys have a long career ahead of them and I wish

them the best."

Asked to field first, India bowled out England for 189 after having them at 61 for six at one stage.

Bowling his medium pacers to deadly effect, Raj Bawa (5/31) ran through the English middle-order after the in-from left-arm seamer Ravi Kumar (4/34) laid the opposition low with two early blows.

India completed the chase with 14 balls to spare.

Secretary Jay Shah said: "India is the most successful side in the history of U19 World Cups and the fifth title is a testament to the robust system and structure we have in place for our age-group cricketers.

## Langer says his respect for values might have been taken as 'too intense'

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Justin Langer has said that his respect for values might have been taken by some as being "too intense" during his tenure as Australia head coach after he opted to quit from the top job instead of agreeing to a short-term contract extension. In his resignation letter to Cricket Australia (CA) officials, Langer offered his apology but stressed that he values "honesty, respect, trust, truth and

performance" but some people might have taken it as being "too intense" in his working style.

"My life has been built on values of honesty, respect, trust, truth, and performance and if that comes across as 'too intense' at times, I apologise," wrote Langer in his resignation letter, according to 'abc.Net.Au'. "It is said that in any venture, if you leave things in a better place than when you started then you have done your job.



Whilst it is not up to me to judge, I hope Australians respect what has been

achieved over the last four years in Australian cricket." Faced with months of

complaints by senior players over his rigid coaching style and more recently by an uncompromising Cricket Australia board of directors, Langer resigned as head coach of the Australian men's cricket team on Saturday.

According to reports, the 51-year-old Langer wanted to sign a new long-term contract but CA only wanted to keep him on until the end of the 2022 T20 World Cup in Australia.

"...I want people to know I am happy with my decision and proud of what I have achieved. I hope through this time, and throughout my tenure, I have held myself with integrity and dignity," the former Australia opening batter said in the letter.

"Last night I was offered a short-term contract until the end of the T20 World Cup in Australia (in November), with the sentiment of 'going out on a high'.



## India's 6-wkt victory against West Indies

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Skipper Rohit Sharma brought in a sense of calm with a sizzling 60 after India's new spin combination of Yuzvendra Chahal and Washington Sundar laid the platform for an easy six-wicket victory over West Indies in the first ODI which also happens to be country's 1000th.

First the hosts bundled out West Indies for a meagre 176 in 43.5 overs as spinners Chahal (4/49 in 9.5 overs) and Washington (3/30 in 9 overs) ran through their listless line-up and then skipper smashed 60 off 51 balls with hosts chased down the target in just 28 overs.

It is the 10th time in last 16 games that West Indies have failed to bat full 50 overs despite presence of senior players like Darren Bravo, Kieron Pollard, Jason Holder, Shai Hope, Nicholas Pooran to name a few.

After a brief middle-order wob-

ble, Suryakumar Yadav (34 no) and debutant Deepak Hooda (26 no) added 62 runs without much pressure to take the team home.

Just like the skipper, India also missed batter Rohit in South Africa in equal measure and on his comeback, there were no signs of any hamstring niggle as he smashed 10 fours and a six, adding 84 with stand-in opener Ishan Kishan (28).

Virat Kohli (8) also started with two boundaries but was holed out in the deep while Rishabh Pant was unfortunately run-out at the non-striker's end.

But Rohit was in his element, while young Kishan, played second fiddle to perfection.

The former toyed with the West Indies attack, as the hosts were on course for a comfortable chase with the team fifty coming up in the ninth over.

Rohit, who made a comeback to the team after an injury, was brutal on veteran Kemar Roach, hitting

**India also missed batter Rohit in South Africa in equal measure and on his comeback, there were no signs of any hamstring niggle as he smashed 10 fours and a six, adding 84**India also missed batter Rohit in South Africa in equal measure and on his comeback, there were no signs of any hamstring niggle as he smashed 10 fours and a six, adding 84

him for two fours and a maximum - his trademark pull shot, as India fetched 15 runs off the 10th over and raced to 67/0.

By the time Alzarri Joseph (2/45) trapped him leg-before, India were on their way towards an easy win in a milestone game.

Earlier, Chahal and Sundar wreaked havoc on slow track as the West Indies batters made a beeline to the pavilion, save Jason Holder (57; 4x6) and Fabian Allen (29), whose 78-run stand for the eighth-wicket helped the team go past the

160-run mark.

Put into bat, West Indies lost opener Shai Hope (8; 2x4) cheaply after he was castled by Mohammed Siraj (1/26) in the third over as the visitors lost their first wicket for 13.

Hope had hit Siraj for two successive boundaries, but on the next his inside edge, while attempting a drive, shattered the middle and leg stump.

Brandon King (13; 2x4) started with a boundary, and then was joined by one-down Darren Bravo (18 off 34 balls; 3x4), as the two tried to resurrect the innings, but could only add 31 runs for the second wicket.

Bravo struck two boundaries off pacer Prasidh Krishna (2/29) in the sixth over, as the visitors crawled to 28/1 after six overs.

The duo mixed caution and aggression as West Indies was poised at 39/1 after 10 overs.

But Sundar pegged back the visitors by removing King and

Bravo in the 12th over as the visitors slipped to 45/3.

Sundar first sent back King, who chipped it to short mid-wicket where Suryakumar Yadav took an excellent catch. And then he trapped Bravo in front of the wicket, using his straight and flat delivery.

Then it was Chahal, who took two wickets in two successive deliveries in the 20th over as he removed both hard-hitting batters - Nicholas Pooran (18; 3x4), whom he trapped in the front. This was Chahal's 100th ODI wicket.

Off the next ball, he cleaned up Kieron Pollard (0) with his googly that knocked the rival skipper's off-stump. West Indies were in a spot of bother as they lost half the side for just 71.

Chahal was on a rampage as he then removed Shamrah Brooks (12), who edged to stumper Rishabh Pant, as West Indies was teetering at 78/6.



I'm pleased to announce the reward of 40 lacs per player and 25 lacs per support staff for the U19 #TeamIndia contingent for their exemplary performance in #U19CWCFinal. You have made ???? proud. @SGanguly99 @ThakurArunS @ShuklaRajiv Jay Shah



Congratulations to the under 19 team and the support staff and the selectors for winning the world cup in such a magnificent way ..The cash prize announced by us of 40 lakhs is a small token of appreciation but their efforts are beyond value .. magnificent stuff. @bccci Sourav Ganguly

Congratulations to the India U19 team for a fantastic tournament. Surely a great moment to remember for one and all. A feat to be proud of for the rest of your lives. Congrats Yash Dhull, @VVS/Laxman281 and the entire team. @BCCI #U19CWC #BoysInBlue Unmukt Chand



Congratulations to the #BoysInBlue & the entire nation for winning the #U19CWC! Amazing spells by Ravi Kumar & Raj Bawa. The future of Indian cricket looks bright Well played boys. Super proud! @BCCI Yuvraj Singh

Jalwa hai hamaara yahaan. Many congratulations @BCCI on becoming champions for the 5th time. Fantastic contributions from everyone and a deserved title. Enjoy the moment boys #U19CWC Virender Sehwag

