

OPINION 6
ELECTIONS, VIRTUES
AND PUBLIC SPIRIT**WORLD 8**
READY TO TALK IF UKRAINE
LAYS DOWN ARMS: RUSSIA**SPORT 12**
INDIA ON COURSE TO WRAP
UP SERIES IN DHARAMSALA

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 26, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3

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CAPSULE

K'TAKA HC RESERVES
ORDER ON HIJAB CASE**New Delhi:** The Karnataka High Court reserved its judgment in the hijab case after 11 days of back-to-back hearing on Friday. The hearing for the hijab case resumed at 2:30 pm in the Karnataka High Court.ALL COVID CURBS TO
BE LIFTED IN DELHI**New Delhi:** Amid a decline in Covid cases, the DDMA on Friday decided to withdraw all curbs, including night curfew, from February 28, reduce the fine for not wearing masks from ₹2,000 to ₹500 and restart physical classes in Delhi schools from April 1. The decisions were taken during a meeting of the DDMA on Friday, which was chaired by Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal and attended by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal along with experts and other officials.

Fear grips Ukraine as Russia marches on

Russian forces
muster near Kyiv,
clashes in suburbs

AP ■ KYIV

Russian troops bore down on Ukraine's capital on Friday, with gunfire and explosions resonating ever closer to the Government quarter, in an invasion of a democratic country that has fueled fears of wider war in Europe and triggered worldwide efforts to make Russia stop.

With reports of hundreds of casualties from the warfare — including shelling that sliced through a Kyiv apartment building and pummeled bridges and schools — there also were growing signs that Russia may be seeking to overthrow Ukraine's government. It would be his boldest effort yet to redraw the world map and revive Moscow's Cold War-era influence.

In the fog of war, it was unclear how much of Ukraine remains under Ukrainian control and how much or little Russian forces have seized. The Kremlin accepted Kyiv's offer to hold talks, but it appeared to be an effort to squeeze concessions out of Ukraine's embattled President instead of a gesture toward a diplomatic solution.

The US and other global powers slapped ever-tougher sanctions on Russia as the



People flee from Ukraine at the Hungarian-Ukrainian border, in Lonya, Hungary, on Friday. Hungary has extended legal protection to those fleeing the Russian invasion

AP/PTI

Govt to evacuate
all stranded
Indians for free**New Delhi:** Finally, there is some good news for thousands of students stranded in Ukraine. The Government has decided to arrange evacuation flights free of cost to fly back Indians who have somehow reached the Romania-Ukraine border amid Russian invasion.

The Government has asked Indian nationals to reach the Ukraine-Romania border by road where they would be taken to Bucharest by officials so that they can be evacuated in the two Air India flights.

Detailed report on Page 4

India steps up global
efforts to resolve crisis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has stepped up its diplomatic efforts in the wake of Russian military action in Ukraine with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar holding talks with his US and Russian counterparts stressing the need for dialogue to resolve the crisis. He also held talks with Foreign Ministers of Romania, Hungary, and Slovakia.

The last three countries share land borders with Ukraine. India is trying to bring out its citizens from these countries as war rages



there. There are more than 15,000 Indians, including students now in that country.

Continued on Page 2

Talk if Ukraine
surrenders, says
Russian FM**Moscow:** Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Friday said that Moscow was ready for talks if Ukraine's military surrendered.

Russian President Vladimir Putin "took the decision to conduct a special military operation to demilitarise and de-Nazify Ukraine so that, freed from oppression, Ukrainians themselves could freely determine their future", Lavrov said.

Detailed report on Page 8

Russia wants India vote
against UN resolutionNew Delhi to take call
on merit of UNSC draft

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) set to take up on Friday evening a resolution on the military actions in Ukraine, Russia said it expected support from India given their close

ties.

The draft resolution is set to condemn Russia's military operation in Ukraine that has triggered strong outrage among the Western powers.

Foreign Secretary Harsh Shringla on Thursday said India was in constant touch with all the countries, including the US, and will take a stand after going through the final resolution.

Continued on Page 2

Nations supporting Russia
war will be stained: Biden

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

In an apparent message to countries which are not standing by its side or are supporting Moscow, US President Joe Biden has said that any nation that countenances Russia's "naked aggression" and a "totally unjustifiable" war against Ukraine will be stained by association.

Liberty, democracy and human dignity are the forces far more powerful than fear and oppression, Biden told reporters at a White House news conference on Thursday as he launched a frontal attack on his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin and announced a series of fresh sanctions against Russia.

Continued on Page 2

Financial to football
sanctions, that's all!

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The world has made it clear that a military intervention in Ukraine is off the books, so most countries on Friday were throwing ever more punishment at Moscow — from financial to football sanctions — anything to force President Vladimir Putin to stop the brutal invasion of Russia's neighbour and unleash a major war in Europe.

Undeterred in the game of punitive sanctions, Russia started its own tit-for-tat measures, banning British flights to and over its territory in retaliation to a similar U.K. Ban on Aeroflot flights.

Detailed report on Page 8

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LIC/PRA/2021-22/19/Eng

'Govt ready to bear students' travel expenses'

Telangana Govt urges Centre to make arrangements to evacuate State students stranded in Ukraine

Hyderabad: The Telangana Government on Friday urged the Centre to arrange special aircraft to bring back students of the State who are stranded in Ukraine and said it is ready to bear the full travel expenses of the evacuation.

Telangana Municipal Administration Minister K T Rama Rao made an appeal to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar regarding the plight of students from the state stuck in the eastern European country. "We appeal to Govt of India to arrange for special aircrafts & Telangana Govt is ready to bear the full travel expenses for these students so we can bring them home safe & soonest," tweeted Rama Rao, who is also the ruling TRS Working President.

The state government has set up helplines at the Telangana Bhavan in New Delhi and the state secretariat here to help the migrants and

of several students studying in Ukraine on Thursday, spoke to a few students over phone and assured them that the Centre is taking steps to bring them back to India, a BJP release said.

Union Tourism Minister G Kishan Reddy earlier said he has spoken to the Indian Embassy in Ukraine and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to help the students from southern states.

"Spoke to @IndiainUkraine and Hon Minister, @MEAIndia today regarding the students from South India and Telugu speaking states in Ukraine. MEA is monitoring situation minute-to-minute and has assured all necessary assistance to all in these times of crisis," Reddy tweeted on Thursday.

As Ukrainian airspace is closed, alternative arrangements are being made for evacuation of Indian citizens, he said. **PTI**

posters and placards demanding an end to the war between the two nations.

Holland-based artist Zou Zou, who is the founder of this unique parade at Anjuna, said no one is being stopped from expressing their views, adding that many were apprehensive about the current global situation.

Meanwhile, Nilesh Shah, president of Travel and Tourism Association of Goa said charter flights between Ukraine and Goa, which had begun some time ago, have now stopped due to the war there. **PTI**

NATIONAL COMMON MOBILITY CARD

Delhi Metro enters into contract with consortium

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Metro has entered into a contract with a consortium for executing the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) along with an upgrade of the complete ecosystem consisting of Automatic Fare Collection (AFC) system which will also enable travel through QR tickets, Account-Based Ticketing and Near Field Communications (NFC) Media.

In a big impetus to the Centre's 'One Nation One Card Policy', the contract agreement for this AFC work for the three priority corridors (Janakpuri West – RK Ashram Marg, Majlis Park – Maujpur and Tughlakabad – Aerocity) under Phase-IV and upgradation of existing (operational) Phase-I, II,

and III AFC system were awarded to a Consortium of M/S Revenue Collection Systems (Thales), France SAS and M/S Paytm Payments Bank Limited, a senior DMRC official said.

On the occasion, Dr Mangu Singh, MD/DMRC said, "The implementation of NCMC along with QR Ticket (Paper QR and Mobile QR), Account Based Ticketing (ABT) and NFC Media will push the country towards being a cashless economy. This will enable commuters to have an integrated access to all public transports and they need not carry/purchase multiple cards for different usage. Implementation of above technology will bring DMRC at par with the leading metros worldwide.

CSS staff protest against delay in promotion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

About thousand staff members of the Central Secretariat Service (CSS) protested inside the North Block on Friday over the delay in promotions of staff for over six years now and sought the Centre to resolve the issues by March 10. The protesters insisted on meeting MoS (Personnel) Jitendra Singh, who was however not present at that time in his office.

"Regular promotions have been withheld in the Central Secretariat cadres for the past six years quoting pending litigations in the Supreme Court. However, promotions in all other cadres of the central government are happening in full swing with the conditions of final judgment of cases filed in the matters," said Gomesh Kumawat, media advisor of the CSS Forum which represents the interests of the staff.

According to Kumawat, even legitimate demands of the CSS cadres such as extending benefits of the Organised Group 'A' Service, conducting the Section Officers Limited Departmental Examination, proceeding on deputation before nine years of service in the cadre etc. have not been taken up by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) despite regular persuasion with the highest officials of the DoPT and the minister.

"Almost 4,500 posts, which is 40 percent of the total strength of CSS cadres, are lying vacant due to pending regular promotions for the last six years.

Russia...

From Page 1

He also said India has seen the draft resolution and that New Delhi's stand will depend on the final shape of its text. "I am told that it would undergo considerable changes.

We will wait to see the shape that the resolution takes before we can pronounce ourselves and the position that we will take on the issue," Shringla had said. Russia's Charge d'affaires Roman Babushkin said India has a deep understanding of the reasons that led to the current situation in Ukraine and Moscow is looking for continued support from New Delhi in sync with the special and privileged strategic partnership between the two countries.

The UNSC is scheduled to vote on Friday evening on a draft resolution on Russia's military operation in Ukraine as well as the escalating situation in the eastern European country.

"We highly appreciate India's deep understanding of the current situation as well as the reasons that led to it. We expect Indiato support Russia at the UN Security Council," Babushkin told a news agency.

Appreciating India's position, the Russian envoy also referred to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's comments three days back in Paris that the situation in Ukraine has its roots in the post-Soviet politics and the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

"India's position has been very balanced and independent. We appreciate it and we continue to expect India's support in sync with the special and privileged strategic partnership between the two countries," Babushkin said.

The Russian Charge d'affaires said Russia has been in constant touch with India over the latest developments relating to Ukraine. "We are maintaining all communication with India and it has a proper understanding of the overall situation," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a telephonic conversation with President Vladimir Putin on Thursday during which he appealed for ending violence, and called for concerted efforts from all sides to return to the path of diplomatic dialogue.

A Russian readout said Putin outlined the fundamental assessments of Ukraine's "aggressive actions" against the civilian population of Donbas as well as the many years of "destructive policy" aimed at breaking the Minsk agreements.

Babushkin said the Western powers and the current Ukrainian Government were responsible for the Russian action against Ukraine as they never heeded to Russia's security concerns as well as legitimate interests of the people of Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People's Republic (LNR) in Ukraine. Incidentally, Ukraine on Thursday said it is "deeply dissatisfied" with India's position on the ongoing crisis there and appealed to Modi to talk to Putin given their close ties in defusing the situation.

Expressing his country's views here, Ukraine Ambassador Igor Polikha sought New Delhi's support in defusing the situation. He said India has a special relationship with Russia and it can play a more proactive role in the de-escalation of the situation.

He said Modi is among very few leaders whom Putin listens to and New Delhi can use its proximity with Moscow to control the situation.

India...

From Page 1

The Indian Embassy in Hungary urged its nationals, especially students living closest to the above border checkpoints, to depart first in an organised manner in coordination with the team from the Ministry of External Affairs to actualise this option.

It also said the Indian Government and the Embassy are working to establish evacuation routes from Romania and Hungary. At present, teams are getting in place at the Chop-Zahony Hungarian border near Uzhhorod and Porubne-Siret Romanian Border near Chernivtsi.

Foreign Secretary Harsh

"strong, safe and alert", while asking students living closest to border checkpoints -- Chop-Zahony, Hungarian border near Uzhhorod, Porubne -- Siret Romanian border near Chernivtsi -- to depart first in an organised manner.

"Once these above routes are operational, Indian nationals travelling by their own arrangements for transport would be advised to proceed to above border checkpoints, and remain in touch with the helpline numbers set up at respective checkpoints, for facilitation through the border. Numbers would be shared once the control rooms are established," the advisory said.

It also asked the students to remain in touch with student contractors for orderly movement.

India has also set up a 24-hour helpline to assist Indian students who are stuck in Ukraine. A 24-hour control room has been set up in Delhi and the helpline numbers are + 9 1 1 1 2 3 0 1 2 1 1 3 , + 9 1 1 1 2 3 9 1 4 1 0 4 , + 9 1 1 2 3 0 1 7 9 0 5 and 1800118797.

The Indian Embassy in Warsaw advised its nationals arriving at the Poland-Ukraine border by public conveyance to make for the Shehyni-Medyka border crossing.

As regards the diplomatic endeavors, Jaishankar on Thursday night held separate telephonic conversations with his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. He said

dialogue and diplomacy are the best way forward to defuse the Ukraine crisis.

His talks came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin talked to each other on Thursday evening. Modi highlighted India's concerns about the safety of Indian citizens in Ukraine, especially students. He conveyed that India attaches the highest priority to their safe exit and return.

Meanwhile, in his talks with Lavrov, Jaishankar conveyed to the Russian Foreign Minister that "dialogue and diplomacy" are the best way forward to defuse the crisis.

"Just spoke to Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov of Russia on the Ukraine developments.

Fear...

From Page 1

Russia's military said it had seized a strategic airport outside Kyiv, allowing it to quickly build up forces to take the capital. It claimed to have already cut the city off from the west — the direction taken by many of those escaping the invasion, leading to lines of cars snaking toward the Polish border.

Intense gunfire broke out on a bridge across the Dnieper River dividing eastern and western Kyiv, with about 200 Ukrainian forces taking defensive positions and sheltering behind their armored vehicles and under the bridge. Another key bridge leading to the capital was blown away, with smoke rising from it.

Ukrainian officials reported at least 137 deaths on their side and claimed hundreds on the Russian one. Russian authorities released no casualty figures, and it was not possible to verify the tolls.

UN officials reported 25 civilian deaths, mostly from shelling and airstrikes, and said that 100,000 people were believed to have left their homes, estimating up to 4 million could flee if the fighting escalates.

"When bombs fall on Kyiv, it happens in Europe, not just in Ukraine," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. "When missiles kill our people, they kill all Europeans."

A US Defense official said

a Russian amphibious assault was underway, and thousands of Russian naval infantry were moving ashore from the Sea of Azov, west of Mariupol. The official said Ukrainian air defenses have been degraded but are still operating, and that about a third of the combat power that Russia had massed around Ukraine is now in the country.

Zelenskyy pleaded with Western powers to act faster to cut off Russia's economy and provide Ukraine military help. His whereabouts were kept secret, after he told European leaders in a call Thursday night that he was Russia's No. 1 target — and that they might not see him again alive.

He also offered to negotiate on one of Putin's key demands: that Ukraine declare itself neutral and abandon its ambition of joining NATO. The Kremlin responded that Russia was ready to send a delegation to Belarus to discuss that. But Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov later said Ukrainian officials were unwilling to travel to the Belarusian capital and would prefer Warsaw, then halted further communication.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov suggested it was too late, saying Zelenskyy should have agreed to talks earlier on. After denying for weeks he planned to invade, Putin argued that the West left him no other choice by refusing to negotiate on Russia's security demands.

In a window into how the increasingly isolated Putin views Ukraine and its leadership, he gave a strongly worded statement Friday urging the

Ukrainian military to surrender, saying: "We would find it easier to agree with you than with that gang of drug addicts and neo-Nazis who have holed up in Kyiv and have taken the entire Ukrainian people hostage."

Playing on Russian nostalgia for World War II heroism, the Kremlin equates members of Ukrainian right-wing groups with neo-Nazis. Zelenskyy, who is Jewish, angrily dismisses those claims.

The autocratic leader hasn't disclosed his ultimate plans for Ukraine. Lavrov gave a hint, saying Friday: "We want to allow the Ukrainian people to determine its own fate." Peskov said Russia recognises Zelenskyy as the president, but wouldn't say how long the Russian military operation could last.

Ukrainians, meanwhile, abruptly adjusted to life under fire, after Russian forces started moving in to their country from three sides in an invasion telegraphed for weeks, as they massed an estimated 150,000 troops nearby.

Residents of a Kyiv apartment building woke to screaming, smoke and flying dust. What the mayor identified as Russian shelling tore off part of the building and ignited a fire. "What are you doing? What is this?" resident Yurii Zhyhanov asked — a question directed at Russian forces. Like countless other Ukrainians, he grabbed what belongings he could, took his mother, and fled, car alarms wailing behind him.

Elsewhere in Kyiv, the body of a dead soldier lay near an underpass.

Ahmedabad Design Week on innovation in Defence

Ahmedabad: The three-day long third edition of Ahmedabad Design Week, a melting pot of ideas and insights, organised by Karnavati University, Gandhinagar, is all set to start on Saturday. This year's theme for ADW is design and innovation in Defence and aerospace, a topic of strategic importance. Army Chief General MM Naravane and DG of Technology Management (TM), DRDO Hari Babu Srivastava will inaugurate the design week.

SDMC asks officials to ensure no student comes in religious attire

NEW DELHI: The Education Committee of the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) has asked its education department officials to ensure that no student comes to its schools in 'religious attire'.

The SDMC's Education Committee Chairperson Nitika Sharma has written a letter in this connection to the Director Education (SDMC).

In the letter, Sharma asked the education director to instruct all zonal officials to not allow students in SDMC primary schools in "religious attires" and ensure that schoolchildren come to their respective institutions in the prescribed dress code only.

The SDMC's move comes days after a parent in Tughlimpur area of northeast Delhi alleged that her daughter was asked by the teacher at the Government school to remove her headscarf. Sharma said attending classes wearing religious attire will instil a sense of "inequality" among students. **PTI**

Nations supporting Russia war...

From Page 1

"Any nation that countenances Russia's naked aggression against Ukraine will be stained by association. When the history of this area is written, Putin's choice to make a totally unjustifiable war on Ukraine will have left Russia weaker and the rest of the world stronger," he asserted.

Biden said the US and its allies and partners will emerge stronger, more united, more determined, and more purposeful from this situation. And Putin's aggression against Ukraine will end up costing Russia

drawal and ceasefire," State Department Spokesperson Ned Price said in a readout of the call.

Following the Russian attack on Ukraine on Thursday, India has underlined the need for dialogue among the key parties and that it will be more than happy to facilitate that engagement. Over the past few days, the Biden administration has been reaching out to its friends and allies to support it against Russian aggression in Ukraine.

"Putin's actions betray his sinister vision for the future of our world - one where nations take what they want by force. But it is a vision that the United States and freedom-loving nations everywhere will oppose with every tool of our considerable power," Biden told reporters. Earlier in the day, a senior administration official told reporters that over the last two weeks, as the UN Security Council has met on this situation, the key question has been: Should the path of diplomacy be chosen or the path of further conflict and confrontation?

"And I think you've had an almost unanimous set of voices calling for a diplomatic resolution to this crisis. I do think that last night you saw a similar set of voices speaking very clearly about the need for a peaceful approach," said the official.

In response to a query, the official said the fundamental question about the role of the Security Council and the meaning of the principles of the UN Charter has been called. There's now a resolution that is being put on the table and every member of the Council is going to have to decide where they stand.

The official was asked: "You said repeatedly at the top that Russia remains isolated, but last night during the Security Council session, US allies like Brazil and partners like India, the UAE, did not condemn Russia's actions; they called on all sides to show restraint, even as Russian bombs were starting to drop. So I just wonder if you could explain a little bit more why you see Russia as isolated here."

"As (US) Ambassador (to the United Nations) Thomas-Greenfield has been saying, this is not the time to sit on the fence. And I think we'll see over the coming days where members of the Council are on this fundamental question about sovereignty and territorial integrity, and I think you'll see Russia isolated and held accountable before the rest of the world in the Security Council and then, just as importantly, before all member states in the General Assembly," the official said.

Russian troops launched their anticipated attack on Ukraine on Thursday, as Putin cast aside international condemnation and sanctions and warned other countries that any attempt to interfere would lead to "consequences they had never seen".

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Managing Director

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Municipal Corporation Rest House, Shyamla Hills, Bhopal
NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER

Online tenders are being invited for the following work from the appropriated firm that Registered in the office of Madhya Pradesh (Central Registration Cell). The tender documents can be obtained online on the website <http://mptenders.gov.in> as per the Key Dates in the Notice published on the above website and detailed information can also be seen on website <http://mptenders.gov.in>

Corrigendum for this NIT shall not be issued separately in news papers. Corrigendum regarding correction can be seen on the website. <http://mptenders.gov.in>

S. No.	NIT No.	Tender ID.	Details of Work	Earnest Money (EMD)	Cost of Tender Documents	Bid Submission End Date/Time
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1.	145 First Call	2022_UAD_185902_1	Construction of approach road from Manuabhan takri WTP to Sanjeev Nagar Under Zone 17, Bhopal. Estimate based on SOR – MPUADD Roads and Bridges, 2021 – MPUADD Building Works, 2021	29709360.00	148547.00	24-Mar-2022 06:00 PM

Key Dates:-

Publication Date	23-Feb-2022 09:00 AM	Bid Opening Date	28-Mar-2022 12:00 PM
Document Download/Sale Start Date	23-Feb-2022 09:00 AM	Document Download/Sale End Date	24-Mar-2022 06:00 PM
Clarification Start Date	NA	Clarification End Date	NA
Bid Submission Start Date	23-Feb-2022 09:00 AM	Bid Submission End Date	24-Mar-2022 06:00 PM

Executive Engineer
Water Works Department
Municipal Corporation, Bhopal

T.N.1237/021/022

DDMA to withdraw all Covid related restrictions in Delhi

Night curfew to be lifted, schools to open fully from April 1, says Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) has decided to withdraw all Covid-related restrictions as the situation has improved in the city, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Friday.

The DDMA has decided to withdraw all Covid-related restrictions, including night curfew in Delhi, restart physical classes in schools from April 1 and reduce the fine for not wearing masks from ₹2,000 to ₹500. The decisions were taken during the meeting

of the DDMA on Friday.

“DDMA withdraws all restrictions as the situation improves and people facing hardships due to loss of jobs. Schools to function fully offline from 1 Apr. Fines for not wearing masks reduced to ₹500. All shud continue following Covid Appropriate Behaviour. Govt will keep strict watch,” Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal tweeted.

The Chief Minister said the restrictions were lifted as the Covid-19 situation had improved and people were facing hardships due to the curbs. Delhi on Thursday reported 556 Covid cases with a pos-

itivity rate of 1.10 per cent and six deaths due to the infection, according to data shared by the health department.

Emphasis was also laid during the meeting, chaired by Lieutenant- Governor Anil Bajjal, on following the precautions as well as vaccination.

With Covid cases declining sharply and the positivity rate going below one per cent, traders and political parties had asked the DDMA to lift the remaining curbs.

The DDMA, during its meeting on February 4, had allowed several relaxations, including opening of schools and colleges. The schools were

allowed to function in mixed online-offline mode.

Weekend curfew was done away with but the timing of imposition of night curfew was extended to 11 PM instead of 10 PM to 5 AM.

However, several restrictions including permitting only one weekly market in a municipal zone were not relaxed.

Cap of 200 people at weddings as well as funeral-related gatherings and ban on entry of visitors at religious places were also continued.

A detailed order on relaxations permitted by the DDMA is expected to be issued later on.

City to harvest rainwater

Govt plans to store monsoon water pouring into Yamuna

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government is planning to store excess water pouring into the Yamuna during the monsoon season. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to discuss the strategy and action plans for augmentation of fresh water (potable water) supply in the city.

Kejriwal on Friday chaired a high-level meeting to carve out a roadmap for storage of monsoon water in the Yamuna, its purification, and supply throughout Delhi.

“Our plan is to store the excess water pouring into the Yamuna during monsoon in reservoirs and purify it for the people of Delhi. Once this strategy is successful, more such reservoirs will be built to divert

excess water from the Yamuna for water supply in Delhi,” he said.

The Chief Minister was given a presentation by the official on the issue and following the presentation, he deliberated on key points with the experts.

During the meeting, it was decided to move forward with two proposals. First, a pilot catchment wetland reservoir of 459 acres at the upper end of the pondage of Wazirabad reservoir will be developed. It will store flood water up to 1,735 MG at reservoir level of 208 MSL. Second, a pilot 20 acre off-river mini reservoir with 10 metre depth will store 223 MG.

Kejriwal said “The Delhi Government is taking various steps to meet the shortage of drinking water in Delhi. In view of this, the Delhi Government has made a strategy to store the monsoon and flood water of

Yamuna River. Two proposals were discussed in today’s meeting. The officials concerned have been directed to proceed with both these proposals, so that the work on the pilot projects can be started soon.

If these pilot projects are successful, then the Delhi Government will build many more such reservoirs, so that the excess water that comes in Yamuna can be used for drinking.”

“The Delhi Government intends to purify and store excess monsoon water in the floodplain upstream of the Wazirabad barrage in order to supply potable water to Delhi residents.

This will increase Delhi’s drinking water capacity. The Delhi Government is developing a strategy and action plan to develop reservoirs on a pilot basis.

Govt to present Budget in March House session

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government will present its annual budget during the Assembly session beginning March 23. The Cabinet in its meeting decided to hold the Budget Session from March 23-29. The Delhi Government’s annual budget for 2022-23 will have a roadmap for the city’s economic progress and for creating job opportunities, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, who also holds the charge of the Finance Department said last week.

Arvind Kejriwal’s Government had invited feedback from people for preparing its budget. It received over 5,700 suggestions which included creation of a new special economic zone, development of Delhi as an IT hub, up-skilling of fresh unskilled workers among others.

Omicron responsible for 80% deaths in city till Feb 22

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As much as 80 per cent of the samples taken from those who died of Covid-19 in Delhi till February 22 had the Omicron variant, according to Government data.

Genome sequencing of 239 samples collected from the deceased showed 191 of them had contracted the Omicron variant.

The remaining 48 (20 per cent) had other variants of Covid-19, including Delta which fuelled the ferocious second wave of infections in April and May last year, and sub lineages.

Overall, the Omicron variant was found in 92 per cent of the 626 samples analysed at genome sequencing laboratories in the Capital till February 22 this year, according to the data.

Two per cent of the samples had Delta, and other variants

Govt to give bereaved kin of Covid warriors get ₹1cr each

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Friday announced an ex-gratia compensation of ₹1 crore each to the families of 13 corona warriors who lost their lives during the Covid-19 pandemic in the national Capital.

These corona warriors include doctors, sanitation workers, nursing officers, staff

accounted for six per cent of the samples.

The third wave of infections driven by the Omicron variant saw lesser hospitalisations and severe cases in the national Capital and Government data showed the virus isn’t the pri-

nurses, hospital staff and a teacher.

It was approved in the meeting of Ministers chaired by Delhi’s Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Friday. Sisodia said that the Corona warriors of Delhi worked hard and sacrificed their lives, putting their service to protect humanity and society before their own lives.

primary reason in most fatalities.

A maximum of 2,784 (17.96 per cent) of the 15,505 Covid-19 beds in hospitals were occupied on January 17. During the second wave, 20,117 (92 per cent) of the 21,839 beds were occupied on May 6.

PICTALK



The Passing out Parade of batch number 2 of Recruit Constables (Male & female) of Secretariate Security force was held at Delhi Police Academy, Wazirabad campus, in New Delhi on Friday.

City to have pothole-free roads in a month: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After reviewing the progress of ongoing development projects, Delhi’s Deputy Chief Minister on Friday said that Delhiites would get pothole-free roads within a month. Officials said that the PWD will soon

launch an App, which would enable Delhiites to register their complaints against the poor infrastructure and condition of roads.

The PWD Minister, Sisodia, who held a meeting with officials, also said that if there is a defect in the construction of any road, the concerned engineer will be

held responsible for it. He reiterated the Government’s commitment to provide better facilities to Delhiites, including roads.

Sisodia told officials that the total 1,300 km of of roads that falls under the PWD should be inspected and patches should be mended within a month.

BSES commissions first ‘Smart Managed EV Charging Station’

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Power giant BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL) claimed to have commissioned India’s first ‘Smart Managed EV Charging Station’ at Mayur Vihar Extension.

The charging station is Demand Response (DR) compatible, which is an important demand side management (DSM) tool for utilities the world over to flatten the load curve and ‘peak shaving’ of the electricity load during certain times. It can also charge five e-vehicles simultaneously.

Supported by Nordic Innovation, an organisation promoted by the governments of Nordic countries, and executed by Fortum Charge and Drive, this will be the first BYPL-operated and managed Smart EV Charging Station. It was inaugurated by the DERC chairperson, Justice Shabihul Hasnain ‘Shastr’ and DERC Member Dr AK

Ambasht. Unlike conventional EV charging stations, this ‘smart-managed EV charging station’ can be integrated with BYPL’s SCADA system — the state-of-the-art nerve system of the discom — and managed remotely.

A senior BSES official said that such DR-compatible smart-managed EV charging stations will increasingly play an invaluable role in managing this power load through automated and efficient management of the distribution network in both peak and off-peak hours. For example, during the time of peak power demand or an unforeseen power exigency, the power-supply to the EV charging station can be optimised and the extra power diverted to the nearby residential and essential establishments without curtailing the functioning of the EV charging station, he said.

A BSES spokesperson said, “BSES is gearing up to play a major role in the emerging EV sector.”



जो सत्य है उसको मानना, मनवाना और
जो असत्य है उसको छोड़ना और छुड़वाना मुझे अभीष्ट है।

महर्षि दयानन्द



हरियाणा सरकार

आज़ादी का
अमृत महोत्सव

आर्य समाज के प्रवर्तक व महान समाज सुधारक

स्वामी दयानन्द सरस्वती जी

की जयन्ती पर

कोटि-कोटि प्रणाम

26 फरवरी, 2022



“स्वामी दयानन्द सरस्वती एक दूरदृष्टा थे, जिन्होंने शिक्षा और सामाजिक सुधारों से लोगों का जीवन उन्नत बनाया। उनकी जयन्ती पर उन्हें कोटि-कोटि नमन।”

- नरेन्द्र मोदी

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Indian Govt to arrange evacuation flights free of cost

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a big relief to those stranded in Ukraine, the government will arrange evacuation flights free of cost to fly back Indians who have managed to reach the Romania-Ukraine border amid Russian invasion. The government has asked Indian nationals to reach the Ukraine-Romania border by road where they would be taken to Bucharest by officials so that they can be evacuated in two Air India flights.

One flight will leave from Delhi and another from Mumbai to Bucharest on Friday night. Sources claimed that Delhi-Bucharest plane is likely to take off at around 9 pm and the flight from Mumbai is likely to depart at 10.30 pm.

Sources said that the government is focusing on evacuating the Indians through Ukraine's land borders with Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Romania as the Ukrainian government closed the country's airspace following the Russian military offensive. "The evacuation flights for the Indians

are being arranged and the transportation cost will be completely borne by the government," sources added.

The government arranged two chartered flight of Air India to Romanian capital Bucharest on Friday while two flights are planned for Saturday from Budapest to bring back the Indians possibly via neighbouring countries of Ukraine. Around 24,000 Indians — mainly students — are currently stranded in Ukraine.

The distance between the Ukrainian capital Kyiv and the Romanian border is approximately 600 kilometres and it takes anywhere between 8.5 to 11 hours to cover the distance by road. The distance from the Ukraine-Romania border to Bucharest is approximately 500 kilometres and it takes anywhere between seven to nine hours to cover the distance by road. The distance between Kyiv and the Hungarian border check point is around 820 kilometres and it takes 12-13 hours to cover it by road.

"The Ukrainian airspace was closed for civil aircraft operations by the country's

authorities on Thursday morning and therefore, the evacuation flights are operating out of Bucharest," sources added.

The Indian embassy in Ukraine on Friday said it is working to establish evacuation routes from Romania and Hungary. "At present, teams are getting in place at the following checkpoints: Chop-Zahony Hungarian border near Uzhhorod, Porubne-Siret Romanian border near Chernivtsi," it said.

Indian nationals, especially students, living closely to these border checkpoints are advised to depart in an organised manner in coordination with teams from the Ministry of External Affairs to actualise this option, the Embassy said.

Air India has kept two Boeing 787s and crew along with support staff like a small team of security personnel and engineers.

Air India's second evacuation flight to Kyiv had to return to Delhi from over Iran on Thursday. A notice to airmen (NOTAM) had been issued before AI 1947 left Delhi around 7.50 am, restricting

Cong accuses Govt of being incapable of evacuating Indians from Ukraine

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday accused the Modi government of being incapable of safely evacuating Indians from Ukraine following a Russian military onslaught, and alleged that India's global influence and strength have diminished under the BJP.

The opposition party urged the government to send special flights and evacuate free of cost all Indians, mostly students studying in different parts of Ukraine.

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi alleged that "this government's strategic mistakes will prove to be very costly." Rahul cited media reports quoting him that the

Modi government's strategic mistakes brought China and Pakistan together and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar saying India's relations with China was going through "very difficult times".

He also shared media reports on new equations emerging between Pakistan and Russia in a changing world and if China helped Pakistan build bridges to Russia. Congress' senior spokesperson Ajay Maken said one has seen how air fares have been increased four to five times and still planes to Ukraine returned midway.

The Ukrainian airspace has been closed for civil aircraft operations since Thursday morning. "This proves that India's influence and strength

at the international level have diminished under the BJP, considering that it is unable and not capable to safely evacuate its citizens," he said at the AICC Press briefing.

Maken said that in the event of a war in the past, Indians were safely evacuated free of cost after the then governments led by the Congress or other parties sent planes to get them back.

"But in the current situation, there is an attempt at profiteering from airfares and the war-situation. This should not happen as exorbitant air fares are being charged from hapless students eager to return from Ukraine. The government should ensure that all Indian students return home safely," the Congress leader said.

airspace was not declared out of bounds, AI sent the flight so that if it could be assured that

the Dreamliner can land safely there, it will be able to bring Indians back home to safety.

Respond on plea in 32-year-old road rage case, SC tells Sidhu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Trouble mounted for Congress leader Navjot Singh Sidhu as the Supreme Court on Friday asked him to file his response within two weeks on an application which sought a review of his sentence in an over 32-year-old road rage case leading to death. The applicant said his conviction should not have been merely for the lesser offence of voluntarily causing hurt.

The apex court was hearing a matter pertaining to review of sentence awarded by it in May 2018 to the cricketer-turned-politician in the 1988 road rage case leading to death.

Though the top court had in May 2018 held Sidhu guilty of the offence of "voluntarily causing hurt" to a 65-year-old man, it spared him of a jail term and imposed a fine of Rs 1,000.

Later in September 2018, the apex court agreed to examine a review petition filed by the family members of the deceased and had issued notice, restricted to the quantum of sentence. The matter came up for hearing before a bench of Justices AM Khanwilkar and SK Kaul.

Senior advocate Siddharth Luthra, appearing for one of the petitioners, said they have moved an application seeking enlargement of scope of the notice.

He referred to an earlier judgement of the apex court and said there was a clear determination that a person who causes death cannot and ought not be punished for an offence in the category of hurt.

"In this case, your lordships have been pleased to reduce the conviction to 323 (section 323 of IPC) and fine," he said, adding that the issue merits consideration by the apex court. Section 323 (punishment for voluntarily caus-



ing hurt) of the Indian Penal Code entails a maximum jail term of up to one year or with a fine which may extend to Rs 1,000 or both. The fact regarding death of the victim in this case is not in dispute, Luthra said, adding that he was seeking indulgence of the bench to enlarge the scope of notice.

Senior advocate P Chidambaram, appearing for Sidhu, who is the Punjab Congress President, said that notice issued by the court on the review petition was restricted to quantum of sentence only.

"My friend is trying to enlarge the scope of the review today and he is assailing the merits of the judgement," Chidambaram said.

Arguing that the scope should not be enlarged at this stage, he said the apex court had in its May 2018 judgement concluded that the case fell under section 323 of the IPC.

The apex court had on May 15, 2018, set aside the Punjab and Haryana High Court order convicting Sidhu and aide Rupinder Singh Sandhu of culpable homicide and awarding him a three-year jail term in the case, but had held him guilty of causing hurt to a senior citizen.

The apex court's May 2018 verdict had come on the appeal filed by Sidhu and Sandhu challenging the high court's 2006 judgment convicting them.

SC refuses to entertain Suwendu on disqualification of Mukul Roy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Friday refused to entertain a plea filed by BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari against an order of the West Bengal Assembly Speaker dismissing his petition seeking Mukul Roy's disqualification as an MLA.

West Bengal Speaker Biman Banerjee on February 11 had dismissed petition filed by Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari seeking Mukul Roy's disqualification as an MLA under the anti-defection law for switching sides after elections.

Roy, a former BJP national vice-president, had defected to ruling TMC in June last year. A bench of Justices L Nageswara Rao and B R Gavaik asked Adhikari to move Calcutta high court against Speaker's decision.

"This writ petition is filed under article 32, challenging speaker decision dismissing Mukul Roy's appeal against disqualification as MLA.

India and Japan to conduct annual joint military exercise

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Japan will conduct the annual joint military exercise "Dharma Guardian 2022" in Belgaum, Karnataka, from February 27 to March 10. "In the series of military training exercises undertaken by India with various countries, this exercise with Japan is crucial and significant in terms of security challenges faced by both nations in the backdrop of current global situation," the Defence Ministry's statement said.

The Japanese forces arrived at Belgaum on Friday to take part in this exercise, it noted. India, Japan, the US and Australia are part of the Quad group that has been formed to keep the critical sea routes in the Indo-Pacific free from any malignant influence of China. The scope of Dharma Guardian exercise covers platoon-level joint training on operations in jungle and semi urban and urban terrain, the statement said.

CBI arrests former NSE group operating officer Subramanian

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has arrested former National Stock Exchange (NSE) group operating officer Anand Subramanian after expanding its probe into a co-location scam in the exchange following a SEBI highlighting a mysterious yogi guiding the actions of former CEO Chitra Ramkrishna.

The agency took custody of Subramanian late on Thursday in Chennai, officials said. Earlier this week, Subramanian was questioned for days in Chennai during which he was found evasive in his responses to CBI investigators following which the agency sought his custodial interrogation.

The agency will produce him before a court in Chennai to seek his transit remand to bring him here, the officials said. Ramkrishna, who succeeded former CEO Ravi Narain in 2013, had appointed Subramanian as her advisor who was later elevated as Group Operating Officer (GOO) at a fat pay cheque of ₹4.21 crore. Subramanian's controversial

appointment and later elevation besides crucial decisions were guided by an unidentified person who Ramkrishna claimed was a formless mysterious Yogi dwelling in Himalayas, according to findings in an audit report at behest of SEBI. Ramkrishna had left NSE in December 2016.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on February 11 has charged Ramkrishna and others with alleged governance lapses in appointment of Subramanian as chief strategic adviser and his redesignation as group operating officer and advisor to MD.

SEBI has levied a fine of ₹ 3 crore on Ramkrishna, ₹2 crore each on NSE, Subramanian, former NSE MD and CEO Ravi Narain, and ₹6 lakh on V R Narasimhan, who was chief regulatory officer and compliance officer. The CBI was probing the co-location scam since 2018 against a Delhi-based stock broker. However, the CBI probe gained momentum after SEBI report showed alleged abuse of power by then top brass of NSE, they said.

PM stresses need for self-reliance in Defence manufacturing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday stressed the need for self-reliance in defence manufacturing as it will ensure an element of surprise to meet any challenge. He also pointed out that the cyber domain was now a matter of national security.

Contracts worth Rs 54,000 crore have been signed for domestic defence procurement, Modi said adding "procurement process for more than Rs 4.5 lakh crore worth of defence equipment is at various stages". While the third list of defence procurement is expected soon, about 70 per cent of the defence budget has been kept for domestic industry only, Modi said.

Underlining these issues during a post-budget webinar on defence here, he favoured indigenisation and said the main principle of security is a customised system and that the surprise element is possible only when equipment is developed in the country. Modi also said cyber security is no longer limited to just the digital world as it has now become a matter of national security.

The main principle of security, he said, is that a country should have its own customised and unique system. "If 10 countries will have same type of defence equipment, your defence forces would have no uniqueness. Uniqueness and surprise element are possible only when equipment develops in your own country," he said.

Pointing out that in the last few years, India has been



focussing on 'atmanirbharta' or self-reliance in its defence sector, he said "you can see the commitment for it in this year's budget too."

He said the process of importing defence items is so long that by the time they reach our security forces, many of them have become outdated and therefore, the solution is to go for indigenous Manufacturing. "Even during the period of slavery and immediately after Independence, the strength of our defence manufacturing was very high.

Weapons made in India played a big role in World War II," he said. Batting for full exploitation of India's capabilities in information technology (IT), Modi said, "The strength of India's IT is our great strength. The more we use this power in our defence sector, the more confident we will be in our security."

The PM said it is a source of happiness that in the last five-six years, India has increased defence exports by six times. Today, India is providing Made in India defence equipments and services to more than 75 countries, he noted. In the last seven years, more than 350 new industrial licences have been issued for defence manufacturing, he mentioned.

EC teams seize cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals, gold worth ₹1,018 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission's surveillance teams have seized cash, liquor, drugs, precious metals, gold and freebies worth ₹1018.20 crore so far in the ongoing Assembly Elections, 2022 of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Manipur and Goa.

The seizures include ₹140.29 crore in cash; 82.07 lakh litre liquor worth ₹99.84 crore; drugs valued ₹560.95 crore; precious metals worth ₹115.05 crore and freebies worth ₹93.5 crore so far.

According to the EC, Punjab has topped the list of states with the seizure of over ₹510.91 crore followed by Uttar Pradesh where seizure worth 307.92 crore has been made.

While UP topped in the seizure of liquor (worth ₹54 crore), Punjab topped in seizing drugs worth Rs 376 crore. As per the data from Punjab, the surveillance teams have seized drugs and narcotics valued ₹376.19 crore; precious metals, gold and silver worth ₹60.544 crore; 59.65 lakh litre liquor worth ₹36.79 crore; cash worth ₹33.79 crore and freebies valued Rs 3.6 crore.

The total seizures in Punjab is much higher as compared to ₹89.64 crore in 2017.



From UP, the EC's team has seized ₹91.30 crore in cash; 19.88 lakh litre liquor worth ₹54.08 crore; drugs valued ₹43.19 crore; precious metals valued Rs 38.32 crore; freebies worth ₹81.03 crore.

The total amount seized in this year's assembly polls in the state is ₹307.92 crore so far as compared to ₹193.29 crore in 2017.

The total seizure of Goa is ₹12.73 crore this year which was just 3.64 crore in 2017.

The seizure in Manipur has reached ₹167.83 crore this year as compared to ₹6.42 crore in the previous assembly elections. The EC teams have seized drugs, liquors, cash and freebies worth ₹18.81 crore as compared to ₹6.85 crore in 2017.

"Seizures mark increasing focus on expenditure monitoring process by the Commission and ECI's efforts to curb menace of money power in elections," said the Election Commission.

SC refuses to entertain plea of BJP leaders against Calcutta High Court

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea of BJP leaders against the Calcutta High Court directing the State Election Commissioner to examine the ground situation in each of the 108 West Bengal municipalities going to polls on February 27, and take a decision on deployment of central paramilitary forces.

A bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud and Surya Kant told senior advocate PS Patwalia, appearing for BJP leaders Mousumi Roy and Pratap Banerjee, "Sorry. We are not inclined to entertain this petition". Patwalia said that wide scale violence and irreg-

ularities were reported during previous phases of municipal elections and deployment of central forces will help in ensuring free and fair elections. He said the high court had erred in asking the State Election Commissioner to examine the ground situation and take a call on deployment of central forces.

Patwalia further contended that as hearing is progressing in top court, he has received a communication saying that some additional forces will be deployed during polls. "We have no problem with additional deployment of security forces but nowhere is it said that central forces will be deployed. What is wrong in deployment of Central forces," he said.

In a first, Union Law Secy appointed Judge of High Court

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a first, a Union Law Secretary has been appointed as a Judge of a High Court. The Department of Justice on Friday issued notification regarding the appointment of Law Secretary Anoop Kumar Mendiratta as a Judge of the Delhi High Court.

Mendiratta was a judicial officer in Delhi when he was made the Law Secretary in October 2019. This was also the first of its kind that a serving District Judge was appointed as Law Secretary. He was appointed as Law Secretary on a con-



tractual basis till March 30, 2023, till his attaining the age of 60 years. Besides Mendiratta, three other judicial officers -- Neena Bansal Krishna, Dinesh Kumar Sharma and Sudhir Kumar Jain -- have also been elevated as judges of the Delhi High Court.

BGR-34 can manage diabetes, heal damaged cells: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian scientists' quest to not only ensure effective treatment of diabetes but also keep the patient of the chronic disease healthier for longer is yielding results.

A study published in 'Serbian Journal of Experimental and Clinical Research' has found that Indian ayurvedic herb BGR-34 based on phyto-constituents of medicinal plants can help lower the sugar level within 12 weeks as well as exert a powerful antioxidant action to prevent diabetic complications.

Led by researcher Ravinder Singh, the team had conducted Phase IV clinical trials for 12 weeks on 100 diabetic patients which were divided into two groups. Subjects from one of the Groups were given allo-

pathic drug, Sitagliptin while the other group was given ayurveda drug, BGR-34, in the double blind study.

Researchers who investigated the drugs on various parameters which included HbA1c (glycated haemoglobin), RBS (random blood sugar), FBS (fasting blood sugar) and PPG (postprandial glucose) values, found that the ayurvedic drug showed promising results.

They investigated that HbA1c level in the diabetic patients, who were given BGR-34, went down significantly from the baseline value 8.499% to 8.061% in the fourth week, 6.56% in eighth week and 6.27% in 12th week.

Similarly, RBS test revealed that before taking the herbal drug, the sugar level on an average which was 250mg/dl declined to 114mg/dl in the

12th week at the same time, FBS sharply went down to 74 from 176 in the same duration.

"Based on these results, it can be simply concluded that BGR-34 is effective in reducing high blood sugar levels and is more potent and efficacious in decreasing the glycemic levels possibly by modulating the insulin release and strengthening the β-cell functional capacity" the study disclosed.

Developed by the scientists from CSIR's labs—National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI) and Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP), BGR-34 is being manufactured and marketed by AIMIL Pharmaceuticals.

Dr. Sanchit Sharma, Executive Director of AIMIL Pharmaceuticals attributed BGR-34 efficacy to the presence of herbs like Vijaysar, Dharuharida, Gilo and,

Manjistha besides phyto-constituents from a few other medicinal plants which are well-known for their anti-diabetic properties.

No doubt, the possible reason for better efficacy of BGR-34 could be due to its several nutritive phyto-constituents and antioxidants which protect β-cells from damage, promote the repair and regenerate, said the researchers.

The results hold importance as the Modi Government has been calling for an integrated and holistic approach to fight Diabetes which is on rise due to sedentary lifestyle and poor eating habits.

India is known as the Diabetes capital of the world with above 77 million adults suffering from the chronic disease. The number is expected to increase to 134 million by 2045.

K'taka HC concludes hearing in hijab case

Reserves order

Bengaluru: The Karnataka High Court concluded the hearing related to the 'hijab' (scarf) case on Friday, but reserved its order.

"Heard. Order reserved," Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi said.

The court asked the petitioners to file written submissions, if any, before the Bench. The Bench, constituted on February 9 and comprising the Chief Justice, Justice Krishna S Dixit and Justice Jaibunnisa M Khazi, heard on a day-to-day basis over the last two weeks a batch of petitions filed by some girls seeking

permission to wear the hijab in educational institutions where a uniform has been prescribed.

The girls were allegedly denied entry into a pre-university college for girls in Udupi in December last for violating the dress code.

On January 1, six girl students attended a press meet held by the Campus Front of India (CFI) protesting against denial of entry into classrooms as they were wearing the hijab. This prompted the boy-students to wear saffron shawls in protest.

As the issue of hijab versus saffron scarves spread to several educational institutions in many parts of Karnataka since then, the State government

announced a holiday from February 9 to February 15 in all the pre-university colleges and from February 9 to February 16 in degree and diploma colleges.

In its interim order, the Bench asked the government to re-open the educational institutions, which were hit by the agitation, and restrained students from wearing religious attire till the court issues the final order.

"The institution did not have any rule on hijab-wearing since no one used to wear it to the classroom in the last 35 years. The students who came with the demand had the backing of outside forces," the principal of a college said. **PTI**

Bengal BJP suffers blow as SC turns down Adhikari's plea

Suvendu Adhikari had filed plea against petition dismissal

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Bengal BJP on Friday suffered two blows in the Supreme Court even as it turned down a plea filed by State Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari against an order of the Bengal Assembly Speaker dismissing his petition seeking Trinamool Congress leader Mukul Roy's disqualification as an MLA.

Roy a founder member of the TMC had joined the BJP in 2017 and became its vice president. However he left that

party to rejoin the TMC soon-after last year's Assembly elections. Roy a former Railway Minister had won the Assembly elections from Krishnagar seat.

Bengal Speaker Biman Banerjee on February 11 had dismissed the petition filed by Adhikari seeking Roy's disqualification as an MLAunder the anti-defection law for joining the Trinamool after elections.

Asking the petitioner to approach the High Court, the Supreme Court in its order said "... we are of considered view that the petitioner can approach High Court assailing speaker order." Roy is also the PublicAccounts Committee Chairman of the State Assembly. "Considering the tenure

of Mukul Roy as Chairman of Public Accounts Committee is only for one year, we request the high court to decide the petitions expeditiously and not later than a period of one months," the Court said.

In another order the Apex Court rejected the plea filed by the State BJP leaders seeking quashing of the Calcutta High Court order directing the State Election Commissioner to take a decision on the deployment of central forces for the elections to the 108 municipal-boards.

The elections are to take place on February 27.

The Court said, "Sorry. We are not inclined to entertain this petition." The BJP had been asking for central forces in anticipationof violence and rigging.

Bombay HC orders RBI to replace demonitised ₹1.61L

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

More than five years after the Centre announced demonetisation of ₹500 and ₹1,000 notes, the Bombay High Court has directed the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to replace demonetised ₹1.6 lakh belonging to a resident from Mumbai's satellite town of Dombivli in the neighbouring Thane district.

After hearing a petition filed Kishor Ramesh Sohoni, a resident of Dombivli, a HC bench of Justices Gautam Patel and Madhav Jamdar – in their ruling given on Tuesday-- used their "equitable discretionary jurisdiction" granted under Article 226 of the Constitution of India ordered the RBI to "replace" the demonitised notes to the petitioner.

In a case of cheating where Sohoni was the complainant, a First Class Judicial Magistrate of Kalyan had directed the accused to deposit Rs 1,60,000 with the local police station. The accused deposited the amount in cash. The matter rested there until 20th March 2017. On that date, the JMFC-3, Kalyan directed the Petitioner and one witness to collect the money from the police station.

Matters might have proceeded smoothly but for the fact that Government of India announced demonetisation on November 8,2016 Notification of 8th November 2016 which demonetised certain currency notes. The Petitioner believed that since his cash was with an authority it was protected from demonetisation.

In his petition, Sohoni stated that since he was not then in urgent need of cash, he "considered the said money as his savings which were with the Government Authority". "We note that the money was still with the police station and we resist the temptation to say anything further about this avement. Time went by. Then there was Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown after March

2020," the HC bench noted.

When Sohoni finally went back to the police station for return of his money, he was handed the old currency notes, all by then demonetised and every note, as the Petitioner put it in his petition, "just a piece of paper having a photo of Mahatma Gandhi". After that Sohoni moved the high court seeking replacement of Rs 1.6 lakh worth demonetised notes.

Alluding to the contention by RBI's advocate Aditi Phatak that the order passed by the Kalyan court directing the accused to deposit Rs 1.6 lakh with the local police station, the HC bench noted that though the Kalyan Magistrate had directed that money be returned to the petition, "but that order does not contain a direction to the RBI to replace the demonetized currency with valid tender, according to Ms Phatak. We find no fault with this submission"

However, the HC bench went onto note: "The notification permits a replacement but provided it meets certain conditions: the serial numbers of notes are to be mentioned and so on. All of this Petitioner is willing and able to do, but what is missing — and the only thing that is missing — is an order of a Court directing the RBI to make that replacement. The JMFC-3 order of 20th March 2017 does not make that direction. The notification is of 12th May 2017, a few months later," the two Judges said.

Invoking Article 226 of the Constitution of India, the HC bench ruled: "We exercise our equitable discretionary jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution of India to direct the RBI by this order to replace the currency tendered by the petitioner with current valid tender, subject to the Petitioner complying with other requirements such as mentioning serial numbers etc. Those particulars are set out in 12th May 2017 notification and in paragraphs 10 and 11 in RBI's Affidavit".

Peace prevails on border as Army keeps tight vigil

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Equipped with the latest version of Finnish sniper rifles and Israeli Light Machine guns (LMG), the foot soldiers of the Indian Army have been maintaining a tight vigil along the 750 Km long line of control in Jammu and Kashmir to foil any possible infiltration bid by the Border Action Team of the Pakistan army and heavily armed terrorists.

Since last year after an agreement was reached between the neighbouring armies of India and Pakistan on February 24/25 to observe a ceasefire agreement of November 2003 peace is prevailing on ground zero. The border residents are leading peaceful lives, farmers are engaged in agricultural activities without fearing for their lives and routine developmental works are going on in the forward areas to further improve the living conditions and strengthen the border infrastructure in the region.

On their part the foot soldiers of the Indian army have been discharging their duties



Indian Army soldiers patrol near the Line of Control (LOC), in Akhnoor, about 65kms from Jammu on Friday

PTI

and maintaining a close watch on the suspicious movement,if any.

In the last one year jawans deployed along the LoC have been equipped with Finland made Sniper rifles and Israeli LMG's in different batches.

Latest surveillance technology which included night vision devices and other tools is also coming to their aid to prevent any major infiltration bid.

The jawans manning the control room and those carrying out long patrols have been keeping a constant watch on the enemy movement.

"We have already equipped our troops with the latest version of Israeli Light Machine Gun Negev NG-7 and .338 Sako TRG 42 rifles", a senior army officer told reporters during a forward area visit in Pallanwala sector of Akhnoor on Friday.

The Sako TRG 42 sniper rifle is a bolt-action sniper rifle designed and developed by the Finnish gun maker SAKO. The rifle is designed to fire powerful .338 Lapua Magnum-sized cartridges. Weighing 5-kg without bulletproof, the sniper rifle has an effective range of 1500 metres. It is considered one of the most accurate and trustworthy weapons world-wide.

On the other hand, the Negev with higher lethal firepower has the belt ammunition feature. The new version of the NG-7 has already replaced the 5.56x45mm INSAS LMG version.

The calibre of the NG-7 is bigger than the INSAS version. It is also capable of pinpoint, single bullet shooting for enhanced firing accuracy, and has a range of over 800 meters, in line with the requirements of the Army.

In automatic mode, the NG-7 has a rate of fire of over 700 bullets per minute. Weighing 7.5 kg, the LMG can be fired from a wide range of mounts, vehicles, helicopters and naval vessels.

Bengal students stranded in Ukraine seek PM's help

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Amar Baba, Maa, Thakurma, Bhai ... sobai atke aachey ... aami khubch-intai aachi ... to be baba boleche Thakurer opor biswas rakhte (Myparents brothers grandmother all are stuck up in war zone back home ...I am deeply concerned," Elena a Ukrainian lady living somewhere in South Kolkata says in crisp Bengali even as she expresses her desire to "run back home as fast as I can and bring them back to safety ..."

The Ukrainian authorities may ask her brother and father to join to military anytime. "That is bothering me more," she says adding "we don't want war with Russia ... no war at all ... we all are same people... we want this to stop right away," says Elena whose paternal house is somewhere in western Ukraine.

Like Elena the family members of medical students -- from Bengal ---stuck up in the war torn country too are praying to God for early relief. Students have made frantic appeal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to arrange for their safe return home.

"We are awake from 3 am in the night ... we were shifted to the basementof a grand building with some bed sheets light blankets ... it was -2 or-3 degrees out there and we were freezing ... still we had no other way out ... since then we are here wondering how to go back home," saysArghya Majhi a medical student from Raidighi in South 24 Parganas.

Arka Prabha Vaidya another student from Bengal says how "we have very limited stock of ration and water which we have to share with otherIndian students ... We request Modi ji and Mamata didi to save us ..."

Harsha Debnath, also a medic from Howrah lives in Kharkiev says, "things in Ukraine had been so smooth since I came here in 2020 ... butnow we are living under intense fear ... we know that both Russia and Ukraine are

UP medical students stuck in war-hit nation

Aligarh: Ritvik Varshney of Aligarh, studying medicine from Ukraine, was sleeping in his rented flat in Kharkiv city at night. Suddenly the sound of loud explosions was heard and he woke up. He told that when he went on the roof of the building, he saw fighter planes dropping bombs. These blasts vibrated in Rithvik's flat and the windows were all shaken. Like Ritwik, more than 40 students from Aligarh are terrified of the war between Russia and Ukraine. They have only one concern, how to return to their homeland. Their parents are more worried than the students.

His only appeal to the Government of India is to bring the children to their homeland by any means.

The fear of war between Russia and Ukraine had already arisen several days earlier. Seeing the situation there, the students had booked air tickets to return to India. Most of the students' tickets were booked between February 25 and 28.

That is, the situation was normal, by Friday evening the students would have started returning to India. But the Russian attack ruined every-

friends but you don't recognize friends from the sky ... we can hear sounds of explosions continuously ... when there are small gaps of a few hours we rush outside the makeshift bunker to literally beg for food."

The family members of Rumki and Jhumki, the two sisters from Durgapur too sound helpless. "We are only pinning out hopes on Modi ji and Didi... the way our Government rescued the Indians from Afghanistan we want our children too to be rescued from Ukraine," say their parents.

Meanwhile the Bengal Government on Friday opened

thing. Ritvik, who was pursuing his MBBS (4th year) from National Medical College in Kharkiv city of Ukraine, was to fly to Delhi on February 28. The city of Kharkiv is also vulnerable in terms of war because it is only 35 km away from the Russian border. Russia has targeted the area around this city more. The Ukrainian government had earlier advised its citizens to hide in their homes. Ritvik told that we have called people to the bunker from 7 o'clock in the evening Indian time.

Apart from Ukraine, citizens of many other countries are hiding in the bunker. Said, had heard the story of the 1971 war between Indo-Pak from father. He used to tell that during the war the lights were turned off at night. Now I am watching this live myself. Such is the situation in Ukraine. It is dark here at night and all lights are off.

Sarthak Upadhyay, son of Amod Kumar Upadhyay, resident of Swarnjayanti Nagar, is also doing MBBS from National Medical College, Kharkiv. He was to catch a flight to Delhi on Thursday. For this, he left for the airport at six in the morning. **PNS**

a control room to assist the students and residents of the State stranded in Ukraine. A Government notice to this effect said that a senior IAS officer was supervising the affairs related to the matter.

The 12-hour control room that will operate from 9 a.m. has been "opened under a senior IAS officer and manned by WBCS officers for assisting and helping students and people stranded from West Bengal inUkraine," the notice said. The families of those stuck in Ukraine have been provided with the following --- 2214-3526, 1070, --- contact number on the notice said.



A woman clicks picture of a wall mural created by artist Sanatan Dinda for the 'Behala Art Fest', in Kolkata on Friday

PTI

Innocent people being rounded up in CPM worker's killing: Kerala BJP

KOCHI: Thalassery in Kannur district has become a Ghost City since a CPI(M) worker was hacked to death allegedly by BJP/RSS activists in the early hours of February 21.

Though the police version is that five persons have been arrested in connection with the murder of Haridasan, a fisherman, the BJP leadership has accused that many innocents were being rounded up and taken to the police stations for thrashing and assaulting them to make them disclose the names of the murderers.

"The BJP and RSS workers have made it clear from day one onwards that they do not have anything to do with the murder. Though we offered the Police to provide them with whatever information we have about the murder, the police refuse to believe us and continue targeting the Sangh Parivar," K Renjith, district secretary, BJP, told The Pioneer.

K Sudhakaran MP and president of KPCC told The Pioneer that the political murders in Kannur district are the fall out of political intolerance shown by the CPI(M) and the Sangh Parivar. "If only these organisations stop encouraging

the murderers and murders, these killings would come to an end," said Sudhakaran who hails from a party village in Kannur.

If the past precedence is any indication, the State is likely to witness more political murders in days to come. The CPI(M) has decided to retaliate with all forces under its command to teach the Hindutwa party a lesson, said an intelligence official.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan alleges that there is a concerted move by the Sangh Parivar and the Congress-led UDF to foment riots all over the State to tarnish the image of CPI(M).

84 Sangh Parivar workers have been murdered in Kannur district since 1968, says Ranjith. "The first murder was that of Vaadikkal Ramakrishnan who was murdered by a CPI(M) strongman in public view. The murderer is walking around freely even today because people are afraid to tell the court that they have seen the murder that took place in day light," he said.

Police officials (both serving and retired) said that the present round of attacks have

a lot to do with the efforts of both the sections to gain control over the administration of temples. "The ancient temples in the district have festoons and decorations of red colour which is a way of telling the world that the temple is under the CPI(M) rule. Instead of God's instructions, the temples feature billboards about the upcoming party congress of the CPI(M) to be held in Kannur," said Ranjith.

A trip to the party villages in Kannur and Kozhikode districts in Kerala prove that the writ of the CPI(M) runs here irrespective of the fact that who is in power at Thiruvananthapuram. Sudhakaran says the accused in the Chandrasekharan murder case, despite being sentenced for life by the court are roaming freely all over Kerala thanks to the political and police patronage. "all of them are CPI(M) workers. They were given parole because the jail authorities were finding it difficult to control them even in central jails. Unless the organisations put down the swords, Kannur would continue seeing such dastard actions," said the KPCC chief. **PNS**

Maha Covid cases dip down to 1-K mark as 973 cases logged

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The daily Covid-19 infections in Maharashtra dropped below 1,000to touch a daily tally of 973 on Friday, even as the daily cases in Mumbai rose marginally from 119 to 128.

A day after the state recorded 1,182 infections, the daily cases dropped to 973.

With fresh infections recorded on Friday, the total number of Covid-19 cases in the state rose from 78,62,650 to 78,63,623.

With 12 fresh deaths, the total number of deaths registered in the state since the outbreak of Covid-19 in the state in March 2020 went up from 1,43,675 to 1,43,687.

With the fresh 128 cases, the total number of cases in Mumbai mounted from 10,56,079 to 10,56,207. While the recovery rate stood static at 98 per cent, the overall growth rate of Covicpid-19 cases in the metropolis for a period from February 18 and 24 remained static at 0.02 per cent.

As 2,521 Covid-19 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March 2020 increased from 77,04,733 to 77,07,254. The recovery rate in the state rose from 97.99 per cent to 98.01

per cent.

The number of "active cases" in the state dropped from 10,250 to 8,688. The fatality rate in the state stood static at 1.82 per cent.

The active cases in Pune dropped from 3513 to 2954. The active cases in Mumbai dropped from 1088 to 1014, while the number of active cases in the neighbouring Thane dropped from 751 to 685. The active cases in Ahmednagar dropped from 905 to 734, while the number of active cases in Nagpur came down from 828 to627

Of the 7,76,58,977 samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far, 78,63,623 have tested positive (10.13 per cent) for COVID-19 until Friday.Currently, 1,47,800 people are in home quarantine while 746 people are in institutional quarantine.

Meanwhile, 62 fresh Omicron case were recorded in Maharashtra on Friday, taking the total number of the new Covid-19 variant cases to 4,629. Of these cases, 4,456 patients have been discharged after they tested negative in the RT-PCR tests.

Till Friday evening, 9,382 samples had been sent for genome sequencing, out of which, results of 8,333 patients have been received, while the results of 1,049 samples are awaited.



Lights, camera, action!

Delhi has unveiled a film policy but it needs to do a lot more to get things going

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia would want to turn Delhi into India's, nay, Asia's, Cannes if he has his way. His enthusiasm to turn Delhi is contagious. He has just unveiled Delhi's film policy that wants to make the national Capital (and State) as a film production hub, thereby boosting local jobs and promoting tourism. A nodal agency will ease production processes by interacting with the cinema teams and personnel from the hospitality, tourism and transport sectors. This is a creditable exercise and its success will depend on how inclusive and seamless the policy will be in practice. Modern generations of Indians still remember the Amitabh Bachchan-starrer, *Trishul*, largely shot in Delhi in the 1970s. The film brought Delhi into the cinematic map of India. Some of the iconic scenes were shot in Lodhi Garden, Golf Club, Odeon Theatre, Teen Murti, Old Fort, the parking lot of Oberoi and, of course, the climax in the Hall of Nations (now demolished) in Pragati Maidan. In the new century, Delhi is the preferred location for films with a heavy dose of nationalism, national politics or national institutions. Some filmmakers, thinking out of the box, revived Delhi as a popular destination by contextualising their works in Dilli rather than Delhi. Chandni Chowk and Karol Bagh in *Delhi 6*, the South Campus of Delhi University in *Fukrey*, Connaught Place in *3 Idiots*, Agrasen Ki Baoli in *PK*, Rajouri Garden and Lajpat Nagar in *Queen*, or Pitampura and Kapashera in *Delhi Belly* focussed on the heritage, immigrant and subaltern Delhi.

Making Delhi attractive to filmmakers of the day is a bit of a challenge for Sisodia. Much of mainstream Indian cinema — not just Hindi — is romancing with realism these days. They are no longer into identity props, like Mumbai's Marine Drive or Delhi's India Gate. There is an eagerness for close-to-the-truth locales for believable, or credible, cinema. A recent multi-lingual film spent huge amounts of money to shoot in a village inside a

pristine, hilly forest of Andhra Pradesh. Sandalwood smuggling operations in such a locale make much more cinematic sense than a film studio. Secondly, Delhi will have to develop cinema-related infrastructure if directors have to save costs of transporting crew, transport and equipment from outside. Thirdly, Sisodia can take a novel initiative and try bringing all States on a single platform for a single-window access to filmmakers. In India, 14 States have their own film facilitation policies while 18 offer various incentives to filmmakers. And now, the Union Government is also jumping into the fray, having decided to frame a model film policy and coordinate with States to set up film promotion offices. The absence of friendly local policies force producers to look for locales abroad even though film shooting is cheaper in India. A cohesive Centre-States effort is needed to make Delhi, the seat of governance, be the natural intersection between national cinematographic legislation, India's internal cinematographic market, cinema's cultural values and film-makers' freedom of expression.



Preparations for the 2nd T20 match between India and Sri Lanka, in Dharamsala

Wake up

Russia is not going to be cowed by the hollow words of the so-called 'global leaders'

There are children crying, people dying, and explosions from missile attacks. This is mostly happening along the eastern borders of Ukraine, which it shares with former parent Russia, as long as they coexisted as the USSR until 1991 when internal political, economic and ethnic disintegration dissolved the USSR and 15 independent countries took shape. The world had barely started limping back to normal after a two-year COVID-19 affliction when it was plunged into an unnecessary and unreasonable war. It basically is a completely unjustified demonstration of regional hegemony. The world was a witness in 2014 when 14,000 Ukrainians were killed by the Russian forces to annex the Crimean peninsula. Now after Russia launched an all-out attack on Ukraine, the so-called global 'leaders' have meekly woken up to the disparaging act and are making suitable noises to show their concern for the upkeep of democracy and the sovereignty of respective countries. And where is the United Nations, by the way? Formed in 1945 to ensure the world will not have to go through another war after the two dreaded World Wars, it replaced the League of Nations, but what else changed? It's still toothless and clawless.

Amid all this chest-thumping and shows of bravado, especially between Russia and the United States where most citizens are not in favour of US involvement in the conflict, the next obvious concern will be with what happens in Taiwan? Will China be emboldened by the feeble protests and actions of the rest of the world's countries? It's undoubtedly set a wrong, bad example for the local bullies to push their way around while the other seniors pretend that they haven't noticed anything. Russian President Vladimir Putin is well known as a 'dictator'; by launching a full-scale war on Ukraine, he has blatantly publicised his policy of "My way or the highway". But the problem is that the threat or actual clamping down of economic sanctions by the EU, US or other countries against Russia are transient and can't sustain for long enough period. Economy has entirely different dynamics largely untouched by global conflicts. The European nations need Russia more than Russia needs them. But does it mean that the world will sit back and twiddle its thumbs? Next in line could be Lithuania and, let's not forget, Belarus is already a puppet in Russian hands.

Elections, virtues and public spirit

The spirit of political party candidates seeking a place in the House has dwindled, and they make no effort to connect with volunteers or voters

The caller was repeatedly pressing the doorbell; sensing an emergency, one rushed out to open the gate. They were a couple of youngsters with pamphlets and badges of a political party prominently displayed on their person. They gave me a pamphlet, firmly instructing that I too must vote for their candidate, as all others in the constituency. Before I could open my mouth, they rushed towards their next target. Under some impulse, I asked them how and when I could see this illustrious person. Prompt came the reply: "Have you not seen him on TV? He is a busy person, cannot see or meet everybody!"

They had firmly put me in my place. I thanked them, and was left wondering whether this represents a transformation in the candidate-party-voter relationship. Obviously, they were no volunteers. They were least interested in the candidate, his victory or the party. I realised it is time for someone like me to erase the memories of candidates visiting voters, accompanied by volunteers, making courteous requests. As one speaks to people on elections on one-on-one basis, a painful reality comes to the fore: We don't expect much change; in the past we have seen the winners devoting all of their time and energy to look after their family and cronies. Several political parties survive on considerations of caste, caste groupings, regionalism and religion. None of this harmonises with the spirit of the Constitution. The credibility of elected representatives has grossly declined; people don't give them the respect that is the genuine due of every elected representative. One must hasten to add that the system functions because of exceptions; the representatives who understand the spirit of the Constitution, who are determined to serve their electors. It is no cliché that a considerable number of elected representatives rarely visit their constituencies. Independent analysis of the contemporary electoral scenario clearly establishes a disturbing level of commitment to public good, declining sense of responsibility to transform the life of



those standing last in the line and to help them lead a dignified life. One is convinced that wherever the elected representative has a clean image, corruption gets checked, which means considerable relief to the 'last man in the line'. Sadly enough, such numbers are consistently on the decline. Young persons in schools and colleges learn about the Constitution, and its emphasis on improving the lot everyone. Every child before he completes 10 years in school is expected to get familiar with the concepts and practices of democracy, the Republic and how these are woven into the Constitution. Eminent experts explain that in a Republic, people are supreme; elected Governments derive powers from people, though for a limited period. There is total emphasis on equality, irrespective of any and every diversity. Eminent constitutional expert Dr Subhash Kashyap indicates how Republics succeed, or fail: "Republics are created by the virtues, public spirit and intelligence of citizens. They fail when the wise are banished from public councils because they dare to be honest, and the

SEVERAL POLITICAL PARTIES SURVIVE ON CONSIDERATIONS OF CASTE, CASTE GROUPINGS, REGIONALISM AND RELIGION. NONE OF THIS HARMONISES WITH THE SPIRIT OF CONSTITUTION. THE CREDIBILITY OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES HAS GROSSLY DECLINED

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DON'T PAINT NEHRU IN BAD LIGHT
Sir — This is in response to Prafull Goradia's article '*Silent churning of revolution in India*' (February 25). Jawaharlal Nehru was of course a man who was the "farthest from anything Indian and Hinduism in soul and spirit". Indeed how could that self-declared "culturally a Muslim" stress that he was the "last Englishman to rule India"? But perhaps Swami Vivekananda was an epitome of all things Indian and Hinduism. Surely this is the reason why he gets projected as their "own messiah" by the nationalist saffron brigade and the ruling party at the Centre. In this context, let me humbly, but firmly, enlighten Prafull about a bold statement of Vivekananda — "For our own motherland, a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam — Vedanta brain and Islam body — is the only hope." Ramakrishna Paramhansa used to live with Muslim and Christian mystics for years, followed their strict routines and thereafter emphasised that all roads lead to truth. Not to forget the "proud Hindu" Vivekananda used to praise all the good that the West had to offer and severely criticise the vices embedded in Hinduism. Lastly, all sane secular humanitarian Indians pray that *Bharat Mata* is spared of the intolerance and parochialism of current 'revolutionaries'.
Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

MORE TURMOIL LIKELY TO FOLLOW
Sir — This refers to the editorial '*War!*' (February 25). Russia on Thursday launched a massive invasion of Ukraine. With utter disregard at the UN Security Council that was in a last-ditch session to make better sense prevail, Russian President Vladimir Putin sent battle tanks rolling into the highways of Ukraine not only from his borders but also from Belarus. And with Nato refusing to put boots on Ukrainian soil, the nation's military doesn't have a ghost of a chance against the infinitely superior invader. Obviously, the crippling economic sanctions that the US, the UK and the EU have started imposing mean little to a despot with an elephantine ego

A diplomatic failure
Afghanistan at the time of transformation of power due to our Government's lethargy. Indian diplomacy has taken a beating and S Jaishankar, the Minister of External Affairs, has failed miserably in handling such sensitive situations and proved beyond doubt that he is the most inefficient Foreign Minister free India has ever had. It is high time to replace him with a veteran in diplomatic dealings, who has the intelligence to foresee and contain damages and save Indians on time. It is also unfortunate that though the Russian invasion and the dangerous situation to which Indians would be pushed into was clearly writ large in the wall, our tall leaders including the Prime Minister, Home Minister and Defence Minister failed to call for relevant meetings and discuss in Delhi the precautionary measures to be taken. Instead, they kept campaigning for their party ahead of the Assembly elections.
Tharcus S Fernando | Chennai

who has no respect for international law. With the US and Nato showing no appetite for being a credible counterweight, both are having a free run. It is a different matter that the diminishing profile of the US as a global cop is a positive development. But the developments are ominous for Taiwan, which can expect fresh turbulence. And the occupying Chinese force on the Ladakh border could get more aggressive. India predictably has chosen to react cautiously. That the turmoil will slow down its economy, which is partially on the mend, is a given.
N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

A WELCOME STEP BY RAJASTHAN GOVT
Sir — The Rajasthan Government has reverted to the old scheme of pension to provide guaranteed pension to State Government employees. With this announcement in the State's Budget, the 18-year-old contributory 'New Pension Scheme' comes to an end. With the Assembly elections due next year in

Rajasthan, this was the last full Budget presented by the current Congress-led Government. The move has a significant repercussion on fiscal stability. Pensions are a generational issue. Disconsolation of the old pension scheme was one of the success stories of fiscal reform in the current century. Going back on it would be a painful journey. Under the new pension scheme, for the same work in a Government job, a worker appointed on or after January 1, 2004, gets 10 per cent less take-home salary because of the contribution he makes, compared to the beneficiary under the old pension scheme appointed till December 31, 2003. Under the old pension scheme, the worker didn't have to make any such contribution towards his pension. The move may encourage other State Governments too to go back to the old pension scheme.
Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai



JS RAJPUT

profligate are rewarded because the flatter the people in order to betray them." Clearly, it is the cognitive capital of the nation, and emphasis on essential unity of all people that would decide the success or otherwise of the Republic in meeting the objectives enshrined in the Constitution. In a parliamentary democracy, the importance and significance of elections and the vote is expected to be well understood by voters. Towards this, people must be well aware of the extent to which the political parties respect the Constitution. Such deliberations must become an integral part of electioneering. Every political party vociferously declares total adherence to the values and vision of Dr BR Ambedkar. People have a right to analyse and identify those who are really serious about it. Ambedkar understood India, its people, its diversities and its inherent unity. He could envision rather precisely the hindrances and impediments to be faced at the implementation stage; and how these could really restrict the pace of socio-economic reforms. The Constituent Assembly had high aspirations of independent India regaining its rightful place in the comity of nations. Ambedkar expressed the sentiments of not only every member of the Constituent Assembly but also of every alert, active and responsible citizen of India: "I feel, however good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it happen to be a bad lot. However bad a Constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it happen to be a good lot. The working of a Constitution does not depend wholly upon the nature of the Constitution. The factors on which the State's organs depend are its people and the parties they set up as their instruments to carry out their wishes. Who can say how the people of India and their parties will behave?" Indian democracy would flourish depending upon the numbers of elected representatives who comprehend these ideas, and have the courage and competence to put them into practice. (The author works in education, social cohesion and religious amity. The views expressed are personal.)



External Affairs Minister
— S Jaishankar



External forces are attempting to manipulate the situation in Ukraine.



Taiwan President
— Tsai Ing-wen



Actor
— Manoj Bajpayee



India cricket captain
— Rohit Sharma



Union Minister
— Bhupender Yadav

My first priority is to finish the films and projects stuck due to COVID.


There are no issues. I am looking forward to playing all the games.

India is walking the talk on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

THE TALIBAN AND THE STARVING AFGHANS



GWYNNE DYER

Because the Taliban have been designated as ‘terrorists’, it is possible for the United States not only to embargo American aid and trade to Afghanistan, but also to block or at least seriously hinder efforts by other countries to send humanitarian aid. As a result, more than half the country’s people - 23 million at last count - are suddenly near starvation. There are many reports of people selling one of their children in order to feed the others. This is formally a kind of adoption process, but in practice is often a thinly disguised form of debt slavery. There have even been a few documented cases of parents selling an organ to buy food for their children. Because the central bank is in Taliban hands, anti-terrorism legislation enables the US to deny the country access even to the many billions of dollars (mostly unspent aid money, but also private savings) that the former government had on deposit with foreign banks. The vindictiveness needs no explanation: nobody humiliates the United States and goes unpunished. The fact that ordinary civilian Afghans had nothing to do with that humiliation, but are the ones suffering the retaliation for it, has no more weight in this case than it had in any other. The ‘domestic US politics’, however, is a more complex issue.

The Biden administration has taken a severe beating politically due to the events of last August, and it’s no use pointing out that it was originally Donald Trump who signed the deal that led to the abrupt collapse of the pro-Western Afghan regime and the humiliating *saave-qui-peut* that followed. Joe Biden has to take the blame. There are mid-term elections coming up this November, and the Democratic Party is at risk of losing control of both houses of Congress. Biden cannot afford to be seen as soft on the Taliban, but that severely restricts his ability to do anything for the starving Afghans even if he wanted to. To give the man credit, he appears to be trying anyway. Seven billion dollars of Afghan money is frozen in US banks. Even now it could probably save several hundred thousand innocent lives in Afghanistan if it were released to Kabul immediately. What Biden has tried to do is free up half of it for humanitarian aid by giving the other half to American families who have lost relatives in terrorist attacks. It’s questionable whether he can legally give that \$7 billion to anybody, but on February 11 he signed an executive order splitting it evenly between US victims of terrorism and humanitarian aid to the Afghan people. He obviously hopes this will give him enough political cover to give half to the starving Afghans, but a) it won’t work; and b) it isn’t fair. If a couple of senior members of the Taliban knew in advance about Osama bin Laden’s plans to attack America eighteen years ago - which is unproven and unlikely - they are long gone now. The Taliban are deeply unpleasant to Western eyes, but they won the war fair and square and the best way of ending the incipient famine would be to recognise them. If you can’t do that, and you can’t even bring yourself to talk to them yet, let alone trust them with their own money, then just buy food for the Afghan people (with their own money) and fly it in. Deliver it to the airports, and let the Taliban distribute it from there. You owe the Afghans that much, at least.

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

Case for early teaching in mother tongue



RAMACHANDRA MURTHY KONDUBHATLA

The NEP was right in suggesting that first five years of learning should be in mother tongue. Then the child can be shifted to English medium

“

English as a medium of instruction has become a political issue in Telugu States. To choose between mother tongue and English as a medium of instruction is a pan-India predicament and debate on this subject has been going on for decades albeit in an unorganized manner. Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) presided over a Cabinet meeting on January 17, 2022 that decided to go for English medium right from first class and simultaneously continue with Telugu medium for students who opt for it. It is against the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) that the Narendra Modi Government finalised. BJP leaders in Telangana have naturally taken objection to the State Government’s decision.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy (JMR) wanted to have English medium in all Government schools from the day he took over as chief minister. He said people asked him, when he met them in large numbers during his historic walkathon in 2017-18, for English medium. No doubt, it is a popular demand. Should the Governments go by what people ask for or what is good for the people? Soon after assuming power, JMR had shown keen interest in developing Government schools by giving them facelift and providing sufficient infrastructure. At first, he did not provide for Telugu medium at all. After a hue and cry from the advocates of mother tongue as medium of instruction, he said he would have Telugu medium at some schools. The policy ran into difficulties, legal problems and the Government wishes to implement the new policy from next academic year.

“According to the human rights declaration by the United Nations, education is a right of every child. What kind of education should the children get depends on their parents, who are the ultimate decision-makers. Parents are particular that their children should study in English medium from the beginning of schooling,” said Prof. Limbadri, Chairman of Telangana Higher Education Council. He said the Government is set to improve facilities in Government schools under the pilot programme “Mana Ooru - Mana Badi” (Our village - Our school). In a way, KCR is following JMR’s policy with due diligence. Telangana will not do away with Telugu medium altogether. It will allow it to have a natural death.

Two decades ago, 80 per cent of the students used to go to Government schools and 20 percent to private schools. By 2005, the percentage of students studying in Government schools came down to 70 percent. Now it is less than 45 percent. Telangana is leading in providing English medium education for SCs, STs, OBCs and Minorities through residential schools, model schools and gurukul schools. Without making it public, the Government allowed teachers to switch over to English medium wherever there was a popular demand. A number of Government schools were closed due to lack of English medium.

There are three kinds of schools in AP and TS. Majority of the schools are run by Government, followed by private schools and then corporate schools. The teachers in Government schools are better qualified and better paid than those in private schools. But even the poor and low caste parents spend on their children for English medium education in private schools. They pay five times to the amount they would have spent if their children went to Government schools. If the Government schools introduce English medium, the poor will be spared of the burden.

Dalit intellectual Chandrabhan Prasad has long been saying that English has been the greatest liberator of Dalits from caste hierarchy. Decades of English deprivation has deepened the inequalities. One intellectual said the mother tongue fanatics are keeping India poor and backward. If we did not have English medium schools, we would not have Padma Bhushans like Satya Nadella and Sunder Pitchai heading prestigious multinational corporations such as Microsoft and Google.

Switching over to English medium overnight, however, is not going to be easy. Bilingual teaching material has to be prepared. There will be considerable investment in the beginning. Teachers have to be trained. What India spends on education is a pittance compared to the US and other developed countries. It has to be increased many folds.

NEP says “wherever possible,

the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/ local language/regional language.” There is a solid scientific consensus that teaching a child in her own language is the best pedagogical method.

Like India, Nigeria is a multi-lingual country with a history of British colonialism and English language dominating their education system. Pioneering Nigerian educationist Aliu Fafunwa launched a project in 1970 in which experimental groups of students were taught in their own native Yoruba language for their first six years. They did far better in studies than those who were taught in English. Nancy Modiano in Mexico experimented on the same lines in 1973 and came up with similar result. Children who were taught in their native language early on and later transitioned to Spanish outperformed children taught only in Spanish from Grade 1. No such comparative studies were undertaken in India, much less in AP and Telangana.

Article 350A of the constitution stated that every State and local authority should endeavour to provide ‘adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups’. The Kothari Commission on education and national development (1964-66) suggested that in tribal areas, for the first two years of school, the medium of instruction and books should be in the local tribal languages. The regional languages should be taught separately and should become medium of instruction by third year. Odisha Government had started implementing this policy in 2007. Right to Education Act, 2009, also insists on teaching kids in their mother tongue. But successive governments have been tinkering with education. Far from encouraging private school to drop English, the union Government does not use mother tongue in its own network of elite Kendriya Vidyalay schools.

English is a language of science, technology, computer, internet, journalism, website and so on. 80 percent of the information fed into the computers is in English. The fact of the matter is English or Spanish or any other language can be learnt better on the foundation laid by mother tongue. A small kid spends only three or four hours in a day at the school. The rest of the child’s time is in a non-English environment. If we force her to learn English directly then it will amount to rote learning. The NEP was right in suggesting that first five years of learning should be in mother tongue. Then the child can be shifted to English medium. English as a language has to be taught right from first class. Till Grade 5, the language of instruction would be mother tongue. Then, from Grade 6 onwards mother tongue would become a subject and the medium of instruction would be English. The transition would then be seamless.

If the Union Government can make it compulsory for all the primary schools run by Government or private sector to teach only in mother tongue till Grade 5, there will be a level playing field. Otherwise, there will be no takers for mother tongue as medium of instruction.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WHOEVER TRIES TO STOP US SHOULD KNOW THAT RUSSIA WILL LEAD THEM TO CONSEQUENCES NEVER FACED IN HISTORY. — RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN



VLADIMIR PUTIN IS THE AGGRESSOR. PUTIN CHOSE THIS WAR. NOW HE AND HIS COUNTRY WILL BEAR THE CONSEQUENCES. —US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN

Freebies push UP discoms into financial distress

These discoms have accumulated losses of almost ₹95,000 crore with an estimated daily revenue gap of ₹80 crore adding to the mess

In the run up to the high-stakes 2022 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, the political parties had announced with much fanfare their respective manifestos adorned with populist announcements to woo the electorate.

Nevertheless, the energy sector freebies grabbed the maximum media space as also the popular imagination given the fact that the UP power tariffs are among the highest in the country. All the major parties, viz., BJP, Samajwadi Party, Congress and Aam Aadmi Party have made competing power sector pre-poll promises.

Yet these outfits have applied little thought to the precarious financial condition of the state power utility, UP Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL), and the distribution companies (discoms).



VIRENDRA SINGH RAWAT

(The writer is a Lucknow-based financial and political journalist. The views expressed are personal.)



lion electrified households in UP, is too much to ignore, especially during election times.

Sample this: The Akhilesh Yadav-led SP has promised to provide 300 units of free electricity to every household plus ensuring a 24-hour power supply in the state. Yadav claimed the free power plank would incur “just” ₹12,000 crore annually.

Energy sector experts warn that the promise of free power

for the first 300 units in a big state like UP with about 30 million consumers would spur sudden upsurge in demand. This would not only stress the transmission and distribution infra but also catalyse the gaping revenue deficit sinkhole.

In its farm outreach especially in the backdrop of the recent farmers’ stir, the ruling BJP helmed by Yogi Adityanath has also promised free power for irrigation.

AAPhas announced plans to replicate its Delhi model in UP by giving 300 units free to the domestic consumers if voted to power. The party has promised to waive off outstanding power bills and give free power to farmers if it formed the UP government. Not to be outdone, Congress has joined the freebie league too, promising to

slash power bills by half and waive outstanding bills pertaining to the Covid period.

According to UP power consumer activist Avadhesh Verma, the free power promise by the different parties together with the financial outgo already incurred owing to the subsidised or free power to certain sections of consumers, including farmers, would cost the exchequer more than ₹30,000 crore annually.

In the 2020-21 annual revenue requirement (ARR) statement filed by the UP Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL), the revenue shortfall was pegged at Rs 16,000 crore. “Against the total expenditure estimated at ₹78,215 crore, the revenue together with the subsidy amount was projected in the ARR at a little over ₹62,000

crore. Thus leaving a deficit of ₹16,000 crore,” he informed.

He blamed a gamut of factors for the precarious condition of the UP discoms, including political interference with the power sector issues, populism, freebies, costly power purchase agreements (PPAs) signed during previous regimes, corruption etc.

On one hand, the populist measures are bleeding the discoms each day, the political interference, corruption and political compulsions, especially during election times prevent the overhauling of the energy sector as also strict compliance with regards to defaulters.

“Energy is the raw material of development. Unless there is energy security, the economic development agenda would remain an unfulfilled dream.

There is an urgent need to stem political interference with the energy landscape, and to review the decision of unbundling of the UP State Electricity Board,” All India Power Engineer Federation (AIPEF) chairman Shailendra Dubey noted.

He lamented that the government departments and agencies were among the top defaulters of the state energy sector, which was a major reason for the dwindling fortunes of the public sector power utilities.

“For example, the civic bodies are major defaulters, but the power department cannot summarily shut down power supply to the street lights managed by the municipalities owing to law and order as well as public convenience factors. This leads to a perennial built up of arrears for the discoms,” he added.

Ready to talk if Ukraine lays down arms: Russia

AFP ■ MOSCOW

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Friday Moscow was ready for talks if Ukraine's military surrendered, as he insisted that invading forces were looking to free the country from "oppression". Russian President Vladimir Putin "took the decision to conduct a special military operation to demilitarise and de-Nazify Ukraine so that, freed from oppression, Ukrainians themselves could freely deter-

mine their future", Lavrov said at a press conference in Moscow. The comment suggested that Moscow intends to overthrow the Ukrainian authorities with its invasion. Lavrov said Moscow was ready for talks with Kyiv if the Ukrainian army surrenders. "We are ready for negotiations at any moment, as soon as the armed forces of Ukraine respond to our call and lay down their arms," Lavrov said. He said the aim of Putin's operation was "openly declared:

demilitarisation and de-Nazification". Lavrov said that "nobody intends to occupy Ukraine". He denied Ukrainian claims that Russian forces had hit civilian infrastructure, despite widespread evidence of residential areas being damaged. The Ukrainian army said Friday that Russian forces were approaching Kyiv from the north and northeast. Russian President Vladimir Putin announced he was launching a major military operation.

By invading Ukraine, Putin loses allies in eastern Europe

KAREL JANICEK ■ PRAGUE,

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has shocked the former Soviet satellite states of Central and Eastern Europe, drawing strong condemnation even from the region's most pro-Kremlin politicians. For some of the countries that fled the Soviet bloc following a series of anti-communist revolutions more than 30 years ago, footage of tanks and troops rolling in to punish a nation trying to pursue its own independent course looks painfully familiar. Two until now major pro-Russian voices in the European Union, Czech President Milos Zeman and Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban, didn't mince their words in criticising Moscow's most aggressive action since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Their countries experienced comparable brutality - the Czech Republic, as part of Czechoslovakia, in 1968 and Hungary in 1956.

Zeman called Thursday's invasion "an unprovoked act of aggression." "Russia has committed a crime against peace," he said in an address to the nation. Zeman had previously made news by calling Russia's 2014 annexation of the Ukrainian Crimean Peninsula "a fait accompli." Many in the Czech Republic reviled Zeman as a "servant of Kremlin" after he sided with Russia and cast doubt on the findings of his own security and intelligence services on the alleged participation of Russian spies in a huge 2014 ammunition explosion. Until just days ago, Zeman was insisting that the Russians wouldn't attack Ukraine because "they aren't lunatics to launch an opera-

tion that would be more damaging for them than beneficial." "I admit I was wrong," he said Thursday. Zeman has called for harsh sanctions against Russia, including cutting it out of the SWIFT financial system which shuffles money from bank to bank around the globe. "It's necessary to isolate a lunatic and not just to defend ourselves by words but also by deeds," he said. Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala also voiced full support for the strongest possible sanctions for what he called "an absolutely unjustified act of aggression against a sovereign state." Prague ordered the closure of two Russian consulates in the Czech Republic and stopped accepting visa requests from Russian citizens.

Pavel Rychetsky, the chief judge at the Constitutional court, the country's highest legal authority, suggested that a European arrest warrant should be issued against Russian President Vladimir Putin. He said Putin should be tried at the International Criminal Court for "an unprecedented unleashing of war on the European continent for the first time since World War II." "In Hungary, high-ranking officials had for weeks avoided condemning Russia's actions directly. Under Orban, the country has pursued close ties with Putin, a point of concern for many of Hungary's western partners. Hungary has historically deeply distrusted Moscow, which ordered the brutal repression of an anti-Soviet uprising in 1956. But Orban in recent years has pursued a diplomatic and economic strategy he calls

"Eastern Opening," which favours closer ties with coun- cial." "I admit I was wrong," he said Thursday. Zeman has called for harsh sanctions against Russia, including cutting it out of the SWIFT financial system which shuffles money from bank to bank around the globe. "It's necessary to isolate a lunatic and not just to defend ourselves by words but also by deeds," he said. Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala also voiced full support for the strongest possible sanctions for what he called "an absolutely unjustified act of aggression against a sovereign state." Prague ordered the closure of two Russian consulates in the Czech Republic and stopped accepting visa requests from Russian citizens.

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Putin waves N-sword in confrontation with West

AP ■ WARSAW

It has been a long time since the threat of using nuclear weapons has been brandished so openly by a world leader, but Vladimir Putin has just done it, warning in a speech that he has the weapons available if anyone dares to use military means to try to stop Russia's takeover of Ukraine. The threat may have been empty, a mere baring of fangs by the Russian president, but it was noticed. It kindled visions of a nightmarish outcome in which Putin's ambitions in Ukraine could lead to a nuclear war through accident or miscalculation. "As for military affairs, even after the dissolution of the USSR and losing a considerable part of its capabilities, today's Russia remains one of the most powerful nuclear states," Putin said, in his pre-invasion address early Thursday.

"Moreover, it has a certain advantage in several cutting-edge weapons. In this context, there should be no doubt for anyone that any potential aggressor will face defeat and ominous consequences should it directly attack our country." By merely suggesting a nuclear response, Putin put into play the disturbing possibility that the current fighting in Ukraine might eventually veer into an atomic confrontation between Russia and the United States. That apocalyptic scenario is familiar to those who grew up during the Cold War, an era when American school children were told to duck and cover under their desks in case of nuclear sirens. But that danger gradually receded from the public imagination after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, when the two powers seemed to be on a glide path to disarmament, democracy and prosperity. Before that, even young people understood the terrifying. Idea behind the strategy of mutual assured destruction -- MAD for short -- a balance in nuclear capabilities that was meant to keep hands on each side off of the atomic trigger, knowing that any use of the doomsday weapons could end in the annihilation of both sides in a conflict. And amazingly, no country has used nuclear weapons since 1945, when President Harry Truman dropped bombs on Japan in the belief that it was the surest way to end World War II quickly. It did, but at a loss of about 200,000 mostly civilian lives in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Around the world, even today, many regard that as a crime against humanity and question if it was worth it. For a brief time after the

war, the United States had a nuclear monopoly. But a few years after, the Soviet Union announced its own nuclear bomb and the two sides of the Cold War engaged in an arms race to build and develop increasingly more powerful weapons over the next few decades. With the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, and its transformation to a hoped-for democracy under Boris Yeltsin, the United States and Russia agreed to limits on their armaments. Other post-Soviet countries like Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus voluntarily gave up the nukes on their territory after the Soviet Union dissolved. In recent years, if nuclear weapons were spoken of at all, it was usually in the context of stopping their proliferation to countries like North Korea and Iran. (Iran denies that it wants to possess them and North Korea has been steadily but slowly building both its nuclear weapons and its delivery mechanisms.) President Joe Biden has been aware of the danger of nuclear war between Russia and NATO since the emergence of the crisis with Ukraine. From the start, he has said NATO would not be sending troops into Ukraine because it could trigger direct fighting between the US and Russia,

leading to nuclear escalation and possibly World War III. It was a tacit admission that the United States would not take on the Russians militarily over Ukraine, and instead rely on extraordinary sanctions to gradually strangle the Russian economy. But the admission also included another truth. When it came to fighting off a Russian invasion, Ukraine remained on its own because it is a non-treaty member and does not qualify for protection under NATO's nuclear umbrella. If Putin tried to attack one of the America's NATO partners, however, that would be a different situation, because the pact is fully committed to mutual defense, Biden has said. Knowing that Biden had already taken a military response off the table, why did Putin even bother to raise it in his speech? In part, he may have wanted to keep the West off balance, to prevent it from taking aggressive action to defend Ukraine against Putin's blitzkrieg drive to take over the country. But the deeper context seemed to be his great desire to show the world that Russia is a powerful nation, not to be ignored. Putin talks repeatedly about the humiliation of Russia after the Soviet collapse. By waving his nuclear sword, he echoed the bluster with which

the Soviet Union had stared down the United States and earned, in his mind, respect. After Putin's speech, Pentagon officials offered only a muted response to his implied threat to use nuclear weapons against any country that tried to intervene in Ukraine. A senior defence official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss internal deliberations, said Thursday that US officials "don't see an increased threat in that regard," but he would not say more. Putin's language touches a raw nerve in the Pentagon because it highlights a long-standing concern that he might be willing to preemptively use nuclear weapons in Europe preemptively in a crisis. This is one reason Washington has tried for years, without success, to persuade Moscow to negotiate limits on so-called tactical nuclear weapons -- those of shorter range that could be used in a regional war. Russia has a large nuclear advantage in that weaponry, and some officials say the gap is growing. Coincidentally, the Biden administration was wrapping up a Nuclear Posture Review -- a study of possible changes to US nuclear forces and the policies that govern their use -- when Russia's troop buildup near Ukraine reached a crisis stage this month.

World leaders fine-tune punitive measures against Russia

EU finance chiefs grapple with economic fallout

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Against Russia comes the economic reckoning. Finance ministers of the 19 countries that use the euro gathered Friday in Paris to weigh the economic fallout of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting European Union sanctions. The EU, and allies like the US, are trying to starve Russia of international capital and key industrial technologies. The finance talks will be "devoted exclusively to the Ukrainian question, to the economic consequences and to what we can do to protect our economies," French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told reporters in televised remarks. At an emergency meeting Thursday evening, EU government heads approved new penalties that aim to make Russian President Vladimir Putin pay a hefty price for an invasion that has rattled the post-Cold War security order. The sanctions will be finalised and submitted for approval to EU foreign ministers Friday. They target Russia's financial, oil and transport industries and cover goods with both military and civilian uses. Like the US, the measures stop short of excluding Russia from the SWIFT international payments system - a move Ukraine demanded but some EU countries, including Germany, resisted. While the EU's 27 national leaders said the sanctions would "impose massive and severe consequences on Russia for its action," some acknowledged pain also would be felt in Europe. "All these measures are going to be expensive, also for us," Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel said Thursday. "But peace also has a price."

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World leaders fine-tune punitive measures against Russia



AP ■ BRUSSELS

The world has made it clear that a military intervention in Ukraine is off the books, so most countries on Friday were throwing ever more punishment at Moscow — from financial to football sanctions — anything to force President Vladimir Putin to stop the brutal invasion of Russia's neighbor and unleash a major war in Europe. Undeterred in the game of punitive sanctions, Russia started its own tit-for-tat measures, banning British flights to and over its territory in retaliation to a similar UK. Ban on Aeroflot flights. Yet with the Kremlin's eyes fully targeted on expanding the attacks on Ukraine, almost of the action was still going one way. European Union leaders discussed until the early hours Friday any ways to hit Putin even harder than the two sets of sanctions that it already approved. "We are hitting the regime at all levels and we are hitting it hardest," Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said early Friday. The 27-nation bloc and other Western powers like the United States and the United Kingdom have agreed on a slew of sanction hitting everything from the banking sector to oil refineries and the defense sector. EU foreign ministers will push the approval process further later in the day. And just as Russia was making a pincer movement to choke Ukraine and its capital Kyiv, Western powers were implementing measures aimed at "asphyxiating Russia's economy," in the words of French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian. Seeking to buttress its eastern flank, the NATO alliance was holding a virtual summit of government leaders, including US President Joe Biden, later Friday. In terms unheard since the Cold War, threats were flying from all sides and ran through society. In a sign of papal anger, Pope Francis went to the Russian Embassy himself to "express his concern about the war", the Vatican said. It was an extraordinary, hands-on gesture, since usually popes receive ambassadors and heads of state in the Vatican.

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client, Gayatri Thakur, who is a registered owner of property bearing address Prop No 19, Ph-2, Kh.No.18/12,18/16,Village Qutubpur, Badli, QutubVihar, South-West Delhi-110071, INDIA vide Registered Authorization Slip registered by POI through DDA via document number 9297 on 11/08/2021 and before through GPAATS, WILL executed by Suresh Kumar in favour of Gayatri Thakur via document number Notarized on 21/08/2021. The said property is under sale which is going to be mortgaged with IIFL Home Finance Limited by the purchaser. Any person/bank/financial institution having any claim/right, in any objection whatsoever in regard to above property, should notified to the undersigned/Adv. Vishal Mehan, E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092 along with documentary evidence under addressed through registered A/D within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice failing which any claim, lien or objection shall be deemed to have been waived.

Vishal Mehan (Advocate)
E-713, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110092
Mobile No. 9811215151

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the General public that, Mrs. Neelam Kaur w/o Mr. Trik Singh is the owner of ENTIRE GROUND FLOOR WITHOUT ROOF RIGHTS, PART OF FRESHOLD PROPERTY BEARING NO. J-194-B, LAND AREA MEASURING 52.3/4 SQ. YRDS. PART OF KHASRA NO.39/11/1, SITUATED IN THE AREA OF VILLAGE KHYALA DELHI, STATE DELHI, NOW COLONY KNOWN AS VISHNU GARDEN, NEW DELHI, vide registered sale deed dated 23.07.2021. All persons are hereby informed that MR. JAMEEL KHAN & MRS. GULSHAN BEGAM are purchasing this property from Mrs. Neelam Kaur w/o Mr. Trik Singh vide a registered Sale Deed & has approached Fullert India Home Finance Company Ltd to take a Loan for the same. If anybody has any charge/interest/ title in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.

Mrs. Prason Lata, Advocate, SG Associates (Law Firm)
Unit No 7, Basement, Plot No C 78, Sector 2, Noida, UP 201301.
E-MAIL: sgassociatespl@gmail.com, Ph: 7011172764, 8130200837

GOVERNMENT OF CHHATTISGARH, WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

OFFICE OF THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER

SHIVNATH CIRCLE DURG (CHHATTISGARH)

e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

eProcurement Portal: <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>

(1ST CALL)

System Tender No.: 93610/NIT No. : 43/SAC/2021 -22, Durg, Dated : 24.02.2022

Online Tenders are invited for the following works up to 17.03.2022 at 17.30 Hour

Name of work :- RENOVATION OF OLD HIRETARA DIVERSION, AND LINING OF CANAL, 0 M TO 1800 M. WITH CONSTRUCTION OF 03 NOS INLET 4 NOS V.R.B AND 05 NOS. COLABA FIXING IN BLOCK DHAMDHA OF DISTRICT DURG.

Probable Amount of Contract :- Rs.148.88 Lakhs

The details can be viewed and downloaded online directly from the Government of Chhattisgarh Integrated e-Procurement Portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) from Date 03.03.2022, at 17.31 Hours.(IST) onwards.

NOTE :- All eligible/intrested contractors/bidders are mandated to get enrolled on the Integrated e-procurement portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) and get approval on specific vendor class from PWD under Centralized Contractor/Supplier Registration in order to download the tender documents and participate in the subsequent bidding process.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Tandula Water Resources Division
Durg (C.G.)

R.o. No.- 68199/8 For, Superintending Engineer Shivnath Circle,
R.o. Date - 25/02/2022 Durg (C.G.)

NATO leaders meet to reassure allies near Russia, Ukraine

BRUSSELS ■ LORNE COOK

US President Joe Biden and his NATO counterparts will seek Friday to reassure member countries on the alliance's eastern flank that their security is guaranteed as Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine closes in on the capital Kyiv.

With Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appealing for help, NATO members ranging from Russia's neighbor Estonia in the north down around the west of conflict-hit

Ukraine to Bulgaria on the Black Sea coast triggered urgent consultations about their security. Only Hungary refrained.

The leaders, meeting via videoconference, plan to take stock of NATO's own military buildup. The world's biggest security organization previously had around 5,000 troops stationed in the Baltic countries - Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - and Poland, but has significantly beefed up its defenses over the last three months.

Notice Inviting Tender

No. SSA/TT/School Safety/311/2019/9152 Date: 25/02/2022

Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilpara, Guwahati-19 invites tender through e-Tendering Process from training / educational service provider for Implementation of Centrally Sponsored Scheme on School Safety & Security in all Govt./Provincialised Elementary and Secondary Schools across Assam.

To participate in the tender process through e-procurement, bidder should have valid Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) and have to register in the portal <https://assamtenders.gov.in> by themselves.

The Bidder who have downloaded the tender schedules containing the tender details, terms and conditions etc. from the website shall submit their tender on-line on the website <https://assamtenders.gov.in>, with proof of payment of non-refundable bid processing fee of Rs. 5,000/- (Rupees five thousand) only in the form of DD/ Banker Cheque as applicable in favour of Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilpara, Guwahati-19 from any nationalized / Scheduled Bank and payable at Guwahati. The tender should be submitted on-line as per date and time of submission as per prescribed schedule.

Sd/-Mission Director
Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilpara, Guwahati-19

Jansanyog /CF/3495/21

'Close' to agreeing on asset freeze on Putin, Lavrov

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union was "very close to agreement" to freezing the assets of Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, Luxembourg's foreign minister said Friday. Jean Asselborn was speaking before a meeting of the 27-nation bloc's foreign ministers to discuss Russian sanctions.

"I think we are very close to an agreement, that we will find an agreement here" for sanctions on Putin and Lavrov. "There will be a discussion, but I think we agree that Putin and Lavrov as far as the freezing of assets is concerned, that we will find a consensus here," he said. Asselborn said Russia would be hurt by the banks' measures and said even further sanctions were still possible, including booting Russia off SWIFT, the dominant system for global financial transactions. "The debate about SWIFT is not off the table, it will continue," he said. EU leaders largely agreed it was too soon to impose a travel ban on Putin and Lavrov because negotiating channels needed to be kept open.

For 3 more officers at Floyd killing, jury says 'guilty'

AP ■ ST PAUL

The three Minneapolis police officers alongside Derek Chauvin at the scene of George Floyd's killing offered a variety of reasons why they weren't to blame: Inexperience. Bad training. Fear of a senior officer. The looming threat of angry bystanders. A federal jury swept them all aside Thursday, emerging from two days of deliberations that followed a month of testimony to convict Tou Thao, J. Alexander Kueng and Thomas Lane of violating Floyd's civil rights. All three men were convicted of depriving Floyd of his right to medical care as the 46-year-old Black man was pinned under Chauvin's knee for 9 1/2 minutes while handcuffed, facedown on the street on May 25, 2020. Kueng knelt on Floyd's back, Lane held his legs and Thao kept bystanders back. Thao and Kueng were also convicted of failing to intervene to stop Chauvin in the videotaped killing that sparked protests in Minneapolis and around the globe as part of a reckoning over racial injustice. Floyd's brother Philonise Floyd called the verdicts "accountability," but added: "There can never be justice because I can never get George back." And Floyd's nephew Brandon Williams said he hoped the verdicts would change laws and policies to "protect people from these situations." He also said the

outcome "sends a message that says, if you murder or use excessive or deadly force, there's consequences that follow." Lane shook his head and looked at his attorney as his verdict was read. Thao and Kueng showed no visible emotion. Their attorneys declined to comment immediately afterward. Charles Kovats, acting U.S. Attorney for Minnesota, called the convictions a reminder that all sworn law enforcement officers have a duty to intervene. "These officers had a moral responsibility, a legal obligation and a duty to intervene, and by failing to do so, they committed a crime," Kovats said. Chauvin and Thao went to the scene to help rookies Kueng and Lane after they responded to a call that Floyd used a counterfeit \$20 bill at a corner store. Floyd struggled with officers as they tried to put him in a police SUV. During the monthlong federal trial, prosecutors sought to show that the officers violated their training, including when they failed to move Floyd or give him CPR. Prosecutors argued that Floyd's condition was so serious that even bystanders without basic medical training could see he needed help, but that the officers "chose to do nothing." The defense said their training was inadequate. Kueng and Lane both said they deferred to Chauvin as the senior officer at the scene.

Sensex, Nifty rebound tracking recovery in global peers

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A day after suffering their worst session in about two years, benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded up to 2.5 per cent on Friday, in line with higher global markets as the US and allies put up a united front to punish Russia with harsher sanctions over the Ukraine conflict.

A strengthening rupee and bargain hunting by participants supported the recovery, traders said.

Snapping its seven-day losing streak, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 1,328.61 points or 2.44 per cent to settle at 55,858.52. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty soared 410.45 points or 2.53 per cent to 16,658.40.

Barring HUL and Nestle, all Sensex shares closed with gains -- with Tata Steel, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finance, NTPC and Tech Mahindra surging as much as 6.54 per cent.

On Thursday, the Sensex had crashed over 2,700 points -- its biggest single-day plunge in about two years; and the Nifty had nosedived 815 points.

"Domestic indices staged a firm recovery tracking positive cues from global markets and took advantage of lower valuations following the massive sell-off in the previous session.

"Global markets took a breather as the fresh US sanctions did not

Russia's oil exports nor their access to the SWIFT global payment network. However, the market will continue to remain volatile



tracking new developments in the Russia-Ukraine war," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

On a weekly basis, the Sensex lost 1,974 points or 3.41 per cent and the Nifty gave up 618 points or 3.57 per cent during the week.

"...As it became obvious that NATO countries have no desire for an armed conflict and would rather use the path of sanctions, the risk perception has lowered marginally globally," said Nitin Raheja, Executive Director, Head - Discretionary Equities, Julius Baer.

"From an India perspective, the greater risk comes from the impact of rising geopolitical tensions on crude oil and commodity prices. If crude sustains over USD 100 it could create a negative economic impact in the form of rising infla-

tion and a deterioration in the current account deficit," he added.

All 19 sectoral indices bounced back on Friday, with realty, power, utilities, basic materials and industrials spurting as much as 5.68 per cent.

Smallcap, midcap and large-cap indices too surged up to 4.17 per cent.

Asian shares edged significantly higher on Friday, driven by a US rebound, as more sanctions were announced against Russia for its military actions in Ukraine. Bourses in Europe too were trading in the positive territory in the afternoon session.

The US, EU and Japan have vowed to support Ukraine and agreed on a second tranche of economic and financial sanctions on Russia, even as Russian forces continued their advance towards the Ukrainian capital.

Rupee rebounds 27 paise to 75.33 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated by 27 paise to close at 75.33 against the US dollar on Friday in line with regional currencies, following a retreat in crude oil prices and a rebound in domestic equities.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 75.31 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 75.18 and a low of 75.46.

The rupee finally ended at 75.33, registering a gain of 27 paise over its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee had tanked 99 paise to close at 75.60 against the US dollar, as riskier assets took a hit after Russia launched military operations against Ukraine.

Meanwhile, European Union leaders are putting up a united front and have agreed on a second package of economic and financial sanctions against Russia.

The dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, inched up 0.01 per cent to 97.14.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, was trad-

ing 1.07 per cent higher at USD 100.14 per barrel.

"Calmness returned to forex markets as participants assessed the fallout of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and focused shifted back to Federal Reserve. Weaker-than-expected US sanctions on Russia supported market sentiment..." said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

Rupee, in line with regional currencies, gained following a retreat in crude oil prices from an eight-year high along with rebound in domestic equities.

However, the bias for spot USD-INR remains bullish as long as it holds 74.80, while on the higher side 75.75 becomes the biggest hurdle, Parmar said.

On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 1,328.61 points or 2.44 per cent higher at 55,858.52, while the broader NSE Nifty surged 410.45 points or 2.53 per cent to 16,658.40.

Foreign institutional investors were net sellers in the capital market on Thursday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 6,448.24 crore, as per stock exchange data.

"On Friday, volatility remained low as market participants remained on the sidelines and waited for more clarity on the ongoing tension between Russia and Ukraine.

"From the US, focus will be on the core PCE index number and a higher number could support the dollar at lower levels. We expect the USD-INR (Spot) to trade sideways with a positive bias and quote in the range of 75.40 and 76.05," said Gaurang Somaiya, Forex and Bullion Analyst, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

According to Sriram Iyer, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities, the rupee appreciated against the US dollar tracking the strength of regional currencies and equities.

On a weekly basis, the rupee has depreciated 67 paise against the American currency, as oil prices spiked following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"The Rupee also took cues from weak domestic equities, which fell for the third consecutive week due to continuous selling pressure from foreign investors," Iyer noted.

Airtel to acquire Vodafone's 4.7% stake in Indus Towers if funds are used for VIL

Telecom operator Bharti Airtel on Friday said it has signed an agreement to buy Vodafone's 4.7 per cent stake in Indus Towers on the condition that the proceeds will be used for investment in Vodafone Idea and clearing its dues towards the mobile tower company.

Debt-ridden Vodafone Idea (VIL) has been unable to pay dues to Indus Towers and both VIL and promoter Vodafone have proposed a payment plan to clear the outstanding amount by July 15.

In the meantime, VIL has committed to pay certain minimum amount each month to Indus Towers.

"Bharti Airtel has...Entered into an agreement with Vodafone to buy 4.7% equity interest in Indus Towers on the principal condition that the amount paid shall be inducted by Vodafone as fresh equity in Vodafone Idea Limited (VIL) and simultaneously remitted to Indus Towers to clear VIL's outstanding dues," Airtel said in a statement.

Vodafone through its group firm Euro Pacific Securities has sold 2.36 per cent stake in Indus Towers.

After tough years, NBFCs to see stability in FY23; capital, margins, provisioning strengths: Report



PTI ■ MUMBAI

After years of enduring challenges, the non-bank lenders are finally set to witness a normalisation in FY23, a report said on Friday.

The non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) will start FY23 with sufficient capital buffers, stable margins and sizable on-balance sheet provisioning, while adequate system liquidity would aid funding, the report by India Ratings, a domestic credit rating agency, said.

The agency, which maintained a 'neutral' sector outlook and 'stable' rating outlook for the NBFCs, said its expectations will hold true in the absence of any negative event.

Credit growth for entities it rates will rise to 14 per cent in FY23 from 8 per cent in FY22.

Since the default by IL&FS in 2017, NBFCs have faced difficulties which only aggravated with the outbreak of the pandemic, which affected liquidity.

The agency said an expected increase in systemic interest rates and asset quality issues in some segments due to the lagged impact of pandemic would be a drag on the operating performance of NBFCs in the new fiscal year.

The sector has been facing increased regulatory oversight and push towards convergence with banks through various measures such as scale-based regulation, realignment in asset quality classification and Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) norm, it said.

The secured asset business for NBFCs may see a revival in FY23 with credit growth of 14 per cent, up from 7-8 per cent in FY22.

"The products such as loans against property, housing loans and vehicle finance could witness a higher demand than personal and unsecured business loans which saw a higher demand during the pandemic.

"Growth in the vehicle finance segment could revive depending on the availability of vehicles which are facing component shortage due to the pandemic, along with an increase in borrower confidence towards an economic recovery," it said.

The gold loan segment could see moderate growth in tandem with gold prices along with opening up of other financing avenues for borrowers. Loans against property would see reasonable growth as it would remain the prime source for borrowers to avail loans for working capital or growth capital, it said.

Meanwhile, on impending interest rate hikes, it said NBFCs would have to recalibrate their funding avenues. The credit costs are likely to normalise in FY23 even though the headline asset quality numbers can seem to be elevated, it noted.

Segments facing heightened delinquencies for non-banks are the ones where the customer profile could be the most vulnerable, such as two-wheelers, passenger vehicles, unsecured business loans, microfinance and heavy commercial vehicles, it said.

Oil retreats, still above \$100; no supply shocks for India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

International oil prices retreated from an over seven-year high but was still above USD 100 a barrel and continue to pose threat to India's inflation rate and current account deficit.

While there are no supply concerns as the oil route remained open, consumers will feel the pinch when PSU oil firms start passing on the increase in international rates through a revision in petrol and diesel prices, which have been on a pause for over three-and-a-half-months in view of elections in Uttar Pradesh and four other states.

The government is "closely monitoring the situation" and will "take appropriate steps as and when required", a top official said.

Brent crude oil surged past USD 105 per barrel on Thursday for the first time since August 2014, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. It however retreated and fell to USD 101 on Friday. It was trading at USD 101.93 a barrel at 1330 hrs.

The spike was a result of fears in the market of Russian supplies to Europe and rest of the world being impacted, a trader said adding the risk premium on the oil price right now is around USD 10-15. Industry sources said the gap between the retail selling price of petrol and diesel and the cost is well over Rs 10 per litre, which when passed on after completion of the elections next month would result in a spike in the inflation rate that is already above the RBI's tolerance level of 6 per cent.

Besides, high oil prices risk impacting the current account deficit as India imports 85 per cent of its oil needs and will have to pay extra because of higher prices.

Morgan Stanley said higher oil prices are negative for India, which is the world's third-largest oil importer.

Great Eastern Energy Corp Ltd (GEECL) chief executive Prashant Modi said the availability of hydrocarbons is expected to become a major issue worldwide.

"This is particularly concerning for a nation like India, which is heavily dependent on imports for its hydrocarbon requirements," he said. "This crisis is again a reminder that we need to urgently build a conducive policy environment in India to boost domestic production of oil and

gas."

Suman Chowdhury, Chief Analytical Officer, Acuit Ratings & Research, said, "As the global economy witnesses a drop in headwinds from the Covid pandemic, new geopolitical risks emerge from the Russia-Ukraine conflict and if it turns out to be a prolonged affair, crude oil prices are likely to stay above USD 100 over the near term."

This will clearly have an impact on the domestic inflationary scenario where there are already significant undercurrents due to increasing pass-through of higher commodity prices with improving demand in manufactured products and even services, he said.

"While the government can partly alleviate the pressures through a further cut in excise duties of retail fuels, input costs are set to increase further for sectors such as paints, chemicals, plastic products, transport and aviation in the near term."

India, the world's third-largest oil consumer, depends on imports to meet 85 per cent of its needs. The imported oil is converted into products like petrol, diesel and LPG.

Saudi Arabia, Iraq and other Middle East nations account for 63.1 per cent of all imports. Africa is the second biggest supplier, accounting for close to 14 per cent of all supplies while North America gives 13.2 per cent.

Russia makes up for a third of Europe's natural gas and about 10 per cent of global oil production. About a third of Russian gas supplies to Europe usually travel through pipelines crossing Ukraine.

PUBLIC NOTICE
TAKE NOTICE THAT the Sellers: Sri. Rajesh Kumar Sehgal and Smt. Deepak Sehgal are intending to sell and my Client Smt. NEHA AGGARWAL is intending to purchase the SCHEDULED PROPERTY free from all encumbrances. Any person having any claim or objection regarding said property is hereby asked to intimate the Undersigned within 5 days from the date of publication of this Notice, with all supporting documents, failing which any such claim shall be considered as waived.
SCHEDULE
Entire Ground Floor A-550, Ansal's Palam Vihar, Gurugram, Haryana.
For, Law Juris
(Yash Agrawal) Advocate
for the BUYER (+91-9871453392)

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to bring to the notice of the General Public that following documents in respect of Entire Third Floor with roof rights (Said Floor) built on Property bearing No. 03 in Block & Pocket No. E-3, area measuring 150 sq. mtrs in Sector-07 situated at Rohini Residential Scheme, Rohini Delhi owned by Mrs. Payal Gupta w/o Mr. Vijay Gupta & Mrs. Shikha Gupta w/o Shiv Shanker Gupta both R/O E- 4/115, SF, Sector 07, Rohini, Delhi have been lost. In case the same is found, it may be returned immediately to the undersigned:
Original Sale Deed dated 26/02/2002 executed by Mr. Gurbachan Singh & Mr. Harjeet Singh Chopra in favour of Mr. Yash Pal Anand in respect of said floor of the said property. (Doc. No. 16613, Vol. No. 2577 on Page No. 141-146)
Original Sale Deed dated 16/02/2004 executed by Mr. Yash Pal Anand in favour of Mrs. Usha Kumari in respect of said floor of the said property. (Doc. No. 13717, Vol. No. 4599 on Page No. 191-198)
All persons claiming an interest in the said property or any part thereof by way of sale, gift, lease, inheritance, exchange, mortgage, charge, lien, trust, possession, easement, attachment or otherwise howsoever are hereby required to make the same known to the undersigned at his office within 10 days from the date hereof, failing which the property would be considered as unencumbered and no objections will be entertained thereafter.
Adv. K. L. Bhardwaj
Progressive Law Group,
9/14, Third Floor,
East Patel Nagar,
Delhi - 110008
9871430462

PARADIP PORT TRUST
e-Tender-cum-e-Auction Notice
An e-Tender-cum-e-Auction Notice invites bids for "Allotment of Floors in Paradip Bhawan behind Port Trust Administrative Building for the period upto 31.12.2024 on lease basis" is available in the website from 24.02.2022 to 21.03.2022. Interested bidders may log on the website <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>
Sr.Asst.Estate Manager
PPT/PR/155/21-22 Dt.25.02.2022

PARADIP PORT TRUST
E-TCN No. EM/IOHP-03/2022
Name of the work : "Repair / Restoration of existing dust control and fire fighting system in IOHP". Estimated Cost : Rs.23,29,24,853/- excluding GST. Last date and time of submission of bid : Dt.14.03.2022 up to 18:00 Hrs. Refer our Website for details: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app> & www.paradipport.gov.in
Executive Engineer (Mech.)
Iron Ore Handling Plant
PPT/PR/154/21-22 Dt.25.02.22

GOVERNMENT OF CHHATTISGARH, WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER SHIVNAGAR CIRCLE (DURG) (CHHATTISGARH)
e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
eProcurement Portal: <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> (1st CALL)
System Tender No : 93591/NIT No : 42/SAC/2021-22, Durg, Dated : 24.02.2022
Online Tenders are invited for the following works up to 17.03.2022 at 17:30 Hour
Name of work :- CONSTRUCTION OF BANK PROTECTION WORK NEAR VILLAGE KHUDDUMA ON KHARUN RIVER IN BLOCK PATAN OF DISTRICT DURG.
Probable Amount of Contract: Rs.186.26 Lakhs
The details can be viewed and downloaded online directly from the Government of Chhattisgarh Integrated e-Procurement Portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) from Date 03.03.2022, at 17.31 Hours. (IST) onwards.
NOTE All eligible/intrested contractors/bidders are mandated to get enrolled on the Integrated e-procurement portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) and get approval on specific vendor class from PWD under Centralized Contractor/Supplier Registration in order to download the tender documents and participate in the subsequent bidding process.
Sd/-
Executive Engineer
R.O. No:- 68162/6
R.O. Date:- 25/02/2022
Tandula Water Resources Division
Durg (C.G.)

Crisil upgrades Vedanta's credit rating; outlook revised to stable

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Crisil on Friday said it has upgraded its rating on the long-term bank facilities and debt instruments of Vedanta Ltd to 'AA'.

Instruments with this rating are considered to have high degree of safety regarding timely servicing of financial obligations. Such instruments carry very low credit risk.

"Crisil Ratings has upgraded its rating on the long-term bank facilities and debt instruments of Vedanta Ltd ...To 'CRISIL AA' from 'CRISIL AA-', and has revised the outlook to 'Stable' from 'Positive'," it said in a statement.

"The short-term rating on bank facilities and commercial paper has been reaffirmed at 'CRISIL A1+', it said.

The rating action factors in stronger-than-expected operating profitability, driven by elevated commodity prices during fiscal 2022, volume growth across businesses, and sustained cost efficiency, especially in the

aluminium business.

While commodity prices are likely to moderate in fiscal 2023, from current spot levels, prices are expected to remain healthy. "EBITDA is thus, likely to be higher than expected, at over Rs 44,000 crore in fiscal 2022 (vis-à-vis around Rs 27,500 crore in fiscal 2021), and over Rs 40,000 crore in fiscal 2023, and aid improvement in free cash flow and return on capital employed over the medium term," it said.

Further, the management is expected to utilise the cash accruals to reduce the outstanding consolidated debt, and improve resilience to a decline in commodity prices.

"The upgrade in credit rating to AA/stable demonstrates superlative financial performance, improvement in corporate structure along with a sound capital allocation and balance sheet; the company remains well positioned towards sustainable value creation," Ajay Goel, Acting CFO, Vedanta said.

NATIONAL CONSUMER DISPUTES REDRESSAL COMMISSION
Under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986
Uphokhta Nyay Bhawan "F"-Block, General Pool Office Complex, INA, NEW DELHI-110023
Telephone No.: 011-24680801-04
Fax No.: 011-24651605
Consumer Case No. 1836/2019
ASHUTOSH KUMAR VERMA ...Petitioner/Appellant
Versus
M/S NINEX DEVELOPERS LTD. & ANR. ... Opposite Party/Respondent(S)
To
1. M/S. NINEX DEVELOPERS LTD THROUGH ITS MANAGING DIRECTOR, HAVING ITS REGISTERED OFFICE AT: GOPI RAM BUILDING KH. NO. 300, SANTANPUR VILLAGE, NEW DELHI-110030
2. M/S. NINEX DEVELOPERS LTD THROUGH ITS MANAGING DIRECTOR, CORPORATE OFFICE AT: SF-05, NINEX CITY MART, SOHANA ROAD, SECTOR-49, GURUGRAM-122018, HARYANA.
NOTICE
(Service By way of Publication of Notice)
Whereas, a Consumer Complaint No. 1836/2019 has been filed before the Hon'ble National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, New Delhi, wherein, you have been arraigned as opposite party No. 1 in the above case and, it has been brought to the notice of the Hon'ble Commission that despite service of Notice, you have not attended the hearing(s) in the case.
Whereas, the Hon'ble National Commission vide its order dated 20.01.2022 has inter alia, posted the case for hearing on 09.03.2022 directing the service of the hearing notice to the opposite party No. 1 by way of publication in two Local Newspapers.
Accordingly, take Notice of this Publication that the Managing Director M/s Ninex Developers Ltd is to attend the hearing in the above case on **07.03.2022 at 10:30 AM**, either in-person or through an authorized counsel or representative, failing which, the case will be heard and determined ex-parte by the Hon'ble National Commission.
Dated on this 04 February, 2022
By Order
(RAJESH NATH)
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR

fanatically for you
agranté
“KAVYAM” - AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT
Advertisement is invited to inform general public at large regarding cancellation of units of already allotted customers through the 1st draw of lots dated 24.06.2019, due to non-payment despite several reminders, in the Residential Apartments in the Affordable Group Housing Project Kavyam is being developed by Agrante Realty Ltd Sector-108, Gurugram, Haryana, as per terms and conditions of the policy prescribed by the Town & Country Planning Department, Government of Haryana vide notification no PF-27/48921 dated 19.08.2013 & amendments thereof (details available at the Department website, i.e. www.topharyana.gov.in).

S.No.	Application No.	TYPE	Unit No.	Applicant Name	Co-Applicant Name
1	2037	Type-1	TA5-102	Rohit	N/A
2	3209	Type-1	TA3-404	JUU Singh	N/A

It is to inform to all above allottees that it is last & final opportunity to restore the allotment after making the all dues till date within seven working days, otherwise it shall be considered as cancelled and the same shall be allotted to the aspiring applicants under the applicable provisions of policy prescribed by the Town & Country Planning Department, Government of Haryana vide notification no PF-27/48921 dated 19.08.2013 & amendments thereof.

Office address: Agrante Realty Ltd Unit No. 122 Suncity Trade Tower, Sector-21, Gurgaon-122016
CIN: U70101DL12013PLC248731
Contact at : - website: www.kavyamhomes.com; 0124-4769500-599, 8800499383, 8800499674

House of Multi Story and Liza Varma collaborated for a pop up fashion show recently
Pix: Pankaj Kumar

BARCA ADVANCES IN EUROPA LEAGUE

AP ■ NAPLES

Barcelona found its scoring touch again to reach the round of 16 of the Europa League with a 4-2 win over Napoli, while Rangers knocked out Borussia Dortmund in Glasgow.

Frenkie de Jong scored with a long-range curler and newly signed striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang netted again for Barcelona, which had been held 1-1 at home in the first leg. The Spanish giant has struggled badly in its first season since the departure of Lionel Messi and was demoted to the Europa League after failing to advance to the Champions League knockout stages for the first time since 2004.

Dortmund is also a Champions League regular but couldn't come back from a 4-2 home loss in the first leg as a 2-2 draw at Rangers saw the German team eliminated in one of eight play-offs between third-place finishers in the Champions League groups and Europa League group runners-up.

On a night when Europe was rocked by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Ukrainian midfielder Ruslan Malinovskyi scored a couple of goals to lead Atalanta into the round of 16.

Malinovskyi netted twice in a two-minute span in the second half for a 3-0 win over Olympiakos as Atalanta advanced 5-1 on aggregate.

After scoring, Malinovskyi lifted his Atalanta jersey to show a message reading "No war in Ukraine" on his undershirt.

Real Betis also advanced after a 0-0 draw with Zenit St. Petersburg that was enough for a 3-2 aggregate victory after the Russian team had a late goal overturned by VAR.

Ten-man Sevilla eliminated Dinamo Zagreb 3-2 on aggregate, Porto knocked out Lazio 4-3 on aggregate and Leipzig won 3-1 at Real Sociedad to reach the next round 5-3 on aggregate.



In the playoff matches to reach the last 16 of the inaugural Europa Conference League, Leicester advanced with a 7-2 aggregate victory over Denmark's Randers.

The other biggest teams in the playoff round, Marseille and PSV Eindhoven, also advanced while Norwegian upstart Bodø/Glimt knocked out Scottish giant Celtic.

EUROPA LEAGUE

Barcelona jumped out to a 2-0 lead within 13 minutes as Jordi Alba finished off a counterattack after a corner kick at the other end in the eighth minute and de Jong doubled the advantage five minutes later with a sublime strike into the top right-hand corner.

Lorenzo Insigne halved the deficit from the penalty spot before Gerard Piqué restored a two-goal lead in the final minute of the first half.

Aubameyang added the fourth in the second with his fourth goal in five games since a move from Arsenal, while substitute Matteo Politano netted a late consolation goal for Napoli.

James Tavernier netted both goals for Rangers, putting the Scottish side in front from the penalty spot and then netting the equalizer after Jude Bellingham and Donyell Malen had given Dortmund a 2-1 lead.

Portuguese side Braga won a penalty shootout 3-2 against Moldovan side Sheriff a 2-0 home win made it 2-2 on aggregate.

Willi Orbán and Andrés scored to give Leipzig a 2-0 lead and Emil Forsberg added the third from the penalty spot after Real Sociedad pulled one back through Martin Zubimendi.

Lazio striker Ciro Immobile returned from injury to score the opening goal in the 19th with a low shot past goalkeeper Diogo Costa, a minute after he had a goal disallowed due to offside. But Porto forward Mehdi Taremi equalized from the spot and Matheus Uribe gave the Portuguese team a 2-1 lead at Stadio Olimpico in the 68th. Lazio substitute Danilo Cataldi's goal in stoppage time came too late.

Mislav Oršić scored the lone goal for Dinamo from the penalty spot in Zagreb for a 1-0 victory over Sevilla.

EUROPA CONFERENCE LEAGUE

Midfielder James Maddison spearheaded Leicester's dominant display at Randers with two second-half goals within four minutes and Harvey Barnes also scored with a curling right-foot attempt from inside the box on the way to Leicester's 3-1 victory on the night.

After winning the first leg 3-1 in Glasgow, Bodø/Glimt dominated again at home with another 2-0 victory even though the Norwegian champions are between domestic seasons.

PSV held Maccabi Tel-Aviv 1-1 to advance 2-1 on aggregate while Marseille won 3-0 away at Qarabag to complete a 6-1 rout.

Slavia Prague earned a second straight 3-2 win over Fenerbahçe, Vitesse beat Rapid Vienna 2-0 to erase a 2-1 deficit from the first leg and Partizan Belgrade advanced with a 2-1 over Sparta Prague. PAOK eliminated Danish side Midtjylland on penalties after a 2-2 aggregate score.



No indication that Davis Cup tie will be held in bio-bubble

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The upcoming Davis Cup tie between India and Denmark won't be held within a bio-bubble but appropriate COVID-19 protocols will be followed during the March 4-5 contest, home team skipper Rohit Rajpal said on Friday.

India will host Denmark on the lush green grass court of Delhi Gymkhana Club for the World Group I tie.

There is a sharp dip in COVID-19 cases in the country and that must have encouraged the DGC and All India Tennis Association (AITA) officials to look for a less stricter arrangements although it remains a referee's choice.

"As of now, there is no indication that the tie will be held under bio-bubble. In the previous ties, we were in enclosed environment, staying and eating separately," Rajpal said in a media interaction.

"However, appropriate COVID-19 behaviour will be followed."

Asked why India chose to host Denmark on grass courts when the record of the hosts is also not very encouraging when it comes to statistics, Rajpal defended the decision.

"We also looked at the discomfort of the opponents. I am sure if we had travelled to Denmark, they would not have liked to face Ramkumar on grass courts. We had a long discussion with Yuki Bhambri and Rohan Bopanna also and we all agreed that grass is the best option," he added.

The India skipper rued that his side missed out on winning against Finland and Croatia but hoped that his players will be more consistent in future.

DGC administrator and Organising Committee co-Chairman Om Pathak said the entry will be free for the fans.

"We are building a seating capacity of 3800. There won't be any priced ticket. All tickets will be complimentary on first cum first serve basis," said Pathak.

Legendary Vijay Amritraj and former Davis Cup skipper Jaidip Mukerjee will be honoured during the tie for their contribution to Indian tennis.

Denmark does not have a singles player inside top-200 in the squad but Rajpal said they won't take anything for granted. They will be led by Mikael Torpegaard, ranked 278 on ATP charts.

"Rankings don't matter in Davis Cup. We are not going to drop our guard," said Rajpal.

It is expected captain and doubles specialist Frederik Nielsen, who is also 2012 Wimbledon champion will be available for the rubber.

Arsenal rallies late for 2-1 victory over Wolves in EPL

AP ■ LONDON

Arsenal kept its Premier League top-four push moving in the right direction as a last-gasp winner secured a 2-1 come-from-behind victory over Wolves.

The Gunners had looked on course to lose ground on the sides above them after gifting Wolves an early lead, but

Alexandre Lacazette's effort from a tight angle in the 95th minute was palmed into his own net by goalkeeper Jose Sa to complete the comeback.

Hwang Hee-chan took advantage of a poor back pass by defender Gabriel to score into an empty net in the 10th minute, putting Wolves on course to leapfrog Arsenal into fifth place.



But club-record signing Nicolas Pepe came off the bench to score his first Premier League goal of the season with a smart turn and finish in the 82nd. And Pepe turned provider in injury time, exchanging passes with Lacazette to set the French striker through on goal.

His shot appeared to be heading wide but deflected off

Sa's outstretched hand and into net to complete the turnaround for Mikel Arteta's side - which who now sits just a point behind fourth-place Manchester United with two games in hand.

For Wolves, it was the first time since November 2018 that it lost a league game after scoring first - a streak of 45 matches.

Chanu wins gold in Singapore

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Star Indian lifter Mirabai Chanu qualified for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in the 55kg weight category on Friday by clinching the gold in the Singapore Weightlifting International here.

Competing in the 55kg weight class for the first time, Chanu lifted 191kg (86kg+105kg) to stand on top of the podium in an uncompetitive field. The second placed lifter -- Australia's Jessica Sewastenko's best effort was 167kg (77kg+90kg), a whopping 24kg less than Chanu's.

Elly Cassandra Englebert of Malaysia finished third with a best effort of 165kg (75kg+90kg).

The other three Indian lifters competing on day one of the event -- Sanket Sagar (55kg), Rishikanta Singh (55kg) and Bindyarani Devi (59kg) -- also sealed Commonwealth Games berths. Having pulled out of the world championships in December, this was Chanu's first competitive event since the historic Tokyo Games performance last July, when she bagged India's first silver medal in weightlifting at the



Olympics.

"7 months of intense training and my never ending love for the sport continues to pay off as I qualify for the @CWG2022 in the 55kg and 49kg category," Chanu said after the win. "I would like to extend my thanks to our Ministry of Youth and Affairs, Weightlifting Federation of India, SAI and all the other stakeholders who have helped me reach here," she added.

Chanu had pulled out of the world championship to work on a

new snatch technique and head coach Vijay Sharma was delighted to see the progress the Manipuri has made in the section, which was once considered her weakness.

She comfortably lifted 81kg, 84kg and 86kg in her three snatch attempts here.

"We had been working on her snatch technique. And I am happy with the results, she has shown good progress in snatch these past seven months," Sharma told PTI over the phone from Singapore.

Tan Kim Her returns as India's badminton doubles coach

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Malaysia's Tan Kim Her returned for a second stint as the doubles coach of the Indian badminton team after the Sports Ministry on Friday approved his appointment for a five-year period till the 2026 Asian Games. The 50-year-old, who was India's doubles coach from 2015 to 2019, was tipped to take over the position which was left vacant following the departure of Denmark's 2012 Olympic silver medalist Mathias Boe after the Tokyo Games.

It was reported in December last year that Tan is likely to join the Indian coaching set-up with the Badminton Association of India waiting for an approval from the Ministry.

During his first stint, Tan had played a vital role in the rise of Indian doubles players Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy as they made breakthroughs on the Tour, besides winning individual silver and team gold at Commonwealth Games in 2018. "Satwik and I are happy that Tan coach will be back with us. We always look up to him as he paired us together despite our early hesitation because while we were similar, neither of us was confident of playing the front court," Shetty.

Medvedev to be No 1

AP ■ DUBAI

Novak Djokovic will fall from No. 1 in the ATP rankings and be replaced by Daniil Medvedev after losing 6-4, 7-6 (4) to Czech qualifier Jiri Vesely in the quarterfinals of the Dubai Championships.

Djokovic's latest stay atop the rankings began on Feb. 3, 2020, and his total of 361 weeks there are the most for any man since the tour's computerized rankings began in 1973. On Monday, Medvedev will move up from No. 2 for the first time and become the 27th man to reach No. 1. He won the U.S. Open last September and was the Australian Open runner-up each of the past two years.

Djokovic congratulated Medvedev on Twitter, saying the Russian was "very deserving" of the No. 1 spot.

Medvedev is the first man other than Djokovic, Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal or Andy Murray to be No. 1 since Feb.



1, 2004. "It's great for tennis, I think, to have somebody new at world No. 1 again," Vesely said in his on-court interview. "Tennis needs, of course, new No. 1s. A new generation is coming up. I think it's just great."

It was the 34-year-old Djokovic's first tournament since being deported from Australia last month for not being vaccinated against the coronavirus, preventing him from being able to defend his Australian Open title.

Paris replaces St Petersburg as Champions League final host

AP ■ LONDON

Russia was stripped of hosting the Champions League final by UEFA on Friday with St. Petersburg replaced by Paris after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The men's final will still be held on May 28 but now at the 80,000-seat Stade de France after the decision by UEFA's executive committee. "UEFA wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to French Republic President Emmanuel Macron for his personal support and commitment to have European club football's most prestigious game moved to France at a time of unparalleled crisis," European football's governing body said in a statement.

"Together with the French government, UEFA will fully support multi-stakeholder efforts to ensure the provision of rescue for football players and their families in Ukraine who face dire human suffering, destruction and displacement."

The meeting also decided that Russian and Ukrainian clubs and national teams in UEFA competi-

tions will have to play at neutral venues until further notice.

The Stade de France last hosted the Champions League final 16 years ago, when Barcelona beat Arsenal in the 2006 final.

The 68,000-capacity St. Petersburg stadium was originally picked in 2019 to host the final in 2021. That was postponed by one year in the fallout of disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The stadium is named for Russian state-owned energy firm Gazprom, which is also a top-tier UEFA sponsor of the Champions League and European Championship.

UEFA executive committee member Alexander Dyukov is the CEO of a Gazprom subsidiary.

The move comes as Russian bombs and troops pounded Ukraine during the invasion's first full day, and world leaders on Friday began to fine-tune a response meant to punish the Russian economy and its leaders, including President Vladimir Putin's inner circle.



Haas drops Russian sponsorship at F1 testing

AP ■ BARCELONA

American-owned F1 team Haas dropped the sponsorship of Russian company Uralkali on its car on the final day of pre-season testing in Barcelona where Mercedes and Red Bull were the fastest in action early Friday.

Haas' driving lineup includes Nikita Mazepin, the only Russian driver on the Formula One grid this season. Its decision to drop the sponsor came a day after four-time champion Sebastian Vettel said he would not race at the Russian Grand Prix in September because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "Haas F1 Team will present its VF-22 in a plain white livery, minus Uralkali branding, for the third and final day of track running at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya," the team

said in a statement. "Nikita Mazepin will drive as planned in the morning session with Mick Schumacher taking over in the afternoon." Mazepin has not yet spoken publicly after Russia's attack on Ukraine. He and team principal Gunther Steiner canceled media appearances Thursday. Mazepin's test run Friday was cut short because of a suspected leak. A coolant leak had reduced the team's time on track on Wednesday.

Haas receives significant funding from Uralkali and had unveiled a white, blue and red livery that resembled the Russian flag. The car Friday had the word "Haas" in big red letters on its side.

"No further comment will be made at this time regarding team partner agreements," the team owned by Gene Haas said.

India on course to wrap up series in Dharamsala

PTI ■ DHARAMSALA

Reinvigorated India will look to pocket their second series win in as many weeks and build on the gains made from a drastic change in their batting approach in the second T20 International against Sri Lanka here on Saturday.

India were forced to look in the mirror after their early exit from the T20 World Cup last year but four months later, they look a transformed unit with a bunch of youngsters being tried out in various positions and roles. It is still early days but the Rohit Sharma-led side has already figured



out the core group of players that will travel to Australia for the World Cup Down Under later this year.

Young opener Ishan Kishan got a massive dose of confidence in the series opener on Thursday after his struggles against the West Indies.

Finding strike rotation tough in the preceding series, Kishan was able to over-

come that weakness against the Sri Lankan bowlers besides flaunting the strokeplay he is known for in the IPL.

There is no time to settle in a T20 game and India have finally realised that, allowing them to post 180 plus totals regularly.

If it wasn't for Ruturaj Gaekwad's wrist injury, he could have opened with Kishan and Rohit would have dropped himself

down the order like he did against the West Indies. The same could happen on Saturday if Gaekwad is able to regain full fitness. Such is Rohit's class that he has not taken any time to find his rhythm after coming from an injury break.

He looked in sublime touch en route to his 44 but must be disappointed to not have carried on for longer. Shreyas Iyer

made merry at number three in the absence of the rested Virat Kohli and would be aiming to repeat that for the rest of the series.

When a full strength India take the field next, he might not find a place in the playing eleven and therefore, he needs to make the most of the opportunities that come his way. As Rohit indicated after the

opening game, a fit again Ravindra Jadeja will continue to bat higher up the order as the team wants to optimise his significantly improved batting skills.

"We want more from him that is why we asked him to bat higher. You will see that happening more and more in the games that he plays for India. I want him to bat up the order more.

"He is a very improved batter, so we will try and see if we can promote him going forward. We are very clear with what we want to achieve with him in white ball cricket," said the skipper referring to the all-rounder.

Comeback man Sanju Samson did not get to bat in the opener and he will be eagerly waiting for his turn at the scenic Dharamsala ground.

India are also getting better on the bowling front. They used as many as seven options, including Deepak Hooda, on Thursday and most of them did alright. Venkatesh Iyer was a tad expensive but took a couple of wickets.

It would take a special effort from Sri Lanka to end India's 10-match winning streak in the spiritual home of Dalai Lama.

With a misfiring top-order and absence of frontline spinners Maheesh Theekshana and Wanindu Hasaranga, Sri Lanka struggled to compete in the first game.

Even skipper Dasun Shanaka bowling after a while did not help as Indians looked unstoppable with the bat.

The weather is expected to be much colder in the night compared to Lucknow. With only a travel day separating the two games, the players will have little time to adjust to the conditions.

10 teams divided in two groups of five; each team to play 14 games

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The 2022 Indian Premier League will see a tweak in format as 10 teams will be divided into groups of five but the number of matches per side will remain 14.

As per groupings released by BCCI on Friday, group A comprises Mumbai Indians, KKR, Rajasthan Royals, Delhi Capitals and Lucknow Supergiants.

The group B will have Chennai Super Kings, Sunrisers Hyderabad, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Punjab Kings and Gujarat Titans.

Over the years, the IPL has been an eight-team affair where each team played each other twice at the round robin league stage to complete 14 games.

However this group league format is not new in IPL as it was once used a decade back when Pune Warriors and Kochi Tuskers Kerala were part of the league.

The rows and columns of the groups (A and B) has been done as per IPL performances --- number of titles and number of finals reached.

Firstly, the groupings have been done as per IPL performance where group A has MI (Team 1) with five titles as first team.



Correspondingly, in group B, the first team is CSK (Team 2) which has four titles.

Team 3 is again placed in group A and that is KKR with two titles and the corresponding Team 4 placed in group B is SRH with a sole title.

Team 5 again in group A is Rajasthan Royals (1 title) and its corresponding Team 6 in group B is RCB, which has played three finals.

Team 7 in group A is DC, which has one final appearance and two play-offs while corresponding Team 8 in group B is Punjab Kings with one final appearance.

Newcomers, Lucknow Super Giants is Team 9 in group A and Gujarat Titans is corresponding team 10 in group B.

Each team plays the other teams in its group twice, which makes it eight matches.

The balance six games they play against the five teams in the other group.

So for MI from group A will pay two games CSK which is its equivalent team in group B and one match against the other four teams. Similarly KKR, the second placed team in A plays SRH in group B twice and all other teams once. This is how teams attain (8+6) 14 group league games.



BCCI may ask Wriddhiman to explain breach

NEW DELHI: The BCCI might seek an explanation from veteran keeper-batter Wriddhiman Saha about his recent outburst targeting Board President Sourav Ganguly and head coach Rahul Dravid after being dropped from the Indian team as it feels he violated the protocols for centrally-contracted cricketers. It is learnt that Saha, who is group B of central contracts with an annual retainer of Rs 3 crore, is in violation of clause 6.3. "Player shall not make any comments about the game, officials, incidents that happened in the game, use of technology, selection matters or any other matter related to the game which is in opinion of the BCCI is adverse to and/or not in the interest of the game, team or BCCI in any media..." the clause states.

The specific comments that Saha made across media is on his selection and his private conversations with Dravid, chairman of selectors Chetan Sharma and Ganguly. "Yes, there is a possibility that BCCI could ask Wriddhiman as to how he spoke on selection matters being a centrally contracted cricketer," BCCI treasurer Arun Dhimal told PTI on Thursday.

The 37-year-old, whose international career has all but ended after he was told by the team management that the focus is now on grooming a younger keeper, has since also made public allegedly "threatening" whatsapp messages from a journalist without taking names.

Ishan credits Rohit for his batting turnaround

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Struggling for fluency in the previous series, young opener Ishan Kishan has credited India skipper Rohit Sharma and head coach Rahul Dravid for his return to form in the first T20 against Sri Lanka.

The left-hander, who failed to capitalise on his starts against the West Indies, finally lived up to his Rs 15.25 crore IPL tag with a whirlwind 56-ball 89 in India's 62-run win over Sri Lanka on Thursday.

"Always a senior player would want a youngster to be in a good head space. Be it (coach) Rahul (Dravid) bhai, Virat (Kohli) bhai or Rohit bhai, they all have passed this phase. They are aware how we feel when we don't perform well," Ishan said at the post-match media interaction.

"I didn't do well against the West Indies. They always told me that they know about my talent and what I can do for the team. We trust in you. Never ever you think that we are doubting your abilities."

"They always help you out with small, small things be it your batting grip or the attacking mindset."

The wicketkeeper-batter, who was bought back by Rohit Sharma-led Mumbai Indians at the recent IPL auction, scored just 71 runs in three matches at a poor strike rate of 85.54.

But skipper Rohit kept his faith in Ishan's abilities and retained him as an opener for the opener against Sri Lanka "After playing so much cricket, you



get used to the situation. Tough times will come but it's very important to be in the situation. You don't get too excited when you score runs.

"Same goes when you don't perform. So you need to be in a very good space. You need to talk to your seniors, because they are much more experienced than us. So it's very helpful when I sit with Rohit bhai for a conversation," added the 23-year-old, who scored his second T20I fifty.

Ishan revealed how Rohit helped him out at the nets to overcome his shortcomings to rotate the strike and take quick singles.

"He (Rohit Sharma) always keeps telling me that you can hit whenever you go out there in the middle. The important thing for me where I was erring was about rotating the strikes, and taking singles

"Obviously he has helped me out in

those areas, especially when I'm batting at the nets. He keeps telling me to try how to rotate the strike. You can hit anyway, but it's about rotating the strike and keeping the bowlers under pressure', he would say.

"When you get their full support, our job is to continue our disciplined life, be it the fitness, homework, or batting pattern we just have to continue."

Ishan further said he's blessed to have so many senior cricketers in the dressing room as they keep showing him the way.

"Senior players always help you out. It's not always about hitting hard, it's about going there and playing with the bowlers' mind and how to put him under pressure if he's bowling well at that point of time."

Ishan has been promoted up the order in absence of regular opener KL Rahul (hamstring injury).



PTI ■ SULTANPUR (HARYANA)

Ganesh Satish pummeled the Maharashtra attack into submission as his elegant 275 put Vidarbha in a commanding position on the second day of their Elite Group G Ranji Trophy game here on Friday.

Satish, who registered his highest individual score and his second first class double hundred,

RANJI TROPHY UPDATES

Ganesh Satish double ton floors Maha

took the Maharashtra attack to task as Vidarbha posted a mammoth 569 for 5 declared in their first essay. His previous best was 237 against Andhra in the 2019-20 season.

The right-handed batter, who walked in number four, played shots at will and round the park as he tore into a pedestrian Maharashtra attack.

He and wicket-keeper batter Akshay Wadkar (145 not out off 283 balls), who also notched up his seventh first class hundred, added a staggering 288 runs for the fourth wicket.

Wadkar, who notched up his second hundred of the season, played the perfect second fiddle, hammering 17 fours in his 283-ball knock.

Satish struck 33 fours and five maximums in his 482-ball knock before being cleaned up by experienced Maharashtra left-arm spinner Satyajit Bachhav (2/134), but till then the damage had been done at the Gurgaon cricket ground.

Akshay Karnewar (39) also played his part well. Wadkar remained unbeaten on 145 as skipper Faiz Fazal decided to declare the innings.

Sharma, Raghuwanshi put MP in driver's seat against Meghalaya

Shubham Sharma's stroke-filled 111 coupled

with Akshat Raghuwanshi's 100 firmly put Madhya Pradesh in a commanding position against Meghalaya on the second day of their Elite Group A Ranji Trophy game here on Friday.

After bundling out Meghalaya for a meagre 61, MP posted a mammoth 499 for 6 declared in their first essay, courtesy hundreds by inform Shubham Sharma, Raghuwanshi at the Saurashtra Cricket Association stadium ground 'C'.

Experienced campaigner Rajat Patidar and Yash Dubey also chipped in by scoring 86 and unbeaten 85 respectively.

MP resumed from their overnight score of 141 for 2 and Sharma, who played a vital role in the team's win over Gujarat in the lung-opener, hammered a listless Meghalaya attack, striking 15 boundaries in his 169-ball knock.

Patidar played perfect second fiddle, even as he struck 12 boundaries and forged a 131-run stand for the third wicket.

But then Aryan dismissed Sharma to peg back MP.

Patidar also missed a deserving hundred, as he was removed by Akash Kumar, leaving MP at 297 for 4. Skipper Aditya Srivastava (42; 4x4) also played his part to perfection.

Rana, Sharma lead Haryana fightback vs Punjab Skipper Himanshu Rana led from the front with his fourth first-class century as Haryana reached 204/3 in a strong reply to Punjab's mammoth 444 on the second day of their Ranji Trophy Group F fixture here on Friday.

Rana slammed 16 fours en route to his unbeaten 113 from 177 balls, while Yashu Sharma, who scored his maiden first-class century against Tripura in the last match, gave him good support at the other end with 69 not out.

Haryana were trailing Punjab by 240 runs at the end of day two's play.

Haryana had a jittery start and were 4/2 after losing both the openers Subham Rohilla (4) and Mayank Shandilya (0) inside the second over before the skipper rebuilt their innings.

Rana got a 50-plus stand with Shivam Chauhan and looked to carry on the momentum but Siddharth Kaul (2/49) Punjab gave another breakthrough.

Kaul cleaned up Chauhan (18) with the team's score at 65/3 and Haryana looked to slip again before Rana resisted the collapse, building a fine partnership with the in-form Yashu Sharma.



Erwee 108, Proteas 238-3 on day 1

AP ■ CHRISTCHURCH

Sarel Erwee responded to a Challenge leveled by his captain with a maiden century for South Africa on Friday against New Zealand on the first day of the second test.

Erwee's 108 helped South Africa to 238-3 at stumps and gave it insulation against a set-back late in the day when Erwee and Aiden Markram's (42) wickets fell within the space of three balls. Temba Bavuma was 22 not out at stumps and Rassie van der Dussen 13.

Proteas captain Dean Elgar threw down the challenge to his fellow batsmen Friday when he chose to bat on winning the toss on the same ground on which the tourists were dismissed for 95 and 111 in losing the first test loss by an innings and 276 runs.

Elgar made 41 in an opening stand with Erwee which was worth as much as South Africa's second-innings total in the first test and which was its first century partnership for the first wicket in 34 tests.

With a fine sense of timing,

Erwee reached his first half century just before lunch and his century in the over before tea, after exactly four hours at the crease.

"I think it means a bit to me but I think it means a bit more to the team and my family back home," Erwee said.

"It's nice to be in this position but there's still a lot of work to do.

"I wasn't expecting (to bat first) until Dean came up to me this morning. You get used to it, these decisions that come so quickly and I guess it's part of being an opening batter. You've got to be ready for these things and whatever comes your way you've got to throw a punch."

The pitch at Hagley Oval wasn't quite the seamer's paradise on which New Zealand's four-pronged pace attack thrived in the first test. But it was still green enough on the first morning for some commentators' jaws to drop when Elgar announced his decision to bat first and explained it was important for South Africa to "front up" in the second test after their failure in the first.

We have done half the job at IPL auction: Ness Wadia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Punjab Kings co-owner Ness Wadia feels they have done half the job by picking a "well-rounded" squad at the recent IPL auction and hopes the chosen players will do the rest to help the franchise bag the elusive trophy.

Punjab Kings have underperformed since IPL's inception, reaching the final only once in 14 attempts. They blew hot and cold in the last three seasons to end up sixth out of eight teams.

They went into the mega auction with the maximum

purse of Rs 72 crore out of the 10 teams, which doesn't provide any guarantee for a successful buying spree due in a highly dynamic environment, but their decisions were largely lauded by the pundits.

"50% of the battle is getting the right team, which is what we've done. Now it's up to the players, coaches Anil (Kumble), Jonty (Rhodes) and Damien (Wright), to really take us to that elusive title we have been waiting for so long.

"Or at least a place in the top four play-offs because we have had a bad run the last four-five years," Wadia told PTI.



Having retained only two players in Mayank Agarwal and young pacer Arshdeep Singh, Punjab managed to get the

To maintain some continuity, they also bought back the big-hitting Shah Rukh Khan and left-arm spinner Harpreet Brar besides getting Rishi Dhawan and Sandeep Sharma, who both played for Punjab in the past.

In recent seasons, Punjab struggled with power hitting in the middle-order and death bowling.

"We have well balanced squad now. We bat all the way down to eight or nine and have the bowlers who can do the job both upfront and at the death.

"I would say this was the toughest and most successful

auction for us since the first edition in 2008," said Wadia comparing the current squad to the 2008 batch which had the likes of Yuvraj Singh, Mahela Jayawardene, Kumar Sangakkara, Brett Lee and Irfan Pathan.

The co-owner said their preparation for the mega auction began in October last year and that included "intense" mock auctions.

"We had a very good idea of who we would be going for and we were pretty accurate when it came to that. And also, our objective was not to really focus on what others are doing.