

OPINION 6

WONDROUS WAYS
OF THE ELEPHANT

WORLD 8

BIDEN: RUSSIAN THREAT TO
INVADE UKRAINE STILL 'VERY HIGH'

MONEY 9

SENSEX, NIFTY EXTEND LOSSES TO
3RD DAY AS GLOBAL CUES WEIGH

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 19, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

TEAM INDIA WIN
THEIR 100TH
T20I GAME
12 SPORT38 given death for 2008
Ahmedabad serial blasts11 sentenced to
life imprisonment,
28 acquitted; 56
had died in blasts

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Thirty-eight out of 49 accused of 2008 Ahmedabad serial blasts were awarded death sentence by a special court here on Friday whereas 11 others were sentenced to life imprisonment.

A series of 21 blasts that rocked the city on July 26, 2008, claimed 56 lives and left over 200 injured. The court had acquitted 28 others in the case on February 8.

In its voluminous judgment running into nearly 7,000 pages, the court termed this as the rarest of rare crime. These 38 people were convicted under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) sections 302 (murder) and 120B (criminal conspiracy) and provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). Eleven others were held guilty for criminal conspiracy and under various sections of the UAPA, he said.

The court imposed a fine of ₹2.85 lakh on 48 convicts and of ₹2.88 lakh on another one. It also awarded compen-



sation of ₹1 lakh to the kin of those who died in the blasts, ₹50,000 to those who were seriously injured, and ₹25,000 to those who received minor injuries.

Those who were awarded death sentences include Safdar Nagori, Qayumuddin Kapadiya, Zahid Shaikh, Qumaruddin Nagori, and Shamsuddin Sheikh. All the convicts were present for the hearing via video conference from eight different jails — Sabarmati Central jail in Ahmedabad, Tihar in Delhi, Bhopal, Gaya, Bengaluru, Kerala, and Mumbai.

"I can say that this is the case in which the highest number of convicts were awarded death sentence. Earlier, in one

case 26 people were given death cases. But in this case, the number is 38," the public prosecutor said.

The court had concluded the trial against 77 accused in September last year. Out of 78 accused on trial, one had turned approver. The trial had begun in December 2009 against 77 persons linked to banned terror outfit Indian Mujahideen (IM).

Four more accused were arrested later, but their trial has not commenced yet, a senior Government lawyer said. Bombs had exploded at various spots in Ahmedabad, including the State Government-run civil hospital, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation-run LG Hospital, on buses, parked

bicycles, in cars and other places, killing 56 people.

As many as 29 live bombs were also found in Surat in the next couple of days though none of them exploded. The trial was conducted after the court merged 20 FIRs of Ahmedabad and 15 FIRs of Surat.

The State Government had transferred the investigation to the Ahmedabad crime branch, under the supervision of then JCP Ashish Bhatia, who is now serving as the Gujarat DGP.

A total of nine different judges presided over the case, starting with Bela Trivedi, in whose court charges were framed against the accused on February 15, 2010. Justice Trivedi is now the judge of the Supreme Court. Special judge AR Patel, who handed over the judgment, started hearing the case from June 14, 2017.

The police had claimed that members of the IM, a radicalised faction of the banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), were behind the blasts.

The IM planned the blasts as revenge for the 2002 post-Godhra riots in Gujarat in which over a thousand persons, most of them from the Muslim community, had died, the investigators have said.

Refund fine, restore seized properties of
anti-CAA protesters, SC tells UP GovtWithdrawn 274 notices,
says UP Govt, seeks
nod for recovery of
damages to public and
private propertiesPNS ■ PREETAM SRIVASTAVA
NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

The Supreme Court on Friday directed the Uttar Pradesh Government to refund the fine and restore the attached properties of the alleged anti-CAA protesters for causing damage to public and private assets in December 2019.

Terming it as a case of "unjust enrichment", the court



said the State can recover the damages under the new law, once it is established before the claims tribunal that public and properties were damaged.

The UP Government told the top court that it has withdrawn 274 recovery notices and subsequent proceedings initi-

ated against anti-CAA protesters in 2019 for property damages. The State Government asked permission from the SC to issue new notices based on the new law for recovery of damages to public and private property.

Continued on Page 2

Campaigning ends for crucial phase for BJP, SP

VIRENDRANATH BHATT ■
LUCKNOW

The campaigning for the third phase of UP Assembly polls ended on Friday. The electoral battle for the 18th UP Assembly becomes increasingly crucial for the BJP and the Samajwadi Party (SP).

The challenge before the BJP is to retain the inroads it had made in this region during 2017 Assembly polls and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, while the

SP is fighting for reclaiming the lost territory. Polling in the third phase will be held on February 20 on 59 seats spread across 16 districts.

These include five districts from western UP — Firozabad, Mainpuri, Etah, Kasganj and Hathras. Six districts of the Avadh region, namely Kanpur, Kanpur Dehat, Auraiya, Kannauj, Etawah and Farrukhabad, will go to polls along with five districts from Bundelkhand region: Jhansi,

Jalaun, Lalitpur, Hamirpur and Mahoba.

The region, known for dominance of the Yadav community, was once a stronghold of the Samajwadi Party but significant share of votes of Yadav community went with the BJP in 2017. The BJP won 49 out of 59 seats while the SP only had to settle for 9. The Congress got one while the BSP drew a blank from here. Even the Yadav stronghold, which includes Firozabad, Kasganj,

Etah, Mainpuri, Farrukhabad, Kannauj and Auraiya did not vote for the SP which got only six seats in these districts.

Political observers feel the family feud between Akhilesh and Shivpal was a major factor for this shift. The biggest shift came from Kannauj in 2019 when Akhilesh's wife and sitting MP Dimple Yadav lost the Lok Sabha contest to the BJP even though the SP was in alliance with BSP.

Continued on Page 2

Modi meets Sikh leaders, details
work done by Govt for community

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of voting in Punjab Assembly elections on Sunday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted a number of prominent Sikh representatives at his residence on Friday and detailed the works done by his Government for the community.

Thirty-eight prominent Sikh representatives met the Prime Minister at his residence and felicitated him for declaring December 26 as "veer baal divas" in the memory of the four sons of the Sikh 10th guru, Guru Govind Singh, and creating Kartarpur Sahib corridor to visit the birthplace of the founder of the Sikh religion Guru Gobind Singh. Modi was presented with a "Kripa" and a shawl.

According to a Press statement from the Sikh representatives who attended the meet-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets with prominent Sikh personalities at his residence in New Delhi on Friday

ing, Modi said in his childhood he was greatly influenced by the lives of the Sikh gurus and "used to mention sahabjades deeds in his public speeches".

"I am grateful that I could do something in the memory of Guru Gobind Singh's brave sons," he said.

Modi was also quoted as saying in his childhood he would go to Kartarpur Sahib

and had darshan of the birthplace of Guru Dev through binocular at Kartarpur Sahib through binocular.

Modi maintained "if we wanted we could have won Pakistan in 1971 war and claimed Kartarpur Sahib in the agreement executed in Soviet Union but we could not do so..."

Continued on Page 2

'Elgar accused tried
to create unrest,
topple Modi Govt',
court denies bail

Mumbai: A special court here has denied bail to three persons accused in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, saying that the material on record suggests that the trio and members of the CPI(Maoist) hatched a "serious conspiracy" to create unrest in the country and to overthrow the Modi Government.

A letter placed on record prima facie speaks that the CPI (Maoist) was bent upon ending the "Modi-raj" and that they were also thinking of another incident like the death of former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, by targeting the road shows of PM Narendra Modi, the court said.

The three accused, Sagar Gorkhe, Ramesh Gaichor and Jyoti Jagtap, members of the Kabir Kala Manch, were denied bail by the special court judge DE Kothalikar on Monday.

Continued on Page 2

Russia welcomes India's
'quiet diplomacy' call to
resolve Ukraine crisis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after India called for resolving the ongoing crisis in Ukraine through "quiet and constructive diplomacy", Russia on Friday welcomed this stand.

The reaction came after India on Thursday said at the UN Security Council that "quiet and constructive diplomacy" is the need of the hour and that any step that could escalate the tension should be avoided.

"We welcome #India's balanced, principled and independent approach," the Russian Embassy in India tweeted.

At a meeting of the UN Security Council on the Ukraine situation, India's Permanent Representative to the UN TS Tirumurti pitched for immediate de-escalation of the situation.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said India has been supportive



of an immediate de-escalation of tensions and resolution of the situation through sustained diplomatic dialogue.

The MEA on Wednesday set up a control room to provide information and assistance to Indian nationals in Ukraine. In addition, the Indian Embassy in Ukraine has also set up a 24-hour helpline for Indians in the eastern European nation.

There are more than 20,000 Indian students there and the Indian Embassy there has urged them to leave the country for time being.

Indian citizens, moreover, were advised to avoid travelling to Ukraine.

Continued on Page 2

Hijab not an essential
religious practice of
Islam, K'taka tells HC

Bengaluru: The Karnataka Government on Friday contended before the Karnataka High Court that the hijab is not an essential religious practice of Islam and preventing its use did not violate Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees religious freedom.

State's Advocate General Prabhuling Navadgi told the full bench of the High Court comprising Justice Awasthi, Justice JM Khazi and Justice Krishna M Dixit that the practice of wearing hijab should also pass the test of constitutional morality as interpreted in various Supreme Court judgments, including the Sabrimala case.

"We have taken a stand that wearing Hijab is not an essential religious part of Islam," Navadgi told the HC bench.

AG Navadgi also rejected the charge of the girls, who challenged the Karnataka Government's order on February 5 which restricted

students from wearing hijab or saffron scarves saying that it violated Article 25 of the Constitution. Article 25 gives freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion to the citizens of India.

"If somebody wishes to exercise the right to freedom of religion, it has to be seen if this exercise affects public order, health and morality," Navadgi contended.

To buttress his point, he said during the Covid-19 pandemic all the religious places were shut and the purpose for keeping the places closed was public health. In terms of hijab, it has to be tested in terms of morality, health and public order. The Government order also does not violate 19(1)(A), Navadgi argued. Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution guarantees to all its citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression.

Continued on Page 2

Sabse Pehle Life Insurance

Invest in LIC's Jeevan Akshay VII

Invest in lifelong Happiness

- Plan: Single Premium Immediate Annuity Plan
- Multiple Options: 10 Annuity options to choose from
- Flexible Annuity Payments: Monthly, Quarterly, Half-yearly or Yearly
- Age Eligibility: Min. Age at Entry: 30 years (Completed) Max. Age at Entry: 100 years (Completed) for option F, 85 years (Completed) for all options except option F
- Annuity Rates are Guaranteed

Sample Illustration: Age - 50, Annuity payable - Yearly, Mode - Offline

Purchase Price*	25 Lac	50 Lac	1 Crore	5 Crore
Option A	1,79,750	3,60,250	7,21,500	36,07,500
Option F	1,46,250	2,93,250	5,87,500	29,37,500
Option J	1,45,500	2,91,750	5,84,500	29,22,500

*Plus applicable tax as per rules. Figures in Rupees

Also Available Online

Download LIC Mobile App "MyLIC" Visit: [licindia.in](#) Call Centre Services (022) 6827 6827

For details, contact your Agent/Nearest LIC Branch or SMS YOUR CITY NAME to 5676474

BEWARE OF SPURIOUS PHONE CALLS AND FICTITIOUS/FRAUDULENT OFFERS. IRDAI is not involved in activities like selling insurance policies, announcing bonus or investment of premiums. Public receiving such phone calls are requested to lodge a police complaint. For more details on risk factors, terms and conditions, please read sales brochure carefully before concluding a sale.

Follow us: [f](#) [y](#) [t](#) [i](#) LIC India Forever IRDAI Regn No.: 512

LIC'S JEEVAN AKSHAY VII

A Non-Linked, Non-Participating, Individual Immediate Annuity Plan

UIN- 512N337V02 Plan No. 857

Option A Annuity for Life

Option F Annuity for Life with Return of Purchase Price

Option J Joint Life Annuity with a provision for 100% of the annuity payable as long as one of the Annuitant survives and Return of Purchase Price on death of last survivor

LIC भारतीय जीवन बीमा निगम LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION OF INDIA

Har Pal Aapke Saath

LIC/PA/2021-22/04/Eng

Shah to Channi:
Will look into
AAP’s link with
pro-Khalistan outfit
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday told Punjab Chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi that he would ‘personally look into’ allegations against Aam Aadmi Party’s alleged ties with pro-Khalistan outfit Sikhs for Justice (SFJ).

Shah wrote a letter to the Punjab CM on Friday in which he said, “As per your letter, a political party being in contact with and seeking support from an anti-national, separatist and banned outfit during elections is a serious matter in the context of national security.”

“The agenda of such people is no different from the agenda of the nation’s enemies. It is condemnable that some people, in order to attain power, can go to the extent of teaming up with separatists and hurting the unity of Punjab and the country.”

Shah further added, “I assure you that no one will be permitted to disturb the nation’s unity. The Government of India is taking this issue seriously and I will personally look into the matter in depth.” Okay, sir

Set up bench for hearing water case: K’taka to SC

New Delhi: The Karnataka Government on Friday moved the Supreme Court seeking setting up of a bench to hear a plea relating to the dispute over the allocation of water of Krishana river, flowing in states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana, after two judges recused themselves on January 10.

A bench comprising Justice D Y Chandrachud, hailing from Maharashtra, and Justice A S Bopanna, who belongs to Karnataka, had on January 10 recused from the case, arising out of the water tribunal’s decision, saying “We do not want to be the target of invectives”.

The judges, who recused themselves, were upset with the tone and tenor of mails and letters against them for being part of the bench to decide the water dispute.

A bench headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana took note of the submissions of senior advocate Shyam Divan, appearing for Karnataka, and said that he will consider setting up the

bench for the case.

The bench, also comprising justices A S Bopanna and Hima Kohli, inquired whether the parties can amicably settle the dispute.

Divan said the main issue would require adjudication from the bench itself and some of the ancillary matters may be settled.

“I am mentioning on behalf of Karnataka. There is a judicial order of January 10, 2022, passed by a bench of Justice Chandrachud and Justice Bopanna where they have directed that the papers be placed before the CJI in the administrative side for directions. They have recognised and all the counsel agreed that this ought to be listed expeditiously,” Divan said at the outset.

“We will look into this,” the CJI said.

Karnataka had sought the vacation of a November 16, 2011, order of the top court that restrained the Centre from publishing in the official gazette the final order of the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal II (KWDT) pronounced in 2010,

allocating the river water to Karnataka, erstwhile Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

The KWDT had further modified its final order and report on November 29, 2013, to allot surplus water to Karnataka, Maharashtra, and the erstwhile State of Andhra Pradesh while preserving the allocation of 2,130 TMC already made among them.

The publication of the tribunal order is a necessary precondition for its implementation.

However, following the bifurcation of unified Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh had moved the Supreme Court challenging the KWDT’s allocation of share.

Karnataka had argued that thousands of crores of its dam and irrigation projects to provide water to its parched northern areas were stalled for all these years because of the 2011 order to not publish the KWDT decisions in the Official Gazette under Section 6(1) of the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956.

PTI

AIADMK seeks deployment of Central forces for civic polls

Coimbatore: Demanding deployment of Central security forces in the district to ensure a fair and free urban civic polls scheduled for February 19, AIADMK MLAs on Friday squatted and staged a dharna on the premises of the Collectorate here.

Led by AIADMK Whip and former minister S P Velumani, the MLAs and party workers raised slogans in support of the demands, which include sending out outsiders, allegedly all goons and rowdies, brought in by the DMK for distributing cash and gifts to the voters.

Despite submitting a number of petitions in this regard to the district administration, no action was taken and police personnel were allegedly functioning as DMK workers, Velumani told reporters.

Collector Dr G S Sameeran was asked by Velumani to see to it that Central paramilitary forces were deployed to ensure free and fair elections.

BJP also has put forth the same demand a couple of days ago.

PTI

Cong distorted history, glorified Akbar: Raj BJP

Jaipur: The Opposition BJP on Friday lashed out at the Congress leader Govind Singh Dotasra for accusing the party of giving a religious colour to the battle between Maharana Pratapp and Mughal Emperor Akbar.

“The fight between Maharana Pratap and Akbar was for power but BJP gave it a religious colour,” PCC chief Dotasra had said Thursday at a party meeting in Nagaur.

BJP state president Satish Ponia said it was a fight of nationalism and not a power struggle.

“This is not the first time that he has given such a statement. They have taught distorted history. In their eyes, Akbar is great but in this country, Maharana Pratap will remain great,” Ponia said lambasting Dotasra’s statement.

“The soil of Haldighati, which is worshipped by all, is the symbol of the battle which was fought for nationalism, self-respect and motherland,” he said, adding that the statement showed “narrow-mindedness” of Congress and its appeasement politics.

Leader of Opposition Gulab Chand Kataria said the struggle was for self-respect

and freedom.

“He should read history. Akbar was an invader, he came to invade. You taught distorted history and termed Akbar as great. “You felt ashamed calling Maharana Pratap great and therefore you kept on teaching Akbar as great,” he said.

“Because of your appeasement policy, your party is cornered now and if you want to finish what is remaining, then keep on making such comments so that people get to know about your thinking,” he said.

Former Rajasthan chief minister Vasundhara Raje said the Congress has challenged the self-respecting history of Mewar by describing the struggle of Maharana Pratap and Akbar as a fight for power.

“Maharana Pratap continued his lifelong resolve to protect the motherland. Maharana Pratap’s battle with Akbar was not a power struggle, but a struggle for the security of nation,” she tweeted. Raje said that for the sake of self-respect of Mewar, Pratap even ate loaves of grass in the forests.

“Congress should apologize to the public for insulting such a mighty warrior,” she added.

Deputy leader of opposition also termed the statement as unfortunate. Former education minister and BJP MLA Vasudev Devnani said that what Dotasra said was an insult to Pratap who sacrificed his life to protect the pride of the motherland.

“Mahatma Gandhi praised Pratap’s bravery at the Round Table Conference in London. Even Vietnam also talked about taking inspiration from the battle of Haldighati.

“After the formation of the state government, there is a constant conspiracy to weaken the glorious history of the great men,” Devnani said.

“Calling the struggle for freedom of such a great warrior as a struggle for power is a sign of a frustrated mentality,” he said. He also tweeted praising the glory of Maharana Pratap.

During the Nagaur meeting, Dotasra had said, “BJP sees everything through the Hindu-Muslim religious point of view.” Maharana Pratap was the Rajput ruler of Mewar in Rajasthan who fought the battle of Haldighati with the forces of Mughal emperor Akbar, led by Man Singh-I of Amber, in 1576.

PTI

J&K DC reviews preparations for Amarnath Yatra

Srinagar: Divisional Commissioner of Kashmir Pandurang K Pole on Thursday chaired a meeting to review the preparation of departments concerned about the forthcoming annual Amarnath Yatra.

Pole said the number of pilgrims this year may be higher compared to the last couple of years which were affected by the Covid pandemic.

He enjoined all officers to increase the capacity of camping sites, parking places and service facilities including health, drinking water and toilet.

Stressing on the registration of all pony ride providers,

labours, Pole directed officers to hire pony ride providers from other districts to cater to the demand.

The divisional commissioner directed the public works department to widen the roads at critical junctions and repair the damage caused to physical infrastructure by cloudbursts the previous year.

Pole directed all the departments to start execution of work from the first week of April and complete all preparation by May 15.

He also directed establishing oxygen booths and Covid testing facilities for the pilgrims.

PTI

Goa Carnival to start on Feb 26

Panaji: The world-renowned Goa Carnival will begin on February 26 with traditional float parades being held in several areas in association with local civic bodies, an official said on Friday.

The first float parade will be held in Panaji on February 26, followed by another the next day in Margao, Corporation of City of Panaji Commissioner Agnelo Fernandes said.

The state tourism department has invited applications from people who desire to be ‘King Momo’, a mythological figure who traditionally heralds the float parade, he added.

PTI

Process on to make deities owner of temple land instead of priests, says Bihar Law Min

Patna: The Bihar Government has begun the process to make deities owners of the temple land instead of priests, Law Minister Pramod Kumar said on Friday.

The Law Department will soon issue a circular, removing the names of priests from the revenue records to protect the properties from unauthorised claims, Kumar told PTI on the decision that is likely to have widespread socio-political ramifications in the state.

“A priest cannot be treated as landowner (bhuswami), and the revenue records will now have the name of the deities of the shrines,” Kumar said.

It would help in dealing with largescale irregularities in temple land as priests have

been buying and selling those as owners, he said.

“The Bihar government will simply implement the Supreme Court judgment passed on September 6, 2021. The SC bench of Justices Hemant Gupta and AS Bopanna had ruled that ‘there is no mandate under the law’ that the name of pujari or manager is required to be mentioned in the revenue records since the deity as the juristic person is the owner of the land,” the minister said.

The bench had also cited the Ram Janmabhoomi case verdict to support its view that the deity presiding over a temple is a juristic person and can hold property in their name, he said.

PTI

Refund fine, restore...

From Page 1

It assured the court that all directions will be followed in the new notices. All the matters would be now sent to the tribunals in Meerut, Lucknow and Prayagraj for further necessary action as per the “Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damages to Public and Private Property Ordinance, 2020”.

Acting on the recovery notices issued to the alleged anti-CAA protesters in December 2019 SC gave one final opportunity to the Government to withdraw the proceedings and warned that it will quash the reports for being in violation of the law.

A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and Surya Kant granted liberty to the UP Government to proceed against

alleged anti-CAA protesters under the new law -- Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damages to Public and Private Property Act notified on August 31, 2020.

“Orders in pursuance to the show-cause notices have been withdrawn, in terms of the Government orders (GOs) by the State of Uttar Pradesh, there shall be refund of any recoveries which have been made in the meantime.

This will, however, be without prejudice to such action as may be warranted, in terms of the proceedings and decisions of the claims tribunals, at the subsequent stage,” it said.

The bench said it is a very important Constitutional principle that all deterrence against the evasion of law has to be provided in the four corners of the law. “There cannot be any principle of deterrence, which lies outside the fold of law,” the bench said, adding that after the withdrawal of orders, it will

be a case of “unjust enrichment”.

It noted the submission of Additional Advocate General Garima Prashad, appearing for Uttar Pradesh, that on February 14 and 15, 2022, two GOs were issued in terms of which show cause notices in 274 cases for alleged destruction of public properties since December 2019 have been withdrawn together with the proceedings which were subsequently carried out.

“In view of the enactment of the Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damage to Public and Private Property Act, 2020, it has been stated that the State Government would refer all the cases to the claims tribunal which has been constituted in pursuance of the State legislation for further action in accordance with the law.

In view of the above a statement made on behalf of the State Government nothing further would survive,” the bench said.

Modi meets...

From Page 1

Modi has in the past criticised the Congress for not taking measures to ensure that the Kartarpur Sahib did not fall in Pakistan when India was divided in 1947.

On this occasion Jharkhand State Gurudwara Prabandhak committee head Sardar Shailendra Singh presented the Prime Minister a “swarupa” and memorandum and urged him to extend the frequency of “Jaliawala Bagh Express” four days a week, running of “Jammu Tavi express” from Tata Nagar and opening of an AIIMS hospital at Kolhan and a ESI hospital in Jharkhand. Besides he request-

ed that “Gurmukhi” be used while presenting caste certificates to Sikhs.

Shailendra Singh told The Pioneer that he also asked the Prime Minister for establishing the Gurmukhi academy in Jharkhand.

The meeting came two days before the Punjab Assembly polls as the BJP is trying to maximise its gains in the State in alliance with former Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh.

The Prime Minister is seeking the support of the Sikh community post-farmer agitation that culminated in the abrogation of three Central farmers laws which were opposed by a section of Sikh farmers in the State.

Besides, Amarinder Singh’s Punjab Lok Congress, the Akali Dal faction headed by Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa is also in alliance with the BJP in the four-corner contest against the

Congress, AAP, and the BSP-SAD alliance in the State.

SAD has exited from the National Democratic Alliance led by the BJP following the farmers’ agitation.

In his tweets, Modi said these Sikh religious and community leaders were at the forefront of popularising Sikh culture and serving society.

“I was humbled by the kind words from the distinguished members of the Sikh community on various efforts of the Central Government. I consider it my honour that the respected Sikh Gurus have taken Seva from me and their blessings have enabled me to work for society,” he said.

BJP leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa said Modi in the meeting said he wants to work for the community every day and regretted that the previous Congress dispensations lost opportunities to bring Sikhs’

holy places like Kartarpur Sahib, which is in Pakistan, into Indian territory.

Sikhs have carried a certain pain because many commitments made to them were not fulfilled but the Modi Government has done “historic” works, including opening the corridor to Kartarpur Sahib and taking the decision to commemorate the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh’s sons, Sirsa said.

The Sikh personalities who attended the meeting with Modi included Delhi Gurudwara Committee president Harmeet Singh Kalka, Padma Sri-awardee Baba Balbir Singh Sichewal, Mahant Karamjit Singh of Sewapanthi in Yamuna Nagar, Baba Joga Singh of Dera Baba Jang Singh in Karnal and Sant Baba Meor Singh Waa of Mukhi Dera Baba Tara Singh Waa in Amritsar.

Jathedar Baba Sahib Singh

of Kar Sewa in Anandpur Sahib, Surinder Singh Namdhari Darbar of Bheni Sahib, Baba Jassa Singh of Shiromani Akali Budha Dal, Harbhajan Singh of Damdami Taksal and Giani Ranjit Singh, Jathedar, Takht Sri Patna Sahib also attended the meeting.

Karamjit Singh quoted Modi as saying “Sikhi” (attributes associated with Sikhs) and service, another quality identified with the community, is in his blood. This touched our hearts, he said, lauding various initiatives of the Government for the community, including the removal of GST on langars run by gurdwaras.

Sikh leaders mentioned SIT constituted by the Government to act against those involved in anti-Sikh riots in 1984 and praised Modi.

The Prime Minister also posted a picture of his meeting with Uday Singh, spiritual leaders of the Namdhari sect.

Campaigning ends for crucial phase for BJP...

From Page 1

However, now Akhilesh is said to have mended fences with his uncle Shivpal and is contesting the Karhal Assembly seat in Mainpuri to reassure his Yadav voters. Karhal has been a SP stronghold and was retained by the party even in 2017.

The BJP has fielded Union Minister Satya Pal Singh Baghel, who is also an OBC face in the party. However his caste is disputed as Baghel claims to be from schedule caste community and elected to Lok Sabha from Agra, a seat reserved for SC. This is being pitched as one of the big battles of this year’s election. The third phase is also crucial

for the BJP, which is seeking to retain the 49 seats it won in 2017. This phase has the Hathras constituency where a gang-rape tore UP apart in September 2020.

Akhilesh Yadav has kept the Hathras issue alive in his campaign. He has been observing ‘HathraskiBetiSmriti Divas’ every month. Then there is Kasganj where the custodial death of one Altaf in November last year had become a major embarrassment for the Yogi Adityanath Government. The police claimed that Altaf has been called for questioning in a case and he ended his life by hanging from a water tap. The matter is now in court.

Kanpur is also going to polls in this phase and the murder of a city businessman Manish Gupta during a police raid in Gorakhpur last year, is being raised at every opposition meeting. The phase also has five districts Bundelkhand that was once a stronghold of the BSP but it was swept by the BJP in 2017. While the BJP is claiming massive development in this region while seeking votes, the Samajwadi Party is exposing areas that have remained untouched by development.

IEDs part of serial blasts plan: Delhi CP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police Commissioner, Rakesh Asthana on Friday said that the initial probe into the case related to the Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) being found in Seemapuri on Thursday and Ghazipur's flower market on January 17, ahead of Republic Day suggest that the IEDs were prepared with the intention of carrying out blasts at public places across the national Capital.

Meanwhile, Delhi Police has also stepped up security and deployed additional personnel in northeast Delhi's Old Seemapuri area, a day after the bag containing the IED was found there.

Police said that the owner of the house, where the IED was found, and a property dealer, through whom the house was given on rent, are being interrogated. According to sources, three men were living on the second floor of the building where the IED was found. They had fled from the area before the police arrived.

Talking to reporters, Asthana said that such activi-



Delhi Police personnel stand outside the sealed house at Old Seemapuri from where an IED was found by the police in New Delhi on Friday

ties are not possible without local support and the initial probe suggests that these IEDs were prepared with the intention of carrying out blasts at public places.

"The Special Cell and other police teams are investigating the case. They are probing forward and backward linkages. Police teams are trying to pre-empt every such incident in Delhi and expose any local and foreign network," said the Police

Commissioner.

According to a senior police officer, security has been stepped up in the area and in order to preserve the crime scene, police have also put up barricades and sealed the house.

"The local police had also conducted the verification of tenants in the area as part of security measures ahead of Republic Day. A local enquiry has also been conducted by the police," said the senior police

official.

"The Special Cell team has also retrieved the footage of all the CCTV cameras installed in the area and the footage is being analysed," said the official.

The mother of the house owner Aashim alleged that police have taken him into custody, while his wife said they had rented out the floor, where the explosives have been found, to two persons a couple of months ago.

"During interrogation, the owner of the house told the police that he had taken the documents of two people while giving the house on rent. However, the documents are yet to be recovered by the Special Cell unit probing the case," said a police officer.

"On Thursday, when the police team went to the house, it was vacant. The bag was found there and we immediately informed the NSG. The suspects have managed to escape. We think that the explosive recovered from Old Seemapuri had been made by the same persons who placed the IED at the Ghazipur flower market last month," police said.

The IED was picked up by the NSG bomb disposal squad from the second floor of the building. The IED was destroyed using a water disruptor, an NSG official said, adding all pieces of evidence have been handed over to the Delhi Police.

NSG sources had said the explosive is suspected to be a mix of ammonium nitrate and RDX but a forensic lab will examine it in detail.

Shift jab centres out of schools, parents urge L-G

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Following the fall in coronavirus cases as well as reopening of schools in the national Capital, the All India Parents' Association (AIPA) has written to Delhi Lieutenant-Governor Anil Bajjal demanding that vaccination centres running in Government schools be shifted to other places and teachers posted on Covid duty be called back.

According to the letter written by Ashok Agarwal, the president of the AIPA, now that students have started returning to school, vaccination centres running in Government schools should be moved to other places.

"Also, teachers posted on Covid duties should be called back since the number of cases has gone down considerably. It

is important to provide a safe and secure environment to students where they can concentrate on studies as there has already been a significant learning loss due to the Covid-induced school closure", he said.

Amid declining coronavirus cases in the city, the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) decided to reopen higher education institutions and coaching centres along with schools for classes 9-12 from February 7. It also decided to reopen schools for students from nursery to class 8 from February 14.

While the Centre has dropped the mandatory parental consent for students to physically attend schools from its guidelines and left it to the States, the Delhi Government has decided to continue with it.

There is no cap of 50 per cent student strength and schools are free to decide the number of students based on their infrastructure so that the Covid protocols are followed. According to guidelines issued by the DDMA, the area or part of a school being used for vaccination or ration distribution should be properly separated or demarcated from the area which is being used for academic activities.

"In this regard, the district administration shall cordon off the area demarcated for the vaccination or ration distribution centre, make separate entry or exit for this purpose and deploy a sufficient number of civil defence volunteers to avoid mingling of students with the persons coming to vaccination or ration distribution centres," the guidelines stated.

2 labourers hurt while demolishing building in Greater Kailash area

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Two labourers got injured while demolishing a building in south Delhi's Greater Kailash area on Friday.

According to Benita Mary Jaiker, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), South district, the Greater Kailash-1 police station was informed at around 10.05 AM that some labourers got injured after a portion of a building collapsed following which police team was dispatched for the spot.

"When police team reached the spot, they found that house number E-162 was being demolished for new construction. During the demolition of the second floor, a portion of the rear wall suddenly collapsed

and two labourers were injured in the incident," said the DCP.

"The injured were identified as Harvesh (28), who has a major injury on his head, and Ajaypal (22), who has a minor injury on his leg. Both of them are residents of Badaun in Uttar Pradesh. They were shifted to the AIIMS where they are under treatment," said the DCP.

"On the basis of Ajaypal's statement, a case under sections 288 (negligent conduct with respect to pulling down or repairing buildings) and 338 (causing grievous hurt by act endangering life or personal safety of others) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was registered and a probe launched," said the DCP. The family members of the injured persons have been informed about the incident, police said.

HC nixes PIL against DMRC-DAMEPL pact

NEW DELHI ■ PTI

The Delhi High Court on Friday refused to entertain a public interest litigation (PIL) alleging that the agreement between a Reliance Infrastructure subsidiary, Delhi Airport Metro Express Private Limited (DAMEPL) and Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), pursuant to which an arbitral award of over Rs 4,600 crore was earlier passed against the corporation, was "fraud on public money."

A Bench headed by Justice Manmohan said the PIL, filed by lawyer Manohar Lal Sharma who alleged that the agreement would result in the Delhi Metro "going into the hands of Anil Ambani", was misconceived, half-baked and without any basis.

The Bench, also comprising Justice Navin Chawla, said the court cannot examine under PIL jurisdiction the allegations of the

petitioner when the contract in question has been scrutinised by the High Court as well as the Supreme Court at the time of testing of the validity of the arbitral award. "You can't come on the basis of a news report to say the contract is vitiated. If we start doing that, what will happen to contracts?"

According to someone, one clause in a contract may be opposed to public policy and they will start challenging it... Which investor will come to India? We'll ensure no business takes place in India and only litigation takes place in India and that too PIL. That's not the intent of PIL," Justice Manmohan said.

Remarking that many times a PIL is filed to kill a good cause by filing a premature plea and getting it dismissed, the court asked the petitioner to avail other legal remedies available to him under the law and come to court after doing some research. "Have you written to the

DMRC? Have you given any notice to the other side saying why this was done? Nothing of this sort has been done and you've come straightaway to the High Court... You have alternative remedies, explore them.

This is all half-baked, quite misconceived," the court stated. The court clarified that the allegations levelled by the petitioner required a "full trial" and the same cannot be done under the PIL jurisdiction. The petitioner, who ultimately withdrew the petition, contended that his petition was filed to protect money and the agreement was void.

"Since August 2008, this agreement was signed in collusion, having the object to grab Delhi Metro... Everybody was hand-in-hand to get this money released and if money is not given fully then Delhi Metro is given to Anil Ambani. This is a game. This is proved by the ter-

mination clause," argued the petitioner. "I will not get a single rupee but public money of Rs 7,100 crore is going. Not only that, interest will be accumulated and Delhi Metro will go into the hands of Anil Ambani because of the termination clause," he said.

The petitioner claimed that the "agreement and release of Rs 7,100 crore under shadow fighting is outcome of corruption and fraud for vested interest" and there is "serious fraud upon the public money which is liable to be investigated and prosecuted u/s 420 and PC Act 1988". An arbitral tribunal in May 2017 had ruled in favour of DAME-PL, which had pulled out from running the Airport Express metro line over safety issues, and accepted its claim that the running of operations on the line was not viable due to structural defects in the viaduct through which the train would run.

Two children mowed down by a pickup vehicle

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a tragic incident, two children were mowed by a pickup vehicle while they were playing in the street in southwest Delhi's Sagarpur area. According to a senior police official, the incident took place on Thursday.

Police said that around 12.30 pm, they received information regarding the death of two children in Sagarpur area. During enquiry from Divyaprashta Hospital, Palam, two children Savitri (7) and Subhan (4), both residents of Nasirpur, were declared brought dead following an accident from Mahindra pickup, said the senior police official.

I must be world's sweetest terrorist, Kejriwal tells Vishwas

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI ■ PUNJAB

Am Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convenor and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal termed himself the sweetest terrorist in the world who builds roads, schools and provide free water and electricity.

Kejriwal's remarks came after Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking an inquiry into allegations levelled against the Delhi Chief Minister by former AAP leader Kumar Vishwas.

"I must be the world's first sweet terrorist who builds schools, hospitals and gives free electricity to people. The British labeled a revolutionary like Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh as a terrorist 100 years ago and today those who divide and rule like the British are labeling his disciple as a terrorist. I have ruined the sleep of these corrupt leaders because of which they call me a terrorist," he added.

AAP leader dubbed the allegations levelled by Vishwas and other leaders as "a comedy". "This is laughable. Is this possible," he asked. Kejriwal said he has learnt that "last evening, Channi got a call from the Centre saying that the matter (accusations of supporting separatists) should be investigated."

"One officer told me that over the next one or two days,

an FIR will be registered against me by the NIA. All such FIRs are welcome, but if the Centre deals with national security in this manner, then it is a matter of concern."

"The Modi Government sent the police, Income Tax and ED not just to my office but my bedroom too, yet couldn't find anything against me. How hilarious is it that the PM of the world's largest democracy gets to know of a terrorist after a poet recites nonsense for cheap publicity. We are living in such an era where the country's largest parties and their chiefs think they can make a joke out of national security," he said.

On the last day of campaigning in Punjab, Kejriwal said that all the corrupt leaders have come together as one to fight AAP and stop Bhagwant Mann from becoming the CM of Punjab.

"We will bring an honest Government to Punjab and eradicate corruption just like we have in Delhi. Calling upon the three crore Punjabis to unite against the BJP, Congress and Akali Dal to fix this broken and corrupt system," he added.

Kejriwal said leaders of the BJP and the Congress as well as their allies have joined hands to target him over Vishwas' accusations which he dubbed as "laughable".

Narendra Modi, Priyanka Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Charanjit Channi, Sukhbir Badal, Amarinder Singh, Navjot Singh Sidhu, all are now level-

ling allegations that for the last ten years, Kejriwal is hatching a plan to break the country into two parts and wants to become the Prime Minister of one part," Kejriwal told reporters in Bathinda.

"If one goes by their claims, that means I am a big terrorist. If one goes by their logic, then what were their agencies doing, why did they not arrest me? Earlier Congress was ruling and now for last over seven years the BJP is in power (at the Centre). Were all of them sleeping," he said.

AAP leader Raghav Chadha had already described Vishwas's allegations as "malicious, unfounded and fabricated."

Kejriwal pointed out that all his rivals have joined hands as he was talking about under-taking development and building schools and hospitals if his party comes to power in Punjab in the February 20 polls.

"See the sequence of the whole thing. Rahul Gandhi was the first to level accusations (after Vishwas' statement), then the Prime Minister, then Priyanka and Sukhbir Badal used the same language against me," he said. Kejriwal said people used to say when Rahul Gandhi says something people don't believe him. "But I never thought the PM too would toe Rahul's line and the PM would also become Rahul Gandhi," he said, referring to Modi targeting the Delhi CM on the issue at his poll rallies.

NMC gives nod to 'waste-to-art' park; to showcase iconic monuments

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The standing committee of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation on Friday approved a proposal to build a park on the 'waste-to-art' theme on the premises of the historic Ajmal Khan Park in Karol Bagh, officials said.

The South Delhi civic body had come up with a 'Waste-to-Wonder' Park in Sarai Kale Khan in February 2019.

It has replicas of seven world-famous monuments, including the Taj Mahal and Eiffel Tower, fashioned out of mechanical waste.

"The standing committee of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation in its meeting today approved a proposal to build a 'waste-to-art' park in the old Ajmal Khan Park in Karol Bagh area. The park is spreadover nine to 10 acres," a senior official said. The approval now awaits the nod of the NDMC House. According to the proposal, 13 sculptural models of world-famous heritage landmarks will be set up in the park, including the Great Sphinx at Giza, the Great Wall of China, Opera House in Sydney, Sagrada Familia of Barcelona and Stonehenge of the United Kingdom. Also, 12 artworks will be done in relief, including models of Angkor Wat at Cambodia, Chichen Itza of Mexico, the Grand Mosque of Abu Dhabi, London Bridge, Mount Rushmore in the US and Petra in Jordan, it says.

14-year-old girl allegedly raped by her neighbour twice in Kirti Nagar area

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 14-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour twice in west Delhi's Kirti Nagar area. Police said that they arrested the accused.

The accused has been identified as Servesh (27). Police said that the accused has been arrested and sent to judicial custody on Wednesday under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and POCSO Act on the complaint of the victim, a resident of Kirti Nagar.

According to a senior police official, the minor girl alleged that her neighbour Servesh forcefully raped her in last December and then just after five days he raped her again.

"She disclosed the matter to her mother who reported the incident to the police and the accused was arrested on the same day," said the senior police official.

Unidentified men stab 18-year-old in West Delhi's Khyala area

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

An 18-year-old man was allegedly stabbed by unidentified men in west Delhi's Khyala area. Police said that they have arrested the two accused while a manhunt has been initiated to nab the remaining accused.

The victim has been identified as Ritik Suri, a resident of Vishnu Garden in the National Capital. Police said the victim used to frequently visit a friend place's at Raghuraj Nagar area on his Royal Enfield bike.

According to a senior police official, some locals became jealous and developed enmity following which a quarrel broke out between them.

"A case of attempt to murder has been registered and two men — Anshu (19) and Bunty (18) — have been apprehended. Teams have been dispatched to apprehend remaining accused," said the senior police official.

PICTALK



Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta with party leaders and supporters at a protest dharna against Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on Friday.

Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

DefExpo extended by a day as Covid abates in India

To be held now from March 10 till 14

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With Covid cases declining, the duration of DefExpo-2022, Asia's largest exhibition on land, naval and homeland security systems, has been extended by a day. The exhibition will now be held from March 10-14, 2022.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday here reviewed the preparations for the event to be held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

The event is being organised as one of the largest defence international exhibitions of the world with more than 1,000 exhibitors including foreign and Indian displaying their weapon systems. The theme of this year's exhibition is 'Path to Pride' to showcase India's march towards self reliance in defence manufacturing.

Giving details here about the minister's review, officials said there has been greater domestic and international interest in this 12th edition of DefExpo, since India relaxed its health protocols owing to the reduction in COVID-19 cases.

So far, 930 exhibitors have registered for the mega event and the numbers are expected to rise beyond 1,000 in the days ahead. Foreign Defence Ministers' confirmations are also being received and are



comparable with the previous edition of the event which was held in February 2020 in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh during the pre-COVID times.

Noting that the relaxation in COVID protocols has generated greater interest in DefExpo-2022, Rajnath extended the event by one day. It will facilitate defence business through three business days and make it inclusive for young entrepreneurs and college and school millennial of Gujarat during two public days.

The DefExpo-2022 will be held as a hybrid exhibition, with stalls in both physical and virtual realms. This will ensure greater engagement as the exhibitors will be able to cater to both physical and virtual

attendees.

The defence minister was briefed that virtual attendees could participate in seminars, interact with the exhibitors and representatives; hold Business-to-Business (B2B) meetings and view product details and supporting videos.

The mega exhibition is being planned in a three venue format - exhibition at the Helipad Exhibition Center (HEC); Events and Seminars at the Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Center (MCCE) and live demonstration for the public at Sabarmati Riverfront.

To instil a sense of pride, the theme of the event has been christened, 'Path to Pride'. In a first-of-its-kind initiative, the

event will showcase India's resolve to be first amongst firsts.

With indigenous technological and logistic prowess at the forefront, the event will invigorate the defence industry, start-ups and MSMEs to cement solid partnerships with attending foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs). A 50 per cent discount is offered to the MSMEs for booking stalls at the expo.

A DefExpo-2022 mobile app was also launched by Rajnath during the review. It is an interactive and user-friendly interface for all issues related to the event. The app, available on the Android/iOS platforms, contains features to support exhibitors, attendees and the media.

NSE scam probe: CBI grills former NSE CEO Chitra Ramkrishna



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Friday questioned former CEO of National Stock Exchange (NSE) Chitra Ramkrishna in connection with its ongoing probe into the alleged abuse of co-location facility in the NSE.

The CBI has also opened look out circulars against Ramkrishna, another former CEO Ravi Narain and former COO Anand Subramanian to prevent them from leaving the country.

The agency had booked an owner and promoter of Delhi-based private firm OPG Securities Pvt. Ltd, Sanjay Gupta and other in connection with alleged abuse of NSE co-location facility to make gains by getting early access to the stock market, officials said.

Unidentified officials of Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and NSE, Mumbai and other unknown persons are also being probed by the CBI.

"It was alleged that the owner and promoter of said private company abused the server architecture of NSE in conspiracy with unknown officials of NSE. It was also alleged that unknown

officials of NSE, Mumbai had provided unfair access to said company using the co-location facility during the period 2010-2012 that enabled it to login first to the exchange server of the stock exchange that helped to get the data before any other broker in the market," the CBI has alleged in the FIR.

Recently, Ramkrishna was in the news after SEBI in a report on February 11 said she was steered by a yogi, dwelling in the Himalayan ranges, in the appointment of Anand Subramanian as the exchange's group operating officer and advisor to the managing director (MD).

The SEBI charged Ramkrishna and others with alleged lapses in the appointment of Subramanian as the chief strategic advisor and his re-designation as group operating officer and advisor to MD.

The SEBI had slapped a fine of Rs three crore on Ramkrishna, Rs two crore each on the NSE, Subramanian, former NSE MD and CEO Ravi Narain, and Rs 6 lakh on V R Narasimhan, who was the chief regulatory officer and compliance officer of NSE.

Air India to operate 3 flights from Ukraine to help stranded Indian citizens



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India will operate three flights between India and Ukraine from February 22 to 26 to facilitate the easy travelling of students and professionals stranded in the eastern European nation. All three flights will land at the Boryspil International Airport in Ukraine.

Air India took to its official Twitter handle on Friday to announce that it will operate three flights between India and Ukraine to help Indian citizens.

"Air India will operate 3 flights between India-Ukraine (Boryspil International Airport) India on 22nd 24th & 26th FEB 2022," wrote Air India.

"Booking open through Air India Booking offices, Website, Call Centre and Authorised Travel Agents (sic)," it added. However, Air India, which is now owned by Tata Group did not mention where in India these three flights--one on each date--will take off for Ukraine's Capital.

Air India's announcement came a day after the Ministry of civil aviation, on Thursday, removed restrictions on the number of flights between the two countries; the operations were taking place under an air bubble agreement. The ministry also removed the cap on the availability of seats on each flight.

The embassy has earlier advised its citizens to temporarily leave Ukraine. On the other hand, the Ministry of External Affairs on Thursday has stated that India does not have any immediate plan to evacuate its citizens and its focus has been on ensuring their safety rather than on anything "larger".

MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said at a media briefing that India has been supportive of an immediate de-escalation of tensions and resolution of the Ukraine crisis through sustained diplomatic dialogue. The government has set up a control room to provide information and assistance to the Indian nationals in Ukraine. In addition, the Indian embassy in Ukraine has also set up a 24-hour helpline for Indians in the eastern European nation.

Russia has positioned around one lakh troops near its border with Ukraine, besides sending warships to the Black Sea for naval exercises, triggering concerns among the NATO countries about a potential Russian invasion of Ukraine. Russia has been denying that it plans to invade Ukraine.

SC junks 2 BJP councillors' plea against Maha notification increasing nine seats in BMC

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea of two BJP councillors challenging the Maharashtra Government's ordinance notifying the increase of nine seats in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) for which elections are scheduled later this month.

A bench headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana did not agree to the constitution of senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the BJP leaders, that the power to increase the number of wards has to be exercised by the poll panel and not by the civic body that too through an Ordinance.

Rohatgi said the last census available was of 2011 and based on that, two elections for BMC have been conducted in 2011 and 2017, and the increase

of the number of wards from 227 to 236 was not valid.

"The issue of increase in the number of wards depends on the population," said the bench which also comprised justices A S Bopanna and Hima Kohli.

"The wards have to be decided and commissioned by the Election Commission and not by the corporation. And here the Corporation has been exercising the power through an Ordinance," Rohatgi said.

The population increases every day and the number of seats cannot be increased without the census and the last one was held in 2011 and on that, two elections for the BMC were held, he said.

PTI

Home Min takes stock of security, development initiatives in J&K

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With agencies anticipating a "hot summer" in the Kashmir region, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday reviewed the security situation along with the development initiatives undertaken in the Union Territory.

Lieutenant Governor of Jammu & Kashmir Manoj Sinha, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, Army Chief Gen Mukund Naravane and top security officials of the Central Government and the Union Territory administration attended the meeting. According to agencies, there might be more infiltration to create troubles in the regions.

The Home Minister reviewed the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir, including along the International Border and the Line of



Control, official sources said. Shah also took stock of the progress of the development initiatives taken in the union territory, they said. Jammu and Kashmir is currently under the central rule.

The erstwhile state was bifurcated into two union territories - Jammu said Kashmir and Ladakh - after the abrogation of Article 370 on August 5, 2019.

ED files supplementary chrgesheet against Unitech

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a supplementary Prosecution Complaint (chargesheet) before a designated PMLA court here against the Unitech Group in a money laundering case.

The Rouse Avenue Court here took the cognizance of this Prosecution Complaint on Friday.

In this Prosecution Complaint, the ED has arrayed as accused five individuals who are promoters/directors Sanjay Chandra, Ajay Chandra, Ramesh Chandra, Preeti Chandra and Rajesh Malik besides 66 domestic and overseas companies.

A prosecution complaint had been filed earlier on December 2 last year/.

The ED had registered a Money laundering case against Unitech Group following a directive from the ED on date June 6, 2018, based on the FIRs registered by Economic Offences Wing, Delhi Police, Mandir Marg, New Delhi and Police Station Saket, New Delhi under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Environment Min notifies guidelines for plastic packaging

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a legal backing to its fight against single-use plastics in the country, the Union Environment Ministry on Thursday notified comprehensive guidelines for plastic packaging ensuring a framework not only to strengthen the circular economy of plastic packaging waste, but also promote development of new alternatives to plastics.

According to government figures, nearly 43 per cent are packaging material, mostly single-use plastic which are mostly non-biodegradable in nature.

Union Environment Minister Bupendra Yadav said on Twitter on Thursday:

"Taking forward the clarion call given by PM Shri @narendramodi ji to eliminate single-use plastics, @moefcc has notified comprehensive Guidelines on Extended Producers Responsibility on plastic packaging."

According to the Minister, the guidelines not only provide a framework to strengthen the circular economy of plastic packaging waste, but also promote development of new alternatives to plastics. "They provide a roadmap for businesses to move towards sustainable plastic packaging," he said.

Plastics have been classified into four categories: rigid, flexible, multi-layered and

those used for packaging and carry bags. Producers, importers and brand owners have to provide details of the certificates from registered recyclers along with data relating to the quantity sent for end-of-life disposal by June 30, said the ministry.

Reuse of rigid plastic packaging material has been mandated in the guidelines to reduce the use of fresh plastic material for packaging.

The enforceable prescription of minimum level of recycling of plastic packaging waste collected under EPR along with use of recycled plastic content will further reduce plastic consumption and support recycling of plastic packaging waste.

The EPR guidelines will

give a boost for formalization and further development of the plastic waste management sector. In a significant first, the guidelines allow for sale and purchase of surplus extended producer responsibility certificates, thus setting up a market mechanism for plastic waste management.

The implementation of EPR will be done through a customized online platform which will act as the digital backbone of the system. The online platform will allow tracking and monitoring of EPR obligations and will reduce the compliance burden for companies through online registration and filing of annual returns. In order to ensure monitoring on fulfil-

ment of EPR obligations, the guidelines have prescribed a system of verification and audit of enterprises.

The Guidelines prescribe a framework for levy of environmental compensation based upon polluter pays principle, with respect to non-fulfilment of extended producer responsibility targets by producers, importers & brand owners, for the purpose of protecting and improving the quality of the environment and preventing, controlling and abating environment pollution. The funds collected shall be utilized for collection, recycling and end of life disposal of uncollected plastic waste in an environmentally sound manner.

Centre gives nod to phase II of ICJS to modernise policing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has approved the second phase of the Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) project, which will be implemented at a cost of Rs 3,375 crore during 2022-23 to 2025-26. The Phase II of the ICJS project, closely monitored by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, will be a step towards ensuring effective and modern policing. The project will be implemented as a central sector scheme, said MHA in a statement.

The ICJS system would be made available through a dedicated and secure cloud-based infrastructure with high speed connectivity. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) will be responsible for the implementation of the project in association with the National Informatics Center (NIC). The project will be implemented in collaboration with State Governments and Union Territory administrations.

Omicron 10 times better at escaping vaccine than Delta

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India along with many other countries may have started easing Covid-19 led restrictions, a team of researchers have flagged concerns that Omicron, the super-mutant variant of coronavirus is 10 times better at escaping Covid vaccine and immunity than the previous Delta variant and that the worst of the virus may not yet be over.

"This may also explain why the virus spread so swiftly around the world, in a short span of time from its discovery," said the researchers at University of New South Wales in Australia. They reached this conclusion after mapping the infectious

rate of Omicron.

The super-mutant variant was first discovered from South Africa and Botswana in late November. It has so far spread to more than 120 countries, outpacing the dominant Delta variant in many countries.

In a highly secure clean room at the University of NSW's Kirby Institute, experts studied the strain at the beginning of Australia's Omicron wave in mid-December and found out just how adept the variant is at evading vaccines, the report said.

While the Delta variant was 60 per cent better at evading antibodies than the original virus found in Wuhan - even in the bodies of the double-vaxxed,

Omicron was 16.5 times better at evading immunity - 10 times more than Delta.

But while the Omicron wave is subsiding across the globe, scientists believe new variants may continue to emerge for years - particularly in winter.

Already in Europe and parts of Asia, a new subvariant of Omicron known as BA.2 is rapidly spreading with indications it could be even more contagious than its predecessor, the Omicron BA.1 strain, the report said.

Danish health officials estimate that BA.2 may be 1.5 times more transmissible than BA.1 based on preliminary data, but it likely does not cause more severe disease.

Covid curbs by State Govts caused 43% drop in airlines' domestic passengers in Jan

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Airlines suffered a major decline in their passenger numbers due to Covid-related restrictions imposed by State Governments.

As per the date of Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), around 64.08 lakh domestic passengers travelled by air in January, approximately 43 per cent lower than the 1.12 crore who travelled in December. This was 17.14 per cent lower as compared to January last year.

Occupancy of the flights termed as the passenger load factors (PLF) fell for all Indian carriers in January as compared to December, the DGCA data said. Major scheduled commercial airlines registered 60.5-73.4% passenger load factor (PLF) in January, down from 67-86% in the previous month. The load

factors of SpiceJet, IndiGo, Vistara, Go First, Air India and AirAsia India were 73.4 per cent, 66.6 per cent, 61.6 per cent, 66.7 per cent, 60.6 per cent and 60.5 per cent, respectively, in January 2022, it mentioned.

IndiGo ferried 3.56 million passengers during January to report 55.5% market share and 66.6% PLF during the month. The airline has carried 6.14 million passengers in December. SpiceJet flew 6.8 lakh passengers and Air India flew 6.56 lakh passengers in January.

The DGCA data said that in January, Go First had the best on-time performance of 94.5 per cent at four metro airports - Bengaluru, Delhi, Hyderabad and Mumbai.

IndiGo and Vistara were at the second and third positions at these four airports in January with 93.9 per cent and 93.6 per cent on-time performance

respectively, the DGCA said.

However, domestic traffic has shown an upward trend as the Covid cases reduced gradually in the country. Average daily domestic air passengers rose sharply in the week ended 12 February, compared to the previous week, due to a decline in active cases of coronavirus. The average number of daily flyers rose to 249,000 in the week ended 12 February, up from 196,000 in the previous week, ICICI Securities said in a recent report.

In terms of passenger complaints, a total of 501 complaints had been received by the scheduled domestic airlines in January 2022. The number of complaints per 10,000 passengers carried for the month was around 0.78.

Major reasons for complaints are flight problems and refunds. Of the total complaints received, around 85 percent or 427 have been addressed.

Tap water now in every home in 100 dists under Jal Jeevan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday claimed a major milestone as it said its Jal Jeevan Mission achieved the landmark of providing tap water to every home of 100 districts in the country. Chamba, in Himachal Pradesh has become the 100th 'Har Ghar Jal' district and the fifth aspirational district to be covered under the initiative.

"A promise made by our government is now a reality in 100 districts of the country, from arid ones to those in the remotest corners," Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said on Twitter.

Earlier this week, the initiative had crossed the milestone of providing clean tap water to nine crore

rural households.

Since the announcement of the 'Har Ghar Jal se Jal' scheme on August 15, 2019, it has provided tap water supply to more than 5.78 crore rural households.

At the time of announcement of the Mission, out of 19.27 crore households in the country only 3.23 crore (17%) had tap water connections, an official statement said.

In this short period, 100 districts, 1,138 blocks, 66,328 Gram Panchayats and 1,36,803 villages have become 'Har Ghar Jal', it said.

In Goa, Haryana, Telangana, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Puducherry, Dadar & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, every rural household has tap water supply.

2008 AHMEDABAD SERIAL BLASTS CASE Survivors, kin hail court’s verdict, seek death for all

Ahmedabad: Survivors and the kin of those who died in the 2008 Ahmedabad serial bomb blasts welcomed the court’s decision to sentence the perpetrators to death as well as life imprisonment.

A special court on Friday handed down the death penalty to 38 persons and sentenced 11 others to life imprisonment for the 21 blasts that took place in a span of 70 minutes on July 26 that year, killing 56 and injuring over 200.

Collegian Yash Vyas, who was a 9-year-old when he suffered severe burn injuries after a bomb blast rocked the trauma ward of the civil hospital in Asarva area, said he and his mother were waiting for this verdict day for the last 13 years.

“I am happy that the court awarded death penalty to 38 persons responsible for killing innocent people, including my father and brother. Even the 11 who were given life imprisonment should have got the death penalty. There should be no mercy for such people,” Yash, 22 now and a second-year B.Sc

student, said.

Yash spent four months in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of a hospital with 50 per cent burn injuries, and continues to suffer from partial hearing impairment because of the impact of the explosion.

His father, Dushyant Vyas, was a lab technician in a cancer medical facility located on the civil hospital campus and had, on the fateful day, taken his two sons to an open ground of the hospital to teach them how to ride a bicycle.

“At around 7.30 pm, when my father saw some blast victims being brought in ambulances (from an incident in another area in the city), he decided to help them. As soon as we reached near the civil hospital’s trauma ward, an explosion occurred killing my father and 11-year-old brother instantly,” Yash said.

As people injured in blasts that were taking place in other parts of the city were being brought into the civil hospital, two blasts ripped the trauma centre, killing patients and kin,

medical staff and bystanders.

Among the victims were Dr Prerak Shah, who used to serve in the civil hospital, and his pregnant wife Kinjal. The duo had come to the civil hospital’s gynecology ward for Kinjal’s medical check-up.

“I welcome this verdict. I always had trust in police and judiciary that one day I will get justice. However, I feel all 49 guilty persons should have been given the death penalty. Nonetheless, I am satisfied 38 will hang,” said Prerak’s father Ramesh Shah, a resident of Modasa town.

Jagdish Kadia, who used to sell sandwiches on his cart in Raipur Chakla area of the old city, lost his wife Hasumati Kadia in a blast that occurred near his cart.

“Some19 sharp objects pierced my wife’s body due to the blast. I remember my wife everyday and have been living a lonely life since then. I strongly believe even the 11 who were given life imprisonment must hang,” the 65-year-old man said. **PTI**

Maha GST officials arrest private firm’s director for bogus invoices worth ₹162

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Continuing their crackdown on tax fraudsters, the Maharashtra State Goods & Services Tax Department officials have arrested the Director of a Mumbai-based private company under the charges of accepting bogus invoices of ₹162 Crore and in the process availing a fake Input Tax Credit of ₹29.17 crore.

More than a week after they took into custody a Gujarat-based couple for allegedly accepting bogus invoices of ₹482 crore and availing fake Input Tax Credit (ITC) of ₹111 crore, the GST officials on Thursday arrested the director of Messrs Everant Feromat Private Limited from Girgaum in south Mumbai for allegedly availing a fake Input Tax Credit of ₹29.17 crore.

“The taxpayer dealing in Metal & Scrap was found to have been accepting bogus invoices from non-existent dealers. Upon investigation; the Directors of the company could not explain the bogus transactions with the non-existent entities; nor could they discharge the liability on the fake Input Tax Credit issue,” a statement issued by the office of Deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar who holds the State Finance portfolio said.

The arrested director of the private firm was on Friday produced before the Metropolitan Magistrate, who remanded him in 14 days’ judicial custody

The arrested director of the private firm was on Friday produced before the Metropolitan Magistrate, who remanded him to 14 days’ judicial custody.

The team led by Assistant Commissioner of State Tax Ramchandra N.Meshram carried out the entire operation.

It may be recalled that the second week of this month the State GST department officials – had in their first-ever operation conducted outside the state arrested a Gujarat-based husband and wife as Prima Mhatre of Dolphin Overseas and Sanjeev Singh of Prime Overseas for allegedly accepting bogus invoices of ₹482 crore and availing fake/ineligible Input Tax Credit (ITC) to the tune of ₹111 crore.

The Maharashtra GST Department officials so far arrested several errant taxpayers involved in 16 different tax evasion cases and unearthed fake ITC scams involving bogus billing of more than ₹3000 crore.

South Asia’s first BSL-3 mobile lab set up in Maha

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

As part of a project undertaken by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to investigate newly emerging and re-emerging viral infections, South Asia’s first Biosafety level-3 (BSL-3) containment Mobile Laboratory was set up in Nashik of north Maharashtra on Friday.

Inaugurated by Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar, the Biosafety level-3 (BSL-3) containment Mobile Laboratory aims to help the health authorities detect and investigate highly infectious pathogens that are highly infectious and of lethal potential to human beings.

The laboratory has been designed and built by ICMR in collaboration with Mumbai based bio-safety equipment maker Klenzaid.

The laboratory is airtight, access-controlled, bio-decontaminable, fitted with safe change HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Absorbing) filtration and biological liquid waste decontamination system, giving it the tag of BSL-3 Enhanced. The lab is controlled through an intelligent

control automation system, which maintains the working environment under negative air pressure, maintains equipment parameters and records all necessary data.

The mobile laboratory provides a public health solution to this problem. It can be simply driven around to various locations, just like a normal bus. This laboratory will be able to access remote and forested areas of the country where specially trained scientists from ICMR can investigate outbreaks using samples from humans and animal sources. These activities will ensure timely and on-site diagnosis with rapid turnaround time for reporting these outbreaks.

Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister, Dr Pawar said that the Biosafety level-3 Mobile Laboratory was a significant value addition to the Government’s efforts to strengthen healthcare infrastructure through the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission.

Dr Pawar further said the mobile laboratory would help in real-time data collection which will enable us to ensure quick containment and preventing further spread of any emerging viral

infections.

Terming the launch of the Biosafety level-3 (BSL-3) containment Mobile Laboratory as “historic”, ICMR’s Director General Dr. Balram Bhargava said: “The need for such laboratories is more pronounced in India and the neighbouring regions, with vast animal and human population living in proximity. The existing infrastructure of BSL-3 laboratories is fixed and dependent on transporting samples from near and far locations, often leading to delays in diagnosis”.

Dr Bhargava recalled that during the Nipah virus outbreak in Kerala, samples had to be transported to National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune. “It was then we felt a mobile laboratory could be of great help during outbreaks of highly infectious pathogens. Such mobile Laboratories can be stationed at different regions of the country and may be mobilised in case of sudden outbreaks,” he said. “In view of repeated outbreaks of highly infectious pathogens like Nipah, Zika, Avian influenza and now Covid-19, it is critical to be able to detect the emerging epidemics/pandemics at a very early stage”, he said.

HC rejects PIL seeking removal of Bengal Guv Jagdeep Dhankar

Says Guv not answerable to court for duty dispensation

Kolkata: The Calcutta High Court on Friday rejected a PIL seeking direction to the Union Government to remove Jagdeep Dhankhar as the Governor of West Bengal.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Prakash Shrivastava and Justice R Bharadwaj said that the Governor is not answerable to any court for the exercise and performance of the powers and duties of his office under Article 361 of Constitution.

The bench rejected the petition that sought direction to the Union government to

remove Dhankhar as the governor of West Bengal.

Petitioner Rama Prasad Sarkar, a lawyer practising at the high court, claimed in the writ petition that Dhankhar is interfering in the functioning of the state and also maligning the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal by commenting critically against it.

The petitioner claimed that Dhankhar is “acting as the mouthpiece of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)”.

Seeking direction to the Centre for removal of Dhankhar as governor alleging that he is partisan, Sarkar’s petition claimed that he is bypassing the state council of ministers and dictating officials directly, “which is violative of the Constitution.” **PTI**

Mamata picks old guard to show she’s boss, not bhatija

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

In a clear indication showing that it was she and not her nephew Abhishek Banerjee called the shots in the Trinamool Congress, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday appointed most of her loyalists in top party posts.

Even as the old and new generations (led by her nephew) fought for supremacy in the TMC the Chief Minister made her preference for the older generation clear, saying however that two sides should work in coordination to take the party to newer heights.Banerjee who addressed the first ever meeting of the national working committee constituted a fortnight ago --- amid ongoing intra party feud --- told her leaders that “there is a need for the newer generation to come forward and work ... But there is also a need for a coordination between the old and the new ... It will have to be remembered that old is gold,” insiders said.

The Chief Minister also asked the leadership to shun extravagance and lead a simple life so as to send the right message to the people.

“We are a poor party ... We have certain ideology and principles and should follow that ... Everyone is expected to shun extravagant lifestyle and lead a simple life” Banerjee said.

Most of her loyalists like Chandrima Bhattacharya, Forhad



Hakim Subrata Bakshi were given top posts. Her nephew Abhishek around whom a parallel power centre had been created however managed to retain his number two post as party national general secretary.

His loyalists however were ignored for any plum post. No decision was taken on poll consultant Prashant Kishor’s I-PAC which is considered to be close to the junior Banerjee.

Unlike earlier ocassion Banerjee appointed three national vice presidents - Yashwant Sinha, Subrata Bakshi and Chandrima Bhattacharya. Yashwant Sinha and Amit Mitra have been given the responsibility to chalk out the economic policy as well.

Firhad Hakim a powerful minority leader and minister has been appointed as the coordinator between the Chief Minister and the NWC.

A tug of war between Mamata and Abhishek loyalists had been on in the TMC for supremacy ever since the party roared back to power in last year’s Assembly elections.

Adventure sports outfit gets notice for safety failure during trekking that led to death

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Taking serious cognisance of the recent tragic death of an uncle-nephew duo at famed Hadbichi Shendi hillock at Nashik in north Maharashtra, the Maharashtra Directorate of Tourism (M-DoT) has slapped a notice on a private “unregistered” adventure sports outfit for alleged failure to take adequate safety measures that led to the mishap.

On February 2, one Indraprastha Trekkers’ Group (ITG), Ahmednagar had organised a tough trek to Hadbichi Shendi hillock, in which 17 participants including some girls had participated.On that day, two of the trekkers - identified as Anil S. Wagh (35) and his nephew Mayur D. Mhaske (22) - had a fatal fall when they were descending from the hillock, while one Pravin Pawar was injured when he tried to rescue them. Following the mishap, un-registered, ill-equipped, formal and informal groups engaged in such treks have come under the scanner of the government.

“From August 2021, we had made it compulsory for organisations engaged in adven-

On February 2, two of the trekkers had a fatal fall when they were descending from the hillock

tures, sports/tours/activities to register themselves, within six months. Till date, the ITG has not registered itself,” M-DoT’s Joint Director Dr. Dhananjay D. Sawalkar said.Sawalkar said that a total of 25 adventure activities related to aerial, terrestrial and water sports have been listed for which registration is compulsory.

“However, after the deadline passed, many organisations or groups have not yet registered themselves for conducting such adventure sports activities. We will take stringent necessary action against them,” Dr. Sawalkar warned.

The M-DoT has demanded the ITG to provide its registration details, whether there are trained operators for their adventure treks, what kind of safety and security equipment/measures were in place during the February 2 trek at Hadbichi Shendi and whether it follows the government norms or not.

Opp-led by Kerala Cong boycotts Guv’s address, waves placard ‘Guv go back’

KOCHI: The fourth session of the 15th Kerala Legislative Assembly commenced on Friday with the customary address of the Governor which was boycotted by the Congress-led Opposition. When Governor Arif Mohammed Khan began his speech, Leader of the Opposition VD Satheeshan was on his feet with a point of order as he wanted to tell the House about Thursday’s controversy caused by the former refusing to sign the declaration of statement which was to be read at the beginning of the Session. “This is not the time for such things. Please understand that you are a responsible person and Leader of the Opposition. There is enough time for you to discuss such things,” the Governor reminded the leader of the opposition. Satheeshan and other opposition members walked out of the House waving placards bearing the slogan “Governor Go Back”.

Satheeshan alleged that the Governor was acting as a BJP agent instead of a Constitutional head. “His refusal to sign the statement last evening was a murder of democracy,” said the Congress leader. What was discernible was the silence by the Opposition, especially the Congress against the CPI(M)-led Kerala Government.

Equally interesting was the silence maintained by the rul-

ing front members including the ministers even as the Governor was waxing eloquence over the achievements made by the Kerala Government during the last nine months. Though the Governor read out in detail the charges levelled against the BJP-led Central Government, the ruling front members sat grim faced. There was no thumping of desk at any point of time while he read out the statement prepared by the Government.

Even as the Governor concluded the speech with the permission of the Speaker, there was no thumping of desks or smiling faces to be seen. Some of the senior members and ministers were seen dozing off while the Governor listed the achievements made by the Pinarayi Vijayan-led Government.

Speaking to reporters, Satheeshan said that under Article 163 of the Constitution, Governor was bound to read out the declaration of statement made by the Government. “The Governor conspired with the Government of Kerala and signed on the ordinance that weakened the Lok Ayukta. Governor insulted and humiliated the House,” alleged Satheeshan.

KVS Haridas, a seasoned political commentator, said the Governor successfully completed his Constitutional

responsibility by reading out the statement. “The Pinarayi Vijayan-led Government had to sit silently for the entire 66 minutes of the Governor’s speech. What stand out in this episode was the failure of the treasury benches to reciprocate or react when the Governor listed the so called achievements of the State Government as well as the charges against the Centre. For the first time in the history of the Kerala Assembly, we saw the ruling front members sitting with frozen minds,” Haridas told The Pioneer.

He pointed out that the Opposition, instead of opposing the Government was targeting the Governor. “It is good that the Congress and the CPI(M) have come together which has underscored the stance of Sitharam Yechury, the CPI(M) General Secretary, who has called for unity among all Opposition parties to take on the BJP,” said Haridas.

Regarding the statement read out by the Governor, Kerala is the State that has effectively managed the Covid-19 pandemic in the country and is designated as the best managed State in the country.

“The refusal of the Centre to part with more funds and its failure to hand over the GST dues to the State are the main problems haunting Kerala,” read out the Governor. **PNS**

BJP youth wing seeks ban on hijab in edu institutions

Aligarh: The BJP’s youth wing on Friday took out a march here, demanding a complete ban on hijab in educational institutions in the country.

Members of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), who took out their march from the Centre Point Market in the Civil Lines area, were heading for the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) crossing, but were stopped by police, leading to angry exchanges. The demonstrators warned

that they would intensify their protest in educational institutions in the district.

BJYM district vice president Saurabh Chaudhry said his organisation would hold demonstrations in all educational institutions to check students from wearing hijab or caps inside educational institutions.

Security measures at AMU have been tightened as a precautionary measure to prevent any untoward incident.

Additional City Magistrate Sudhir Kumar, who received a copy of a memorandum stating the BJYM’s demands, said it would be forwarded to the state and central governments.

The demonstration comes amid a row over hijab versus saffron scarves in Karnataka, which started at the end of December in Udipi in the southern state.

On Thursday, the Karnataka government ordered

that students in schools managed by its minority welfare department should not wear saffron scarves, hijab or any religious flags.

In Aligarh, on Tuesday, students belonging to the BJYM in some colleges in the city wore saffron shawls while attending classes.

The same day Raghuraj Singh, a senior BJP leader of the district, who holds the rank of a minister of state in the Uttar Pradesh government,

had released a statement warning AMU students, who were protesting over the hijab issue, “to mend their ways or the UP police would enter their homes and drag them out from there”.

Singh had stirred a controversy by saying that “either such wayward elements should mend their ways or migrate to Pakistan or Afghanistan where they will find that there is no democracy or right to protest which they enjoy in India”. **PTI**




People engaged in sand mining activities in the River Ganga despite Bihar Government’s ban in Patna on Friday

PTI

FIRST COLUMN

UKRAINE: THE INVASION NEVER COMES

Only the Americans believe that it is coming



GWYNNE DYER

Since January 18 till date, The Americans have been saying that "every indication that (Russian President Vladimir Putin) is going to use military force sometime perhaps between now and the middle of February".

It's not clear whether any of these officials really believes these dire predictions, since there are other plausible reasons why they might utter them: to whip the European NATO allies into line, or simply to restore Joe Biden's reputation as a determined leader standing up for 'freedom' after his less than stellar performance in the Afghan debacle last August.

But even if the Americans really do believe what they are saying, the prospective victims of the 'imminent' Russian invasion, Ukraine's own leaders clearly do not.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, responding to a warning by NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg on 27 January that current Russian troop movements could lead to a "fully-fledged Russian invasion," said: "I don't consider the situation now more tense than before."

"There is a feeling abroad that there is war here. That's not the case. I am not saying an escalation is not possible... (but) we don't need the panic." And Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, added on 2 February that the Russian troops near Ukraine's border are "insufficient for a large-scale military operation."

But how could all those expensive American (and British) intelligence agencies get things so wrong? Well, they got Iraq's alleged 'weapons of mass destruction' wrong in 2003, didn't they? In fact they cooked the evidence then to justify their masters' desire to invade Iraq. They're not above going back into the kitchen to serve their current masters' needs.

Or maybe they're just not very bright. Last week's story of an alleged Russian plot to shoot a "very graphic" fake video of a Ukrainian attack involving corpses, blast damage, Ukrainian military hardware including Turkish-made drones, and actors playing Russian-speaking mourners, all to 'justify' a Russian invasion of Ukraine, was beneath contempt.

Behind all this nonsense, however, there are real strategies at work. Putin's goal is to neutralise NATO's military presence near Russia's borders as much as possible, and at the least to neutralise Ukraine. Biden's is to rebuff the broader Russian aim at all costs, and protect Ukraine as much as possible without fighting a war. This gives both men a strong motive for exaggerating the threat of war, but none at all for fighting one.

It is already stated NATO policy not to fight for Ukraine, although it threatens sanctions if Russia invades. And while Moscow gains leverage from its unspoken threat to invade Ukraine, actually doing so would cripple Russia economically and might even end Putin's rule, because the Ukrainians would fight and the occupation would be a nightmare.

Knowing all this, the Ukrainians are relatively relaxed about the 'crisis'. Putin never overplays his hand in this sort of situation (consider Georgia 2006, Crimea and Donbas 2014, Syria 2015), so he'll eventually take whatever he can get in term of concessions on NATO dispositions in Eastern Europe (if anything) and shut the crisis down.

And NATO only loses if it loses its nerve. It is not illegitimate for Eastern European countries that spent half a century under what amounted to a Soviet military occupation to seek reassurance by joining the rival alliance once they are free, especially since it does not create any significant military threat to their former overlords.

The younger George Bush made a big mistake by inviting Ukraine to join NATO in 2008, but the other members were never really going to let it in: too far east, too close to Moscow. Wait this 'crisis' out, and it will eventually go away.

(Gwynne Dyer's new book is 'The Shortest History of War'. The views expressed are personal.)

The big leap forward for post-Covid recovery



ASHWANI MAHAJAN

With investment not forthcoming from the corporates, it was imperative to raise investment, especially in the infrastructure sector



DURING THE CORONA PERIOD, THE GOVERNMENT OUTLINED THE GOAL OF SELF-RELIANT INDIA, MODIFYING ITS OWN 'MAKE IN INDIA' POLICY ANNOUNCED EARLIER. PRODUCTION LINKED INCENTIVES SCHEME WAS LAUNCHED BY IDENTIFYING 14 SECTORS WHICH HAVE BEEN AFFECTED THE MOST DUE TO IMPORTS

(The writer is Professor, Department of Economics, P.G.D.A. V. College (University of Delhi). The views expressed are personal.)

made for various types of infrastructure including digital infrastructure, infrastructure for education, drinking water and housing for the poor. We can definitely say that this budget is not a populist one and is futuristic with a focus on development for the next 25 years.

Since the years of Green Revolution, chemical farming was promoted in the country, due to which agricultural production did increase in the country, but at the same time, the cost of farming also increased and unwanted chemicals including pesticides entered our food plate. For some time, the emphasis of the government has been towards chemical-free farming. Provision has been made in this budget for promotion of natural farming, zero budget farming and organic farming, taking forward the goal of chemical-free farming. We have been going through excessive production of food grains and shortage of oilseeds, due to which the country's dependence on imported edible oils is very high. Provision has been made in the budget to rectify the same by encouraging production of oilseeds. Although the farmers' agitation is over, to improve the condition of the farmers, provision was needed to ensure remunerative price for their produce, which has got place in the budget.

In the era of globalization, protection had become a dirty word. Due to the obsession for globalization, tariffs were constantly reduced, causing unprecedented increase in imports, especially from China. The manufacturing sector of the country was almost destroyed. Our API industry was finished due to the gimmicks adopted by China, the electronic industry almost died in its infancy, the chemical industry was also badly hit. How the small-scale industries suffered, is known to all. Country was imposing nearly 10 percent of average tariff, which was hardly one fourth of bound tariffs rates in WTO. Even before Corona, in his budget presented in February 2018, the former Finance Minister of the Modi government, Arun Jaitley, had announced hike in tariff from 10 percent to 20 percent, for protection of India's electronics and telecom industry. After that this prudent policy of protection continued. During the Corona period, the government outlined the goal of self-reliant India, modifying its own 'Make in India' policy announced earlier. Production Linked Incentives (PLI) scheme was launched by identifying 14 sectors which have been affected the most due to imports. Last month, a \$10 billion support was also announced to manufacture semiconductors in the country. All this happened for the protection and promotion of the industries of the country.

Continuing this policy in the present budget as well, the government has announced hike in tariffs. A special allocation of Rs 19,500 crore has also been made in the budget to promote the production of solar energy equipment in the country.

Though, push for capital expenditure and protection and promotion of domestic industry is also likely to create employment, limited efforts towards promotion of small-scale industry is a cause of major concern in the budget. Promotion of self-employment in the country, should be the first priority for both central as well as state government. For this Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDPs) can help. Further government can infuse more funds and seed capital for small businesses to motivate youth to start their own enterprises. Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDCs) can also be established in each district of the country. In this regard enhanced lending to MSME sector by extending the guarantee cover for such loans is a welcome move.

Although, the budget has taxed the income from the virtual digital assets at the rate of 30 percent and gift of virtual digital asset will also be taxed at the hands of recipients, looking at the dangers of national security, the menace of money laundering and other related dangers emanating from the transactions in cryptos ban on private crypto currencies is the only solution. However, the announcement of the issue of Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) is a welcome move.

Baghel a dark horse vs Akhilesh like Shubhendu?

The BJP has sent key organisers, strategists and hundreds of workers to Karhal constituency



SHIVAJI SARKAR

amid shifting of majority votes, the next phases of polls in Central UP hold the key. The party winning the region reigns Lucknow.

The trends in the first two phases in UP and Uttarakhand turned curiouser. The minority votes are consolidating and majority votes are shifting. It gives jitters to contestants and is becoming a serious study for social scientists.

It is not easy to say if the trends would continue in the next phases. The split of majority votes finds echo in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Kalyanpur, Kanpur Dehat addresses. Modi called upon the "Hindus not to split their votes" deprecating Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's move to divide majority votes in Goa. Whether it changes the perception in Central UP and leads to Hindutva consolidation or not is to be watched. The Samajwadi Party got 90 seats here in 2012 and a mere 12 in 2017. BJP also had a loss and windfall. In 2012, it got 10 seats that soared to whopping 90 of 118 seats in 2017.

The region spreads from Hardoi in the West, Lucknow, Kanpur - heart of the region - Farrukhabad, Kannauj, Etawah - the Yadav belt - to Bundelkhand. The region understands the pulse and the party that controls it reigns UP.

It also has the key seat of Karhal. It will decide whether Akhilesh Yadav would be in the UP Assembly and could lead the state or not. The intense contest forced SP to recall relaxing patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav to address a rally at Karhal on February 16.

Now Akhilesh faces stiff resistance as BJP pits central minister Satya Pal Singh Baghel against him. The BJP has sent key organizers, strategists and hundreds of workers to the constituency. It is too prestigious for the party. High pitched contest is crucial if Baghel could emerge a dark horse like Shubhendu Adhikari who trounced Mamata Banerjee at Nandigram in Bengal.

Ayodhya is adjacent or almost a part of the region. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had considered contesting from there.

But Ramjanmabhoomitemple is not a great vote attractor. In the recent Zila (district) Panchayat elections BJP could get eight of 40 seats. The rest went to SP and allies. Yogi quietly shifted to Gorakhpur. Chief priest of Ramjanmabhoomi temple Mahant Satyendra Das says he told Adityanath to shift as there is commotion in Ayodhya for houses and shops being demolished due to infrastructure projects in the wake of the construction of the temple. Soaring real estate prices and manipulative land deals also are issues, party workers say.

This is an aspirational region. It contributes significantly to agriculture but is poor on human development index. This makes the contest tough in these seats.

The region remembers Covid-19 bodies floating in the rivers, the difficult migrant labourers' trek, acute poverty and farmer problems. Akhilesh is contesting on the issue of an empathetic regime. The two major contenders have their strengths and weaknesses. Most sitting MLAs are proving a liability for the BJP.

While SP campaign is measured, sharp and avoids inciting passion, the BJP is aggressive, often raising threats from 'SP's goondas, Hijab and Hindu insecurity', an attempt to polarize. There are sections of the people who are heeding Yogi. But there are others who have decided to oppose him. There is a palpable yearning for change in the regions.

A new social coalition is emerging. Majority community is aligning with unemployment, high prices and issues of junking of ten-year-old cars, stray cattle guzzling crops and many more.

But in the first two phases it is also observed that caste groups like Tyagis and some others were swept by the Modi and community sentiments, 'rashtravad' (nationalism), law and order, women's safety and free food dole.

The silent voters may give jitters to everyone. Amid euphoria there are fears too as minority voters consolidate. The political parties are apprehensive of BJP's influence over the official machinery.

Akhilesh Yadav, instead of selecting only minority and Yadav candidates like in 2017, has a broader caste mix also including other OBCs, Jats, Thakurs, Brahmin, Saini, Shakya, Kurmi, Gujar and other marginal castes. This constitutes about 44 percent of the total voters. He has been adventurous in pitting Thakur, Brahmin, Jat, Gujar and other candidates even in minority hotbeds in Saharanpur, Deoband and Amroha.

The bouquet, RLD leader SK Mukherjee says, is more practical than Yogi's 80-20 (percent) formula. He excludes 20 percent minorities. In lighter vein, he says that Yogi is attempting for 80 marks in an exam against Akhilesh's 100. But polls are more than arithmetic with emotions and creepy calculations.

Biden: Russian threat to invade Ukraine still ‘very high’

Kyiv:Fears of a new war in Europe resurged Thursday as U.S. President Joe Biden warned that Russia could invade Ukraine within days, and violence spiked in a long-running standoff in eastern Ukraine that some worried could provide the spark for wider conflict.

World dignitaries raced for solutions, but suspicions between East and West only seemed to grow, as NATO allies rejected Russian assertions it was pulling back troops from exercises that had fueled fears of an attack. Russia is believed to have built up some 150,000 military forces around Ukraine's borders.

Concerns escalated in the West over what exactly Russia is doing with those troops, which included an estimated 60% of Russia's overall ground forces. The Kremlin insists it has no plans to invade, but it has long considered Ukraine part of its sphere of influence and NATO's eastward expansion an existential threat.

The U.S. Government issued some of its starkest, most detailed warnings yet about what could happen next.

Speaking at the U.N. Security Council, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken revealed some conclusions of U.S. Intelligence in a strategy that the U.S. And Britain have hoped will expose and preempt any invasion planning. The U.S. Has declined to reveal much of the evidence underlying its claims.



People pass by an unexploded missile fired by pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine's east and taken to Kyiv as a reminder of war, in Kyiv, Ukraine, Friday, Feb. 18, 2022. Russia has announced massive nuclear drills while Western leaders grasp for ways to avert a new war in Europe. Tensions are soaring after unusually dire U.S. warnings that Moscow could order an invasion of Ukraine any day

AP

He told the diplomats that a sudden, seemingly violent event staged by Russia to justify invasion would kick it off. Blinken mentioned a "so-called terrorist bombing" inside Russia, a staged drone strike, "a fake, even a real attack ... using chemical weapons."

The assault would open with cyberattacks, along with missiles and bombs across Ukraine, he said. Painting the U.S. Picture further, Blinken described the entry of Russian troops, advancing on Kyiv, a city of nearly 3 million, and other key targets.

U.S. Intelligence indicated Russia also would target "specific groups" of Ukrainians, Blinken said, again without giving details.

In an implicit nod to Secretary of State Colin Powell's appearance before the Security Council in 2003, when he cited unsubstantiated and false U.S. Intelligence to justify the U.S. Invasion of Iraq, Blinken added: "Let me be clear. I am here today not to start a war, but to prevent one."

Biden's own comments on the Russian threat were unusually dire.

Speaking at the White House, he said Washington saw no signs of a promised Russian withdrawal, and said the invasion threat remains "very high" because Russia has moved more troops toward the border with Ukraine instead of pulling them back.

AP

Allies watch for Kremlin attempt to justify Ukraine invasion

Kyiv: The U.S. Issued some of its starkest, most detailed warnings yet about how a Russian invasion of Ukraine might unfold, and its Western allies went on high alert for any attempts by the Kremlin to create a false pretext for a new war in Europe.

U.S. President Joe Biden sounded unusually dire Thursday, as he warned that Washington saw no signs of a promised Russian withdrawal - but instead saw more troops moving toward the border with Ukraine, indicating Moscow could invade within days.

"Every indication we have is they're prepared to go into Ukraine, attack Ukraine," Biden told reporters at the White House. He said the U.S. Has "reason to believe" that Russia is "engaged in a false flag operation to have an excuse to go in," but he did not provide details.

Western fears focus on an estimated 150,000 Russian troops - about 60% of Russia's overall ground forces - posted around Ukraine's borders. The Kremlin insists it has no plans

US Senate approves resolution for Ukraine, warning Russia

Washington: The US Senate voted overwhelmingly Thursday to show unwavering support for an independent Ukraine and "condemn" Russian military aggression toward its neighbour as fresh fears emerged of a possible invasion that could spiral toward a European war.

Action in the Senate came after President Joe Biden said the US has "every indication" of a potential Russian attack on Ukraine in a matter of days. US officials have outlined stark scenarios of President Vladimir Putin's potential plans as Russian troops remain massed at the Ukraine border.

The resolution from the senators does not carry the force of law but puts the US legislative body on record with "unwavering United States support for a secure, democratic, and independent Ukraine" and "denounces the Russian military buildup" on Ukraine's border. The vote was unanimous, without objection or the formal roll call.

"This Congress is united in its support of Ukrainian inde-



pendence and sovereignty," said Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, in introducing the measure with Democratic Senator Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire and others.

Senators have been racing all week to mount a response to rising tensions in the region, many eager to go even further by imposing devastating sanctions on Putin that would send shockwaves through the Russian economy.

Ukraine has strong allies in the Senate, where there is broad support for sanctions on Russia as a powerful foreign policy tool to be used if Putin furthers his aggression toward Ukraine.

AP

OFFICE OF THE RECOVERY OFFICER-II
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI
4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street, New Delhi - 110001.
E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE
R. C. No. 6/2019
DATED : 09.02.2022
EDELWEISS ASSET RECONSTRUCTION CO. LTD. V/S M/S. EVINIX INDUSTRIES LIMITED
"ORDER."
As per my order dated 09.02.2022 the under mentioned property will be sold by public e-auction sale on 24.03.2022 in the said Recovery Certificate:
The auction sale will be "online e-Auctioning" through website : www.auctiontiger.net
Date and Time of Auction: 24.03.2022 between 03.00 pm and 04.00 pm
(With extensions of 5 minutes duration after 04:00 PM, if required)
DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

Sr. No.	Description of the Property	Reserve Price (In Rs.)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (In Rs)
1.	Land and Building situated at Khasra No. 43, Sector 45, Mewla Maharajpur, Faridabad, Hararyana - 121 003	1,71,00,000/-	17,10,000/-
2.	Plant and Machinery lying in Lot No. 1	20,34,000/-	2,03,400/-
3.	Lot No. 1 and Lot No. 2 together	1,91,34,000/-	19,13,400/-

- TERMS AND CONDITIONS**
 - The auction sale will be "online through e-auction" through website portal: www.auctiontiger.net.
 - The EMD shall be paid either through Demand Draft/Pay Order in favour of the "Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi-A/C R.C. No. 6/2019" or through NEFT/RTGS to the following account - IDBI Bank, Name of Beneficiary: Edelweiss Asset Reconstruction Company Limited, Account No. 0004103000054719, IFSC Code IBKL0000004. The said Demand Draft/Pay Order or original proof of payment through NEFT/RTGS qua EMD, alongwith self-attested copy of identity (voter Icard/driving license/passport), which should contain the address for future communication, and self-attested copy of PAN card, and in the case of company, copy of resolution passed by the board members of the company or any other document confirming representation/attorney of the company also, **must reach the Office of the Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi latest by 22.03.2022 before 4.00 PM.** In the case of individual, a declaration if the bid is on his/her own behalf or on behalf of his/her principals be also submitted. In the latter case, the bidder shall be required to deposit his/her authority and in case of default, his/her bid shall be rejected. The EMD or original proof of EMD received thereafter shall not be considered.
 - The envelope containing EMD or original proof of payment of EMD through NEFT/RTGS, along with details of the sender, i.e. address, e-mail ID and mobile number, etc., should be super-scribed "RC No.6/2019"
 - The property is being sold on "as is where is basis" and "as is what is basis".
 - The bidders are advised to go through the portal www.auctiontiger.net for detailed terms and conditions for e-auction sale before submitting their bids and taking part in the e-auction sale proceedings and/or contact Sh. Meghraj Deshmukh, Deputy Vice President-Legal Mobile No. 7506642534 and Sh. Naman Awasthi-Assistant Manager-Legal. Mobile No. 9100018502.
 - Prospective bidders are required to register themselves with the portal and obtain login ID and Password well in advance, after deposit of EMD, which is mandatory for bidding in the above e-auction, from M/s. E-procurement Technologies Limited. A-201, Wall Street-II Opp. Orient Club. Near Gujarat College. Ellis Bridge Ahmedabad-380006 Contact Person: Mr. Ram Prasad. Contact No. 8000023297 & Sh. Gagan Prakash. Contact No. 9265562818 & Sh. Chintan Bhatt Contact No. 9978591888 Email ID: ramprasad@auctiontiger.net, chintan.bhatt@auctiontiger.net, gaganprakash@eptl.in
 - The interested bidders may avail online training on e-auction, after deposit of EMD, from M/s. E-procurement Technologies Limited, A-201, Wall Street-II, Opp. Orient Club, Near Gujarat College. Ellis Bridge. Ahmedabad-380006 Contact Person: Mr. Ram Prasad. Contact No. 8000023297 & Sh. Gagan Prakash. Contact No. 9265562818 & Sh. Chintan Bhatt Contact No. 9978591888 Email ID: ramprasad@auctiontiger.net, chintan.bhatt@auctiontiger.net, gaganprakash@eptl.in.
 - The prospective buyer may inspect the site on 10.03.2022 and 11.03.2022 from 10.30 AM to 04.00 PM.
 - Only those bidders holding valid user ID & Password and confirmed payment of EMD through demand draft/pay order or NEFT/RTGS shall be eligible to participate in on line e-auction.
 - The interested bidders, who have submitted their bids not below the reserve price by 22.03.2022 before 4.00 PM in the office of the Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi, shall be eligible to participate in the e-auction to be held from 03.00 PM to 04.00 PM on 24.03.2022. In case bid is placed in the last 5 minutes of the closing time of the auction, the closing time will automatically get extended for 5 minutes.
 - The bidders shall improve their offer in multiples of Rs.1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lac Only) (in respect of Lot no. 1 & 3) Rs. 20,000/- (in respect of lot no. 2).
 - The unsuccessful bidder shall take the EMD directly from the Office of Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi/CH, i.e., EARC, immediately on closure of the e-auction sale proceedings.
 - The Successful / highest bidder shall have to prepare and deposit Demand Draft Pay Order for 25% of the bid/sale amount, after adjusting the EMD, favoring Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi, A/C R.C. No. 6/2019 by next bank working day i.e. by 04.00 PM with this Tribunal.
 - The successful/highest bidder shall deposit, through Demand Draft/Pay Order favoring Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi, A/c R.C. No. 6/2019, the balance 75% of the sale proceeds before the Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi on or before 15th day from the date of auction of the property, exclusive of such day, or if the 15th day be Sunday or other holiday, then on the first office day after the 15th day alongwith the poundage fee @ 2% upto Rs. 1,000 and @ 1% on the excess of such gross amount over Rs. 1000/- in favour of Registrar, DRT-II Delhi. (In case of deposit of balance amount of 75% through post the same should reach the Recovery Officer as above). In case of default of payment within the prescribed period, the property shall be re-sold, after the issue of fresh proclamation of sale. The deposit, after defraying the expenses of the sale, may, if the undersigned thinks fit, be forfeited to the Government and the defaulting purchaser shall forfeit all claims to the property or to any part of the sum for which it may subsequently be sold.
 - CHFI/CH Bank is directed to serve the Sale proclamation on CDs through Dasti, speed post, courier and by affixation at the conspicuous part of the property and by beat of drum in its vicinity and a copy of the same be placed on the notice board of the Tribunal.
 - Sale proclamation be also published in the Newspapers in English as well as in vernacular language, having adequately wide circulation in the area.
 - CHFI/CH Bank is directed to confirm the publication of advertisement in the Newspapers and original proofs of the publication be filed before next date of hearing.
 - The undersigned reserves the right to accept any or reject all bids, if not found acceptable or to postpone the auction at any time without assigning any reason whatsoever and his decision in this regard shall be final.

SCHEDULE OF PROPERTY				
Lot No.	Description of the property to be sold	Revenue assessed upon the property or any part thereof	Details of any encumbrances to which the property is liable	Claims, if any, which have been put forward to the property, and any other know particulars bearing on its nature and value
1.	Land and Building situated at Khasra No. 43, Sector 45, Mewla Maharajpur, Faridabad, Hararyana - 121 003	Not Known	Not Known	Not Known
2.	Plant and Machinery lying in Lot No. 1	Not Known	Not Known	Not Known
3.	Lot No. 1 and Lot No. 2 together	Not Known	Not Known	Not Known

Matter be listed on 28.02.2022 for filing affidavit of service of E-auction sale notice with proofs of service (including track results qua speed post and courier) and dasti, original proofs of publication in newspapers and wider publicity including website for the purpose of e-auction.



Sd/-
(Dattatrey Bajpayee)
Recovery Officer-II
DRT-II, Delhi

Satellite photos give a bird's eye view of Ukraine crisis

Washington:Widely available commercial satellite imagery of Russian troop positions bracketing Ukraine provides a bird's-eye view of an international crisis as it unfolds. But the pictures, while dramatic, have limitations.

High-resolution photos from commercial satellite companies like Maxar in recent days showed Russian troop

assembly areas, airfields, artillery positions and other activities on the Russian side of the Ukrainian border and in southern Belarus as well as on the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia seized from Ukraine in 2014.

The images confirmed what U.S. And other Western officials have been saying: Russian forces are arrayed

within striking distances of Ukraine. But they could not provide conclusive information about net additions or subtractions of Russian forces or reveal when or whether an invasion of Ukraine would happen. In such a fluid crisis, even day-old satellite photos might miss significant changes on the ground.

AP

Origo Commodities India Pvt Ltd
(CIN: U51103DL2011PTC213352)
Registered Office: FK-06, First Floor, Somdatt Chamber – I, 5, Bhikaji Cama Place, New Delhi – 110066
Corporate Office: Plot No. 37, 1st Floor, Institutional Area, Sector - 18, Gurgaon - 1220016
Tel: +911244934750 email: info@origoindia.com website: www.origoindia.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
CORRECTION FOR TYPOGRAPHICAL ERROR
Notice is hereby given to all the stakeholders that period mentioned in the financials of the Company for the quarter ended 31st December, 2021 published in the newspaper "PIONEER" English and Hindi (Delhi Edition) on Friday, 18th February, 2022 be read as follows:

For the quarter ended		For the 9 month period ended		For the year ended
December 31, 2021	September 30, 2021	December 31, 2021	December 31, 2020	March 31, 2021
Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Unaudited	Audited

Point No. 5 be read as follows
The above standalone results have been approved by the Board of Directors in its meeting held on 8th February 2022 and have been reviewed by the Statutory Auditors of the Company in accordance with the requirement of regulation 52 of SEBI (Listing Obligations & Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 (Listing Regulations).
Regret for the inconvenience caused.
Sd/-
Mayank Dhanuka
Whole Time Director
Date:18th February, 2022 Place: Gurugram

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE
Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd. 4/10, Mythree Tower, Bommanhalli Hosur Main Road Bangalore- 560068
Whereas
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.
As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Bhavin Mekunnath/ Divya/ LBCLT00002413295	As Described In The Loan Document/ Property Document Covering Door No 354, Ward 20 Arakinar Po, Bepore Village Meenchandatown, Resy No 132/11B, Calicut 673028 Date of Symbolic Possession: 14- Feb- 2022	09-Aug-21 Rs. 36,26,663.00/-	Calicut

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
Date : February 19, 2022
Place: Gurgaon
Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

FORMAT C-1
DECLARATION ABOUT CRIMINAL CASES
Name and address of Candidate : **S. Manpreet Singh Ayali R/O V.P.O Gorsian Kadar Baksh, Tehsil Jagraon, Distt. Ludhiana-142033.**
Name of Political Party: **SHIROMANI AKALI DAL**
Name of Election: **General Legislative Assembly Election Punjab -2022**
*Name of Constituency: **068-DAKHA.**
I, **Manpreet Singh Ayali**, a candidate for the above mentioned election, declare for public information the following details about my criminal actecedents:

A. Pending Criminal Cases				
No.	Name of Court	Case No. and Date	Status of Cases	Section(s) of Acts concerned and brief description of offence(s)
1.	Sh. Sumit Makkar CJM, Ludhiana	CHI/40693/ 2021	Appearance	U/S 188/283/341/431 of IPC 1860 & 8B of National Highway Act. Fir was Registered when Highways was blocked during protest (Dharna)
2.	Fir No. 0026 PS North, Chandigarh (Matter under investigation)	Challan has not been presented before the court	Not Applicable	U/S 186, 323, 341, 511 IPC. Fir was registered for protesting against CM Haryana.

(B) Detail about cases of conviction for criminal offences.	
No.	Name of Court & Date(s) of order(s)
1.	Nil
2.	Nil

(B) Detail about cases of conviction for criminal offences.	
No.	Name of Court & Date(s) of order(s)
1.	Nil
2.	Nil

Pak court directs Islamabad IG to file report on detained journalist's police torture allegation

Islamabad: The Islamabad High Court on Friday ordered the city police chief to file a report by February 21 on the allegation of police torture made by a senior media personality who was arrested recently.

Mohsin Baig was arrested on Wednesday from his house here by officials of police and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on the complaint of communication minister Murad Saad that he made "indecent" comments against him during a TV talk show. Baig told the media while being presented before a court after his arrest that he was subjected to physical torture by the police.

The issue of torture again came up during a hearing by

the Islamabad High Court (IHC) of a petition filed by Baig's wife for the dismissal of terrorism and other charges brought against him.

The petitioner's lawyer said Baig was severely tortured by 15 people in the room of the Station House Officer (SHO).

IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah ordered the Inspector General (IG) of Islamabad to file a formal report of alleged torture by police personnel by February 21. He also ordered that legal access to Baig should not be blocked.

However, the IHC dismissed the petition by saying that only Baig himself can file the petition to delete terrorism charges against him and also granted permission to Baig to file the petition.

Hundreds rescued from ferry fire near Greek island

Athens:A fire on an Italy-bound ferry in the Ionian Sea early Friday required rescuers to carry out an overnight evacuation of more than 280 people near the Greek island of Corfu, authorities said.

A crew member and two passengers were hospitalized with breathing difficulties. There were no initial reports of anyone missing, but a full check of passenger and crew member lists was expected to take several hours, the Greek

coast guard said. The rescued passengers were being transported to Corfu.

"This is a difficult operation and we must remain cautious. The final accounting of the people on board will take place on Corfu when everyone rescued is assembled there," Greek Deputy Minister for Shipping Costas Katsafados told state-run ERT television.

AP

Sensex, Nifty extend losses to 3rd day as global cues weigh

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity indices surrendered mid-session gains to close lower for the third day in a row on Friday as participants remained cautious amid geopolitical uncertainties in eastern Europe. Persistent selling by foreign investors and expectations of policy tightening by global central banks kept sentiment muted, traders said.

After swinging about 700 points between gains and losses, the BSE Sensex finally closed 59.04 points or 0.10 per cent lower at 57,832.97. On similar lines, the NSE Nifty edged lower by 28.30 points or 0.16 per cent to settle at 17,276.30. The Sensex was dragged

lower by mainly Ultratech Cement, M&M, Infosys, Reliance Industries, Bajaj Finance and Nestle -- dropping as much as 1.88 per cent.

In contrast, HDFC topped the gainers' chart with a jump of 1.25 per cent, followed by L&T, Axis Bank, SBI, Dr Reddy's, Kotak Bank and HDFC Bank. On the index, 17 shares closed in the negative zone. "...Market opened low taking cues from yesterday's sell-off in Wall Street following the release of FOMC meeting minutes.

Reports that the US Secretary of State agreed to meet the Russian foreign minister in order to ease tension helped the domestic market to

wipe-off early losses though sell-off was seen in late hours.

Rupee spurts by 40 paise to over 2-week high against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee spurts by 40 paise, its biggest single-day gain in over three months, to settle at a more than two-week high of 74.66 against the US dollar on Friday on hopes of a diplomatic solution to the East-West standoff over Ukraine. A fall in crude oil prices also supported the local currency, analysts said.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 75.03 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.60 and a low of 75.05. The rupee settled at 74.66, registering a rise of 40 paise or 0.53 per cent over its previous close of 75.06. The rupee had closed the session on Thursday at 75.11 (provisionally) but later settled at 75.06.

Toro Finserve launches USD 1 bn healthcare fund

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Healthcare industry veteran Kapil Khandelwal's Toro Finserve has announced the launch of its maiden healthcare fund with a USD 1 billion (about Rs 7,450 crore) commitment from investors, primarily hedge funds and healthcare industry players. Khandelwal, who launched the country's first quantum (algo-based) hedge fund -- EquiNev-K1t Capital -- which he later sold to the England-based Coleman Group in 2018, said the digital healthcare impact fund will make most of its investments to accelerate adoption of digital healthcare.

Most of the funding commitments are from global hedge funds and from a few domestic healthcare industry players, Khandelwal told PTI on Friday, but refused to name them citing confidentiality.

The first investment should be done over the next three-four months, he added. Khandelwal, who has over 30 years of experience in the healthcare industry, launched Toro Finserve in 2020. He was previously associated with KPMG in Bahrain as a partner, headed the global healthcare division at Wipro, and was the managing director of Cisco's healthcare business in the APAC and emerging markets.

Govt to launch doorstep distribution drive to deliver crop insurance policies to farmers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) enters the seventh year of implementation with the upcoming Kharif season, the government on Friday said it will launch a doorstep distribution drive to deliver crop insurance policies to farmers.

The doorstep campaign 'Meri Policy Mere Hath' aims to ensure all farmers are well aware and equipped with all information on their policies, land records, the process of claim and grievance redressal under the PMFBY, the Agriculture Ministry said. The doorstep campaign will be launched in all implementing states in the upcoming Kharif season, the ministry said in a statement. PMFBY, launched in February 2016, aims to provide financial support to farmers suffering crop loss/damage arising out of natural calamities. According to the ministry, over 36 crore farmer applications have been insured under the PMFBY, with over Rs 1,07,059 crores of claims have already been paid under the scheme as of February 4, this year. The crop insurance scheme has been able to provide financial assistance to the most vulnerable farmers as around 85 per cent of the farmers enrolled with the scheme are small and marginal farmers.

the book, published by Atlantic Books, claims to contain 'juicy details not yet made public'. "Modern technology tales are usually told as stories of individual achievement-more 'genius' than 'scenius'.

'The Founders': Book tells story behind making of tech giant PayPal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mapping the trailblazing story of multinational digital-payments company PayPal, a new book sheds light on how a scrappy start-up turned into one of the most successful companies of all time, worth over USD 70 billion today.

"The Founders", written by author Jimmy Soni, offers colourful anecdotes about perennially popular figures like Elon Musk and Peter Thiel with the gripping true story of how PayPal reimaged the digital age. It will hit the stands on February 24.

Based on original research and rare interviews with Peter Thiel, Elon Musk and others,

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known all that I, Dr. Aljale Raj W/o Mr. N. Pown Raj R/o Flat No.153, 2nd Floor, Pkt. 3, Sec.23, Rohini allotment of Flat No.153, 2nd Floor, Pkt. 3, Sec.23, Rohini, Delhi has applied for conversion of the aforesaid flat from lease hold to free hold in DDA. The original documents i.e. Demand Letter, Handing Over Possession, Site Possession, N.O.C for electricity and water connection, Bank challans etc. of the above flat have been lost. An FIR to this effect has been lodged in Police Station Tikla Marg, New Delhi, vide NCR No.4196/2007 on 17.12.2007. Any person (s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone no. 987155155 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objections with respect to this property can personally inform or write to Dy. Director (LAB) H or Director(H)-3, D Block, 5th Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is known to all men that the owner/ allottee Anjali Aggarwal Sharma w/o Shri Vineet Kumar Sharma R/o Flat No. Vikram 1402, Ghrparavesh Sector-77, Noida has given her General Power of Attorney to Mr. Parvinder Singh S/o Shri Daljit Singh R/o C-206, Prateek Wisteria, Sector-77, Noida., in respect of Flat No. Vikram 1402, Ghrparavesh Sector-77, Noida, and the above said GPA holder is transferring the above said flat in favour of Sumitavo Biswas S/o Shri Jagdiswar Biswas R/o 2149, Vasto Tower, Mahagan Midrange, Sector-78, Noida.If anyone has any objection, he/she will submit his/her objection with documentary evidence in the Group Housing department of Noida Authority within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice
Parvinder Singh

Price rise needed for survival of certain Coal India subsidiaries

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Mining major Coal India has flagged an urgent need for price hike of the dry fuel, contending that without which, "certain subsidiaries" would find it "difficult to survive", company sources said on Friday.

It is also trying to bring stakeholders on board to build a consensus for hiking prices, they said. In an effort to tide over inflationary pressure, the miner will likely raise prices after the assembly elections in five states, including Uttar Pradesh, in March, the sources said.

"Every day is critical for me. A price hike has become very urgent. For certain subsidiaries, survival depends on it," Coal India Chairman Pramod Agrawal is understood to have told investors on Thursday, they said. Agrawal, however, did not disclose the name of the subsidiaries.

Global coal prices have been on the higher side, which has led to greater demand for the dry fuel from domestic sources.

He also said wage negotiations are expected to be completed in 2022-23. The mining behemoth is facing huge cost pressure from proposed wage hikes and fuel costs, the sources said.

In the second quarter of the current fiscal, higher diesel prices had resulted in cost inflation by around Rs 700 crore, the chairman had said earlier.

CSB Bank gets RBI nod to appoint Pralay Mondal as Deputy MD

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

CSB Bank on Friday said the Reserve Bank has approved appointment of Pralay Mondal as the deputy managing director of the private sector lender for three years.

"Pralay Mondal has been appointed as Deputy Managing Director of CSB Bank post RBI's approval in terms of Section 35B of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949. His tenure is for three years from February 17, 2022," CSB Bank said in a statement. His prior appointment

in the bank since September 23, 2020 was as President (Retail, SME, Operations and IT). With over 30 years of banking experience across multiple business and functions including retail assets, retail liabilities, business banking, products and technology, Mondal has been instrumental in building up various facets in leading banks and reputable organisations such as Axis Bank, Yes Bank, HDFC Bank, Standard Chartered Bank, Wipro InfoTech and Colgate Palmolive.

Mahindra Electric ties up with CSC to promote EV adoption in rural India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Mahindra Electric Mobility Ltd (MEML) on Friday said it has partnered with Common Service Centres (CSC), a government organisation that helps provide employment in rural India, to promote adoption of electric vehicles. Through this association with CSC, MEML will offer its range of electric vehicles like the Treo and Alfa to aspiring customers in the rural markets. Commenting on the partnership, MEML CEO Suman Mishra said, "Such tie-ups can provide gainful employment opportunities for the educated youth in India to earn a proud livelihood." The earning ability with

Mahindra electric three-wheelers is quite high while the maintenance is the lowest when compared to conventional fuel vehicles and the benefit to environment is significant, she added.

Co-promoter Gangwal resigns from IndiGo board

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IndiGo's co-promoter Rakesh Gangwal on Friday resigned from the board of directors of parent company InterGlobe Aviation, stating that he will gradually reduce his equity stake in the airline over the next five years. Gangwal and his related entities own around 37 per cent stake in this company. Rahul Bhatia and his related entities own around 38 per cent in InterGlobe Aviation.

"I have been a long-term shareholder in the company for more than 15 years and it's only natural to someday think about diversifying one's holding," Gangwal said in his letter to the board members. "Accordingly, my current intention is to slowly reduce my equity stake in the company over the next five plus years," he added. At an extraordinary general meeting held on December 30, IndiGo shareholders had approved a special resolution to remove a clause from the company's Articles of Association (AoA) which gave its two promoters the power of right of first refusal when one of them wanted to sell his shares.

Sebi lifts restrictions on 10 entities in Zee Entertainment insider trading case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Friday lifted restrictions imposed on ten entities, including individuals, in a matter pertaining to alleged insider trading in the scrip of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd.

They were alleged to have traded in the scrip of the firm while in possession of unpublished price sensitive information (UPSI) pertaining to audited financial results of ZEEEL for the quarter ended June 30, 2020. They allegedly violated Prohibition of Insider Trading norms. Consequently, the regulator had barred 15 entities from accessing securities market till further directions. The 15 entities are -- Bijal Shah, Gopal Ritolia, Jatin Chawla, Amit Bhanwarlal Jajoo, Manish Kumar Jajoo, Gomati Devi Ritolia, Daljit Gurucharan Chawla, Monika Lakhotia, Pushpadevi Jajoo, Bhawaral Ramniwas Jajoo, Bhawaral Jajoo HUF, Ritesh Kumar Kamalkishore Jajoo, Successore Partners, Yash Anil Jajoo and Vimla Somani.

UNITED TEXTILES LIMITED									
Registered Office- 7th K.M. Stone, Barwala Road, Hisar									
CIN: L17115HR1993PLC032092									
EXTRACT OF UNAUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND NINE MONTHS ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2021									
Particulars	Quarter Ended		Half Year Ended		Year Ended		(Rs. in Lakhs except per Share data)		
	31.12.2021	30.9.2021	31.12.2021	31.12.2021	31.12.2021	31.3.2021	Unaudited	Unaudited	Audited
Total income from operations	596.55	531.17	338.44	326.87	728.02	1235.43			
Net Profit/(Loss) for the period before tax	1.04	1.10	2.09	3.66	4.44	2.83			
Net Profit/(Loss) for the period after tax	0.27	1.33	1.12	2.73	1.90	(5.17)			
Other comprehensive income/(loss)	0.09	0.10	0.86	0.28	2.56	0.38			
Profit/(Loss) for the period (after tax) and Other Comprehensive income (after tax)	0.36	1.43	1.98	3.01	4.46	(4.79)			
Equity Share Capital	300.00	300.00	300.00	300.00	300.00	300.00			
Reserves(excluding Retention Reserve) as shown in the Audited Balance Sheet of the previous year						738.82			
Earnings per share (of 2/- each)									
(1) Basic	0.01	0.04	0.03	0.09	0.03	(0.17)			
(2) Diluted	0.01	0.04	0.03	0.09	0.03	(0.17)			
Note:									
1. The above is an extract of the detailed format of Quarterly/Annual Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchanges under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015. The full format of the Quarterly/Annual Financial Results are available on the website of the Stock Exchange, www.bseindia.com and on the Company's website, www.unitedtextileslimited.com									
For United Textile Ltd. Vivek Aggarwal Director DIN 07079208									
Place : Hisar Date : 11th February, 2022									

SBFC
SBFC Finance Pvt. Ltd.
(erstwhile Small Business Finance India Pvt. Ltd.)

Address Unit No. 103, First Floor C&B Square, Sangam Complex, 127, Andheri-Kurla Road, Village Chakala, Andheri (East), Mumbai 400059 | Telephone: +91 22 67873053 Fax: +91 22 67873334 | www.sbfcl.com

Corporate Identity Number: U67190MH2008PTC178820

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the Public that Auction of golded Gold Ornaments will be conducted by SBFC Finance Pvt. Ltd. on **26th February 2022** or thereafter at 10 AM at O - 7, 1st Floor, 'above Look Saloon', Lajpat Nagar - 2, New Delhi-110024, Faridabad branch D-2, First Floor/N.I.T., Near 1-2 Chowk, Faridabad, Haryana- 121001 and Gurugram branch First Floor, Property No. 342/9, Subhash Nagar, 1st Floor, Near Railway Road, Gurugram-122001, Noida Branch add- Plot No. 5, Ground Floor, Opposite White Castle Hotel, Main Dadi Road, Salarpur, Bhangel Sector, 101, Dist. Gautam Budh Nagar, Noida 201304 (UP), Ghaziabad add- B2, BASEMENT, RDC RAJ NAGAR, GAZIABAD -201002, Hapur add- First Floor, Above PC Jewellers, Garah Pargana, Garah Road, Tehsil & District Hapur 245101, (UP)

The Gold Ornaments to be auctioned belong to Loan Accounts of our various Customers mentioned below with branch name.

Faridabad Branch, PR00947695/AP00182435, PR00973326/AP00153595, PR00862727/AP00336316, PR00888483/AP00350229, PR00888510/AP00350321, PR00970450/AP00340623, PR00973303/AP00320279, PR00970297/AP00321249, PR00971265/AP00338411, PR0094375/AP00325723, PR00867782/AP00320279, PR00946570/AP00194430, PR00964038/AP0031732, PR00840512/AP0032745, PR00991067/AP00320279, PR00947723/AP00181418, PR00843029/AP00182942, PR00973280/AP00327245, PR00861198/AP00335708, PR00866653/AP00210180, PR00925442/AP00370769, PR00954074/AP0032944, PR00868838/AP00354363, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00911823/AP00345498, PR00850132/AP00210790, PR00838785/AP0032670, PR00891708/AP00265322, PR00990164/AP00182293, PR00965080/AP00363352, PR00958728/AP00385874, PR00973394/AP00321249, PR00944290/AP00338411, PR0094375/AP00325723, PR00867782/AP00320279, PR00838636/AP0031732, PR00857114/AP00208549, PR00952072/AP00266016, PR00915626/AP00382575, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00947723/AP0032944, PR00843029/AP00182942, PR00954074/AP0032944, PR00868838/AP00354363, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00911823/AP00345498, PR00850132/AP00210790, PR00838785/AP0032670, PR00891708/AP00265322, PR00990164/AP00182293, PR00965080/AP00363352, PR00958728/AP00385874, PR00973394/AP00321249, PR00944290/AP00338411, PR0094375/AP00325723, PR00867782/AP00320279, PR00838636/AP0031732, PR00857114/AP00208549, PR00952072/AP00266016, PR00915626/AP00382575, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00947723/AP0032944, PR00843029/AP00182942, PR00954074/AP0032944, PR00868838/AP00354363, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00911823/AP00345498, PR00850132/AP00210790, PR00838785/AP0032670, PR00891708/AP00265322, PR00990164/AP00182293, PR00965080/AP00363352, PR00958728/AP00385874, PR00973394/AP00321249, PR00944290/AP00338411, PR0094375/AP00325723, PR00867782/AP00320279, PR00838636/AP0031732, PR00857114/AP00208549, PR00952072/AP00266016, PR00915626/AP00382575, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00947723/AP0032944, PR00843029/AP00182942, PR00954074/AP0032944, PR00868838/AP00354363, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00911823/AP00345498, PR00850132/AP00210790, PR00838785/AP0032670, PR00891708/AP00265322, PR00990164/AP00182293, PR00965080/AP00363352, PR00958728/AP00385874, PR00973394/AP00321249, PR00944290/AP00338411, PR0094375/AP00325723, PR00867782/AP00320279, PR00838636/AP0031732, PR00857114/AP00208549, PR00952072/AP00266016, PR00915626/AP00382575, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00947723/AP0032944, PR00843029/AP00182942, PR00954074/AP0032944, PR00868838/AP00354363, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00911823/AP00345498, PR00850132/AP00210790, PR00838785/AP0032670, PR00891708/AP00265322, PR00990164/AP00182293, PR00965080/AP00363352, PR00958728/AP00385874, PR00973394/AP00321249, PR00944290/AP00338411, PR0094375/AP00325723, PR00867782/AP00320279, PR00838636/AP0031732, PR00857114/AP00208549, PR00952072/AP00266016, PR00915626/AP00382575, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00947723/AP0032944, PR00843029/AP00182942, PR00954074/AP0032944, PR00868838/AP00354363, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00911823/AP00345498, PR00850132/AP00210790, PR00838785/AP0032670, PR00891708/AP00265322, PR00990164/AP00182293, PR00965080/AP00363352, PR00958728/AP00385874, PR00973394/AP00321249, PR00944290/AP00338411, PR0094375/AP00325723, PR00867782/AP00320279, PR00838636/AP0031732, PR00857114/AP00208549, PR00952072/AP00266016, PR00915626/AP00382575, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00947723/AP0032944, PR00843029/AP00182942, PR00954074/AP0032944, PR00868838/AP00354363, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00911823/AP00345498, PR00850132/AP00210790, PR00838785/AP0032670, PR00891708/AP00265322, PR00990164/AP00182293, PR00965080/AP00363352, PR00958728/AP00385874, PR00973394/AP00321249, PR00944290/AP00338411, PR0094375/AP00325723, PR00867782/AP00320279, PR00838636/AP0031732, PR00857114/AP00208549, PR00952072/AP00266016, PR00915626/AP00382575, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00947723/AP0032944, PR00843029/AP00182942, PR00954074/AP0032944, PR00868838/AP00354363, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00911823/AP00345498, PR00850132/AP00210790, PR00838785/AP0032670, PR00891708/AP00265322, PR00990164/AP00182293, PR00965080/AP00363352, PR00958728/AP00385874, PR00973394/AP00321249, PR00944290/AP00338411, PR0094375/AP00325723, PR00867782/AP00320279, PR00838636/AP0031732, PR00857114/AP00208549, PR00952072/AP00266016, PR00915626/AP00382575, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00947723/AP0032944, PR00843029/AP00182942, PR00954074/AP0032944, PR00868838/AP00354363, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00911823/AP00345498, PR00850132/AP00210790, PR00838785/AP0032670, PR00891708/AP00265322, PR00990164/AP00182293, PR00965080/AP00363352, PR00958728/AP00385874, PR00973394/AP00321249, PR00944290/AP00338411, PR0094375/AP00325723, PR00867782/AP00320279, PR00838636/AP0031732, PR00857114/AP00208549, PR00952072/AP00266016, PR00915626/AP00382575, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00947723/AP0032944, PR00843029/AP00182942, PR00954074/AP0032944, PR00868838/AP00354363, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00911823/AP00345498, PR00850132/AP00210790, PR00838785/AP0032670, PR00891708/AP00265322, PR00990164/AP00182293, PR00965080/AP00363352, PR00958728/AP00385874, PR00973394/AP00321249, PR00944290/AP00338411, PR0094375/AP00325723, PR00867782/AP00320279, PR00838636/AP0031732, PR00857114/AP00208549, PR00952072/AP00266016, PR00915626/AP00382575, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00947723/AP0032944, PR00843029/AP00182942, PR00954074/AP0032944, PR00868838/AP00354363, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00911823/AP00345498, PR00850132/AP00210790, PR00838785/AP0032670, PR00891708/AP00265322, PR00990164/AP00182293, PR00965080/AP00363352, PR00958728/AP00385874, PR00973394/AP00321249, PR00944290/AP00338411, PR0094375/AP00325723, PR00867782/AP00320279, PR00838636/AP0031732, PR00857114/AP00208549, PR00952072/AP00266016, PR00915626/AP00382575, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00947723/AP0032944, PR00843029/AP00182942, PR00954074/AP0032944, PR00868838/AP00354363, PR00958387/AP00319192, PR00911823/AP00345498, PR00850132/AP00210790, PR00838785/AP0032670, PR00891708/AP00265322, PR00990164/AP00182293, PR00965080/AP00363352, PR00958728/AP00385874, PR00973394/AP00321249, PR00944290/AP00338411, PR0094375/AP00325723, PR00867782/AP00320279,



FERRAN EARNS DRAW FOR BARCELONA

AP ■ BARCELONA

Rangers stunned Borussia Dortmund 4-2 in the Europa League on Thursday while Barcelona had to come from behind to draw 1-1 at home to Napoli in their play-off first leg tie.

In Dortmund, James Tavernier gave Rangers the lead with a 38th-minute penalty after a handball by Dan-Axel Zagadou from a corner.

Three minutes later, Dortmund again failed to cope with a Rangers corner.

Joe Aribo nodded the ball to the far post where Alfredo Morelos was unmarked and scored from close range.

Four minutes after the break, Ryan Kent, who tormented Dortmund all night, found John Lundstram who scored with a powerful strike.

Jude Bellingham replied for the home team with a rasping left-foot shot.

But two minutes after that, Rangers scored again as Zagadou, attempting to deprive Morelos of another tap in, deflected the ball into his own goal.

Raphael Guerreiro cut the deficit with eight minutes left with a ferocious long-range left-footer but

Rangers survived without further scares.

"It is a great night but only a great night," said Rangers manager Giovanni van Bronckhorst.

"We are not through to the next round, which is what we want. We know we have to have a good performance next week."

Napoli gained a 1-1 draw in Barcelona.

The visitors, challenging for the Serie A title, opened the scoring in the Nou Camp against a home team that is scrambling just to finish in the top four in La Liga.

Polish midfielder Piotr Zielinski ran onto his own rebound to slam the ball home after 29 minutes.

Barcelona increasingly dominated possession but needed one of four penalties awarded for handball by VAR in the Europa League on Thursday to level.

Adama Traore's cross hit Juan Jesus on the arm after 59 minutes.

Ferran Torres converted the penalty with confidence for his first goal at Camp Nou for Barcelona but his cool deserted him as he hit two good chances over the bar as Barcelona dominated the closing stages.



'Not a friendly'

"We played very good football," said Barca coach Xavi.

"But of course, it's not a friendly, it's the Europa League. The result is insufficient, but I am very happy with the performance."

Real Betis, who won 3-2 at Zenit Saint Petersburg, and Sevilla, who beat visiting Dinamo Zagreb 3-1, both stayed on course for the final in their home city.

Ivan Rakitic gave Sevilla the lead from the spot. The next three goals came in four minutes just before half time. Mislav Orsic levelled for the visitors but Sevilla quickly replied through Lucas Ocampos and Anthony Martial, with his first goal since arriving from Manchester United.

Zenit, who have played only friendlies since their last Russian League game on December 12, looked rusty at the start conceding to Guido Rodriguez and William Jose in the first 18 minutes.

Artem Dzyuba and Malcolm brought Zenit level with goals three minutes apart, but the home team then presented Betis with the winner in the 41st minute.

Aitor Ruibal ambushed Yaroslav Rakitskyi and found Andres Guardado who curled the ball into

the goal.

Real Sociedad grabbed a 2-2 draw away to RB Leipzig.

The Basques led twice, first with a goal by defender Robin Le Normand. Christopher Nkunku levelled.

Mikel Oyarzabal restored the lead with a penalty spot but Emil Forsberg levelled from the spot with eight minutes left.

Atalanta came from behind to edge Olympiacos 2-1 in Bergamo.

Albanian defender, Berat Djimsiti who had not scored since November 2018, struck twice within two minutes following corners.

In Tiraspol, Braga dominated possession and had more goal attempts, but Sheriff won 2-0.

Luxembourg midfielder Sebastian Thill converted a first-half penalty and with Braga pressing, Sheriff sealed victory on the counter-attack in the 83rd minute with a goal by their Adama Traore.

In the Europa Conference League, Celtic had a less distinguished evening than their Glasgow rivals, losing 3-1 at home to Norway's Bodo/Glimt.

Leicester responded after Vito Hammarshoy-Mistrati of Randers cancelled an earlier Wilfried Ndidi goal just before half time.

Court cites lab delay in ruling allowing Valieva to skate

AP ■ BEIJING

The judges who let Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva continue to compete at the Beijing Olympics blamed anti-doping officials in a legal document published Friday for a "failure to function effectively."

The Court of Arbitration for Sport explained its verdict in the case that has dominated Olympic headlines for more than a week in a 41-page document, citing the "untenable delay" at the testing laboratory in Sweden as a reason for letting the 15-year-old Valieva skate in the women's competition. Valieva's positive test for a heart medication was only revealed during the Olympics despite her urine sample arriving at the Stockholm lab on Dec. 29. The lab's staffing was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The full verdict was published early Friday, hours after the 15-year-old Valieva's mistake-filled free skate dropped her from the lead to finish fourth in the women's individual event at the Beijing Games.

Valieva was cleared to skate by an urgent CAS ruling Monday after an appeal hearing that started Sunday night and ended at around 2 a.m.



Monday. The World Anti-Doping Agency and International Olympic Committee appealed against the decision by the Russian anti-doping agency to lift Valieva's initial suspension, which had been triggered by the positive test.

"Put simply, athletes should not be subject to the risk of serious harm occasioned by anti-doping authorities' fail-

ure to function effectively at a high level of performance and in a manner designed to protect the integrity of the operation of the Games," the verdict stated.

Valieva's lawyers suggested she tested positive "as a result of domestic interaction with her grandfather who uses Trimetazidine" after heart replacement surgery."

RUUD PULLS OUT OF RIO OPEN

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

Second-seeded Casper Ruud of Norway pulled out of the Rio Open clay-court tournament with an abdominal injury.

Ruud told a news conference that he was still feeling the effects of an injury he picked up during Sunday's final of the Argentina Open, which he won.

"I tried as much as I could, but unfortunately it wasn't possible," Ruud said. "It was a tough decision, I was looking forward to play here."

Ruud was replaced by Spain's Roberto Carballes Baena, who lost his second-round match against Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo 6-3, 6-2 after the second set was halted for a rain delay.

Cerundolo will next face Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic, who beat sixth-seeded Lorenzo Sonego of Italy 7-5, 6-4.

Rain came back to Rio late on Thursday and forced the suspension of the two remaining matches of the day. Seventh seed Carlos Alcaraz of Spain was beating Argentina's Federico Delbonis 5-4 when play was stopped. The encounter will take place Friday.

AFC Women's Asian Cup in India most engaging ever

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The recently-concluded AFC Women's Asian Cup held in India was the most engaging event on digital platforms in the tournament's history, the continental football body said on Friday.

The Asian Football Confederation's (AFC) digital channels witnessed unprecedented growth during the January 20 to February 6 tournament in Mumbai and Pune as the statistics grew by a staggering 5324 per cent as compared to the 2018 edition in Jordan. "The AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022 has left an indelible digital footprint, with the engagement and coverage of the showpiece surpassing the previous edition and soaring to an all-time high record," the AFC said in a statement. The tournament's digital platform received more than 270 million impressions, 17 million engagements and 74 million video views across its channels.

The AFC reached out to more fans by producing coverage in Arabic, Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Vietnamese, Farsi and Indonesian, in addition to its coverage in English.

"The AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022



has achieved many milestones, on and off the pitch, with our talented football teams and officials creating history while our digital platforms continue to rise in record numbers and engaging with more fans than ever before," AFC's General Secretary Datuk Seri Windsor John said.

The tournament, however, turned out to be a heart break for India as they were forced to withdraw after playing their first group match as the home team could not assemble enough players for the second game due to a COVID-19 outbreak in their hotel.

Hamilton says he's energized for Formula One season

AP ■ BRACKLEY (UK)

Lewis Hamilton downplayed speculation he considered quitting Formula One following last year's controversial finale that cost the Mercedes driver a record eighth championship.

"I never ever said I was going to stop," Hamilton said Friday at the launch of Mercedes' car for the upcoming F1 season.

Hamilton said he "needed to take a step back" after the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, where Red Bull driver Max Verstappen won his first world title following a controversial ruling.

"It was obviously a difficult time for me," Hamilton said in his return to the public eye.

"I eventually got to a point where I decided I (am) going to be attacking again coming into another season." Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff said he was "never concerned" that Hamilton would stop racing. "Within the team, we knew he needed to take the time to reflect on things and particularly to understand how he would return in the



right frame of mind," Wolff said.

"I think what he did was absolutely right to take himself out of the microcosm of Formula One and step aside and flake out socially," he added. "And he has come back in a great mindset. He's posi-

tive, he's determined and he, yet again, adversity that was thrown at him will make him stronger. It's attack mode."

On Thursday, motorsport's governing body announced that Michael Masi will be replaced as F1's race director.

Indian men's and women's team fail to qualify for knock-outs

PTI ■ SHAH ALAM (MALAYSIA)

India's campaign at the Badminton Asia Team Championships came to end as the men's and women's teams failed to advance to the knockout round after going down to their respective opponents here on Friday.

While the men's team lost 2-3 to three-time defending champions Indonesia, the women's side were hammered 1-4 by Japan.

The Indian men's team had earlier lost 0-5 to Korea and beaten Hong Kong 3-2. It needed an outright win against title holders Indonesia to advance to the knockout stage.

The Indians finished third in the group stage behind Indonesia and Korea. Hong Kong finished last.

The women's team also needed a win to qualify for

the knockouts but found Japan to be a formidable opponent. The Indians had earlier lost to hosts Malaysia 2-3.

India Open winner Lakshya Sen and Mithun Manjunath gave a good account of themselves

Sen, a world championship bronze medallist, eked out a hard-fought win over Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo 21-18 27-25 in 46 minutes to start the proceedings on a bright note for India.

However, the two inexperienced doubles pairs and singles player Kiran George couldn't rise to the occasion.

The pair of Manjit Singh Khwairakpam and Dingku Singh Konthoujam went down in straight games 16-21 10-21 to Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin in less than 30 minutes as Indonesia levelled the tie.



Hyderabad look to consolidate lead at top

PTI ■ BAMBOLIM

With the chasing pack snapping at their heels, Hyderabad FC will look to leave no stone unturned in their bid to consolidate their top spot when they take on FC Goa in an Indian Super League match here on Saturday. Hyderabad are on 29 points from 16 games but have ATK Mohun Bagan breathing down their neck having the same number of points but with a game in hand.

The Mariners take on Kerala Blasters earlier in the day but Manolo Marquez would want his wards to decide their own fate with a win on Saturday which would all but secure their place in the semifinals.

Hyderabad are currently in the midst of their



click.

Javier Siverio was handed a start in the last game and he rewarded his coach with a crucial goal as they won 2-1 against Bengaluru FC. Siverio now has six goal contributions with only Ogbeche involved in more goals for the club.

Joao Victor also scored in the previous match and now has four goals to his name, his best-ever return in a single season. FC Goa, meanwhile, are not mathematically out of the semifinal race but realistically the defeat to ATK Mohun Bagan the other night virtually ended all their hopes. FC Goa are in ninth spot with 18 points from 17 matches.

Glan Martins is suspended for the game against Hyderabad FC, Pereira confirmed.



My ultimate goal is to win Gold for India: Lovlina

DRITI ATRI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian boxer Lovlina Borgohain, who created history at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics by winning a Bronze medal in the women's welterweight category, has set her eyes on the Gold at the Paris Olympics 2024 and says that she's hungry to bring more laurels to the country and will give her best to change the colour of her medal in the world's biggest sporting extravaganza.

In an interaction with The Pioneer, the 24-year-old Assamese

pugilist, who has also won two World Championship Bronze medals besides having a pair of Bronze in the Asian Championship, said: "My ultimate goal is to win gold for my country, which will inspire many young girls to opt for boxing as their career."

"I'm planning a different strategy this time, which I cannot disclose, but I will give my 200% and make sure to book my seat and make my country proud," she said.

"I just don't want to stop, and my goal is to

win Gold for the country," Lovlina added.

Lovlina became an overnight sensation in the country after the Olympics and the Bronze in Tokyo changed her life completely, but she doesn't want to get carried away by the fame and still prioritises her training over anything.

"My life has experienced some changes (after getting the Olympics medal). Earlier, I was not so busy. Now I am doing a lot of events. Amid all this, I take care of my

training so that it does not get affected. I try to attend as few events as possible. I don't miss my training. My ultimate goal is to play."

Lovlina has been associated with adidas for a long time and said that it has been their biggest support for better game play.

"Adidas has been my biggest supporter. There was a time when I didn't have the money to buy sports equipment. It was Adidas who sponsored me in 2018 and supported me throughout," she concluded.

Team India win their 100th T20I game

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Harshal Patel produced superb bowling in slog overs as India survived some anxious moments before walking out with an eight-run won over West Indies in the second T20I that handed them an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series here on Friday.

Chasing a stiff 187, wicket-keeper-batter Nicholas Pooran (62 off 41 balls) and Rovman Powell (68 not out from 36 balls) hit belligerent fifties to keep them in the hunt as they needed just 29 runs from the last two overs.

But death bowling specialist, Bhuvneshwar Kumar revived India's hopes by removing the dangerous-looking Pooran with a slower off-cutter.

Under pressure after he dropped Rovman Powell off his own bowling, Bhuvneshwar was brilliant and conceded just four runs in the over.

Needing to defend 25 in the final over, Patel was hit for two consecutive sixes but he held his nerves to seal the issue for India.

This was India's 100th win in

T20Is as they sealed the series with one match to go on Sunday.

Earlier continuing his impressive run in his debut series, Ravi Bishnoi dismissed Brandon King (22) in his third delivery to break the second-wicket stand.

But Pooran and Powell looked without any trouble against the Indian attack.

Wicketkeeper-batter Pooran continued his impressive form to smash a second successive half-century, while Powell gave a fine support at the other end with a 28-ball 50 as the Windies recovered from being 59/3 inside nine overs.

Dropped on 21 by Bishnoi in the 10th over, Pooran brought up his fifty in 34 balls -- his second in as many games -- with a slog over off Deepak Chahar's final over.

Powell then completed a 28-ball fifty as India looked under real pressure before Bhuvneshwar turned it around.

Earlier, Virat Kohli was back among runs with a fifty while Rishabh Pant smashed a quick-fire unbeaten 52 to lift India to a challenging 186/5.

Kohli hit his 30th fifty in the shortest format, his first since the 57 versus Pakistan in the T20



World Cup on October 24 last year.

The former captain's sheer elegance was on full display as he

cut, pulled and also took the aerial route en route to his 41-ball 52 that had seven fours and one six.

Luck also favoured Kohli on the day as the former skipper brought up his 30th T20I fifty with

a slog over long-on after Jason Holder failed to get hold of the catch as the ball went over the boundary.

But Kohli failed to make it big and was cleaned up by Chase two balls later after the Windies off-spinner breached his gate for his third wicket.

Chase was impressive in the middle overs to return with 3/25 and which included the wickets of Rohit Sharma (19) and Suryakumar Yadav (8).

Thereafter it was Pant and Venkatesh Iyer (33 from 18 balls) show on offer as they took charge on the likes of Kieron Pollard and Romario Shepherd in their 76-run partnership from 35 balls.

Pant (52 off 28 balls) brought up his third fifty in T20Is with a double in the penultimate delivery of the innings, taking just 27 balls to get to the milestone.

Earlier India got off to a slow start with Sheldon Cottrell bowling four dots on the trot before dismissing Ishan Kishan in the second over of the day.

Kishan, who was the most expensive buy of the IPL 2022 mega auction, looked listless and under pressure to continue his

poor form and departed for two after his 10-ball stay.

But thereafter it was Kohli show at the sparsely-crowded Eden as the former India skipper delighted his fans with his elegant timing and strokeplay.

Getting off the mark with a boundary with a whip to the square leg boundary, Kohli found his timing early on and got a second boundary in the same over of Akeal Hossain.

Kohli was the aggressor and skipper Rohit was happy to play the second fiddle as the duo took India's score to almost 50 in the first six overs.

There was a clear shift in India's batting in the powerplay as the duo were not afraid to take the aerial route.

Rohit departed for 19 in 18 balls after a fine partnership with Kohli that yielded 49 runs from 36 balls before Chase gave the breakthrough in his first over removing the Indian skipper after inducing a thick leading edge to be caught at the point.

In his next over, Chase accounted for Suryakumar but Kohli ensured that there was no further damage.

India suffer 3-wicket loss in 3rd women's ODI

PTI ■ QUEENSTOWN

Veteran pacer Jhulan Goswami's impressive three-wicket haul was the only bright spot as India yet again failed to defend an imposing total with hosts New Zealand notching up a series-clinching three-wicket victory in the third ODI here on Friday.

It was Goswami yet again who led the bowling pack, after sitting out of the second ODI. She accounted for the three New Zealand wickets at the top to rock the home side's run chase of 280.

India seemed to be cruising to their first win of the tour when they reduced New Zealand to 171 for 6 in the 35th over but in the end they could not do so as Lauren Down (65 not out) took the hosts home with five balls to spare.

This was the second highest run chase in women's ODI cricket history.

New Zealand needed 105 runs from the last 15 overs and 64 from 10 with four wickets in hand and the Indians failed to polish off the home side's lower order.

Down and Katey Martin (35) made

life difficult for the Indian bowlers with a 76-run stand for the seventh wicket.

New Zealand needed 18 runs from the final two overs and Goswami conceded 12 in the penultimate over before Down, who was dropped on 10, hit a six in the first ball of the final over bowled by Deepti Sharma to reach 280 for 7 and win the match.

India had lost the first two ODIs by 62 runs and three wickets, respectively, after suffering a 18-run defeat in the lone T20I.

The 39-year-old Goswami struck in the third ball of New Zealand run chase by removing captain Sophie Devine for a duck before clean-bowling Suzie Bates (5) to leave the hosts at 14 for 2 in 2.3 overs.

She then returned to break a dangerous-looking partnership between Amy Satterthwaite (59) and Amelia Kerr (67) by dismissing the former in the 24th over.

Satterthwaite and Kerr had revived the New Zealand innings with a third-wicket stand of 103 runs.

After Kerr -- who had hit a match-



winning 119 not out in the second game -- was out in the 31st over, New Zealand lost three quick wickets for just 19 runs to be reduced to 171 for 6 in the 35th over.

Earlier, India rode on half centuries from Sabbhineni Meghana, Shafali

Verma and Deepti Sharma to post 279 -- their highest total against New Zealand -- after being asked to bat.

Young openers Meghana (61) and Verma (51) gave India a flying start with a stand of 100 in 13 overs, but the visitors lost wickets at regular intervals later

to be all out for 279 in 49.3 overs.

Star opener Smriti Mandhana once again missed the match -- her fourth game of the tour, including the lone T20I -- as she came out of quarantine on Tuesday.

Meghana was in sensational form as she consumed just 41 balls for her 61 and struck nine fours and two sixes. Verma had seven fours in her 57-ball knock.

Vice-captain Harmenpreet Kaur's wretched form continued as she made just 13 off 22 balls to add to her identical 10 runs each in the first two ODIs.

Yastika Bhatia (19) and captain Mithali Raj (23), who scored back-to-back half centuries, were also unable to contribute much but Deepti Sharma rose to the occasion with a brilliant run-a-ball 69 not out down the order to take India's score past 275 mark.

Sharma struck seven fours and one six.

New Zealand used as many as seven bowlers with Hannah Rowe and Rosemary Mair picking two wickets apiece.



Katich tenders resignation from SRH assistant coach's post

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Premier League franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad is once again in news for all the wrong reasons after former Australian batter Simon Katich resigned from the post of assistant coach after reportedly being unhappy with some of the side's hefty auction buys.

Katich, who along with West Indies legend Brian Lara and former India batter Hemang Badani, were added to the SRH coaching group headed by Tom Moody and Muttiah Muralitharan, resigned immediately after the auction. Although the SRH management, headed by Kavya Maran, hasn't yet issued any official statement, it is understood that his resignation has been accepted and well-known coach Simon Helmot, who has earlier worked with the franchise, has been brought back.

"The Australian" reported that Katich's resignation was primarily due to the fact that the pre-auction strategy discussed wasn't followed at the two-day auction where SRH had some whopping big buys like Nicholas Pooran (Rs 10.75 crore), Washington Sundar (8.75 crore) and Rahul Tripathi (8.50 crore).

Some of the SRH big buys have been baffling although it's not always a player's quality but the auction dynamics that determines the final price of a player.

Left-handed spin bowling all-rounder Abhishek Sharma's Rs 6.75 crore deal also grabbed eye balls.

Abhishek is being looked as a potential opener for this edition of IPL.

The 21-year-old hasn't done anything in his four seasons in the league which would warrant such a steep price and many were shocked at Pooran's bid after he had endured one of the worst IPL seasons in the UAE last time round.

SRH's three retentions have also come under scanner as they couldn't convince their best performer spinner Rashid Khan to stay back while keeping New Zealand captain Kane Williamson, who has a recurrent elbow condition. Add to that, they kept two Kashmiri youngsters, pacer Urman Malik, more for his raw pace and Abdul Samad for his big hitting prowess for Rs 4 crore each.

To prove myself, I need chances: Yash Dhull

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Yash Dhull always knew that a smooth transition from age-group to first-class level can only happen if he is ready to counter challenges and that is precisely what worked for him on his Ranji Trophy debut for Delhi against Tamil Nadu.

The Under-19 World Cup winning skipper, who has been a career middle-order batter, was asked to open against a formidable domestic side like Tamil Nadu and he came out in flying colours with a cracking 113 that had no less than 18 boundaries.

"In my cricket career, there has been a lot of coaches but someone who had guided me from childhood is Rajesh Nagar sir. Nagar sir had told me that when Ranji Trophy will come, I might be asked to open, so I should be mentally prepared," soft-spoken Dhull told PTI in an interview after his opening day exploits.

Delhi cricket is replete with instances where



young players have lost track after showing early promise. There is no choice if someone is assigned an unfamiliar role. The player needs to accept it rather than choosing the easy option of cooling heels.

"Whatever the team demands from you, it needs to be done without any questions asked. I am ready to bat any position. I am just starting off in my

career and now I need to make a mark with consistent performances and for that I need chances.

"So when you are told to play, you need to be ready to grab that chance. When I was informed that I would be opening the innings, mentally I was ready," said Dhull, who looked like having played first-class cricket forever on his launch day.

It was even more praiseworthy as Dhull had not played any red ball cricket this season after being named for India U-19 side before the Cooch Behar Trophy (National U-19 days format) even started.

"Cricket at this level will be as much about mindset as it is about technique. It's all in the mind and if I can have the right attitude, then things will fall in place," the youngster showed maturity beyond years.

So what is Dhull's process of preparing for a big match?

"I do my visualisations of how I am going to play a particular bowler," said the 19-year-old.

"Try to watch videos and close my eyes and try to be in that zone where I can see the bowler running up and I am in mind deciding on a particular shot that I intend to play. What will be bowl to me and what will be my reaction time, all these things I try and visualize," he explained.

Coach Powar 'not concerned' about series defeat

PTI ■ QUEENSTOWN

The Indian women's team has lost all the four matches so far in its ongoing tour of New Zealand but coach Ramesh Powar is "not concerned at all" as he attributed the poor performance to lack of game time due to COVID-19 and quarantine-related issues.

India suffered an 18-run defeat in the lone T20I before losing the three ODIs on the trot to concede the five-match series to New Zealand. The visiting team has not won a match so far.

"We had only three days of practice sessions ahead of tour. You cannot get into a competitive series like against New Zealand in such less time. So, there will be some rustiness in the players' approach," Powar said at the post-match conference after India lost by three wickets in the third ODI here on Friday.

"There is no concern at all, I'm not concerned about anything. After Australia, we did not play any



game as a team. We came straight to NZ. When you want to address few issues about batting, fielding and bowling, you need to play as a group before a series which did not happen."

Powar admitted that batting has clicked on this tour but there has been "inconsistencies" in bowling department but expected that things will be sorted out before the World Cup starts next month.

"Batting has clicked. From England tour to where we are now. We have scored 270, 280. In Australia also, we have

scored 260, 270 so batting unit has done its job," said Powar, adding that opening batter Smriti Mandhana will be available from the next game after coming out of quarantine on Tuesday. "It is now the bowling unit to get into rhythm. There were restrictions on doing practice, other limitations. So, I have to give (benefit of doubt) to the bowlers, they will come back hard when the World Cup begins." India put up 270-plus targets to New Zealand in the second and third ODIs but the bowlers failed to defend on both the occasions.

runs to his score. Railways hit back with some quick wickets and had the opposition at 438 for 9.

Lalit Yadav's special hundred puts Delhi in command against TN

Shah's maiden double ton takes Maharashtra to 415; Assam 81/2 in reply

Debutant Pavan Shah slammed his maiden double hundred to take Maharashtra to an imposing 415 and put them in a commanding position against Assam on the second day of their Elite Group G Ranji Trophy game here on Friday.

The 22-year-old Shah, a right-handed batter, who hails from Chinchwad near Pune, took the pedestrian Assam attack to cleaners as he hammered 20 boundaries and two maximums enroute his 219 off 401 balls.

Shah started from his overnight score on unbeaten 165, and remained the cynosure of eyes at the Choudhry Bansilal stadium here, as he kept playing his shots at will.

Lalit Yadav hammered 10 sixes enroute to his maiden first-class hundred and batted brilliantly with the tail to put Delhi in a strong position against Tamil Nadu after day two of the Ranji Trophy Group H here on Friday.

Resuming the day at 291 for seven, Delhi ended up getting an imposing first innings score of 452 all out courtesy Yadav's 177 off 287 balls.

Delhi also got two crucial wickets before stumps, leaving Tamil Nadu at 75 for two and trailing by 377 runs.

If the opening day belonged to India U-19 star Yash Dhull, Friday was all about Yadav who batted fearlessly in his entertaining innings. Besides 10 sixes, he smashed 17 fours.

Sarfراز's 275 takes Mumbai to mammoth 544/7d against Saurashtra

Ranji Trophy Updates

Het Patel keeps Gujarat in hunt for first innings lead against MP

unbeaten half-century to lead Railways' strong response to Karnataka's huge first innings score of 481 on the second day of the Ranji Trophy Elite Group C match here on Friday.

Railways finished the second day at 213 for 3. The team's cause was helped by Ghosh's knock of 78 (108 balls, 12 fours, 1 six) and fifties by Mrunal Devdhar and Vivek Singh after Karnataka had rode on tons by skipper Manish Pandey's 156, (121 balls, 12 fours, 10 sixes) and K V Siddharth's unbeaten 146 (250 balls, 18X4, 2X6) to post a huge total.

Resuming at 392 for 5, Karnataka lost the wicket of overnight not-out batsman Siddharth after he had added six



PTI ■ RAJKOT

Wicketkeeper Het Patel hit a patient 72 off 139 balls to keep Gujarat in the hunt for a crucial first innings lead against Madhya Pradesh on the second day of their Elite Group A Ranji Trophy match here on Friday.

Madhya Pradesh, which started at the overnight score of 235 for 7, were bundled out for 274 in 96.3 overs. In reply, Gujarat ended the day at 244 for 6, thanks to Het Patel's vital knock, in which he slammed eight fours and a lone six.

Gujarat still trail by 30 runs at the SCA stadium.

At one stage, Gujarat were reeling at 167 for 5 as their top-order faltered despite decent contributions from skipper Priyank Panchal and Manprit Juneja.

Arindam Ghosh leads Railways' solid response to Karnataka's 481

Arindam Ghosh hit an