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Air India lands up in Tatas' hands

Your arrival was much awaited, Tata Group tweets and asserts 'committed to making it a world-class airline'

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

After 70 years, the Tata Group on Thursday officially took over the Air India, Air India Express and Air India SATS. The Government transferred 100 per cent shares to Tata's wholly-owned subsidiary Talace Pvt Ltd shortly after Tata Sons chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Government also transferred the management control of the company to the new owners. This completed the process of the Government selling the debt-ridden airline to the Tata Group company. "Your arrival was much awaited," tweeted the Tata Group soon after the handover.

Expressing his happiness over the development, Chandrasekaran said Tata Group was delighted to have Air India back and was committed to making it a world-class airline. Ratan N Tata joined Chandrasekaran in expressing his "thankful recognition" to the Government and its various departments for the successful completion of this important transaction.

Later Chandrasekaran reached out to employees of Air



Air India CMD Vikram Dev Dutt welcomes Tata Sons Chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran on his arrival at Air India office in New Delhi on Thursday

PTI

AI will boom and help civil aviation sector grow: Scindia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India will boom under the wing of the new owners and the airline will pave the way for a thriving and robust civil aviation sector in India, Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said after the carrier was handed over to Tata Sons on Thursday. "It is indeed noteworthy that the disinvestment process of @airindiain has been brought to a successful conclusion in a time-bound

manner," Scindia said on Twitter.

This proves the central government's ability, and the resolve to carry out disinvestment effectively in non-strategic sectors in the future, he noted.

"Best wishes to the new owners. I am confident that the airline will bloom under their wings, and pave the way for a thriving and robust civil aviation industry in India," he mentioned.

Chronology of Maharaja privatisation

June 2017: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) gave in-principle approval to the consideration for strategic disinvestment of Air India and its five subsidiaries. A Panel of Ministers or Air India Specific Alternate Mechanism (AISAM) was constituted for this purpose.

March 2018: Government invites EoI from investors for buying 76 per cent stake in Air India, remaining 26 per cent to be with the Government.

The buyer was required to take ₹33,392 crore or close to 70 per cent of the beleaguered carrier's debt on its books.

June 2018: Government decides to go slow on Air India sale till oil prices soften.

January 2020: Government floats EoI for Air India privatisation. Government to fully exit Air India by selling 100 per cent. The deal would also include 100 per cent in Air India Express and 50 per cent in ground handling arm AISATS. The last date to bid was extended 5 times until December 14.

As per the EoI, of the airline's total debt of ₹60,074 crore as of March 31, 2019, the buyer would be required to absorb ₹23,286.5 crore.

October 2020: Government sweetens deal, gives flexibility to investors to decide on the amount of Air India debt they want to absorb.

December 2020: DIPAM

Secretary said Air India EoI received "multiple bids".

March 2021: Hardeep Singh Puri, the then Civil Aviation Minister said: "...There is no choice, we either privatise or we close the airline. We run a loss of ₹20 crore every day despite Air India making money now".

April 2021: Government starts inviting financial bids for Air India. September 15 last date to put in bids.

September 2021: Tata Group, Spicejet Promoter Ajay Singh put in financial bids.

October 8, 2021: Government announces Tata group makes a winning bid of ₹18,000 crore for Air India.

Modi raises Af, pitches for regional connectivity at Central Asian summit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday expressed concern on the development in Afghanistan and stressed on creating an "ambitious road map" for "regional connectivity and integration". The PM was hosting the first India-Central Asian countries summit.

The virtual event was attended by Presidents of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

All of them greeted Modi on the just concluded Republic Day as India entered the 75th anniversary of its Independence.

Stating that the diplomatic relations between India and Central Asian countries have "completed 30 fruitful years", the Prime Minister expressed his concern about the developments in Afghanistan and called for greater interaction between India and the Central Asia countries.

The Prime Minister said "regional integration connectivity and integration" is important and there is a need to "make an ambitious road map to have regional connectivity and integration".



"India has deep relations with all of the Central Asian countries. Kazakhstan has become an important partner in India's energy security. I express my condolences at the recent loss of lives in Kazakhstan," Modi said as he welcomed Central Asian heads of states in his opening address.

He said India and Central Asian nations share the same concerns and goals with regard to regional security.

"We are all concerned about the developments in Afghanistan. In this context too, mutual cooperation among us has become more important for regional security and stability," he said.

Modi said the summit has three key objectives. The first one is to make it clear that mutual cooperation between India and Central Asia is necessary for regional security

and prosperity. "I want to make it clear that Central Asia is central to India's vision of an integrated and stable neighbourhood," he said.

"The second objective of today's meeting is to give an effective structure to our cooperation, which will pave the way for the establishment of a platform for regular interaction among all stakeholders," Modi said.

He said the third objective of the summit is to prepare an ambitious road map for our cooperation, which will enable them to adopt an integrated approach for regional connectivity and cooperation.

The Presidents of the Central Asian countries in their address pointed to the age-old ties with India and its "unique civilisation".

Modi had paid historic visits to all Central Asian countries in 2015. Following this, there has been continuous high-level dialogue at bilateral and multilateral forums.

The first India-Central Asia Summit, the Ministry of External Affairs had said, is a reflection of the country's growing engagement with the Central Asian countries, which are a part of India's "extended neighbourhood".

Delhi lifts Covid curbs on mkts, cinemas, eateries can run at 50%

Night curfew to continue; call on reopening schools in next DDMA meeting

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on Thursday decided to remove the weekend curfew and odd-even rule for shops and malls in the national Capital. The night curfew, however, will remain in place. The authority also decided that weddings can be held with 200 people or 50 per cent capacity of the venue.

According to Delhi Government sources, cinema halls, bars and restaurants can also operate at 50 per cent capacity. Delhi Government offices will also operate with 50 per cent capacity.

A decision on the reopening of schools will be taken up in the next DDMA meeting. Thursday's decision on easing of curbs in the national Capital will be implemented after a formal order is issued to give them effect.

According to sources, experts in the meeting sug-



gested reopening of schools in a phased manner. In the first phase, schools from classes 9-12 should be reopened, then classes 5-8 in the second phase, and classes 3-4 in the third phase.

Delhi's Covid-19 positivity rate has dipped below ten (9.56) per cent. A total of 4,291 cases were reported in the last 24 hours from 44,903 tests. As many as 34 deaths were also registered.

The DDMA's meeting was attended by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, NITI Aayog member Dr VK Paul, Health Minister Satyendar Jain, DG ICMR Balram Bhargava and several top officials. Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal, who is the chairman of the DDMA,

chaired the meeting.

The Delhi Government has been trying for the reopening of schools. Hundreds of parents have joined #BACK-TOSCHOOL campaign and written to DPCR division. Delhi Education Minister announced on Wednesday that he will recommend the DDMA for reopening of schools in Delhi as education and mental health of students were being hampered due to the curbs. Delhi schools have been closed since December 28.

BJP leaders in Delhi also called upon Lieutenant Governor Bajjal last Tuesday demanding that the weekend and night curfew should be withdrawn, while odd-even restrictions should also be lifted.

PLA hands over missing Arunachal boy to Indian Army

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China on Thursday handed over the missing Arunachal Pradesh teenager to the Indian Army. The 17-year-old boy was now undergoing medical examination. He returned home after nine days.

Miram Taron was reported missing on Tuesday last week. One version claimed he was abducted by the PLA while sources in the Defence establishment here said the boy had lost his way in the jungles.

Announcing the boy's release, Law and Justice Minister Kiren Rijiju, who also hails from Arunachal Pradesh, said, "The Chinese PLA has handed over the young boy from Arunachal Pradesh, Miram Taron, to the Indian Army. Due procedures are being followed, including the medical examination."

He said the youth was handed over to India at Wacha Damai interaction point in Arunachal Pradesh and thanked the Indian Army for pursuing the case "meticulously with the PLA and safe-

ly securing our young boy."

The youth will return to his family after the completion of formalities in collaboration with the Army, police, health, and local officials, sources said here, adding all the Covid protocols have also been followed. The boy hails from Jido village in the Upper Siang district and was reported missing from Shiyung La in the Indian territory's Bishing Area.

India and China on Wednesday had talked to each other on the hotline regarding the teenager and it was indicated he will be released soon after the weather improves.

A day after he went missing, the Indian Army contacted the PLA and the Chinese informed a few days later the boy was in their custody. Giving an update on Wednesday, Rijiju had said China indicated the release of the 17-year-old boy and will soon share the date and time.

He had said, "Hotline exchanged on Republic Day by Indian Army with Chinese PLA. PLA responded positively indicating handing over of our national and suggested a place of release."

'Give booster dose to frontline workers'

Also to senior citizens on priority basis : CM

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Thursday asked the administration at all levels to fast-pace Covid awareness and underlined the need to administer booster dose for frontline workers and senior citizens on a priority basis. "While active Covid cases are stable in the State, new cases are dropping. It's good that there has no pressure on hospitals during the third wave. But this is no time to pat on back; rather, we



should remain fully prepared and alert," he said. He directed the administration to spread awareness on the pandemic involving the Mission Shakti groups. He advised police to ensure that people follow Covid protocols. Rapid response teams and field workers should supervise and keep a track of home quarantine patients, he said. Patnaik appealed to people not to panic; rather be alert and follow Government regulations.

State adds 5,901 Covid cases, 8 deaths

739 children among infected, 1,065 infections in BBSR

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State continued to witness a downtrend in daily Covid-19 positive cases on Thursday with 5,901 infections registered in the 30 districts and the State pool. The total tally stood at 12,31,169. Among the newly-infected were 739 children in the age group of 0 to 8 years. In the last 24 hours, 63,209 samples were tested and the test positivity rate (TPR) was 9.33 per cent. The active cases reached 70,327. Out of the new cases, 3,413 were reported from quarantine and 2,478 local contacts. Khordha district reported the maximum 1,430 cases followed by Sundargarh with 545, Cuttack 402, Baleswar 200, Jajpur 191, Nuapada 189, Balangir 184, Nayagarh 180, Kalahandi 168, Mayurbhanj 149, Kendrapada

144, Sambalpur 138, Kenjhar 128, Puri 117, Nabarangpur 113, Bargarh 102, Rayagada 101, Bhadrak 96, Ganjam 95, Angul 93, Deogarh 89, Kandhamal 86, Subarnapur 86, Jagatsinghpur 82, Boudh 78, Dhenkanal 73, Gajapati 69, Koraput 64, Jharsuguda 63, Malkangiri 55 and the State pool 291. Eight more persons succumbed to the disease, mounting the total death toll to 8,550. Three deaths were reported from Sundargarh district and one each from Baleswar, Khordha, Keonjhar, Koraput and Rayagada. However, 11,147 more patients recovered, increasing the total recoveries to 11,63,396. Notably on Wednesday, the State had reported 7,426 positive cases and 10 deaths. Capital Bhubaneswar registered 1,065 positive cases, with which the total tally in the city rose to 14,8020. The active cases were 11,298. One more patient died, increasing the total toll to 1,115. The city had registered 1,208 cases and three deaths on Wednesday.

In State 3,407 to vie for 852 ZP seats

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The final candidates' list of Zilla Parishad seats was announced by the State Election Commission on Thursday. There are as many as 3,407 candidates for 852 ZP seats. Of them, the BJD has put of 851 candidates, the BJP 848, the Congress 836, the BSP 159, the CPI(M) 72, the JMM 47, the CPI 38, the AAP 32 and the AJSU 12. Independents and others number 298 and 214, respectively.

Puri rape accused nabbed, sent to jail

PNS ■ PURI

In the case of rape of the five-year-old girl, police arrested the accused Mahesh Mohanty from a location near the Puri-Bhubaneswar border on Wednesday evening.

After medical examination, the accused was sent to jail on Thursday after being produced before the designated court in Puri. A police team engaged since Sunday went to the area and nabbed Mohanty. According to ASP Mihir Nanda, the location from where the accused was arrested has been kept a secret

to facilitate the investigation process. Notably, the accused had raped the minor girl after luring her to the terrace of a building in the Sidhabakula Math lane of Puri town when he found her alone in her house. He managed to escape from the spot when the girl's mother reached there after hearing her screaming.

Meanwhile, police accorded 'Red Flag' status to the case. "We are taking the case with all seriousness and it will be tagged as a 'Red Flag' case after a discussion with the Crime Branch," said Puri SP Kanwar Vishal Singh.

‘State has hit Covid 3rd wave peak’

But health official warns people to be cautious

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

With Odisha witnessing a declining trend in the Covid-19 positive cases over the last week, Public Health Director Dr Niranjan Mishra on Thursday said it seems like the State has touched the peak during the on-

going third wave of the pandemic.

Mishra said, “The State is reporting around 5,000 to 7,000 new cases daily. The single-day cases and total active cases are in a declining trend.” “It seems, as of now, the State has touched the peak of the third wave, but other countries have been hit by fourth and fifth waves too. So, exact prediction about the peak is difficult,” he observed. He further said, “As the transmissibility of

Omicron is very high, it is difficult to exactly predict when will the cases rise and fall. Therefore, people need to be cautious. Unless the daily cases come to the baseline, we have to monitor the situation closely.”

Experts are also of the opinion that the continuous decrease in the daily cases during the third wave of the pandemic is the indication that the State has already hit the peak and the graph is in a plateau state at present.

Property, hatred behind royal family murder

PNS ■ CUTTACK

Police on Thursday claimed that the Wednesday’s murder in the Kanika royal family at Sri Vihar Colony here under the Bidanasi police station was fallout of property dispute among siblings and also disagreement between mother and son over the latter’s marital life. Kanika scion Soumendra Narayan Bhanjdeo (57) alias Gopala had on Wednesday morning hacked to death his mother Paresk Kumari Devi (75) with a sharp weapon in their palace after a heated exchange of words between them. On the basis of a complaint by Gopala’s sister Jayanti Samantray, police arrested

the accused on Wednesday and forwarded him to court on Thursday.

Paresh Kumari was the granddaughter-in-law of erstwhile Kanika king Rajendra Narayan Bhanjdeo. Police believe that it was not a pre-planned murder. “It appears that the extreme act was the outcome of a fit of anger,” said city DCP Prateek Singh, adding that the accused was of the belief that his mother had ruined his marital life.

Denying that the mother-son dispute had earlier been brought to the notice of police, as alleged by the complainant, Singh said the brother and sister, however, had a dispute over the share of property and a case in this regard is pending in court.

Guv unfurls Tricolour in BBSR

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

As chief guest, Governor Ganeshi Lal unfurled the National Flag at the state-level Republic Day celebrations at Mahatma Gandhi Marg here and took salute during the parade on Wednesday.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik attended the event as guest of honour. In view of the Covid-19 situation, only 10 contingents took part in the parade, in which the BSF became a part for the very first time. The parade was commanded by IPS officer Rohit Verma.

As many as 25 platoons of police force and 70 officers were deployed to maintain law and order.

Shall not context 2024 polls: Prasad

Brakes down while clarifying his silence

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Former Pradesh Congress Committee president Prasad Harichandan on Thursday announced that he would not contest the 2024 elections as there has been a deliberate slander campaign against him in a section of media and political circle despite his best efforts to work for betterment of the Congress.

The three-time Satyabadi MLA broke down at his Press conference here while clarifying his position over the recent rumour of his joining the BJD, making a deal with BJD and knowingly abstaining from coordinating panchayat polls in his constituency Satyabadi. “I



shall continue in the Congress come what may. I was in politics; I am in politics and I will continue to be in politics even with renewed vigour.

I will continue to fight for people and interest of the State,” he said. Obviously referring to PCC president Nirajan Patnaik,

Harichandan, a former Minister of State for Home, said he has never been a businessman nor has he mines or a newspaper; so, there is no question of making a deal with anybody, the State Government or the Central Government to protect his business. He dared his detractors and even challenged anybody from BJD or BJP to tell that he is having a nexus with anybody. “If anybody proves it, I will leave politics forever,” Harichandan said.

He said the issuing of tickets for party candidates for the panchayat election in the Satyabadi area was the organisational responsibility of the PCC president. “The tickets reached me at the last moment. I said I was not in charge for this. Then, the PCC issued only one ticket for one candidate. The mess was created by the PCC and not me,” he said.

11 OAS officers made Special Secys

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Government on Tuesday promoted 11 senior OAS officers, including two district Collectors, to the rank of Special Secretary. This

decision was taken based on the recommendations of the Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC).

These officers were designated as Level 17 officials. Their recruitment would be made based on the

vacancies, said a release from the GA Department.

The officers are Abanikanta Pattanaik, Sudarsan Panda, Shiva Nrayan Nanda, Biswajeet Keshari Das, Saroj Kumar Mishra,

Sangram Keshari Moahapatra, Dr ABHAYA Kumar Nayak, Madhusudan Miahra, Dillip Kumar Ray, Brajabandhu Bhol and Sanat Kumar Mohanty.

BJP to guard misuse of panchyat funds

Comes out with manifesto

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

While releasing a party manifesto for the panchayat elections, senior BJP leaders on Thursday announced that the party would guard the funds sent by the Modi Government at the Centre.

BJP State president Samir Mohanty said the Modi Government has sent crores of rupees through the 14th and 15th Finance Commissions. Besides, the State Government is getting big chunks of money from DMF and OMBADC. The money meant for



panchayts should be utilised for development of infrastructure and people’s wellbeing. While describing the manifesto as ‘Ama Pratishruti Aam Sankalpa’ Mohanty said that in the name of ‘Mo Sarkar’ or ‘Mo Parivar’, the

BJD Government has deceived the people. The manifesto committed to strengthen Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha, stop PC Raj and empower Sarpanches and Ward members and Zilla Parishads.

It promised to upgrade and

streamline the mandi system, empower SHGs, install streetlights and deploy waste disposal system. It also sai the party would stop mortgaging of MGNREGA job cards and the spread of liquor and ensure clean and green villages.

Temps to dip in State from today

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The cold wave conditions are likely to return and sweep several districts of the State from Friday, predicted the Regional Centre of the IMD here on Thursday.

The IMD said that while dry weather is expected to prevail over the districts, minimum temperature (night temperature) is very likely to dip gradually by 3 to 5 degree Celsius during the



next three days in the State. The weather office also issued a Yellow Warning for cold wave conditions in the districts of Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Balangir,

Subarnapur, Sundargarh and Keonjhar on Friday. Similarly, A Yellow Warning for cold wave conditions was also issued for Jharsuguda, Bargarh,, Sambalpur, Angul, Deogarh, Nuapada, Keonjhar and Sundargarh on January 29 and Jharsuguda, Bargarh, Bolangir, Subarnapur and Nuapada districts on January 30, said the IMD.

Such conditions are likely to prevail in the districts till January 30.

SOCIAL CANVAS

Free PRI polls from money, muscle power



MANAS JENA

The local self-government is meant for realisation of grassroots democracy. The PRIs have been involved in addressing the most basic need of the inhabitants. Day by day, the institutional role of PRIs has expanded in terms of financial spending and for implementation of developmental activities ranging from primary education, health, hygiene and infrastructure expansion to social security measures for the most vulnerable sections.

Today PRIs are playing more meaningful role in identifying the beneficiaries for a host of schemes

run by the Central and State Governments and also for their timely executions. So there must be every effort to create an environment where the voters can freely choose representatives in the best interest of their locals. But there are news of violence and increasing role of money and muscle power in the election. This is not going to strengthen grassroots democracy and make accountable the elected leaders to the locals. Now in Odisha, it is a decent time for panchayat elections because of Covid-related restrictions over mass campaign that has reduced the election expenses in many ways. But informally, everybody knows that this kind of restrictions will have very less impact over election expenses. The fact is that candidates having money bag and support of ruling parties usually have more influence over the voters. The candidates from marginalised sections, having poor financial strength and social influences without any institutional financial support are facing a very tough time in managing the election expenses in a highly competi-

tive environment. In many places it is a competition among the unequal.

Mostly it is found that a good number of independent candidates without any institutional backing are facing challenge in many ways. The SCs, STs and women and financially poor candidates are relatively in weak position to give a fight at par with other contenders. The ruling parties have well-established official and non-official networks to reach to the voters while others have poor access or restricted access to the voters for a number of reasons. The poor people and beneficiaries of welfare schemes are easily trapped with attraction of freebies that are mostly used by the ruling parties with support of local administration, employees of welfare schemes since these schemes mostly under the control of the local MLAs and MPs. Along with poor economic status, existing caste and gender based social barriers in village society are restricting the free mobility of candidates belonging to socially deprived sections; even in many places it is being shared that SC candidates are not allowed

to upper caste hamlets for a dignified interaction and campaign. The restrictions over campaign activities of mass nature will affect them more especially in reaching out to a major section of voters.

Grassroots elections are building a scope to exercise political rights by every citizen but the reality is somewhat different. Many times the dominant narratives are being propagated to influence the mass mind such as the poor people should not contest elections or the candidates having no money bag or backing have very little chance to win. These statements are discouraging many genuine candidates to keep aloof from local politics and leave the affairs of local governance to the wish of the dominant people who are mostly representing the ruling parties. The distribution of liquor and narcotics to misuse our youths for petty short term gain is going to be disastrous for the whole society and we all have to pay a heavy price for it. The emerging sign of hope with grassroot democracy is that there are a good number of young inde-

pendent candidates, with higher education and from different social groups, who are contesting in the ongoing panchayat election. It will give a break to our continued traditional hegemonic leadership, dynasty rule, and make available alternative leaders before the people to make a right choice. It will encourage youths to get involved in local development work and in resolving many emerging new types of local issues. They will be able to use all their modern education and skill while applying for native’s development. Their participation can be a good training ground for them in realization of grassroot democracy and its ongoing practices.

In the long run this will influence to improve the quality of politics at large. The success of democracy and growth of a progressive society mostly depends on the political awareness of the masses. The corrupt leaders may offer bribe and encourage all kinds of unfair means to get vote but it is always the high moral value of the people that can save democracy.

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Drug shop loots : Inter-State gang busted

4 West Bengal criminals held

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

An inter-State gang, which was involved in looting money from cash counters of several medicine shops in Bhubaneswar, was busted by the Commissionerate police on Thursday.

Four members of the gang were arrested by the police. Cash of Rs 39,000, four mobile phones, two voter ID cards and an Aadhaar card were seized from their possession. Commissioner of Police Saumendra Priyadarshi said a special team led by ACP Sanjeev Satpathy was formed following a series of loots reported from Badagada, Nayapalli, Lingaraj Nagar and Kharavel Nagar. “Our special squad finally busted the gang and arrested four miscreants in connection with the heists. Significantly, all the accused

are residents of West Bengal. They were staying at a lodge near Ashok Nagar area and operating from there. They were also planning to carry out such loots in Cuttack when our team nabbed,” said Priyadarshi. While the prime accused Raju hails from Nadia district in West Bengal, Deepak Biswas, Sankar Dey and Sonu-are from North 24 Parganas. The modus operandi of the gang was to loot, especially medicine shops, by diverting the attention of the shopkeepers, he said. He further said, "During investigation, we found that the gang had earlier carried out such loots in Brahmaspur. We suspect there may be some more members of the gang. Our investigation was still ongoing." Priyadarshi has urged the traders and businessmen to remain vigilant during transactions and keep cash box locked.

Paradip Port to cross 115-MMT traffic again

PPT celebrates Republic Day

PNS ■ PARADIP
The Republic Day was celebrated by the Paradip Port Trust (PPT) With Chairman PL Harandh unfurling the National Flag and stating that the PPT is determined to cross 115-MMT cargo handling this fiscal like the previous four years. Mentioning about the path-breaking decisions by the Union Government for the port sector, he said that with over Rs 10,000-crore investment opportunity lined up, the Paradip Port is now the main driver for economic growth in the Paradip region. Over Rs 3,500 crore worth of projects for port modernisation have been imple-



mented. Further, development of the Western Dock at a cost of Rs 3,005 crore has been approved by the Government and is in tendering stage. On completion, this would transform the port with facilities to handle Cape-size vessels, Haranadh said. The Haridaspur-Paradip railway

line, which has recently been completed, is a major game-changer making the Paradip Port very competitive in international trading. Besides, the 8 laning of the Paradip-Barbil Road by NHAI would further improve the road connectivity to the port, he informed.

He gave a list of the several initiatives taken under port-led industrialisation. All efforts are made to beautify parks, creek side and walking paths, etc., to make Paradip a walkers' paradise. For the fishermen community, the port has undertaken lighting of the Fishery Harbour road and dredging of the navigational channel from the Mahanadi mouth. For fishermen, the port also plans modernisation and upgradation of the fishing harbour with Rs 100 crore under the PM Mastya Sampad Yojana, Harandh said. He then awarded prizes to the PPT Hospital for 52,000+ Covid-19 vaccinations, employees and Covid warriors of other departments and CISE, who have excelled in their respective work area.

Nabard felicitates tribal kids

On Girl Child Day

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) Odisha Regional Office celebrated the National Girl Child Day across five districts of Koraput, Kalahandi, Rayagada, Malkanagiri and Deogorh. The bank has been supporting various tribal development projects in these districts and 250 girl children of the project beneficiaries were invited on the occasion. Nabard has also identified and felicitated fourteen girls who have become inspiration for others in their area. CGM Nabard Odisha Regional Office C Udayabhaskar advised the girl children to focus on studies, nutri-



tional food and assured that the support of Nabard will continue in the project areas. Project Director, Odisha Community Tank Development and Management Society, Department of Water Resources, Government of Odisha, Madhusmita Sahoo was the chief guest and interacted digi-

tally with the girl children. She motivated the girl children and advised them about the importance of education and hard work to excel in life. Further, the Nabard also felicitated girl children of their support staff. All the District Development Managers of Nabard from 30 districts of Odisha also participated.

Massive fire engulfs Balukhand park

4 acre forest reduced to ashes

PNS ■ PURI
In a major fire on Wednesday evening, around four acres of plantations in the Balukhand wildlife sanctuary along the Puri-Konark Marine drive was reduced to ashes. Though the damages to wildlife were yet to be ascertained, sanctuary DFO Ramaswamy P said the involvement of some miscreants was suspected and investigations were on to unravel it. The fire started in Zone 13 of the sanctuary and gradually spread to Zone 14, which has dense casuarinas and mangrove forests covering a vast patch near the Beladala village under Puri Sadar block. Getting information,



Fire Service personnel rushed to the spot, but by that time plantations in four acres were burnt. Notably, the Balukhand sanctuary close to the seashore on the outskirts of Puri town, is a famous tourist destination for its deer and other rare species of animal, birds and aquatic species. The sanctuary spread over an area of 34 sqkm is also a nesting ground for Olive Ridley turtles. It had suffered severe damage in the 2019 Fani cyclone.

In Balimela Reservoir BSF launches boat ambulance service

PNS ■ MALKANGIRI
The Border Security Force (BSF) launched a 'Boat Ambulance Service' in the Balimela Reservoir for the people of Swabhimaan Anchal in Malkangiri district on the Republic Day on Wednesday. BSF DIG Sanjay Kumar Singh inaugurated the service by the side of Gurupriya Bridge. This will facilitate in providing emergency medical services to around 10,000 people of over 35 villages of the area. Recently, BSF DG Pankaj Kumar Singh, who visited the area, had realised that the people of the Swabhiman Anchal should be pro-



vided with medical facilities as patients face lots of difficulties to cross the reservoir to visit hospital in Chitrakonda. Though the State Government has built the

Gurupriya Bridge, most of the residents are unable to get ambulance service due to lack of roads to come to the main land. They used to carry ailing persons to hospitals on

slings or bamboo stretchers through forest areas. Swabhiman Anchal, popularly known as Cut-off Area, was created when the Balimela Reservoir was erected in

1977 which isolated 151 villages from the mainland. After the decades, the turning point came in 2018 when the Gurupriya Bridge was built, making feasible for the security personnel and the State administration to venture into the Maoist bastion with a vision of development in the region. The boat ambulance is equipped with oxygen cylinders, drip system, emergency medicines, a physician, paramedical staffs and stretchers. BSF officers will arrange the ambulance to shift the patients to the nearby hospital once they cross the Balimela Reservoir.

Asst Prof quits job, contests for Sarpanch

Wants to serve people of her panchayat

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA
Meet the 36-year-old MTech qualified Prajnaramita Kar. She was an Assistant Professor in an engineering college in Bhubaneswar but now she is in the election fray and put her candidature for post of sarpanch.



She has completed her BTech in Marine Engineering and later studied MTech in Mechanical Engineering. Later, she joined Bhubaneswar-based NM Institute of Engineering and Technology. She had been working as Assistant Profession in Mechanical Engineering Department for last 10 years. Kar has filed her nomination for Sarpanch post of Badakula Gram panchayat under Mahakalapada block. "Development of my panchayat is not up to the mark despite generous flow of Government funds through various schemes. There is rampant corruption. Time has come now to give my service to my fellow panchayat people. I have decided to enter politics to ensure the development of my gram panchayat and serve the

B'pur teen clubs celebrate Girl Child Day

PNS ■ BRAHMAMPUR
Adolescents through the 'teen clubs' celebrated the National Girl Child Day here on Monday. The members of the teen clubs organised meetings and rallies at different slums such as Uttaramukhi Street and Jagabandhu Street and other places to mark the event. Teen club members conveyed the importance and need of girl child to their parents and communities. The speakers in their

address said that, girls touch the heights with success in many sectors like science, technology, politics, defence and social work by innovating ideas that change human lives. But the irony is that the society still believes boys are better than girls. The gender discrimination creates many social problems like child marriage, child trafficking and violence against children and women. On the other hand, girls' education also not that encouraging in the society which is

due to the gender differences and poor infrastructure for girls in various institutions (e.g. unavailability of separate toilets for girls in schools), the speakers pointed out. They particularly highlighted the role of citizen and various committees like slum committees, youth clubs,

mother's committees and self-help groups and citizen committees like Gaon Kalyan Samiti, School Management Committee, Standing Committees of local self-Governments to highlight the issues, monitor public programmes and prioritise the needs and aspirations of the girl children.

VIMSAR Dir seeks voluntary retirement

Move stirs speculations

NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR
In a surprising but unbelievable step, Director of VIMSAR, Burla, Prof Lalit Kumar Meher has sought for permission from the State Government for voluntary resignation from his post. Although he has stated the reason behind his voluntary retirement

to be physical illness, the real reason is said and discussed to be something else. Unnecessary and undue interference from political angels and even higher authorities is said to be the reason behind such a step by Director Dr Meher, although he refuses such assumption. "My physical illness doesn't permit me to hold such a responsible post," said Dr Meher in an exclusive interview. But the people of the region know 'what is what' in VIMSAR since they are well aware of the state

of affairs here based on their past experience. But it is a fact that Dr Meher is quite a gentle but strong administrator. At the same time, he is also a skilled medicine specialist whom patients and their attendants rely upon. In the month of October last year, Dr Meher, for the first time, applied for voluntary retirement. But the State Government took no step on it. Hence, he has sent it to the State Government for the second time this week with request to consider his case on health grounds.

He has sent a copy of his request letter to the Governor of the State whose office has also forwarded it to the State Government for consideration. "I have served the people of the State for 35 years with all sincerity. The people also realize it very well. But my health condition doesn't permit me to continue further and particularly in the chair of an administrator," he wrote. It needs to be mentioned that normally Dr Meher will retire in February 2023.

In Jharsuguda 1 killed in factory cylinder blast

PNS ■ JHARSUGUDA
A security guard was burnt alive and three other persons were injured when an oxygen cylinder exploded at a sponge iron factory at Patrapali under the Kolabira police station in Jharsuguda district late on Wednesday night. All the injured were admitted to the District Headquarters Hospital. According to the Jharsuguda SDPO Nirmal Mohapatra, a fire engulfed the Klin 2 of the Jay Hanuman Udyo about

2.00 am and spread to nearby areas. Spotting the fire, the security guards tried to control the fire but an industrial oxygen cylinder exploded. A security guard Sailsesh Sahu died at the spot. Three other security personnel sustained burn injuries and were shifted to the DHH.

Leopard kills 2 deer in Harishankar park

PNS ■ BALANGIR
Panic spread among the locals in and around the Harishankar temple near Khaprakhol in the district following the killing of two deer in the deer park by a leopard. While forest officials are on their toes after a leopard entered into the enclosure of the deer park, people are frightened over movement of the leopard. Bolangir DFO Nitish Kumar said that while a joint investigation was on by the Forest and Veterinary Departments to ascertain the cause of the deer's death, eight solar street lights have been installed in the deer park area and the whole premises is already under CCTV surveillance round the clock. Kumar assured the people that forest officials are keeping a tab on the leopard's movement and steps are being taken to give a safe passage to the leopard.

Panchayat polls in Dhinkia next yr

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR
The State Election Commission (SEC) has stated that elections to the post of Sarpanch of Dhinkia gram panchayat in Jagatsinghpur District will be held next year. SEC Secretary RN Sahu also said that polls to the 23 Ward Members in the area would be held in 2023. The tenure of Dhinkia GP would be over in 2023 as the last elections were held in 2018, the SEC informed.

The election to Dhinkia panchayat had been delayed by over two years and was held in 2018 due to the agitation against the Posco steel project. Later the company abandoned its project. Recently, Dhinkia was in news due to an agitation by villagers against the proposed steel plant project of JSW and police excesses on them. Notably, the three-tier panchayat election will be held elsewhere in the State in five phases from February 16, 2022.

In Jaleswar

Man disappears, leaving letter for family

Says not to search him as he has incurable disease

UBACHAK MOHANTY ■ BALESWAR
An unfortunate incident has shattered a family of Jaleswar after it found a handwritten letter of a missing member urging them not to search him. Uttam Kumar Panda (35) of Sorisa village was working as a lab assistant in a Haryana-based medicine company. He had come on leave on Friday to his home. However, he on Sunday afternoon went



out stating he was going to withdraw cash from a nearby ATM kiosk. When he didn't return till 8 in evening, his family members made calls to his phones which went unanswered. The worried family members later found a handwritten letter by Uttam for his wife on his bed. In the letter he mentioned that he was suffering from an incurable disease and won't recover since it was in an advanced stage. He wrote that the money he had could be spent for education of his daughter instead of futile spending on his treatment. Panda has a one year old daughter besides his

wife and father and mother. Although the father of the missing lodged a complaint with the local police outpost at Nampo yet he couldn't be traced till date. The financial condition of Uttam was not sound and his father eked out a living by performing house-to-house puja rituals. Although he had not disclosed any of his family members about his ailments, yet he reportedly said to one of his friends that he was suffering from cancer. The police after registering a missing case have launched a search for him at various places by circulating his photographs.

246 militants surrendered, says Assam CM

Two Barak Valley outfits to lay down arms in Feb: Himanta

Guwahati: A total of 246 militants of United Gorkha People's Organisation (UGPO) and Tiwa Liberation Army (TLA) formally surrendered before Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Thursday. Welcoming the 169 UGPO and 77 TLA insurgents into the mainstream, Sarma said that two more Bru-Reang militant outfits in Barak Valley will lay down arms in February. Speaking at a formal arms-laying ceremony, the chief min-

ister said that ULFA (Independent) and Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) will then be the only remaining active insurgent groups in the state. "Two Bru-Reang groups in the Barak Valley will surrender in the coming days. We will try to settle them by February," he said. A senior police officer, who is involved in the surrender process of the militants, told PTI that the chief minister referred to the Bru Revolutionary Army Union (BRAU) and United Democratic Liberation Front (UDLF). The UGPO and TLA militants deposited 277 firearms of various types, 720 cartridges and grenades in front of Sarma. **PTI**

TMC to make IAS Rules issue in Budget session

Likely to move resolution in RS seeking removal of Bengal Gov

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress is going to raise a host of 'contentious issues' in parliament in the upcoming Budget Session, inside sources said quoting Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has directed her MPs to raise the issue of proposed amendment of Indian Administrative Services (cadres) rules in Parliament, the party sources on Thursday said. Banerjee who on Thursday had called a meeting of TMC MPs ahead of the Budget Session is known to have chalked out a battle plan for her MPs guiding them on how to raise various issues including "the most contentious" issue related to the mandatory dep-

utation of IAS officers in Delhi. Claiming that proposed amendment of the IAS Cadre Rules, 1954 would disturb the federal structure of the country compelling the State Governments to release the bureaucrats once they are asked to do so by the Centre, Banerjee earlier said that the proposed amendment is "against spirit of cooperative federalism and that it upsets harmonious arrangement between Centre and States in the matter of posting of IAS and IPS officers." In her letter written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the issue, Banerjee earlier said, "I express my strong reservations to the approach followed by the Central Government in proposing such an amendment to the Cadre Rules which unilaterally mandates the State Government to make such a number of officers available for deputations prescribed under (the) central deputation reserve." Apart from the IAS issue the TMC is also likely to raise other issues regarding "some Bills sent by the State and have



been lying pending with the Centre," sources said. Besides, the party is also likely to move a resolution in Rajya Sabha seeking withdrawal of Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar who has not been in good terms with the Chief Minister. The two sides have been at loggerheads ever since the Governor assumed office in 2019. The Chief Minister is personally likely to take up the issue and start a movement demanding the Governor's removal from Bengal, sources said. With the Governor often

raising issues like increasing violence, lack of model political culture, alleged politicization of bureaucracy and disregard for the gubernatorial chair the Bengal ruling outfit have often accused Dhankhar of converting the Raj Bhavan into a BJP party office. One such war of words ensued on Thursday when Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari attacked the Chief Minister for subverting the dignity of her chair ... she has been conducting herself in most undignified manner. He earlier said how during the Republic Day Parade in Kolkata

she broke the protocol by not proceeding to receive the Governor who was the Chief Guest. "Outrageous protocol violation by CM... She did not receive Hon'ble Governor at Republic Day function. But he showed grace by walking together and greeting her on this special National day. Her conduct left much to be desired and goes against the propriety and culture of WB", Adhikari said adding "the office of the Chief Minister has been disgraced like never before." Adhikari staged a short dharna at a Vikas Bhavan that houses Education Ministry demanding early opening of the educational institutions. "The TMC Government has opened bars, liquor shops, malls and even allowed weddings with 200 people but has kept the educational institutions closed ... this is because they do not want educated people in Bengal as after getting education they will want jobs which the Government cannot create," Adhikari said.

Padma Award for Azad not on merit: Cong

Bengaluru: Senior Congress leader M Veerappa Moily said on Thursday the Narendra Modi Government's decision to confer Padma Bhushan on Ghulam Nabi Azad was a political one and not based on merit. He said the former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister should not accept the award if he thinks that it harms the interest of the Congress party. "Narendra Modi took a political decision," Moily told PTI here. "They have taken a decision politically; not weighing on any merit or otherwise. Now, it's for him (Azad) to take a decision (on whether to accept or decline the award). The former Union Minister, who was among the Congress group of 23 leaders who wrote to the party chief Sonia Gandhi in 2020 seeking internal reforms, said Azad should think whether it's in the interest of the party or not before accepting it. **PTI**

Kerala HC acquits ultras in Kozhikode twin blast case

Court quashes life sentence in blast that shook Kozhikode in March 2006

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on

Thursday acquitted two alleged extremists of all charges in connection with the twin blast cases that shook Kozhikode city on 3rd March 2006. Judges Vinod K Chandran and AA Ziyad Rehman quashed the life sentences slapped on Thadiyantevida Nazeer and Shafaz by the NIA special court and set them free. The twin blast cases which was investigated by the Kerala

Police was transferred to the National Investigating Agency in 2009 which arrested Nazeer and Shafaz along with other accused persons. The prosecution charge was that the accused resorted to the twin blasts following the denial of bail to the persons who were arrested for the 2003 Maradu massacre in which eight Hindu fishermen were slaughtered by a group of per-

sons. While allowing the appeal filed by Nazeer and Shafaz questioning the trial court verdict, the High Court came down heavily on the NIA for its lopsided investigation. "The case has been set up by the prosecution merely on surmises and conjectures, which the Trial Court swallowed without further ado and throwing to the winds the funda-

Twin blast case was transferred to the National Investigating Agency in 2009 which arrested Nazeer and Shafaz along with other accused persons

mental principles of criminal jurisprudence. It is pointed out that the charge under the Explosive Substances Act could not have been levelled, since

the Act provides a consent of the District Magistrate, from the year 2001 onwards, which has not been obtained," said the judges. The NIA came under scathing attack by the Division Bench. "The investigation agency has carried out no investigation and has put words into the mouth of the accused, recorded them as disclosure statements, which is the only

basis of the conviction. The conduct of the Court below is seriously assailed for having not considered the objections raised by the defence, in the course of chief-examination regarding the admissibility of the confessions; which are quite a few in number," they said. The Division Bench also pointed out that the seventh accused turned approver and

the NIA's allegations were based on his statement. "The only evidence before Court was that of the approver and the lack of identification demolishes the prosecution case. There were four persons in the dock and each should have been identified separately by pointing them out from the dock by their position, dress or stand-out features," said the judges.

All Cong corporators join NCP ahead of Malegaon civic polls

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a political coup of sorts pulled off by the Sharad Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) ahead of the Malegaon Municipal Corporation (MMC) elections, all the 28 Congress corporators – including current Mayor Tahera Shaikh Rashid – on Thursday defected to the NCP, thus causing an earthquake in the State Congress. In a development that that diminished the Congress in the Muslim-dominated town in north Maharashtra but also brought about strains in the NCP and Congress which are constituents in the Shiv Sena-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), the 28 Congress corporators joined the Sharad Pawar-led party in the presence of Deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, state party president Jayant Patil, senior minister Chhagan Bhujbal and Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik. At a function held at the state party quarters in south Mumbai, Malegaon Mayor Tahera Shaikh, her husband, former MLA and current cor-

porator Rashid Shaikh and 26 corporators entered the NCP, taking the NCP's strength from the 20 corporators to 48 corporators. Hitherto, the Congress and NCP were ruling the MMC as an alliance. Informed sources said that Thursday's mass-defection was an off-shoot of the resignation tendered by Rashid Shaikh as the Malegaon Congress president last year. Though the State Congress had thought that the crisis triggered by Shaikh's resignation had blown over, his wife and MMC Mayor Tahera Shaikh dropped the bombshell on the Sonia Gandhi-led party and led the entire team of disgruntled party corporators into the NCP. Though jolted to the core, Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole sought to underplay the development, by saying this kind of defections did happen in politics and that some people from the NCP would soon be joining his party. "Some persons from Congress have joined the NCP. Similarly, a few people from NCP will also be joining us. But, I am not revealing details

now. We may be in alliance in MVA, but this is after all politics," Patole said. With the defection of the 28 Congress corporators to the NCP, the political arithmetic has vastly changed in the powerloom town of Malegaon in general and the MMC in particular in the run-up of the local civic body polls scheduled to be held next month. Prior to the defection of the 28 Congress corporators to the NCP, the party-wise break-up in the MMC was as follows: Congress 28, NCP 20, Shiv Sena 12, BJP 9, AIMIM 7 and JD(S) 7. But, post- en masse defection of corporators from Congress to the Congress, the Sharad Pawar-led party's strength has gone to 48, while the Congress reduced to zero. Earlier, welcoming 28 Congress corporators to his party fold, deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar recalled that Rashid Shaikh, who was elected to the State Assembly in 1999, was taking along with him all sections of the society in Malegaon. "Our party president Sharad Pawar has believed and practised inclusiveness in politics.

‘Panchayati Raj laws need amendments’

Kerala Ex-Panchayati Raj Secy seeks to strengthen local govt system

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

India's Panchayath Raj laws Ineed urgent amendments and reforms to make the local government system more effective and strong, according to S M Vijayanand, Chairman, Kerala's Finance Commission. Vijayanand, former chief secretary to Government of Kerala who is the longest serving Panchayath Raj Secretary in the State, wanted the system of 50 per cent reservation of local government seats for women and scheduled caste/scheduled tribe should be reformed at the earliest. Interactions with those who get elected to the local government bodies under these categories revealed the truth that they were not at all interested in taking up major works in their wards. This is because the reservation of the ward from where they get elected would become general ward in the subsequent election and the chances of them getting re-elected become bleak. A member should get minimum tenure of two terms to undertake major initiatives," Vijayanand told a congregation of senior lawyers, judges,

Panchayat raj members in a seminar held to mark the conclusion of the ninth and last workshop organized by CG3 (Connecting Governed, Governing and Governance), an initiative launched to empower local body members to take up causes for their electorate. The veteran IAS officer, who is rated as one of the master brains in the country in the system of decentralisation of power reiterated that those in power dare to bring in anti-people measures because of the failure of Grama Sabhas and Ward Committees which he described as the Basic Units of The Republic. "What former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi dreamt was transferring power to people. He had visualised Grama Sabhas and Ward Committees as institutions which were as important as legislatures and parliament. If these Grama Sabhas and Ward Committees do not succeed, the concept of decentralisation too fail," said Vijayanand. While exhorting the local body members to reject populism, he said they could play a major role in eliminating cor-

ruption. "Always bear in mind the fact that local self governments are part of federalism. The Panchayath Raj institutions should have the power and right to tax," he said. According to Vijayanand, Kerala would not have experienced the deluge and landslides it suffered since 2018 had the local self governments made use of their power and freedom effectively. "The massive floods and landslides in the State were fall out of the failure to implement the recommendations of the Madhav Gadgil Committee that was constituted to preserve the sanctity of the Western Ghats, the water tower of South India. Massive deforestation and quarrying had almost robbed the Ghats of its rain forests. The Local Self bodies in Kerala which had the power to accept the recommendations of Madhav Gadgil Committee in totality failed to do so because of the intervention of vested interests. Had these local bodies put their foot down, the State administration would not have been able to over rule them," he said.

Kylasanadha Pillay, senior advocate, Supreme Court, who conceived the concept of CG3 disclosed that LAMP (Legal Awareness and Motivation Programme), a mission to take legal awareness to schools and students have found takers from Kayamkulam in Kerala to Nepal. "Though the workshop for Panchayath members has concluded, we are launching the next step of CG3. The members of urban local bodies would be trained in taking up the causes of the people," said Dr Pillay. The Kerala Institute of Local Administration under the Kerala Government has extended a hand of cooperation and collaboration with the CG3 and this is expected to turn a new page in the history of local governance in the State.

Jammu-Srinagar highway closed for 2nd day after fresh landslide

Jammu: The Jammu-Srinagar national highway was closed for vehicular traffic for the second consecutive day on Thursday due to a landslide in Ramban district, sources said. The 270-km-long stretch, the only all-weather road linking Kashmir with the rest of the country, was blocked by a landslide in the Panthiyal area in Ramban, they said. As a result, hundreds of vehicles are stranded at different points on the highway, they added. Men and machinery have been deployed to clear the area for the traffic, the sources said. The highway was closed on Wednesday after a landslide in the Duggi area of the district. **PTI**

ABVP seeks resumption of classes in all edu institutions, holds demonstration in Kolkata



Kolkata: Activists of the ABVP on Thursday staged a demonstration outside the main campus of the Calcutta University demanding that schools, colleges and universities be reopened in the interest of students. Saptarshi Sarkar, the national secretary of the right-wing students' organisation, told PTI that its activists had gathered near the main gate of Calcutta University's college street campus to hold a peaceful demonstration, but the police forced them to vacate the spot. "The area was suddenly cordoned off by the police. Out activists did not get into any confrontation and left the spot. A woman member of the outfit was, however, injured in the melee," Sarkar said. Sarkar said the demonstrators demanded resumption

of classes in schools, colleges and universities, given the fact that the COVID-19 situation was showing signs of improvement and "everything else from malls to restaurants and bars are in operation". Describing the state government's 'Paray Sikshalay' initiative as a "farce", he said normal classes should resume at the earliest as "students had been suffering for about two years". Under the 'Paray Sikshalay' project, the state government has decided to hold classes in the open for pre-primary and primary students of state-run schools. A Kolkata Police officer said around 50 ABVP activists, who had assembled before the CU main gate around 2 pm, were dispersed without the use of any force. **PTI**



Shankaracharya Swami Narendranand Saraswati, Akhara Parishad General Secretary Hari Giri Maharaj pose for photographs after offering prayers on the banks of Ganga river, during the ongoing Magh Mela festival in Prayagraj on Thursday **PTI**

Biting cold in Gulmarg as mercury dips in Valley

Summer capital Srinagar records minus 1.3 degrees temp

Srinagar: The minimum temperature across Kashmir plunged below the freezing point with the tourist resorts of

Gulmarg and Pahalgam reeling under extreme cold, officials said here on Thursday. Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, recorded a low of minus 1.3 degrees Celsius – down from 1.3 degrees Celsius the previous night, they said. Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 10 degrees Celsius – slightly up from minus 10.4

degrees Celsius the previous night. Pahalgam, which also serves as the base camp for the annual Amarnath yatra, recorded a low of minus 10.9 degrees Celsius – down from the previous night's minus 5.6 degrees Celsius, they said. The officials said Qazigund recorded a minimum of minus 0.2 degrees Celsius, while the

nearly south Kashmir town of Kokernag recorded a low of minus 4.3 degrees Celsius. The minimum temperature in Kupwara in north Kashmir settled at a low of minus 3.4 degrees Celsius. Kashmir valley is currently under the grip of the 40-day harshest winter period known as 'Chilla-i-Kalan' which began

on December 21 last year. 'Chilla-i-Kalan' is a period when a cold wave grips the region and the temperature drops considerably leading to the freezing of water bodies including the famous Dal Lake here as well as the water supply lines in several parts of the valley. The chances of snowfall are

the most frequent and maximum during this period and most areas, especially in the higher reaches, receive heavy to very heavy snowfall. The 'Chilla-i-Kalan' will end on January 31, but the cold wave continues even after that in Kashmir with a 20-day-long 'Chillai-Khur'd' (small cold) and a 10-day-long 'Chillai-Bachha' (baby cold). **PTI**



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Scalping hair

India exports hair but there's more moolah if it turns to the hair products industry

Human hair can cause hair-raising problems and the Indian Government is waking up to the reality. If India has a commodity that can never become scarce, grows for free, and has the most of it in the world, it is human hair. Yet, India gets no benefit from this asset because it is not the leader of the hair products industry. It is merely an exporter. Between April-November last, hair exports stood at \$144.26 million. The pandemic lowered these to \$15.28 million in 2020-21. Exports are also hurt by rampant smuggling. Smugglers hire people to collect raw hair and illegally move it in bulk to some East Asian countries. The allegation is the hair is processed there and sent across to China, which makes wigs and hairpieces and exports them for a tidy profit. Hair products manufacturers and the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence could not end smuggling despite best efforts. It is estimated that around 16,000 tonne of human hair are smuggled even now. Finally, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade stepped in this week and placed human hair in the restricted export category. That should help genuine exporters. However, it is time the industry shifted from exporting hair to exporting hair products. There is some talk of improving value addition in export products from India, like wigs and hairpieces, to increase foreign exchange earnings. It has to turn into reality now.



India raises huge quantities — 80 per cent — of the best quality of human hair in the world. All of it is donated, at places of worship. The Tirumala temple is the biggest source in the country. If hair export is banned, India's exports of hair products can touch \$3 billion annually and go up to \$6 billion in a few years. Importantly, stopping exports can bring back around 8.6 lakh jobs lost over the last few years and open up new jobs as well. It is not difficult for India to become the leader in the hair industry. But with it

comes the responsibility that Indian hair collectors, aggregators, product manufacturers and exporters are unaware of. For instance, the collection of hair from non-temple areas like salons and the villages is not organised at all. Planned collection can earn regular employment for rag-pickers. It can reduce the clogging of hair in pipes and sewers — the biggest contributor to rising plumbing costs. India should have expertise in synthetic hair materials and products to be able to compete with countries that lack natural hair. That the production of polymers, used to make synthetic hair products, leads to several environmental problems is another complication on the way. Indian manufacturers need to speed up research into a key area — the life cycle of hair products. At present, the products have a short life and are deemed disposable. If these are designed for a circular economy where they can be recycled, reconditioned and remanufactured, they can help reduce the demand for hair.

PICTALK



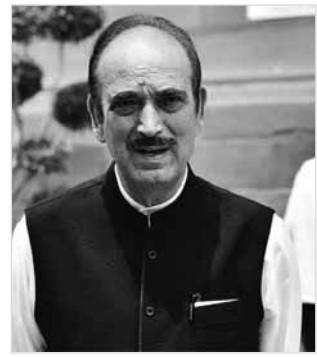
Fishermen row their boats in the Arabian Sea near the Bandra-Worli Sea Link, in Mumbai

PTI

Missing focus

Rather than taking a jibe at Azad, the Congress will do well to get ready for Assembly polls

The announcement of the Padma Bhushan for senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad has set the cat among the pigeons in the 'grand old party'. While several party members — especially those belonging to the so-called G23 — have congratulated him for being named for the prestigious award, there understandably is a section that is miffed with the Kashmiri leader for accepting the honour. The prominent Congress leaders from among the G23 who supported Azad include Kapil Sibal and Shashi Tharoor, with Sibal even calling it "ironic that the Congress doesn't need his services when the nation recognises his contributions", but the party's chief whip in the Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh took a swipe at Azad, hinting that the latter should have refused to accept the honour. Even though the reasons for the upset section's grouse are not being explained openly, it is being speculated that these leaders are not happy with Azad as he has accepted the award from the BJP-led Government. Now, to put matters in the right perspective, even though the honour may have been bestowed upon Azad during the BJP-led Government's rule at the Centre, it can by no stretch of imagination be counted as coming from the Bharatiya Janata Party.



It has simply been announced by the Government of India, by the President who is the executive head of the sovereign Republic. However, the upset colleagues refuse to subscribe to this view and, in this context, are even citing the "example set by" former West Bengal Chief Minister and CPM leader Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, who has since refused to accept the award. Now Bhattacharjee's reasons and circumstances could be totally different from Azad's who has been for a long time now sidelined within the party and practically forced into oblivion. Had the Congress been treating him fairly, even of late, there was a possibility that the Kashmiri leader might have considered the wishes of the party old guard and high command. But now that he has been left to his own devices, there is no justification in trying to vilify him, especially for something which isn't even his own doing. It's time that the Congress, which is already in a visible state of decline across the country, had a relook at its priorities and kept its focus on Assembly election in the five States that are going to polls within days from now.

Why Buddhadeb said no to Padma Bhushan



PRAFULL GORADIA

It could have been an opportunity to re-enter the mainstream of politics; in India, there is increasing space for politicians of quality

It is a pity that Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, West Bengal's former Chief Minister, has refused to accept the Padma Bhushan he was offered this Republic Day by the President of India. The offer was not from the Bharatiya Janata Party Government or the Prime Minister. Even his refusal was confused; no one informed him or any member of his family, said Buddhadeb, as if that was the reason for declining the honour. The late Jyoti Basu had declined the opportunity of becoming a coalition Prime Minister when Deve Gowda had to resign as the PM. Later, he described it as "a historical blunder". The immediate reason given then was his party, the CPM, did not permit him to accept the post. While one might not question the genuineness of these persons in not accepting the honour/executive post, their refusals certainly do say something.

With the demise of Marxism as an ideology the world over, these could be the little opportunities to re-enter the mainstream of politics, at the Centre or in States. Why not seize them like floral bouquets? Is there something inherently different about communists? It is true that in Eastern Europe, some of them have managed to creep into the mainstream. However, in Europe, politics has swung towards the Right, especially because of a wave of migrants from Africa and Arabia, more so from Syria. In India, the Left is vacant without any prejudicial obstruction as in Europe. In fact, in our country there has been increasing space for politicians of quality; the Congress continues its decline, which increasingly looks terminal, while no replacement for it as a national Opposition has come up. The communists cannot, it appears, see this widening gap.

Is this because the communists are essentially trade union leaders and not politicians? When their trade unions weaken, they sink with their cadres. In the free world, Margaret Thatcher blew the whistle and best the Left could do in



response to her uncompromising right-wing way of rule was to bring forth Tony Blair, but with the novel label of New Labour, which shunned Leftism during its 10 years in power. The Soviet Union collapsed and scattered into 16 Republics with the advent of the 1990s. The French and Italian communist parties went virtually out of existence just a little earlier.

Nor did Leftism revive in the rest of Europe after 1991. China learnt its lesson from the Soviet Union and converted itself into a pseudo-capitalist system. The Beijing experiment is a novel one with the Communist Party of China owning the armed forces and controlling, with shares, many or most of China's mega enterprises. This was done perhaps with the objective of thwarting any revolt against the regime. Citizens there aren't allowed to set up a political party to compete for votes. But isn't this a new version of fascism?

Can it last? If so, for how long? After all, the CPC members are not blood relations, and they cannot remain beholden forever. Nevertheless, the Chinese experiment is unique and has been studied by experts, although one must add that it



IN INDIA, THE LEFT IS VACANT WITHOUT ANY PREJUDICIAL OBSTRUCTION. THE CONGRESS CONTINUES ITS DECLINE, WHICH INCREASINGLY LOOKS TERMINAL, WHILE NO REPLACEMENT FOR IT AS A NATIONAL OPPOSITION HAS COME UP

is a work in progress.

Until the 18th century, religion, particularly Christianity, provided the governing ideologies through monarchs. The French Revolution shook up this ideological duality and gave birth to a kind of pseudo-nationalism. To prevent nationalism being used or misused by capitalists, the communists supported by the industrial classes became the antidote to the Soviet Union in the lead. The spectre of communism spreading throughout the continent and engulfing European civilisation was very real, and it was in order to prevent such an eventuality that fascism was born. It first came into being in Italy under Benito Mussolini and was soon adopted by Adolf Hitler in Germany with all its consequences, particularly WWII. Today, both communism and fascism have virtually expired. Some former communists believe that they lost because of their lack of democratic functioning within the party. There can be no denying that parties that spawned and brought this ideology to power acquired dictatorial authority over their respective countries. The result was that the fascist leadership did not obtain any regular feedback

nor authentic information about how people felt, or where their country was headed. Third, people in the world outside also did not come to know as to what was happening in a particular communist country.

Regimes did not change often; it was only when a revolutionary cataclysm took place that everyone, inside and outside the country, became aware of what had been wrong. By the time they did become aware, they found that it was too late; they were swept away by the tide of change. It needs no reiteration that communism as an ideology has no future anywhere in the world. Places like China and North Korea have to use the State's brute muscle to remain in power. For any political future in free countries, former communists have to jettison their hidebound mindset and embrace a democratic way of functioning, beginning with their own parties.

But given the inherent contradiction between democracy and communism, this does not look like materialising.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LEAVE GHULAM NABI AZAD ALONE

Sir —Those who believe in the adage, "Coming events cast their shadow earlier" were already perking their ears when the Prime Minister got emotional and broke down during Ghulam Nabi Azad's farewell function in February last year due to his long association with the latter. Now, several people, including some of Azad's colleagues, are casting aspersions on him upon being conferred the prestigious Padma Bhushan, though some expressed happiness and extended their greetings. Among the G-23 members, Anand Sharma heaped praise on his friend being awarded the country's third highest honour but Kapil Sibal's tweet, "Congratulations bhajiyan; ironic that Congress does not need his services when the nation recognises his contributions to the public service", carried a sarcastic touch.

Jairam Ramesh came up with the phrase "Ghulam, not Azad" (enslaved, not free) and simultaneously referred to former West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee who refused to accept the honour. Film star-turned-politician Raj Babbar, however, felicitated Ghulam Nabi Azad, calling him an elder brother whose immaculate public life and commitment to Gandhian ideals have always been an inspiration. The Congress leadership, meanwhile, has maintained a studied silence. All these scenarios have made public the ideological fissures continuing unabated among the grand old party members.

Azhara Khan | Rampur

DON'T LET THE GUARD DOWN

Sir —On the one hand, the spirit of people has been just amazing and an example is the way people have been venturing out in large numbers to celebrate festivals and functions. On the other hand, most people have been turning a blind eye to the current COVID status, especially in the wake of the Omicron variant, by not wearing masks. Ignoring such serious yet simple protocols as wearing masks, these people pose a great threat to society. Incidentally, I see numerous

Arunachal teen returns home



It's heartening to know that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has handed over 17-year-old Miram Taron from Zido, in Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh, to the Indian Army. The matter of Miram's kidnapping was first reported by BJP MP Tapir Gao, though the PLA had denied the kidnapping allegation. Instead, it claimed that he "illegally entered Chinese territory... and then was routinely questioned... and given humanitarian assistance". Kudos to our Army for pursuing the case meticulously with the PLA and safely securing our Miram back home. This is not the first such incident. In March 2020, a 21-year-old was kidnapped by the PLA from the Asaphila area in the same district and was returned after two weeks.

On September 3, 2020, five youth of Tagin community, engaged as porters for the Indian Army, were captured by the PLA on the McMahon line and returned home after 10 days. The reason for this type of dispute with China and why our citizens are continuously harassed is that Upper Siang district shares the boundary with China. People from Arunachal Pradesh often go into the interiors for hunting and inadvertently cross the border. To stop it permanently, some barbed wire barricade on the border with China or other method should be resorted to. Who knows it may create a major problem for both the nations one day?

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

people venturing out for their daily needs without wearing masks. Sticking to my own mask, I have been advising to wear masks to many people in my native areas in Tamil Nadu.

As for the Omicron threat, it depends on us to keep away these fears. Even though vaccination has been a big hit worldwide, people should come out only after wearing masks. Plus, the Government and all media houses should come forward to churn out daily local feeds with a strong message and celebrity voice/word of advice. After all, countries have to look into their economic needs like agriculture activities and industrial operations. For this, the international community must come out of the COVID loop soon.

P Senthil Saravana Durai | Mumbai

KICKING UP A CONTROVERSY

Sir — This refers to three different issues, with the common agenda to defame Prime Minister Modi, that are hitting the head-

lines in media during the last three days. I would like to repudiate these one by one. The first issue pertains to withdrawal of "Abide with me" from the Beating Retreat ceremony. The Scottish-origin tune has been replaced by Lata Mangeshkar's popular "Ae mere watan ke logo".

The second controversy which should be laid to rest is the shifting of Amar Jawan Jyoti to the National War Memorial. The eternal flame at India Gate has still not been extinguished. The third dissent is the refusal to accept the Padma Vibhushan bestowed on former West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and its acceptance by Ghulam Nabi Azad, with castigation of the latter by his party colleagues. The corollary of all these uncalculated-for situations is that since all this has been done by the Modi dispensation, it is not acceptable to those who hate him ad nauseum.

Sagar Singh | Muzaffarnagar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

It's our sacred national duty to follow the precautions suggested by our scientists and experts.



President — Ram Nath Kovind



The Afghan girls must return to schools, women to work. Our religion allows it.

Afghan ex-President — Hamid Karzai

I feel proud when I watch a patriotic film... Films have the power to evoke that emotion.



Actor — Rakul Preet Singh



Setbacks normally are part of life when you are in sports. But not these kinds.

Indian women's football coach — Thomas Dennerby

I know nothing about this award (Padma). If they've decided to offer it to me, I refuse to accept it.




West Bengal ex-CM — Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee

FIRST COLUMN


PRE-POLL GUARANTEES
FILL UP's HORIZON

Freebies do represent unfulfilled aspirations and needs of society



VIRENDRA SINGH RAWAT

With the election fever in Uttar Pradesh gaining momentum, pre-poll promises of freebies by major political parties are filling the horizon of the poll-bound state. Samajwadi Party (SP) has taken the lead in promising doles. Congress and comparatively new entrant Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have zealously spiced up the freebie pot as well. These freebies pertain to free electricity, unemployment dole, pension for targeted sections, crop loan waiver, free two-wheelers for girls, etc. Considering there are about 28 million power consumers in UP, of which the domestic connections comprise 24 million, the promise of free power by competing political parties has created the maximum buzz in the media and the public alike. Taking a leaf from its gainful experience in Delhi, where it the ruling party, AAP has announced to provide 300 units of free electricity to domestic consumers if voted to power. It also promised to waive off out-




standing power bills and give free power to farmers if it formed the UP Government. Besides, Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia had also announced to provide ₹5,000 unemployment dole per annum to the beneficiaries. Not to be left behind in the pre-poll math, SP president Akhilesh Yadav also announced to provide free power up to 300 units to all households. Yadav promised ₹25 lakh ex-gratia to the kin of the farmers who died during the recent protest against the central farm laws. Meanwhile, Congress has promised to give smartphones and electric two-wheelers to girls if the grand old party forms the next UP Government after more than three decades of political wilderness in the State. Moreover, the party has talked about increasing pension for widows and senior citizens, increasing honorarium for ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) and Anganwadi workers, free bus travel for women, three free gas cylinders a year, etc.

Interestingly, Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) has promised to double the ex gratia payment under PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana from ₹6,000 to ₹12,000 if it forms the next Government. Meanwhile, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is yet to release its official poll manifesto, which the party calls 'Sankalp Patra'. The party had gained immensely from its pre-poll promise of crop loans waiver in the run-up to the 2017 UP elections. After coming to power, the BJP government of Yogi Adityanath, in its first cabinet meeting on April 4, 2017, had approved to waive crop loans worth almost ₹36,000 crore, projected to benefit 8.6 million small and marginal farmers. The flagship crop loan waiver scheme was hailed as a game changer for the party. In its recent Supplementary Budget of nearly ₹8,500 crore for 2021-22, the Yogi Government allocated about ₹4,000 crore for the bottom of the pyramid sections, viz., unorganised workers, including farm labourers, sharecroppers, and street vendors to be distributed as social security payment or doles. Besides, ₹670 crore was allocated for senior citizens and farmers' pension schemes, wherein their payout was increased from ₹500 to ₹1,000 a month. This is estimated to benefit more than 5.6 million elderly persons in the state. The financial grant to the differently-abled was doubled and the honorarium of shikshamitras hiked by ₹2,000 a month. Freebies do represent the unfulfilled aspirations and needs of the society, while on the other, they cast a taint on the tendency of pre-poll allurements to gain advantage at the hustings. A discerning voter is expected to make an informed choice before casting his/her vote to keep the Indian democracy healthy and vibrant beyond the narrow boundary of pre-poll guarantees.

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

Texas crisis exposes
Pakistan's tentacles

There are no US-Nato forces in Afghanistan and rogue elements have the entire country to themselves to train Pak-backed militants, suicide bombers




NANDINI SINGH

“

PAKISTAN HAS BEEN DISOWNING TERRORISTS OF PAK ORIGIN WHENEVER THEY ARE ARRESTED IN OTHER COUNTRIES BUT NOT SO IN THE CASE OF AAFIA. IN AUGUST 2009, PAKISTANI PRIME MINISTER YUSUF RAZA GILANI MET WITH SIDDIQUI'S SISTER AT HIS RESIDENCE AND ASSURED HER THAT PAKISTAN WOULD SEEK HER RELEASE FROM THE US

(The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal.)



Shakil Afridi, a Pakistani doctor accused of helping the Americans confirm the identity of Osama bin Laden, in advance of the raid where he was killed.

Earlier, the Pakistan embassy in the US hired a three-person defence team to supplement Al Qaida terrorist Aafia's two existing public defenders during her trial. The Pakistani government paid \$2 million for the services of three lawyers to assist in the defense of Siddiqui during the trial. This is a curious case, where a Government has so openly come out to support an Al Qaeda terrorist exposing its own nefarious designs, how Pakistan harbours Al Qaeda militants and uses them too, all the while giving false assurances to the Americans that it is helping them to finish Al Qaeda, which is very much active and calling shots more after lying low for some time until the Taliban consolidated its takeover of Afghanistan in 2021.

Terror groups carried out a number of attacks to take revenge for Aafia's imprisonment, which again exposes whether it is Al Qaeda, Taliban or Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan or Haqqani network or JeM; they all are one when it comes to jihad or targeting foreign nationals or people of other religions. They join forces with covert support from Pakistani establishment to target whom they brand as an 'enemy of Islam.' According to a video released by Hakimullah Mehsud, head of the Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) at the time, the 2009 Camp Chapman attack in Afghanistan that killed seven CIA officers was partly in revenge for Aafia's imprisonment. The 2010 Times Square car-bombing attempt

occurred one day after Mehsud released another video promising to avenge Siddiqui. The perpetrator of the attempt was Faisal Shahzad, a recently naturalized Pakistan-born citizen who had contacts with Jaish-e-Muhammad and Hakimullah Mehsud.

The Taliban threatened to execute US soldier Bowe Bergdahl, whom they had captured in 2009 in retaliation for Lady Al Qaeda - Siddiqui's conviction. Bergdahl was later released in 2014 in exchange for five Guantanamo Bay detainees. In September 2010, the Taliban kidnapped Linda Norgrove, a Scottish aid worker in Afghanistan, and Taliban commanders insisted Norgrove would be handed over only in exchange for Siddiqui. But later Norgrove was accidentally killed. In July 2011, then-deputy of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, Waliur Rehman, announced that they wanted to swap Siddiqui for two Swiss citizens abducted in Balochistan. The Swiss couple escaped in March 2012.

In December 2011, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri demanded the release of Siddiqui in exchange for Warren Weinstein, an American aid worker kidnapped in Pakistan in August 2011. Weinstein was accidentally killed in a drone strike in January 2015.

Al Qaeda, Taliban, TTP and a host of other affiliated outfits have been kidnapping Americans, Europeans to make an exchange offer for Siddiqui's release and the recent hostage taking in a Texas synagogue is just another incident in the long series of events for several years. Given Pakistan's insistence on release of Siddiqui, now questions are being raised whether

all the kidnappings, hostage takings for Siddiqui was at the behest of Pakistan or whether Pakistan gave a tacit approval for the same? Pakistan's role in these terror activities has become more and more suspect.


Pakistan has been disowning terrorists of Pak origin whenever they are arrested in other countries but not so in the case of Aafia. In August 2009, Pakistani Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani met with Siddiqui's sister at his residence and assured her that Pakistan would seek her release from the US. In 2010, President Asif Ali Zardari requested Richard Holbrooke, US Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, that the U.S. considers repatriating Siddiqui to Pakistan under the Pakistan-US Prisoner Exchange Agreement. Siddiqui, who had links to al Qaeda and the banned jihadi group Jaish-e-Muhammad has received support not only from Islamic terror groups but Pakistan Government too and this in itself is a clear sign of hobnobbing between jihadists and Pakistan.

The latest hostage crisis at a Texas synagogue and number of similar incidents in Af-Pak demanding release of Lady Al Qaeda must be taken as a warning; the threat of Al Qaeda remains imminent, Taliban takeover of Afghanistan would only worsen it. Now there are no US-Nato forces in the region to check these rogue elements and they have the entire Afghanistan to themselves to train militants and suicide bombers backed by Pakistan government and ISI; this is a dangerous scenario and the sooner the world takes note the better.


Sardar Patel's rationale for a permanent civil service

Principles of new public management are needed to make administration facilitatory, rather than regulatory, to private enterprise and capital

Good Governance is necessary for development and citizen's satisfaction. One of the indicators used by the World Bank to measure Governance is its Effectiveness, measured in terms of the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies. India has improved its Percentile Rank in Governance Effectiveness, but remains low (66.8), much below Denmark and Norway (98), Australia (93.8), New Zealand (93) and even a single-party ruled country like China (72.6). Did our founding fathers err in their vision for the Civil Service?



RAKESH SARWAL




MRINALI DUDI

(Sarwal is Additional Secretary, NITI. Dudi is an intern at NITI. The views expressed are personal.)

As early as October, 1945, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had a resolution adopted at conference of Congress Chief Ministers authorising the setting up of two all-India services, the IAS and the IPS, to succeed the ICS (Indian Civil Service). Despite oppositions, Sardar Patel stood his ground for varied reasons - avoid an administrative gap and to retain the steel frame for a diverse republic as India.

A permanent civil servant is not bound to any political party or leader; its autonomous nature makes it stand unique and therefore work independently for the welfare of society hence, is also accountable to the Constitution of India on which they take oath of allegiance. Patel's public acknowledgment of the patriotism and dedication



of public servants and his expression of trust in them, gave them the self-assurance without which they could not have given their best.

The services need to shed the colonial legacy that makes officers act as the rulers rather than as public servants. Rapid Assessment System (RAS) in which a generic technology-enabled platform is used for seeking real-time citizen feedback on public services have been tried in many countries with success.

A lack of articulated and consistent goals, mismatch

between authority and accountability which loosens the scope for fixing responsibility, duplication of roles, absence of a system of strong incentives or disincentives, in-adequate delegation or excessive discretion - all these bring slack in the system. Lean, accountable, empowered work teams with clear responsibilities are likely to deliver better results, as in the case of Elections, Census or disaster relief.

Interference by or collusion with politicians can come in the way of delivery of services as per rules. Sometimes, cases of transfer and posting receive greater attention than those of public policy. Tenures of officers are one indicator of the flux in the dynamic systems of governance. For example, tenures of Chief Medical Officers range from eight months to three

years across the States. While political engagement and participation in governance is essential for ensuring accountability, transparency and garnering citizen's perceptions, the bounds and norms of acceptable conduct are social constructs built over time.

The New Public Management (NPM) in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Scandinavian countries represented an attempt to make the public sector more businesslike and in order to increase the performance of government, private sector management principles borrowed. It seeks to borrow from the private sector principles of flexibility, transparency, minimum Government, de-bureaucratisation, decentralisation and market orientation. The main principle of NPM is to empha-

size economy, efficiency, and effectiveness by downplaying the importance of regulation. It is not surprising that these countries score high on governance effectiveness index.

Today's government is trying to inject more specialists into the bureaucracy through lateral hires at the level of Director and Joint Secretary. Globally, countries like US, Belgium, UK, Australia have in fact institutionalized this practice as a part of their system. Debates around lateral hires have centered around perceived lack of rigour in the selection procedure. It is feared that due to the pressure of a fixed term contract, the lateral hires might not express or put forward their views freely and in an unbiased manner.

There is no doubt that India's permanent civil service

needs reform. This is vital to the country's progress and development. While the country needs talent and expertise to man specialized assignment, Patel's ideals of permanent, unbiased, independent administrators who can work for the betterment of country with a loyalty towards the people and commitment to rule of law should be kept alive. The ideas of the Constitution makers need to be imbibed in the process of lateral hires. In addition, principles of new public management need to be mainstreamed by amending our regulations to make the administration facilitatory, rather than regulatory to private enterprise and capital. This way the administration will be strengthened and made more relevant to current requirements.

US response on Ukraine offers little optimism: Russia

AP ■ MOSCOW

The U.S. rejection of Russia's main demands to resolve the crisis over Ukraine left little ground for optimism, the Kremlin said Thursday, while adding that dialogue was still possible.

Tensions have soared in recent weeks, as the United States and its NATO allies expressed concern that a buildup of about 100,000 Russian troops near Ukraine signaled that Moscow planned to invade its ex-Soviet neighbor. Russia denies having any such designs — and has laid out a series of demands it says will improve security in Europe.

But as expected, the U.S. and the Western alliance firmly rejected any concessions on Moscow's main points Wednesday, refusing to permanently ban Ukraine from joining NATO and saying allied deployments of troops and military equipment in Eastern Europe are nonnegotiable.

The U.S. did outline areas in which some of Russia's concerns might be addressed, possibly offering a path to de-escalation. "There is no change, there will be no change," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said, repeating the warning that any Russian incursion into Ukraine would be met with massive consequences and severe economic costs. All eyes are now on President Vladimir Putin, who will decide how Russia will respond amid fears that Europe could again be plunged into war.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that response from the U.S. — and a similar one from NATO — left "little ground for optimism." At same time, he added that "there always are prospects for continuing a dialogue, it's in interests of both us and Americans." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov noted that U.S. response contained some elements that could lead to "the start of a serious talk on secondary issues" but emphasized that "the document con-

tains no positive response on the main issue." Those are the Russian demands for the non-expansion of NATO and the non-deployment of weapons that may threaten Russia.

Lavrov told reporters that top officials will now submit their proposals to Putin, who has the American response, and Peskov said the Russian reaction would come soon.

The evasive official comments reflect the fact that it's Putin who will single-handedly determine Russia's next moves. The Russian leader has warned that he would order unspecified "military-technical measures" if the West refuses to heed the demands.

Peskov added that Putin and U.S. President Joe Biden will decide whether they need to have another conversation following two calls last month. While the diplomacy sputters on, so, too, do maneuvers that have escalated tensions.

Russia has launched a series of military drills: Motorized infantry and artillery units in southwestern Russia practiced firing live ammunition, warplanes in Kaliningrad on Baltic Sea performed bombing runs, dozens of warships sailed for training exercises in the Black Sea and the Arctic, and Russian fighter jets and paratroopers arrived in Belarus for joint war games.

Meanwhile, NATO said it was bolstering its deterrence in the Baltic Sea region, and the U.S. ordered 8,500 troops on higher alert for potential deployment to Europe.

Amid the tensions, thousands of Ukrainians expressed their resolve to stand up to the Russian pressure under the hashtag #UkrainiansWillResist on Twitter and Facebook. "No one will force Ukrainians to accept the Kremlin ultimatum," wrote Andrii Levus, who initiated the online campaign.

Beyond the fears of a Russian invasion in Ukraine, there also has been speculation that Moscow's response could include military deployments to the Western Hemisphere.

While a senior Russian diplomat recently pointedly refused to rule out such deployments to Cuba and Venezuela, a top Putin associate expressed skepticism Thursday at that prospect.

"Cuba and Venezuela are aiming to come out of isolation and restore normal relations with the U.S. to a certain extent, so there can't be any talk about setting up a base there as happened during the Soviet times," Dmitry Medvedev, a deputy head of Russia's Security Council, said in an interview with Russian media.

While he charged that the West is using Ukraine as a way to contain Russia, he somberly acknowledged that a Russia-NATO conflict "would be the most dramatic and simply catastrophic scenario, and I hope it will never happen."

As concerns rise about a possible Russian invasion, another conflict still simmers in Ukraine. In 2014, following the ouster of a Kremlin-friendly president in Kyiv, Moscow annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and threw its weight behind a separatist insurgency in the country's eastern industrial heartland.

Fighting between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed rebels has killed over 14,000 people, and efforts to reach a settlement have stalled.

Ukrainian and Russian envoys and others sat down in Paris on Wednesday to discuss a resolution to that conflict, but Medvedev said that Moscow sees no point in talking to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy — and suggested that only a change in leader would defuse tensions.

He expressed hope that the Ukrainians would eventually become "weary of that bedlam and elect the leadership that would pursue policies ... aimed at normal economic relations with Russia." That comment follows a British claim that the Kremlin is seeking to replace Ukraine's government with a pro-Moscow administration — an allegation Russia denied.

US rejects Russia's 'bar Ukraine from NATO' demand as talks see new life

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE ■ WASHINGTON

The United States on Wednesday rejected Russia's key demand to bar Ukraine from NATO and said it believed Moscow was ready to invade but offered what it called a new "diplomatic path" out of the crisis.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he would speak again in the coming days to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, whom he met Friday in Geneva, as a separate initiative by France brought a promise by Moscow at least to keep talking to Ukraine's government.

One month after Russia put forward sweeping security proposals, having sent tens of thousands of troops to Ukraine's border, the United States delivered a reply in coordination with NATO allies and said it was ready for any eventuality.

"It sets out a serious diplomatic path forward should Russia choose it," Blinken told reporters of the US response, which he said would remain confidential.

He renewed an offer on "reciprocal" measures to address mutual security concerns including reductions of missiles in Europe and transparency on military drills and Western aid to Ukraine.

But he made clear that the United States would not budge on Russia's core demand that Ukraine never be allowed to join NATO, the US-backed military alliance.

"From our perspective, I can't be more clear — NATO's door is open, remains open, and that is our commitment," Blinken said. Russia, which has a complicated historical relationship with Ukraine, has fueled an insurgency in former Soviet republic's east that has killed more than 13,000 people since 2014. Russia that year also seized Crimea after the overthrow of a government in Kyiv that had resisted efforts to

move closer to Europe. The United States has warned of severe and swift consequences if Russia invades, including possible personal sanctions on President Vladimir Putin, and NATO has put 8,500 troops on standby.

"While we are hoping for and working for a good solution -- de-escalation -- we are also prepared for the worst," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said.

Blinken's deputy Wendy Sherman, who led a previous round of talks with Russia, said Putin seemed ready to invade despite the US warnings.

"I have no idea whether he's made the ultimate decision, but we certainly see every indication that he is going to use military force sometime perhaps (between) now and the middle of February," Sherman told a forum.

She said Putin may be waiting so as not to overshadow February 4 start of Winter Olympics in Beijing, which Russian leader will attend amid a diplomatic boycott by United States and several of its allies.

World remembers Holocaust as antisemitism rises in pandemic

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Holocaust survivors and politicians warned about the resurgence of antisemitism and Holocaust denial as the world remembered Nazi atrocities and commemorated the 77th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp on Thursday.

"I have lived in New York for 75 years, but I still remember well the terrible time of horror and hatred," survivor Inge Auerbacher, 87, told the German parliament.

"Unfortunately, this cancer has reawakened and hatred of Jews is commonplace again in many countries in the world, including Germany."

Commemorations are taking place amid a rise of antisemitism that gained traction during lockdowns as the pandemic exacerbated hatred online. "This sickness must be healed as quickly as possible," Auerbacher said. German parliament speaker Baerbel Bas noted that the coronavirus

pandemic has acted "like an accelerant" to already burgeoning antisemitism. "Antisemitism is here - it isn't just on the extreme fringe, not just among the eternally incorrigible and a few antisemitic trolls on the net," she said. "It is a problem of our society - all of society."

The UN General Assembly adopted a resolution in November 2005 establishing the annual commemoration, and chose Jan 27 - the day that Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated by Soviet troops in 1945.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, many International Holocaust Remembrance Day events were being held online this year again. A small ceremony, however, was to take place at the site of the former Auschwitz death camp, where World War II Nazi German forces killed 1.1 million people in occupied Poland. The memorial site was closed earlier in the pandemic but reopened in June. In all, about 6 million European Jews and

millions of other people were killed by the Nazis and their collaborators during the Holocaust. Some 1.5 million were children. "Our country bears a special responsibility - the genocide against European Jews is a German crime," Bas told a special parliamentary session in Berlin attended by country's leaders. "But at same time it is a past that is everyone's business -- not just Germans, not just Jews." Israel's parliamentary speaker, Mickey Levy, broke down in tears at Germany's Bundestag while reciting Jewish mourner's prayer from a prayer book that belonged to a German Jewish boy who celebrated his bar mitzvah on eve of Kristallnacht.

Levy said Israel and Germany experienced "an exceptional journey on way to reconciliation and establishing relations and brave friendship between us". Auerbacher recalled being nearly hit by a stone thrown by Nazi thugs during the anti-Jewish pogrom of November 1938.

France to organise event focused on Indo-Pacific under its EU presidency

New Delhi: France on Thursday announced that under its presidency of Council of European Union, it will host a ministerial meeting focused on Indo-Pacific -- Paris Forum -- on February 22. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian announced this during an online discussion and extended an invite to International Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, who also took part in the event titled "The French Presidency: EU-India Partnership in Indo-Pacific". Le Drian said it will be first time that in EU council presidency there will be an event focussed on relations between EU and Indo-Pacific. This Indo-Pacific meeting will be held on February 22 and High Representative of EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell Fontelles will be in Paris for it, he said. Le Drian hoped for Jaishankar and other partners to partici-

pate in event and contribute to peace and stability in region. "What I wish is for this Paris Forum to allow for concretisation of the principles we share with respect to rule of law, harmonious relations and post-Covid recovery," he said. Le Drian said security and defence, connectivity and digital issues and global challenges will be on the agenda of the Indo-Pacific ministerial meeting in Paris. The French foreign minister asserted that India plays a key role in the Indo-Pacific.

In his remarks, Jaishankar said the French aircraft flying at the finale of the Republic Day parade was a visible example of the strategic ties between India and France. Asserting that France has an Indo-Pacific resident presence, Jaishankar called for strengthening the India-France partnership and said that focusing it on the Indo-Pacific is timely." PTI

German archbishop pushes reform after criticism over abuse

Berlin: The archbishop of Munich said Thursday that Catholic church needs deep reform to overcome "disaster" of sexual abuse and made clear that he intends to stay in his job, after a report faulting him and predecessors including retired Pope Benedict XVI for their handling of abuse allegations and cases in Germany. Cardinal Reinhard Marx last year offered to resign over church's abuse scandal, an extraordinary gesture at time which was rejected swiftly by Pope Francis. Marx, a prominent reformist ally of pontiff, was faulted over his handling of two cases in report commissioned by his archdiocese from a Munich law firm. He told a news conference a week after report's release that he will look over those cases "to learn from them." Marx said he hadn't renewed his resignation offer. "In current situation, that struck me as just disappearing," he said. AP

कार्यालय कार्यपालन अभियंता,
लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड, गरियाबंद छत्तीसगढ़

eegar_phe_cg@nic.in

निविदा निरस्तीकरण

एकीकृत पंजीयन प्रणाली अन्तर्गत सक्षम श्रेणी में पंजीकृत एजेंसी/उकेदारों से ऑनलाईन निविदा ग्राह्य बेहराखड़ा, नैरापुर, मालगाँव एकल गम जलप्रदाय योजना के कार्य हेतु इस कार्यालय का निविदा सूचना क्रमांक 146/दिनांक 22.11.2021 सिस्टम टेण्डर नं. 87309, जी क्रमांक – G-65378/1/ दिनांक 26.11.2021 आमंत्रित की गई थी। इस सिस्टम टेण्डर नं. में तकनीकी एवं वाता निधारण के संबंधों के कारण इस सिस्टम टेण्डर नं. को निरस्त किया जाता है।

शीघ्र ही पुनः उक्त कार्य हेतु ऑनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जावेगी।

हस्ता/-
कार्यपालन अभियंता
लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड,
गरियाबंद (छ.ग.)

R.O. No-67194/7
R.O. Date - 27/01/2022

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one lady Namely **Renu W/o Santosh Kumar R/o H.No. C-24, Gali No.22, S.B.S. Colony, Karawal Nagar, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped from her House, since 30.12.2021. In this regard, a case **DD No 50-A dated 2.01.2022 has been registered at P.S. Karawal Nagar Delhi**. The description of the missing / kidnapped lady are as under.

Age: about 40 years, **Height:** 5'2", **Complexion:** Wheatish, **Face:** Round, **Build:** Medium, **Wearing:** Yellow Colour Blouse & Saree, and chappal in feet. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out her but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the kidnapped/missing lady then please inform P.S.Karawal Nagar Delhi at following Tel No./ e-mail: **cic@cbi.gov.in** and Website: **http://cbi.nic.in**, providing clue about the person.

Ph:011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No.011-24368639

Sd/- SHO
Karawal Nagar, Delhi
PH.011- 22932232

DP/1313/NE/2022

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the public at large, on behalf of our client, ICICI Bank Ltd. ("Bank"), that the original Allotment letter and other connected documents (hereinafter collectively referred as "Documents") listed herein below pertaining to the immovable property (More particularly described in "Schedule ") of Mr. Ravi Chawla deposited with our client by way of security, have been misplaced from the custody of our client. "Allotment Letter (dated) June 27, 1988, 5 Nos of Receipt issued by DDA dated Feb 14, 1984, Dec 22, 1984, Feb 16, 1985, Jun 24, 1985, Jul 12, 1988, Possession slip dated Mar 13, 1989 and Demand letter dated Jan 15, 1984, executed by Delhi Development Authority in favour of Prakash Chawla in respect of Flat No-B-1/1256, Sec-B, Pocket-I, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi - 110070. Any person(s) coming into possession of the aforesaid Documents and / or any person(s) who is/are having knowledge of the whereabouts of the Documents, are hereby requested to intimate the undersigned forthwith, about the same at the below address. Public are warned not to deal with the Documents and any person receiving or dealing with the said Documents would do so at their own risk and responsibility (including criminal liability) and our client shall not be liable in any manner whatsoever for any loss incurred by such person(s) on account of any such unauthorised dealing. In the event no information is received within 15 days from date hereof, our client will proceed to take such action including applying to concerned authorities for issue of duly Certified Copies of the Documents.

SCHEDULE

A residential Flat No. 1256, Pocket - I, Sector B, Floor No. 3rd in the layout plan of Housing Estate at Vasant Kunj, New Delhi - 110070.

Mittal & Mittal Co. Advocates
614, 6th Floor, R.G. Trade Tower, Netaji Subhash Place, Pitampura, Delhi - 110 034.
Ph.981191761, 9891188839
E-mail: mittal782004@yahoo.co.in

CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS

OPEN E-TENDER

No. COS/CRJ/PUB/e-Tender/19/0162
Date: 24/01/2022. The following e-Tenders can be accessed under the link www.ireps.gov.in. Offers for such e-Tender can be submitted only electronically by accessing the link www.ireps.gov.in → **login** → **E-Tender Stores/Supply**. Vendors may also contact the following officials to obtain clarification regarding particular tender or IREPS related information if any, Dr.CMM/HQ/CLW/Chittaranjan, 0341-2525594 or SMM/CON/HQ, 0341-2535631. **Office Address:** Office of the PCMM /CLW/Chittaranjan. **Sl. No. Tender No. Brief Description of Item; Qty; Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees); Tender Closing Date & Time (IST) :** [1]- **63204213** Set of Stator and Rotor Stamping for Traction Motor Type 6FRA-6068. One set consisting of 05 items; **595.00** Set; **2000000.00**; **21/02/2022 at 11:00 AM**; [2]- **75224128** Set of Fabricated Items for WAP-7 with Hotel Load Converter; **72.00** Set; **0.00**; **14/02/2022 at 11:00 AM**; [3]- **75213872A**; Set of Inter Lock Assy. for Cab doors for WAG-9HC/WAP-7; WAP-5 as per Spec. No. CLW/MS/3/111 Alt-6 and Drg. No. 1209-09-133-021 Alt-2 [01 set consisting of 02 No. RH and 02 Nos. LH] as per set details attached; **323.00** Set; **253300.00**; **21/02/2022 at 11:00**; [4]- **75213878B**; Set of Miscellaneous Hardware Items (Electrical) for WAG-9HC/ WAP-7/WAP-5 locos as per Spec. No. CLW/ES/3/187, Alt-M [Each set consist of 31 items as per pdf annexure]; **460.00** Set; **60280.00**; **21/02/2022 at 11:00**; **PRIS-311** PCMM/CLW/CRJ **Like us on: www.facebook.com/clwrailways**

WHO staff complaint, email allege racism and abuse in Asia

AP ■ GENEVA

Current and former staffers have accused top director of World Health Organization in Western Pacific of racist, unethical and abusive behaviour that has undermined UN health agency's efforts to curb coronavirus pandemic.

The allegations were laid out in an internal complaint filed in October and again in an email last week, sent by unidentified "concerned WHO staff" to senior leadership and the executive board and obtained by the Associated Press. Two of authors said more than 30 staffers were involved in writing it, and that it reflected experiences of more than 50 people. The internal complaint and email describe a "toxic atmosphere" with "a culture of systemic bullying and public ridiculing" at WHO's Western Pacific headquarters in Manila, led by Dr. Takeshi Kasai, director of a vast region

that includes China and his home country of Japan. The AP also has obtained recorded snippets of meetings where Kasai is heard making derogatory remarks about his staff based on nationality. Eleven former or current WHO staffers who worked for Kasai told AP he frequently used racist language. Staffers, who did not identify themselves to WHO "for fear of retaliation," said in the email that Kasai's authoritarian style has led to departure of more than 55 key staff in past year and a half, most of whom have not been replaced.

This resulted in a lack of understanding and involvement with member countries that "significantly contributed" to a surge of cases in many countries in region, they said. However, other WHO staffers pointed out that spikes in COVID cases were due to numerous reasons, including countries' own resources and timing of their national efforts.

North Korea fires 2 suspected missiles in 6th launch in 2022

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea on Thursday fired two suspected ballistic missiles into the sea in its sixth round of weapons launches this month, South Korea's military said. Experts say North Korea's unusually fast pace in testing activity underscores an intent to pressure the Biden administration over long-stalled negotiations aimed at exchanging a release of crippling U.S.-led sanctions against the North and the North's denuclearization steps. The renewed pressure comes as the pandemic further shakes the North's economy, which was already battered by crippling U.S.-led sanctions over its nuclear weapons program and decades of mismanagement by its own government. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the weapons, which were likely short-range, were launched five minutes apart

from an eastern coastal area and flew 190 kilometers (118 miles) on an apogee of 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) before landing at sea. Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who described North Korea's repeated missile firings as "extremely regrettable," but said there has so far been no reports of damage to vessel and aircraft around the Japanese coast. The North also last week issued a veiled threat to resume the testing of nuclear explosives and long-range missiles targeting the American homeland, which leader Kim Jong Un suspended in 2018 while initiating diplomacy with the United States. Kim's high-stakes summitry with then-President Donald Trump derailed in 2019 after the Americans rejected North Korea's demands for major sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of its nuclear capabilities.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

ICICI Bank

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

Whereas A housing loan facility was granted pursuant to a loan agreement entered into between ICICI Bank Limited ("Secured Creditor, which term shall include its successors and assigns) and the borrower & co-borrower, mentioned below ("Borrower(s)", which term shall include his/ its/ their respective [successors, assigns, heirs). The undersigned being the authorized officer of the Secured Creditor ("Authorized Officer") under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 ("Act") and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, ("Rules") has issued demand notices under Section 13(2) of the Act calling upon the borrowers / co borrowers mentioned below to repay the amount payable pursuant to the loan agreement and as specifically mentioned in the said respective demand notices within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notices.

The borrowers / co-borrower, having failed and neglected to repay the amount as claimed in the said demand notices, a notice is hereby given to the borrowers / co-borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Section 13 (4) of the Act read with Rule 8 of the Rules. The details including date of symbolic possession of the properties are as mentioned below

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Manish Jain/ Kohnoor Jewel Studio/ Madhu Jain/ Rupal Jain/ LBDEL0001587524	D - 81, Second Floor, Veer Nagar, Near Rana Pratap Bagh Jain Colony, New Delhi, Delhi/ January 24, 2022	June 19, 2021/ Rs. 33,06,793/-	Delhi/ Ncr
2.	Abdul Karim Wani/ M/s Gulam Ahamad Wani/ Mahbooba Akhtar/ LBDEL00001654457	Plot No- R-8, First Floor, Block- R, South Extension Part- 2, Delhi/ January 25, 2022	July 02, 2021/ Rs. 74,27,377/-	Delhi/ Ncr

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

Date : January 28, 2022
Place: Delhi/NCR

Authorized Officer
Secured Creditor

कार्यालय संयुक्त संचालक एवं अधीक्षक छत्तीसगढ़ आयुर्विज्ञान संस्थान (सिम्स चिकित्सालय) बिलासपुर छगग

FAX(0)-07752-224200, PHONE(0)-07752-230030

क्रमांक 268 /ओगं०/सं.सं.अधि./सिम्स चिकि./2022 बिलासपुर, दिनांक 24/01/2022

लोकल परचेस एवं पेशनरों हेतु तृतीय निविदा 2021--22

निविदा कार्य का नाम	सिम्स चिकित्सालय, बिलासपुर (छ.ग.) में उपचारार्थ सौजन्य, पेशनरों, लोकल परचेस (L.P.) एवं मुख्य सजी विशेष स्वास्थ्य सहायता योजना की औषधी एवं चिकित्सा सामग्री की अपातकालिन स्थिति में उक्ताल पुर्रि के लिए सिम्स चिकित्सालय के समीप जो की सड़क मार्ग से सिम्स चिकित्सालय के मुख्य द्वार से 500 मीटर के दायरे में स्थित हो ऐसे स्थानीय विलर दवा विक्रेताओं से निविदा आमंत्रित किया जाता है।
निविदा पत्र मुख्य	रुपये 2000.00 (दो हजार मात्र) का demand Draft वापसी योग्य नहीं। जो की संयुक्त संचालक एवं अधीक्षक (Joint Director Cum Superintendent, CIMS Hospital Bilaspur C.G.) सिम्स चिकित्सालय बिलासपुर (छ.ग.) के पक्ष में देय हो।
निविदा कार्य प्राप्त करने की अंतिम तिथि, समय एवं स्थान	09/02/2022 संघ्य 5.00 बजे तक। संविधि साखा सिम्स, चिकित्सालय बिलासपुर (छ.ग.)।
निविदा कार्य जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय	28/02/2022 दोपहर 3.00 बजे तक।
निविदा खोलने की तिथि एवं समय	28/02/2022 संघ्य 4.00 बजे के बाद।
निविदा जमा एवं खोलने के हेतु निर्धारित स्थान	कार्यालय संयुक्त संचालक एवं अधीक्षक, सिम्स चिकित्सालय, बिलासपुर में कार्यालयीन दिवस एवं अवधि में।

उपरोक्तानुसार इच्छुक निविदाकारों से निविदा आमंत्रित किया जाता है।

हस्ता/-

R.O.No - 67192/4 संयुक्त संचालक एवं अधीक्षक
R.O. Date - 27/01/2022 सिम्स चिकित्सालय बिलासपुर (अगग)

UN chief urges major Afghan aid increase, unfreezing assets

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

The U.N. Chief urged nations Tuesday to greatly boost humanitarian aid for millions of Afghans living in "a frozen hell" and release nearly \$9 billion in frozen assets to pull Afghanistan's economy back from brink of a collapse that could set off a mass exodus of people fleeing country. "Time is of essence," Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told Security Council. "Without action, lives will be lost, and despair and extremism will grow." Guterres said liquidity must be urgently restored to Afghan economy. He said that means freeing up country's frozen currency reserves, re-engaging with its Central Bank and finding othr ways to inject money, including allowing

A nurse checks the weight of a child in the makeshift clinic organized by World Vision at a settlement near Herat, Afghanistan, on Dec. 16, 2021 (AP Photo/Mstyslav Chernov, File)

Iran state TV shows dissidents' images after apparent hack

AP ■ DUBAI

Channels of Iran's state television broadcast images Thursday showing the leaders of an exiled dissident group and a graphic demanding the country's supreme leader be killed, an incident state TV later described as a hack. The graphics showed the leaders of the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq and the name of an account on two social media platforms, which claimed to be a group of hackers who broadcast the message praising the dissidents. The MEK, now largely based in Albania, did not immediately answer telephone calls from The Associated Press. The incident marked a serious breach for Iranian state TV, which is controlled by hard-liners in the country.

Tata to get loans from SBI-led consortium for AI

New Delhi: A consortium of lenders led by State Bank of India (SBI) will soon provide loans to Tata Group for the operations of Air India as well as to retire the airline's high cost borrowings.

After nearly 70 years, Tata Group on Thursday regained ownership of Air India. With the completion of the deal, the group will own 100 per cent stake in Air India, Air India Express and a 50 per cent shareholding in AISATS.

Bankers said the SBI-led consortium has agreed to grant both term loans and working capital loans depending on the airline's requirements.

All large lenders, including Punjab National Bank, Bank of Baroda, and Union Bank of India, are part of the consortium, they added.

"Many banks have agreed for refinancing of Air India debt to Tatas and the process has begun," one of the bankers said. Existing lenders who do not wish to participate in refinancing of debt to Tatas will get



their money repaid through the refinanced amount, the banker said.

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is among the entities that had given loans earlier to loss-making Air India. Now, the IPO-bound LIC has decided not to extend more loans to the airline and will not participate in the current funding round led by the SBI, the bankers said.

Talace Private Limited -- a subsidiary of the Tata Group's holding company Tata Sons -- on October 8, 2021, won the bid to acquire debt-ridden Air India. It had offered Rs 18,000 crore, including cash of Rs

2,700 crore which has now been paid to the government. The term loans to Talace will help in retiring the high cost borrowings of Air India, the bankers said.

The amount of loans likely to be extended by the consortium could not be immediately ascertained.

"The strategic disinvestment transaction of Air India successfully concluded today with transfer of 100 per cent shares of Air India to M/s talace Pvt Ltd along with management control," DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said in a tweet on Thursday.

PTI

Sensex sinks 581 pts as hawkish Fed roils global markets

Mumbai: Equity benchmark Sensex tumbled 581 points on Thursday, in tandem with a global selloff after the US Federal Reserve signalled policy tightening from March.

A depreciating rupee and persistent foreign fund outflows further weighed on sentiment, traders said.

The 30-share BSE index ended 581.21 points or 1.00 per cent lower at 57,276.94. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty plunged 167.80 points or 0.97 per cent to 17,110.15.

HCL Tech was the top loser in the Sensex pack, skidding 4.17 per cent, followed by Tech Mahindra, Dr Reddy's, Wipro, TCS, Titan and Infosys. On the other hand, Axis Bank, SBI, Maruti, Kotak Bank, Sun Pharma and IndusInd Bank were among the gainers, climbing as much as 2.81 per cent.

The Federal Reserve left policy rates unchanged on Wednesday, but chairman

Jerome Powell said the US central bank is likely to raise interest rates in March and end its massive bond buying program to combat surging inflation. Investors fear foreign capital outflows from emerging markets like India after rate hikes in the US.

"As the Fed left key interest rates near zero, its hawkish commentary quickly washed away gains in global markets, leading to a gap down opening in indices back home.

"As FPIs continued to book profits from Indian equities, value stocks made a comeback with the PSU Bank Index rallying over 5 per cent in afternoon trade today, well supported by auto stocks to stage a smart recovery. As IT and pharma stocks witnessed profit taking, textile stocks were sought after in the broader market on the back of earnings," said S Ranganathan, Head of Research at LKP Securities.

PTI

20 years later: India's CPSE privatisation off to 'Maharaja' start

New Delhi: After a hiatus of nearly two decades, the Government's programme to privatise state-owned firms restarted with the handing over of debt-laden national carrier Air India to the Tata Group.

With the new owner shelling out Rs 18,000 crore for the buyout of the 'Maharaja', this would be the highest-ever amount garnered through privatisation, and is even more than the cumulative sum mopped up through strategic sales from 1999-00 to 2003-04.

The Government had in October last year inked the share purchase agreement with the Tata Group for sale of national carrier Air India for Rs 18,000 crore.

Tatas would pay Rs 2,700 crore cash and take over Rs 15,300 crore of the airline's debt. The deal also includes sale of Air India Express and ground handling arm AISATS.

The government had garnered roughly over Rs 5,000 crore during that five-year period by privatising 10 CPSEs. Besides, three hotel properties of Hotel Corporation of India and 18 of ITDC were also sold off by way of slump sale.

Here is a timeline of strategic sale of central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) to private entities between 1999-00 to 2003-04: 1999-00 - Modern Food Industries Ltd -- Rs 105 crore 2000-01 - BALCO, Lagan Jute Machinery Co Ltd -- Rs 554 crore 2001-02 - VSNL, Computer Maintenance Corporation (CMC), Hindustan Teleprinters Ltd (HTL), Paradeep Phosphate Ltd (PTL), some hotel properties of HCI and ITDC -- Rs 2,089 crore 2002-03 - Hindustan Zinc Ltd (HZL), Indian Petrochemicals Corporation (IPCL), some ITDC hotel properties -- Rs 2,335 crore 2003-04 - HZL (second tranche), Jessop & Co -- Rs 342 crore.

PTI

Gold plunges ₹563; silver declines ₹1,186

New Delhi: Gold in the national capital on Thursday plunged Rs 563 to Rs 48,215 per 10 grams amid weak international precious metal prices, according to HDEC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious settled at Rs 48,778 per 10 gram.

Silver also tumbled Rs 1,186 to Rs 62,792 per kg from Rs 63,978 per kg in the previous trade. In the international market, gold was trading lower at USD 1,810 per ounce.

PTI

Sebi amends rules; to send notices, summons via instant messaging services

New Delhi: Sebi will now be sending show cause notices and summons to alleged offenders of securities market rules through instant messaging services, a move that will make the process faster.

At present, the regulator sends such documents through either registered post, courier or electronic mail. Also, Sebi has tweaked norms pertaining to powers of investigating authority for seeking information and documents in respect

of any transaction in securities markets, which are under investigation.

To effect these, the regulator has amended Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices (PFUTP) norms relating to securities market, according to a notification issued on Tuesday. Summons or notices issued by Sebi under PFUTP norms will be served on the person by delivering or tendering it to that person or his duly authorised agent.

PTI

Sebi strengthens MF norms; winding up of schemes only after majority unitholders' consent

New Delhi: In a move aimed to further safeguard the interest of mutual fund investors, Sebi has made it mandatory for trustees of mutual funds to obtain the consent of unitholders when majority of trustees decide to wind up a scheme.

Under the new norms, mutual fund trustees will be required to obtain the consent of the unitholders when the majority of the trustees decide to wind up a scheme or prematurely redeem the units of a close-ended scheme.

The trustees will have to obtain consent of unitholders by simple majority of the unitholders present and voting on the basis of one vote per unit held and publish the results of voting within 45 days of the publication of notice of circumstances leading to winding up, Sebi said in a notification issued on Tuesday.

In case the trustees fail to obtain the consent, Sebi said the scheme would be open for business activities from the second business day after publication of results of voting.

Amending mutual fund norms, Sebi said the trustees will give notice within one day, disclosing the circumstances leading to the winding

up of the scheme to the regulator and in two daily newspapers having circulation all over India as well as a vernacular newspaper circulating at the place where the mutual fund is formed.

The decision to amend the regulations came after the Supreme Court in July held that the trustees are required to seek consent of majority unit-holders for closing mutual fund schemes after publishing notice disclosing reasons for their decision to wind up schemes.

The Supreme Court's decision came in the case pertaining to winding-up of Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund's six debt schemes. The fund house shut its six debt mutual fund schemes on April 23, 2020, citing redemption pressures and lack of liquidity in the bond market. The schemes - Franklin India Low Duration Fund, Franklin India Dynamic Accrual Fund, Franklin India Credit Risk Fund, Franklin India Short Term Income Plan, Franklin India Ultra Short Bond Fund, and Franklin India Income Opportunities Fund - together had an estimated more than Rs 25,000 crore as assets under management.

PTI



Arun Joshi AD-PR with colleague on the auspicious occasion of Republic Day, at a State-level function at Savai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur

Pioneer photo

POS biz grew to \$4 bn annualised transaction value, deployed over 1.25 lakh machines: BharatPe

New Delhi: BharatPe, a fintech company for merchants, on Thursday said it has witnessed 200 per cent growth in annualised transaction value to USD 4 billion (about Rs 30,078 crore) from its POS business over the last 12 months. The Point of Sale (POS) business - BharatSwipe - now contributes about 25 per cent to the overall payments Transaction Processed Value (TPV) of the company, a statement said.

BharatPe has ramped up the reach of its POS business by 25X to over 250 cities in the last 12 months and since the launch

in the second half of 2020, company has deployed more than 1.25L BharatSwipe machines across offline shops, it added.

"The growth can be attributed to the expansion of the company's POS business in non-metro cities, with more than 50 per cent of BharatSwipe machines being deployed in tier II/tier III towns and cities since 2021. BharatSwipe has been universally adopted by small merchants and retailers across categories including grocery, food and beverage, electronics and durables, among others," it said.

PTI

Oil nears \$90; petrol, diesel price freeze enters record 83rd day

New Delhi: With the forthcoming high stake assembly elections in states like Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, the freeze on petrol and diesel prices is now the longest ever even as international oil prices climbed to USD 90 per barrel for the first time in seven years.

Brent - the key global oil benchmark - soared to USD 90.02 per barrel on Thursday amid tensions between Ukraine and Russia, the world's second-largest oil producer that have fanned fears of energy supply disruptions to Europe.

Analysts expected weaker Omicron impact to keep prices elevated.

But domestic fuel prices - which are directly linked to international oil prices - have not been revised for 83 days now, beating the 82-day hiatus of 2020.

Petrol costs Rs 95.41 a litre in Delhi and diesel is priced at Rs 86.67 - the same as it did after accounting for the excise duty cut and a reduction in VAT rate by the Delhi government.

PTI

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to General Public that the property documents viz. Site Possession Slip and Allotment cum Demand Letter qua property bearing No. 89-C DDA Flats, Gubali Bagh, Delhi-110007, issued by Delhi Development Authority in the name of Smt. Geeta Devi W/o Sh. OP Rohatgi & D/o Bagwati Devi have been lost. Smt. Geeta Devi had lodge complaint with PS Crime Branch Delhi vide LR No. 55315/2022 dated 19.01.2022 at around 14.34 hrs. If any person(s) who finds the above said documents are requested to contact either the undersigned or Mr. Dinesh Kumar S/o Sh. OP Rohatgi having mobile 9811160345 and return the same at the address mentioned herein above.

Pranay Trivedi (Advocate)
Ch. No. 636, Saket Courts, New Delhi

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, that a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company will be held on Thursday, 3rd February, 2022, inter-alia, to consider and approve the Un-audited Financial Results Prov. of the Company for the quarter ended on 31st Dec., 2022. The information contained in this notice is also available on the Company's website www.cbci.in as also on the website of the Stock Exchange viz. BSE Limited - www.bseindia.com

For Cbci Financial Services Limited
Sd/-
PLACE: NEW DELHI (Ashwani Kumar Gupta)
Date: 27-01-2022 Managing Director

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all that I, Dr. USHA PRASAD am the owner of Flat No. 365/0N SECOND + THIRD FLOOR (DUPLICATE) WITH CAR GARAGE NO. 365, MANDAKINI ENCLAVE ALAKNANDA NEW DELHI- 110019, vide DDA's File No F3473(81)/SES. My few original documents of the said Property viz. (1) Allocation Letter of the Flat (2) Possession Letter of the Flat (3) NOC for Electric & Water connection of the Flat (4) Demand/Allotment Letter of Car Garage and (5) Possession Slip of Car Garage have been misplaced. An Information Report of this effect has been lodge in Police Station Crime Branch, Delhi vide LR No.6786/2022 on 24.01.2022. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9870504436 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice.

SEARCH FOR MISSING

Tilak Raj
General public is hereby informed that one person namely **Tilak Raj, S/o Sh. Bharat Singh, R/o H. No. 142, Khanpur Village, New Delhi, Age: 46 years, Height: 5'8", Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Wearing: Unknown, has been missing since 29.11.2019 from P.S. Neb Sarai area, New Delhi. In this regard a DD No. 39A, dated 30.11.2019 has been logged at P.S. Neb Sarai, New Delhi.**

Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out the person but no clue has come to light so far. If any one having any information about him please inform undersigned.

Website : <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail : cic@cbi.gov.in
Fax: 011-24368639
Ph. No. : 011-24368638, 24368641
DP/856/SD/2021

SHO
P.S. Neb Sarai, New Delhi.
Ph.: 011-29551326, 29551597

ICICI Bank

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

PUBLIC NOTICE

Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank hereby inform that all scheduled auctions, to be held for the period from **January 20, 2022 up to February 28, 2022** under recovery of dues as per court orders, stands postponed until further notice, due to unprecedented outbreak of Corona Virus (COVID-19). The list of auctions that are postponed are given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Case Details	Asset Details	Reserve Price	EMD	Scheduled Date & Time of Auction
1.	Ravinder Kumar (Borrower), LAROH00035177651	MARUTI UDYOG LTD WAGON R LXI Mfg Yr. -2016 Reg No. - HR46E5117	Rs. 80,000/-	25,000/-	January 28, 2022 - 11.00 AM Onwards
2.	Dinesh (Borrower), LAROH00034435594	HYUNDAI MOTORS LTD XcentMfg Yr. - 2016 Reg No. - HR46D0050	Rs. 80,000/-	25,000/-	January 28, 2022 - 11.00 AM Onwards

Date: **January 28, 2022**
Place: **Delhi/NCR**

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

ICICI Bank

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

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Ritika Soeny/ Jitendra Soeny/ LBDEL00005079693	Prop No 13/42-A, Second Floor, Without Roof Rights, Block-13 Tilak Nagar Delhi/ January 24, 2022	October 16, 2021 Rs. 37,53,082/-	Delhi/ NCR
2.	Ashish Dhingia/ Onkar Singh Dhingia/ LBDEL00001101022	Flat No. 302, Second Floor, Jahangir Puri, Delhi/ January 24, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 1,86,353/-	Delhi/ NCR
3.	Jyoti Kumar/ Raman Kumar/ LBDEL00002400225	Flat No 33, Third Floor, Block C8, Pocket 3, Sector 34, Rohini, Delhi/ January 24, 2022	October 16, 2021 Rs. 11,05,059/-	Delhi/ NCR
4.	Kishan Lal/ Devender/ LBDEL00002389726	Flat No 42, First Floor DDA LIG, Block-C3, Pocket- 3, Sector-34, Rohini, Delhi/ January 24, 2022	October 16, 2021 Rs. 11,36,068/-	Delhi/ NCR
5.	Manjeet Kumar/ Shashi Yadav/ LBGUR00002364572	Flat No 52, Second Floor, Block E6, Pocket 3, Sector G8, Narela, Delhi/ January 24, 2022	October 16, 2021 Rs. 10,60,357/-	Delhi/ NCR
6.	Pankaj Jain/ Chander Sen Jain/ LBDEL00005207467	Flat No 6, 1st Floor, Pocket 2, Sector G2, Narela, Delhi/ January 24, 2022	October 16, 2021 Rs. 10,60,949/-	Delhi/ NCR
7.	Amit Kumar Mathur/ Supriya Mathur/ Sumit Kumar Malviya/ Vision India Ayurved (P) Ltd/ LBDEL00005201200/ LBDEL00002440117	Flat No 298, Type A, Block B, PKT 3, Bindapur, Delhi/ January 25, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 21,91,881/-	Delhi/ NCR
8.	Anita Sharma/ Narender Sharma/ LBDEL00004972103	DDA Flat 25B, 1st Floor MIG Sheikh Sarai Phase-1 Delhi/ January 25, 2022	October 16, 2021 Rs. 1,33,76,709/-	Delhi/ NCR
9.	Dhiraj Kumar/ Wizmore Communication Pvt Ltd/ Ranjita Jha/ LBDEL00002379472	Flat No B53/II, First Floor DDA Mig Block-6, Narela Vihar Delhi/ January 25, 2022	October 16, 2021 Rs. 85,43,828/-	Delhi/ NCR

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

Date : **January 28, 2022**
Place: **Delhi/ NCR**

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA date	Description of secured asset (immovable property)
(LC No. 0000380 of Azadpur N S P Branch) Govinda Bagri (Borrower) Ravi Kumar (Co Borrower 1) Chet Ram (Co Borrower 2) (LC No. 00003049 of Noida Branch) Pankaj Sharma (Borrower) Kusum (Co Borrower 1) Devender Bhardwaj (Co Borrower 2) (LC No. 00043578 of Delhi - Safdijung Branch) Babita Mehta (Borrower) Amarjeet Singh (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00002254 of Rohini Branch) Nimal Singh (Borrower) Rachpal Kaur (Co Borrower 1) Balvinder Singh (Co Borrower 2) Rupinder Kaur (Guarantor 1) (LC No. 00001783 of Noida 1 Rajendra Place Branch) B D Builders Private Limited (Borrower) Dheeraj Malik (Co Borrower 1) Yudhir Singh Malik (Co Borrower 2) (LC No. 00043787 of Delhi - Safdijung Branch) Vivek Channana (Borrower) Kalawati Channana (Co Borrower 1) Om Prakash Channana (Co Borrower 2) Channana Plastics Pvt. Ltd (Guarantor 1) (LC No. 00002793 of Gurgaon Branch) Vijender Singh (Borrower) Gupreet Kaur (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00044000 of Delhi - Safdijung Branch) Vivek Channana (Borrower) Kalawati Channana (Co Borrower 1) Om Prakash Channana (Co Borrower 2) Channana Plastics Private Limited (Guarantor 1) Himani Channana (Guarantor 2) (LC No. 00004333 of Delhi Janakpuri Branch) Pramod Kumar Shrivastava (Borrower) Shobhit Kumar Shrivastava (Co Borrower 1) Usha Rani Shrivastava (Co Borrower 2) (LC No. 00002376 of Rohini Branch) Arney Buildtech Private Limited (Borrower) Virender Singh (Co Borrower 1) Meghna Thakur (Co Borrower 2) (LC No. 00041313 of Noida -sector 2 Branch) Sheel Kumari (Borrower) Satendra Kumar (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00001953 of Durgapur Branch) Raja Mitra (Borrower) Mousumi Mitra (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00042515 of Delhi - Safdijung Branch) Tapas Biswas (Borrower) Sona Biswas (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00000884 of Cannanught Place Branch) Gurmest Singh (Borrower) Pramjit Kaur (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00000455 of Karkarduma Noida Branch) Manoj Sangwan (Borrower) Anu Rani (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00001749 of Netaji Subhash Place Branch) Rajiv (Borrower) Jyoti (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00000944 of Delhi Rajouri Garden Branch) Bala Bhatia (Borrower) Sanjay Kumar Bhatia (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00000956 of Delhi Rajouri Garden Branch) Harvinder Singh (Borrower) Harjeet Kaur (Co Borrower 1) Gurmest Singh (Co Borrower 2) (LC No. 00000756 of Karkarduma Noida Branch) Dalvir Singh Rawat (Borrower) Manju Rawat (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00001061 of New Delhi-west Branch) Chetan Arora (Borrower) Pooja Arora (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00001988 of Noida 1 Rajendra Place Branch) Mansi (Borrower) Gaurav (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00004800 of New Delhi Branch) Manish Kumar Yadav (Borrower) Vikas Yadav (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00000357 of Dwarka Branch) Anun Kumar Singh (Borrower) Anu Kumari (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00002396 of Noida 1 Rajendra Place Branch) Raju (Borrower) Pinky (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00043598 of Gurgaon - Sohna Road Branch) Manav Bhatliya (Borrower) Ramu (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00001286 of Delhi Rajouri Garden Branch) Khang Shong Vano Ravi (Borrower) Soni Khang Shong Vano (Co Borrower 1) K S V Ashok (Co Borrower 2) K S V Vandana (Guarantor 1) (LC No. 00005447 of Kamal Branch) Vivek Dhaka (Borrower) Indu Wo Vivek Dhaka (Co Borrower 1) (LC No. 00003652 of New Delhi Branch) Sikha Promoters Pvt Ltd (Borrower) H S Sikka (Co Borrower 1) Gurinder Singh Sikka (Co Borrower 2) Kusum Kaur (Guarantor 1)	27-07-2021 ₹ 3067996 /- (₹ Thirty lakh Sixty Seven Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety Six) NPA (09-01-2021) 27-07-2021 ₹ 3087834 /- (₹ Thirty lakh Eighty Seven Thousand Eight Hundred Thirty Four) NPA (10-12-2020) 08-10-2021 ₹ 14954406 /- (₹ One Crore Forty Nine lakh Fifty Four Thousand Four Hundred Six) NPA (10-07-2021) 22-11-2021 ₹ 7697007 /- (₹ Seventy Six lakh Ninety Seven Thousand Seven) NPA (09-10-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 22462922 /- (₹ Two Crore Twenty Four lakh Sixty Two Thousand Nine Hundred Twenty Two) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 9912266 /- (₹ Ninety Nine lakh Twelve Thousand Two Hundred Sixty Six) NPA (09-10-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 7908451 /- (₹ Seventy Nine lakh Eight Thousand Four Hundred Fifty One) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 4029939 /- (₹ Forty lakh Twenty Nine Thousand Nine Hundred Thirty Nine) NPA (09-10-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 3827719 /- (₹ Thirty eight lakh Twenty Seven Thousand Seven Hundred Nineteen) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 3715411 /- (₹ Thirty Seven lakh Fifteen Thousand Four Hundred Eleven) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 3684135 /- (₹ Thirty Six lakh Eighty Four Thousand One Hundred Thirty Five) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 3455884 /- (₹ Thirty Four lakh Fifty Five Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty Four) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 3295197 /- (₹ Thirty Two lakh Ninety Five Thousand One Hundred Ninety Seven) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 3098829 /- (₹ Thirty lakh Ninety Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty Nine) NPA (10-07-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 2875445 /- (₹ Twenty Eight lakh Seventy Five Thousand Four Hundred Forty Five) NPA (10-07-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 2528365 /- (₹ Twenty Five lakh Twenty Eight Thousand Three Hundred Sixty Five) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 2510535 /- (₹ Twenty Five lakh Ten Thousand Five Hundred Thirty Five) NPA (10-07-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 2328730 /- (₹ Twenty Three lakh Twenty Eight Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty) NPA (09-08-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 2239162 /- (₹ Twenty Two lakh Thirteen Thousand One Hundred Sixty Two) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 2197626 /- (₹ Twenty One lakh Ninety Seven Thousand Six Hundred Twenty Six) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 2040895 /- (₹ Twenty lakh Forty Thousand Eight Hundred Ninety Five) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 1759228 /- (₹ Seventeen lakh Fifty Nine Thousand Two Hundred Twenty Eight) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 1641016 /- (₹ Sixteen lakh Forty One Thousand Sixteen) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 1459293 /- (₹ Fourteen lakh Fifty Nine Thousand Two Hundred Ninety Three) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 1438037 /- (₹ Fourteen lakh Thirty Eight Thousand Thirty Seven) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 1270555 /- (₹ Twelve lakh Seventy Thousand Five Hundred Fifty Five) NPA (09-11-2021) 18-12-2021 ₹ 1253800 /- (₹ Twelve lakh Fifty Three Thousand Eight Hundred) NPA (09-11-2021) 22-12-2021 ₹ 910360 /- (₹ Nine lakh Ten Thousand Three Hundred Sixty) NPA (09-11-2021)	D-2/173,third Floor, Block-d-2 Kh No-11/21, village Asalatpur Khadar, Jeevan Park,uttam Nagar Delhi New Delhi Delhi - 110059 Plot No-64, Kharsa No-487, Village Pesaragari, West Delhi New Delhi Delhi - 110085 Flat No. 506 5th Floor Tower E (block E2) Ireo Skykon Sector 60 Gurgaon Gurgaon Haryana - 122001 PropNo. 138, entire prop Killa No. 16, Muall No. 32 Village Khyala Chand Nagar Kanhaiya Park New Delhi New Delhi - 110063 Prop No-m-30,old No-11/11882,kharsa No--291 -294,vill-udhanpur,naveen Shahdara, Near - Shri Ram Satsang Bhawan Delhi New Delhi Delhi Delhi 110032 Plot No 826 1st Floor Without Roof Right Block D New Friends Colony New Delhi Delhi New Delhi Delhi 110065 Property No. FA- 343, Old No. FA- 91, Second floor, Village Basai Dangar Mansarovar Garden New Delhi New Delhi Delhi 110015 Plot No 826 1st Floor Without Roof Right Block D New Friends Colony New Delhi New Delhi New Delhi Delhi 110065 Plot No. 51, 1st Floor Silver Park Shipuri Delhi New Delhi Delhi 110051 Flat No B401, Fourth Floor, Plot No 1b, Gulistan CGHS Ltd, Sector-13 Dwarka New Delhi New Delhi Delhi 110075 Villa No B-77, Block-B, Paramount Golf Foreste, Plot No-BGH-A, Surajpur Site C, Greater Noida-201308 Greater Noida Gautamdhur Nagar Uttar Pradesh 201308 Flat No F 1102, At Princess Park, Sector 86 Parklands, Faridabad, Haryana, Princess Park Faridabad Faridabad Haryana 121001 H.No F-169 A, Sudeshar Park Plot No-82 Kharsa No-653 Near C Block Atta Chakki New Delhi New Delhi Delhi 110015 Wz-54-a/5, Flt Without Roof Right Chau

Food for the soul

SAMEER BAWA’s taste buds are tantalised by the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean flavours of Cafe Mez



If I say that there is a real dearth of Middle Eastern restaurants in Delhi/NCR, I am confident that there would hardly be anybody who would accuse me of exaggeration. There are only a handful of eateries and I am surprised why, over the years, Levantine food concepts have not captured the imagination of restaurateurs. After spending a few years in Dubai, I can safely say that Indians have a palate for Middle Eastern flavours and textures and it's only a matter of time before the cuisine becomes a rage in India. Thankfully, concepts like the newly opened Cafe Mez in DLF Cyberhub, Gurgaon reinforce my point and give my ‘Arabic food’ deprived body some respite.

I visited Cafe Mez a few days ago and was immediately transported to a different world as soon as I stepped into the restaurants. Large windows which allowed abundant natural light, casual yet comfortable seating and a soothing blue & white colour scheme made it seem that I could very easily be eating at a cafe in Beirut, dining at a Greek restaurant in Athens or enjoying a Lebanese meal in Dubai. Well, that was the impression if I looked at the optics in isolation.

“I wanted to create a cafe where you could enjoy great breakfast options from the Middle East to the Mediterranean and, at the same time, use the freshest of ingredients to create a friendly cuisine throughout the day”, says Ashish Dev Kapur (co-owner, Cafe Mez). Super-talented chef Megha Kohli is

at the helm of affairs in the kitchen. I have known Megha from her time at Lavaash by Saby and she comes in with a lot of pedigree. She has an individual style and most of the preparations on the menu are a nifty amalgamation of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean elements. Almost all the dishes dance on the periphery of authenticity due to a unique twist. Most of the preparations

carefully thread the needle between creativity and authentic flavours. And I shall explain how.

We started with the *Muhammara*, *Gazan guac* and *Fattoush salad*. Red peppers, walnuts and pomegranate molasses are the main ingredients for a *Muhammara* along with some olive oil and spices but I loved the way the dip is decorated with black olives and

cucumber peel. Even without that, the dish would have been complete but I loved that little touch. Also, when you look at a *Fattoush salad*, in its original form, it is toasted pita or *khubz* with mixed greens, tomatoes, cucumber, peppers and onions drizzled with sumac and pomegranate molasses. Chef Megha's version is sans the toasted pita and drizzled with lemon herb dressing and feta which adds the Mediterranean element to it. I must confess that, at an individual level, I missed the toasted pita in the mix of things and feel that a *fattoush* is incomplete without it. The *Gazan guac* though was a stunning preparation. So unique, so subtle but yet so familiar.

Next up was the *Bacon and egg pide*. I have sampled that before during a meal at Lavaash by Saby a few years ago and had very high expectations. It was that and much more. It is chef Megha's take on Georgian bread with an egg and cheese at the core topped with generous chunks of bacon. When you cut through the bread, the runny egg yolk oozes out of imprisonment and lusciously laces the bread. Gastronomic heaven! For the mains, we

requested the *Chicken Shawarma roll* and the *Iranian lamb koobideh*. The shawarma was decent with succulent chunks of chicken and pickle engulfed in a pita and served with fries but the showstopper was the *Koobideh*. Flavourful and juicy ground lamb kebabs on a bed of thin bread with a side of spiced onions and *Tzaziki*. Absolutely brilliant. Every bite is an experience in itself. One prep that is definitely for the Gods.

I culminated the meal on a sweet note with some *Ponchikis*, an American doughnut filled with Nutella or rose-scented custard. It's a serving of two *ponchikis* and I chose one of each. Best decision ever as the custard and chocolate provided a great contrast. All in all, we had a fabulous meal. The restaurant has a well-stocked bar and you can have a lazy afternoon out with some cocktails or savour your favourite bottle of wine with the lovely food. The service orientation of the staff is also top-notch and they would ensure that you have a pleasant dining experience. As I was stepping out of the restaurant, my taste buds couldn't thank me enough for the tantalising play of flavours and textures. I made silent promises to myself that I shall be back soon. Very soon!



A smoothie start

SAMRAT REDDY makes a case for drinking breakfast to get a full dose of nutrition

It is said that breakfast, the most important meal of the day, should ideally never be skipped. In the pandemic, there has been a sudden change in people's eating habits where they are opting for healthier and more nutritious food.

While breakfast looks different in different parts of the world, it is most eclectic in India, where there are so many food choices — from fruits and juices to oats, Indian staples like *poha*, idli, dosa, parathas and more. Over the last couple of years, Indians have discovered ‘smoothies and smoothie bowls’, which are packed with health benefits and are known to make a person feel fuller for a longer period.

Our body needs proteins and nutrients to function properly and, when it's not provided with healthy food and fluids, it deteriorates. Smoothies and smoothie bowls are an excellent source of vitamins, folate, minerals, dietary fibre, proteins and carbohydrates besides being a delicious addition to breakfast.

Eating healthily and keeping healthy is such an overrated concept that it has been made to appear like a difficult task when, in truth, it is as simple as returning to our origins. We have a body that, like any other machine, has to be used to maintain it. When it comes to food, it's the same thing as machine fuel. The tougher the fuel is for the body, the more adulterated (far from natural food) it is. The most significant change we need to make is to eat more natural foods and avoid manufactured foods.

The simplest way to do this is by inculcating the habit of increasing the fruit intake in all forms, either as cut fruits or simple blends such as smoothies. Starting your day with smoothies will help detox, recharge and refresh the body. Fruits and vegetables in smoothies act as detoxifying agents and help cleanse the body. These smoothies have great health benefits due to their nutritious elements like vitamins, minerals, iron, fibre and proteins. They also help in weight loss and re-energise the body to attain a better immune system.

Here are some interesting smoothie ideas that are not just tasty but rich in health while helping you lose weight as you kick start your day with these. The best thing about a smoothie is that you can include different fruits like apple, banana, pineapple and more to create your flavours. Drinking smoothies makes it easier to absorb water into our body helping us stay hydrated throughout the day.

Fruits like watermelon, pineapple, date, musk melon have a lot of water content in them. These fruits not only keep you hydrated but also



decrease your risk of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, increase your energy levels and keep your cells active. Bananas and apples are rich in fibre, protein and help blood glucose control.

MAKING YOUR MORNING SMOOTHIE EFFECTIVE:
Liquids are a must. Water, juice, non-dairy milk, coconut water are some of the low calorie, fewer sugar options that should be added to your meal smoothie.

Add protein and natural flavours. Avocado is one option that gives great flavour to your smoothie.

Fill it with something fresh. Add some fruits and vegetables like watermelon, apple, banana, muskmelon, carrots, baby spinach to make it filling and nutritious.

Blend until smooth. Put all your ingredients into the blender jug and let it work its magic till it looks smooth. So, just feed your body with the right nutrition and your body will love you for it. Do try replacing your morning routine breakfast with a smoothie sometime and you will know why people are making a switch.

Swap your regular breakfast with a smoothie and smoothie bowl to turn on the nutrient powerhouse in your body. Hydrate yourself with the abundant fibres in farm-fresh fruits and vegetables and stay fit with power-packed smoothies.

Drinking a smoothie will not only keep you hydrated throughout the day but will be beneficial for your body with a boost of all vitamins and proteins.

(The author is the founder, Drunken Monkey, a smoothie delivery chain with more than 200 options.)

R E C I P E S

SUPER SEEDS *CHIKKI* WHAT YOU NEED

- Sesame: 2 cups
- Jaggery: 1 cup
- Daily dose trail mix: 3 tbsp
- 7-in-1 superseeds and nut mix: 1 tbsp
- Ghee: 1 tbsp

METHOD

- Heat a pan and dry roast sesame seeds until golden brown. Keep the heat low so that the seeds don't burn.
- Remove it and keep it aside.



- In the same pan heat some ghee and roast daily dose mix. Remove daily dose mix from the pan and keep aside.

- Now add jaggery in the pan and melt it.
- Add 1/4th cup water and mix well
- Now add all the dry ingredients in the jaggery syrup and mix well.
- Meanwhile, line a baking tray or a plate with butter paper.
- Pour the hot mixture on the tray and flatten it with the back of a spoon.
- Cut the *chikki* into squares.

Courtesy: Pavitra K, lead, new product development at True Elements

VEGAN SPICY PUMPKIN CAPPUCCINO WHAT YOU NEED

- Espresso: 30 ml
- Almond milk: 200 ml
- Pumpkin puree: 3 tsp
- Honey: 15 ml
- Nutmeg: A pinch
- Cinnamon: 1 stick
- Whipped cream

METHOD

- In a pan take almond milk, honey, pumpkin purée, cinnamon stick and nutmeg. Boil at medium heat.
- Once the milk starts boiling, remove it from the fire and also remove the cinnamon stick. Pour the milk mixture into a French press and just push and pull the plunger six-eight times to get a nice silky and smooth texture foam.



- Take a shot of espresso or Moka pot coffee into a serving mug, pour the milk with foam over the espresso.
- Make sure you get a thick layer of milk foam top. If you can't manage to get it by pouring then just scoop it with the help of a spoon
- For garnish, add whipped cream on the top and sprinkle some freshly grated nutmeg.

CHOCOLATE PRUNE BANANA MUFFIN WHAT YOU NEED

- All-purpose flour: 1.5 cups
- Ripened mashed bananas: 2 large
- Prunes: 1 cup
- Dark chocolate 175 gm
- Butter at room temperature: 1/2 cup
- Eggs: 2
- Sugar: 1/2 cup
- Vanilla essence: 1 tbsp
- Baking powder: 1 tbsp
- Baking soda: 1/2 tbsp
- Salt: 1/4 tbsp

METHOD

- Preheat the oven to 170°C.
- Sift together flour, salt, baking powder and soda.
- Cream together butter and sugar. Add one egg and beat until incorporated well. Add another egg and beat again. Add vanilla essence and mix.



Now add the melted chocolate and mix.

- Add flour mixture in three batches and fold it until mixed well. Add chopped prunes.

- Fill the muffin pans, lined with the muffin liners. Bake them in the preheated oven for 18 to 20 minutes or until skewers come out clean.

GARLIC OLIVE TAPENADE WHAT YOU NEED

- Garlic cloves: 6 (finely chopped)
- Black olives: 1 cup
- Green olives: 1/2 cup
- Olive oil: 1/3 cup
- Capers (optional): 2 tbsp
- Dijon mustard: 1 tbsp
- Dried rosemary: 1/2 tbsp
- Dried basil: 1/2 tbsp

METHOD

- Put the black and green olives in a blender and add, cloves, capers, mustard, rosemary, and basil to them till everything is nicely minced.
- Slowly pour in the olive oil and blend till the mixture becomes a smooth paste.
- Top it with chopped olives and serve with your favourite crackers.

Courtesy: Del Monte



3 SPICE LATTE WHAT YOU NEED

- French press coffee: 200 ml
- Cloves 3
- Freshly grated nutmeg: A pinch
- Cinnamon: 3 small sticks
- Water: 60 ml
- Demerara sugar for sweetness
- Milk: 200 ml
- Whipped cream: Optional

METHOD

- Combine the water and spices in a saucepan,



cover and simmer for three-four minutes.

- Add the demerara, milk and bring to a boil. Remove from the heat and stir in the coffee.

- Strain to remove the spices and pour the

coffee into a coffee mug or glass.

- For a creamier option, add a swirl of whipped cream on the top, sprinkle some demerara and cinnamon.

Courtesy: Abdul Sahid Khan, head trainer at Lavazza India

INDIA LOOK TO AT LEAST FINISH ON PODIUM IN ASIA CUP

PTI ■ MUSCAT

Their title hopes already over, India would be desperate for at least a podium finish when they take on China in the third-fourth place play-off match of the women's Asia Cup hockey tournament here on Friday.

Lack of match practice due to the COVID-19 pandemic after a successful 2020, where they finished a historic fourth at the Tokyo Olympics, cost India dearly as they produced inconsistent performances in crucial matches to crash out of the title race.

After thrashing lowly Malaysia 9-0 in their opener, India suffered a 0-2 defeat against Asian Games champions Japan before thrashing Singapore 9-1 to qualify for the semifinals.

But in the semifinals, some sloppy defending and poor penalty corner conversions put paid to India's hopes as they were beaten 2-3 Korea, who set up a clash against Japan in the summit clash on Friday.

The Indians controlled the game in the first two quarters to go into half time with a slender 1-0 lead.

But a determined Korea stunned the Indians in the 31st, 45th and 47th minutes before Lalremsiami reduced the margin

Some sloppy defending and poor penalty corner conversions put paid to India's hopes as they were beaten 2-3 Korea, who set up a clash against Japan in the summit clash on Friday. The Indians controlled the game in the first two quarters to go into half time with a slender 1-0 lead.



just six minutes from the hooter but in the end it proved to be too late. After resolute defending in the first two quarters, the Indian defence led by skipper and goalkeeper Savita over the match to Korea. And come Friday, the Savita-led

Indian defence, which also includes the experienced duo of Gurjit Kaur and Deep Grace Ekka, will have to be on their toes to finish on the podium.

While the Indian forwardline have enjoyed decent outings in the tournament so far with the likes of Vandana Katariya, Monika, Navneet Kaur and Lalremsiami finding the net on more than one occasion, it is the lack of co-ordination between the midfield and backline that put paid to India's hopes.

Penalty corner conversion is another key area where Indian need to improve by leaps and bounds.

Barring a hat-trick against Singapore, seasoned drag-flicker Gurjit Kaur and her partner Ekka looked off-colour from set pieces throughout the tournament.

Going by world rankings and recent head-to-head record, India definitely hold an edge over China in Friday's match.

While India are placed 10th in the world rankings, China are ranked 13th.

In their last three outings, India had defeated China twice -- 3-1 in the Asian Champions Trophy in 2018 in Donghae, Korea and 1-0 win in the last Asian Games -- before playing out a 0-0 draw in the Tokyo Olympic Test event in 2019.

Australian Open men's singles semifinals: a shot at history

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Even before he hit his first ball at this year's Australian Open, Rafael Nadal knew he had an open door to set the men's record for most career Grand Slam singles titles.

So far he hasn't let it close. Nadal plays Matteo Berrettini in one semifinal on Friday at Melbourne Park, knowing he's potentially two match wins from a 21st major title.

He's tied for the record of 20 with Roger Federer, who is recovering from right knee surgery, and Novak Djokovic, who was deported from Australia on the eve of the tournament following an 11-day visa saga over his decision not to be vaccinated for COVID-19.

In the other semifinal, Daniil Medvedev plays Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rematch of their 2021 Australian Open semifinal. Medvedev won last year's semi-final, then lost to Djokovic in the final.

After Nadal's tough five-set win over Denis Shapovalov on Tuesday, he looked to take away some of the pressure of that



21st major. "I don't believe that my happiness, my future happiness is going to depend on if I achieve one more Grand Slam than the others, or if the others achieve more Grand Slams than me," Nadal said.

"For me, the fact that we are equal at 20 ... The only thing that says is that we share an amazing part of the history of our sport, and for me it's a real honor to be part

of it." Nadal spoke highly of Berrettini, among the players like Tsitsipas and Shapovalov who could replace the Big Three who have dominated the sport for nearly 20 years.

"Matteo, he's one of the best players of the world," Nadal said.

"I need to play my 100% and my highest level if I want to keep having chances to fight, to be competitive, and to try to be in the final."

The pair have only played once — Nadal beat the Italian in the semifinals of the 2019 U.S. Open in straight sets. Berrettini has matured since, having lost the Wimbledon final last year to Djokovic in four sets. Nadal gives a decade in age to Berrettini — 35 to 25.

U.S. Open champion Medvedev will have to overcome the fatigue from a late-night, 4 hour, 42-minute, five-set comeback win over Felix Auger-Aliassime on Wednesday.

Djokovic was firmly on Medvedev's mind during his escape over Auger-Aliassime, who won the first two sets and had a match point in the fourth.

Hockey legend Charanjit Singh dies



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Captain of India's 1964 Tokyo Olympics gold medal-winning hockey team, Charanjit Singh, died on Thursday at his home in Una, Himachal Pradesh after suffering a cardiac arrest that followed prolonged age-related illnesses.

The former mid-fielder was 90 and would have turned a year older next month. He is survived by two sons and one daughter.

Charanjit suffered a stroke five years back and was paralysed since then.

"Dad was paralysed after suffering a stroke five years back. He used to walk with a stick but since the last couple of months, his health deteriorated and this morning he left us," his younger son V P Singh told PTI.

Besides captaining the Olympic gold-winning team in 1964, he was also a part of the silver-winning side in the 1960 edition of the Games. He was also a part of the 1962 Asian Games silver-winning team.

"His last rites will be performed today after my sister reaches Una from Delhi," V P Singh said.

His wife died 12 years ago. While his elder son is a doctor in Canada, his younger son was next to him when he breathed his last.

His only daughter is married and based in New Delhi.

His last rites will be performed this evening in Una.

The two-time Olympian was a part of India's glorious days. A charismatic halfback, Charanjit had led the Indian team to a historic gold medal in 1964 Tokyo Olympics, beating Pakistan in the final and also featured in the Indian team that won silver in the 1960 Games in Rome.

Charanjit was an alumni of Col Brown Cambridge School, Dehradun and Punjab University. After his illustrious career in international hockey, he worked as the director of the physical education department in Himachal Pradesh University in Shimla.



Manjunath stuns 7th seed Cheam to storm into Odisha Open quarters

PTI ■ CUTTACK

Unseeded Mithun Manjunath stunned seventh seed June Wei Cheam of Malaysia in straight games to storm into the men's singles quarterfinals of the Odisha Open here on Thursday. Manjunath took 40 minutes to outclass Cheam 21-11 21-18. He will next face Priyanshu Rajawat.

Third seeded Indian Subhankar Dey, who had beaten sixth seed Xiaodong Sheng of Canada on Wednesday, also eased into the last-eight with a 21-16 21-14 win over compatriot Rahul Yadav Chittaboina.

Kiran George also moved to the men's singles quarterfinal with an easy 21-12 21-13 win over compatriot Chirag Sen.

Subhankar will play George in the next round. Continuing her good run of form, young Indian shuttler Malvika Bansod got the better of compatriot and junior world no 1 Tasnim Mir in straight games to advance to the women's singles quarterfinals. Bansod took just over half an hour to dispatch 16-year-old Tasnim 21-13 21-15 in the women's singles pre-quarterfinals of the BWF Super 100 tournament.

The 20-year-old Bansod, who had lost to PV Sindhu in the final of the Syed Modi International last week before defeating her idol Saina Nehwal at the India Open earlier this month, will take on the winner of the clash between Tanya Hemanth and Vijetha Harish.

Fifth seed Ashmita Chaliha also booked a quarterfinal spot as she got the better of compatriot Anupama Upadhyay 21-17 21-16. She will take on Rucha Sawant, who defeated Nikki Rapria to reach the final eight.

Chaliha will face Rucha Sawant in the quarterfinals. Qualifier Unnati Hooda cruised past eighth seed Disha Gupta of USA 21-6 21-9 in just 20 minutes to set up a quarterfinal clash against Samiya Imad Farooqui.

In the mixed doubles event, the India pairing of Dhruv Rawat and Shikha Gautam lost 11-21 14-21 to the Sri Lankan duo of Sachin Dias and Thilini Hendahewa in the second round, while Ayush Akhija and Deeksha Choudhary handed Chirag Arora and Nish Rapria a 21-5 21-16 loss to move to the quarterfinals.

Ash Barty defeats Madison Keys, storms into final



IAN S ■ MELBOURNE

The world No.1 increased her own winning streak to 10, the last nine in straight sets. Opponents have grabbed a total of 21 games off the Queensland native this fortnight

World No. 1 tennis player Ash Barty became the first Australian woman to reach the final at her home major since 1980 by defeating a resurgent American Madison Keys 6-1, 6-3, here on Thursday.

The crowd at Rod Laver Arena enjoyed a rendition of 'Girl on Fire' prior to the semifinals at the Australian Open. American Keys, too, had been on fire, tallying a career-best winning streak of 10 after a difficult 2021 that saw her rankings fall outside the top 50. But Barty is on another level at the moment, showing her impeccable skills at the Australian Open.

The world No.1 increased her own winning streak to 10, the last nine in straight sets. Opponents have grabbed a total of 21 games off the Queensland native this fortnight. An indication of Keys' night came in the opening game. Leading 30-0, Barty thwarted three game points before taking advantage of a first break-point.

The serve, slice, and forehand all make up Barty's vast weaponry yet so does her movement. She hurried to a Keys drop shot, then ripped a forehand cross-court. A hefty sec-

ond serve - an ace if not for a good stretch from the 2017 US Open finalist - helped Barty consolidate for 2-0.

But at 30-all in the next game, Barty's floated slice on a second-serve return barely dropped in. There was no luck involved on the next point when Barty curled a forehand for 4-1. Still one of the hardest hitters around, Keys found the right balance between aggression and not going for too much, which has been an issue throughout

her stellar career. Only once this Australian Open had Keys hit more unforced errors than winners in a match.

On Thursday, pressed by Barty, though, she committed 24 unforced errors, coupled with eight winners. Barty bypassed a break-point with an ace to lead 5-1 and sent a forehand return down the line to seal the opener.

Keys' defending, not that big-hitting, aided in escaping from 0-30 at 0-1 in the second. A fist pump ensued from the 26-year-old after holding at deuce for 2-2.

Barty miscued on a drive volley after stretching the World No.51 and suddenly faced a break-point. But a fine forehand approach close to the net - made more difficult given the slight momentum change - allowed the Australian to later finish at the net.

Keys, maybe and understandably, dwelled on her opportunity. Barty took advantage for 4-2 after Keys decided to approach from deep in the court.

Friends, both smiled at the net after Barty caressed a forehand on match point for winner number 20 on the night, mixed with a mere 13 unforced errors.

China demands US halt Olympics 'interference'

AP ■ BEIJING

China is demanding the US end "interference" in the Beijing Winter Olympics, which begin next week, in an apparent reference to a diplomatic boycott imposed by Washington and some of its allies.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi made the demand in a phone call with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Thursday Beijing time, according to a news release posted on the Foreign Ministry's website.

The U.S. Has said it will not send dignitaries to the Games, which open Feb. 4, in a protest over China's detention of an estimated 1 million or more Uyghur and other Muslims in the northwestern region of Xinjiang, along with crackdowns on human rights elsewhere in the country.

The boycott does not prevent U.S. Athletes from taking part in the Games, which are being held under strict anti-pandemic restrictions.

China has also protested what it



says are calls within the State Department to withdraw staff and their dependents from the embassy and consulates around China over the tightening rules.

The news release said Wang also called for an end to U.S. Support for self-governing Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory.

Wang also complained that the

U.S. Hasn't altered tough political and economic policies toward China under the administration of President Joe Biden, despite its expressed wishes for a less confrontational relationship.

A brief statement from the State Department said that Blinken and Wang exchanged views on how to manage strategic risk, health security and climate change.

Vietnam, Myanmar settle for draw

IAN S ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Vietnam and Myanmar played a 2-2 draw in their final AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022 Group C tie at the D.Y. Patil Stadium, here on Thursday.

Vietnam came from behind twice to salvage a point and finish third but will have to wait till the Group B matches conclude later on Thursday to know their knockout stage fate, with the two best third-placed teams to join the respective group winners and runners-up in the quarter-finals.

Myanmar, needing a win to finish above their Southeast Asian rivals, started the more aggressive of the two sides and had a first look on goal in the second minute after Tun Win Theingi's threaded pass found Thaw Thaw, whose shot failed to trouble Vietnam custodian Tran Thi Kim Thanh.

Vietnam came close to finding the net a minute later when Nguyen Thi My Anh tried to catch Myanmar goalkeeper Nwe May Zin off her line but her shot from distance was denied by



the crossbar.

That set the stage for a well balanced game as both teams created opportunities with Nwe denying

Vietnam's Huynh Nhu in the 13th, while Tun's header from inside the box was cleared away two minutes later.

However, it was Vietnam who

conceded the first goal when Nguyen Thi Thanh Nha brought down an advancing Noe Khin Myat inside the box, with Tun making no mistake in converting the penalty.

Vietnam fought back and after several missed opportunities, they finally levelled the score at the stroke of half-time, with Nguyen Thi Tuyet Dung beating Nwe off a corner set-piece. Mai Duc Chung's charges were wasteful in front of the goal after the restart with Huynh Nhu and Nguyen Thi Tuyet Dung both missing chances.

Myanmar, however, edged ahead again in spectacular fashion in the 49th minute when Tun set up Tun Khin Marlar, who found space before smashing her effort into the back of the net. Vietnam were given a lifeline when Myanmar's Saw Thaw Thaw conceded a penalty in the 62nd minute after she brought down Nguyen Anh Thi My inside the six-yard-box.

Huynh Nhu made no mistake from the penalty spot, sending Nwe the wrong way to level the tie for a second time as both teams had to settle for a share of the points.



RAVI BISHNOI GETS MAIDEN CALL-UP FOR WINDIES SERIES

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Young leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi was on Wednesday rewarded with a maiden India call-up for the upcoming Twenty20 series against the West Indies, while senior wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav also returned to the white-ball setup after a knee surgery.

Skipper Rohit Sharma on the day cleared his fitness test and as reported by PTI on January 17, was back in-charge for the series that starts with ODIs in Ahmedabad from February 6.

Among senior players, Ravichandran Ashwin has been dropped from the white-ball team, while Washington Sundar, who missed the South Africa series due to COVID-19, was back in the squad. "Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammad Shami have been rested from the series,"

BCCI secretary Jay Shah was quoted as saying in a press release.

While Ashwin is believed to be

injured and out for six weeks, BCCI statement didn't mention his injury status so it can be concluded that even if he is fit, he wouldn't have been picked after an indifferent white-ball series in South Africa.

The other notable comeback has been Baroda batter Deepak Hooda, who had changed states and did wonderfully well for Rajasthan in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy as well as Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Hooda is being looked as a potential finisher in shorter formats and for now in the ODI team. He was part of the Nidahas Trophy squad in Sri Lanka four seasons back but didn't get a game.

"If you go and look at Hooda's performances in white-ball cricket this season, most of his runs have come when the team has been in trouble. That shows he can take pressure. The selectors would like to see more of M Shahrulkh Khan, who is a good talent. There are a lot of matches and if he has a good IPL, who knows, he will

"Ravindra Jadeja is undergoing his final stage of recovery post his knee injury and will not be available for the ODIs and T20Is. Axar Patel will be available for the T20Is," Shah added

be right there," a BCCI source informed PTI on condition of anonymity.

However it is understood that Himachal Pradesh captain Rishi Dhawan wasn't in consideration as his bowling is friendly medium pace and can't be seen as a finisher in

white-ball cricket.

It is also learnt that vice-captain KL Rahul will be available from the second ODI onwards as he is set to miss the first 50-over game due to personal reasons.

"Ravindra Jadeja is undergoing his final stage of recovery post his knee injury and will not be available for the ODIs and T20Is. Axar Patel will be available for the T20Is," Shah added.

Bishnoi has been one of the finds of the Indian Premier League for the Punjab outfit and has been picked up by new franchise Lucknow Super Giants from the drafts for the next IPL. In 42 T20 games, he has 49 wickets at a great economy rate of 6.63. In 17 List A games, he has 24 wickets and an economy rate of 5.48.

He primarily bowls googlies which is his stock delivery and occasionally

bowls leg-breaks. With Kuldeep, Yuzvendra Chahal and Bishnoi, India is again going back to the trust-ed formula of wrist spin which gave

them lot of success between 2017 to 2019.

Bhuvneshwar Kumar has been dropped from the ODI squad but retained for the T20Is while former skipper Virat Kohli featured in both the teams.

It is understood that Kuldeep, who had lost his mojo in the Kohli-Ravi Shastri era, has been called back as the current team management and selectors feel that he has the X-factor to contribute to the team's cause.

He underwent a knee surgery in September last year.

Avesh Khan and Harshal Patel, who were part of the New Zealand T20 Internationals are predictably back as reported by PTI.

The six-match series against the West Indies will feature three ODIs starting in Ahmedabad from February 6, followed by as many T20 Internationals in Kolkata.

Due to COVID-19 protocols, the BCCI has curtailed the number of venues from six cities to two.

Roach returns to West Indies squad



PTI ■ ST JOHN'S (ANTIGUA)

Seasoned pacer Kemar Roach and Syoung all-rounder Nkrumah Bonner have been recalled to the West Indies ODI squad for the three-match series in India beginning February 6. Roach, who has not played any List A cricket since his last ODI in 2019, has made the return with West Indies great Desmond Haynes picking him in his first squad selection since taking over as lead selector. Six additions have been made to the squad, to be led by Kieron Pollard, that lost to Ireland at home. The ODIs against India will be played at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on

February 6, 9 and 11.

The T20Is will be played at Eden Gardens in Kolkata on February 16, 18 and 20 and the Caribbean squad for that is expected to be announced on Friday. Besides the experienced Roach, the 22-year-old Bonner, a middle-order batter whose last ODI appearance was exactly a year ago, and Brandon King, an opener, have been recalled to the squad.

The 27-year-old King's last one-day outing in national colours was back in 2020. Roach has so far played 92 ODIs with 124 wickets. Bonner made his ODI debut in Bangladesh a year ago and has so far played three matches, while King has appeared in four matches

in this format.

"Kemar Roach is one of our leading fast bowlers and we believe we need bowlers upfront to get early wicket, and Kemar, with an economy rate of five, is certainly good enough to play. "Over the last few years, Nkrumah Bonner's cricket has come on leaps and bounds and we believe he should be given an opportunity to play in the 50-over format," said Haynes in a statement."

The series will be part of the ICC ODI Super League and the West Indies will have the opportunity to win points to be one of the top seven teams, excluding hosts India, to gain automatic qualification for the 2023 World Cup.

Powell's 107 leads West Indies over England by 20 runs



AP ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

Royman Powell hit 10 sixes among his 107 runs from 53 balls to lead West Indies to a 20-run victory over England and a 2-1 lead in the five-match Twenty20 series.

Powell, brought in for Odean Smith, formed the backbone of the home side's 224 for five, with Nicholas Pooran clubbing 70 off 43 deliveries. England finished at 202-9.

Tom Banton gave England hope of pulling off its third-highest chase ever with a 39-ball 73 but his dismissal left the tourists needing 96 from 45 deliveries before Phil Salt kept its flickering hopes alive.

Salt, one of three T20 debutants alongside George Garton and Harry Brook, brought the equation down to 36 in an over, flaying the first two deliveries for six en route to a 22-ball 50 before being bowled.

England was captained by Moeen Ali because of a slight quad injury to Eoin Morgan.

The final two matches are on Saturday and Sunday, also in Bridgetown.

NZC moves all games against Indian women to Queenstown

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

The Indian women's team will play all its six upcoming matches against New Zealand in Queenstown as NZC on Thursday announced a revised schedule to reduce chances of a COVID-19 outbreak.

The Indian women's team, which is already in New Zealand, is now scheduled to play all five ODIs and a T20I, starting February 9 at John Davies Oval in Queenstown.

The bilateral series, which is key for India ahead of the World Cup in March-April, was earlier scheduled to begin with the one-off T20I at McLean Park in Napier followed by the first ODI at the same venue two days later.

The Saxton Oval in Nelson was to host the second and third ODIs on February 14 and 16, with the final two ODIs to be played in Queenstown on February 22 and 24.

Other changes in the schedule announced by NZC include the South Africa men's side remaining in Christchurch for the entire duration of its visit, playing both its scheduled Tests at Hagley Oval rather than



decamping to Wellington for the second match, as initially scheduled.

Australia's three T20s against the New Zealand men's side will now be hosted in Napier (subject to MIQ availability), and the Netherlands men's tour is set to be split between Mount Maunganui (one T20 and one ODI) and Hamilton (two ODIs). All matches have been kept on originally-scheduled days. The changes in the venues is aimed to cut down on domestic travel and the increased likelihood of exposure to the Omicron variant of COVID-19.

"These risk mitigations

are based on avoiding known Covid-19 hotspots, and include limiting air travel, limiting accommodation transfers and, essentially, operating in safer environments," NZC chief executive David White said in a statement.

"We know the more domestic flights we have, and the more movement there is between hotels, the greater the chance of a match or even a series being put at risk," he added.

White added the intent is to explore the concept of allowing multiple pods, each of no more than 100 spectators, in venues in accordance with government guidelines.

Tough road awaits Kuldeep, Harbhajan wants Team India to 'stick by'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

When Kuldeep Yadav had gone for a skier during a Kolkata Knight Riders practice session in the UAE last September, little did he know that within seconds his world would come crashing down with a twisted knee.

Those present at the Dubai training facility were horrified seeing his condition as he lay there writhing in pain, waiting to be stretched out.

In a week's time, he underwent a major knee surgery in Mumbai, which cast doubts on how long it would take for him to get fit for competitive cricket. He visited Mathura with his family on Thursday to offer

prayers on his comeback, for Kuldeep really needed some divine intervention to make his way back into the Indian team.

Otherwise, all that he could have done was to wait at home to hear from the BCCI if it would hold the now-postponed Ranji Trophy, where he was supposed to lead Uttar Pradesh.

"It will be a very tough road ahead for Kuldeep. He hasn't had any proper domestic games under his belt and it's not easy to make an international comeback just like that," one of India's greatest spinners, Harbhajan Singh, told PTI when asked about his expectations.

"He wasn't playing regularly before surgery and when you are making a comeback in white



ball, the first thing that's at the back of your mind is 'I don't want to get hit'.

"So it's like striking a balance as you are naturally dealing with a lot of insecurities. It's a test of mental fortitude," said Harbhajan, who saw Kuldeep from close quarters at KKR nets.

But Kuldeep has the skills and the 'Turbanator' expects that he can get a few early wickets and make it a different ball-game.

"Let me make it clear. If he gets a couple of early wickets, he will be a different bowler but things may not go as per plan. It might take some time for him to get back the rhythm.

"My only suggestion would be that stick with him since you have shown conviction based on

his past performances and give him enough time and confidence. He is a man who can deliver the goods for India," said the holder of 700-plus international wickets.

The national selectors made an exception for him as he is one of the rare cricketers who is coming back without having to prove his match-fitness as there is no domestic cricket at the moment.

The rub of green finally seems to be going Kuldeep's way after enduring rough times as his exclusion from the playing XI wasn't always a cricketing one during the earlier regime of Virat Kohli and Ravi Shastri.

Call it India's bare spin cupboard and injuries or poor form of some elite spinners.

England first team to reach U-19 World Cup semifinals

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND

Jacob Bethell's blistering batting display helped England advance to the semi-finals of the ICC U-19 World Cup with a six-wicket win over South Africa here.

Bethell was one of the bowlers to restrict South Africa to 209 all out before hitting 88 to see England set up a clash with either Sri Lanka or Afghanistan.

South Africa endured a slow start having won the toss and chosen to bat, their first boundary came off the final ball of the fourth over, before Joshua Boyden dismissed Valentine Kitime off the next delivery.

Boyden would claim his 12th wicket of the tournament to send the other opener Ethan-John Cunningham back to the hutch and reduce South Africa to 21 for two.

Dewald Brevis and Gerhardus Maree combined to steady the South African ship, adding 55 runs to the total before Bethell dismissed Maree.

Brevis remained a familiar stronghold for South Africa as he brought up his fourth fifty-plus score in a row even-



tually falling just short of a century on 97.

His dismissal brought about a batting collapse for South Africa as three wickets fell for one run as the batters went in search of boundaries, but only found the grateful hands of fielders with

Rehan Ahmed claiming figures of four for 48.

The final-wicket partnership of Matthew Boast and Asakhe Tsaka frustrated England adding 40 runs as South Africa ended on 209 all out.

Bethell came out all guns blazing in

England's chase, hitting the fourth fastest half-century of U19 World Cup history, reaching fifty off just 20 balls, as the Young Lions went to over 10 an over.

George Thomas was a delighted onlooker at the non-striker's end only

moving into double figures in the tenth over, before smacking a six to bring up England's hundred.

South Africa finally struck as Bethell went for one heave too many but not before he had put on 88 from 42 deliveries to place England as overwhelming favourites.

That tag was backed up by good partnerships in the top order, before William Luxton came in at five to strike 47 from 41 balls and get England into the semi-finals with a six.

Zimbabwe, West Indies win in the Plate competition

Matthew Welch's 78 helped Zimbabwe set Scotland a tricky chase of 249 in their Plate quarterfinal.

Scotland were unable to build partnerships as they slumped to 140 all out to see Zimbabwe advance to meet Ireland. They will be joined in the semi-finals by hosts West Indies who were too good for Papua New Guinea in a 169-run win. The West Indies will now face the United Arab Emirates, while Papua New Guinea are set to take on Uganda in the Plate play-offs.

ICC unveils NFT in partnership with 'FanCraze'

PTI ■ DUBAI

The International Cricket Council on Thursday released 'ICC Cricetos', the official range of digital (NFT) collectibles, in partnership with FanCraze.

Cricetos enables fans to collect and trade their own slice of cricket history from a range of ICC events.

Featuring 75 unforgettable moments from the 2015 and 2019 editions of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup, fans can start their Cricetos collection with one of three packs: a Base Pack, a Booster Pack and a Hotshots Pack.

Fans that have reserved a pack will be the first to have the chance to own NFTs of some of the most talked-about shots, catches and wickets in international cricket.

The roster of collectibles will continue to grow and will include classic plays from past ICC Men's and Women's events as well as iconic moments created at future events.

The number of Cricetos vary by pack-type and Cricetos will vary in their rarity across four tiers: Common, Rare, Epic and Legendary with Common Cricetos being the most minted whilst Legendary will be the rarest.

Finn Bradshaw, ICC Head of Digital said: "We are so excited to drop our first packs of Cricetos today which is a unique opportunity for fans to own and be part of historic moments in cricket. Cricetos will be a digital record of those moments cricket fans love, and enable them to collect these legendary video highlights. "This Beta launch is our first step into the cricket metaverse and those lucky enough to be part of it can start their Cricetos collection today and shortly start growing it by trading on the peer-to-peer marketplace through our partners FanCraze before we move to a full launch in the near future."

Some of the digital collectibles include Glenn Maxwell whipping one over square leg for a boundary against Sri Lanka, Hardik Pandya smashing Mohammad Amir through the covers at Old Trafford in 2019 and Joe Root drilling one over long-on in the World Cup 2019.

Alongside MS Dhoni and Steve Smith moments, a Lasith Malinga yorker from the ICC Men's World Cup 2019 can be found.

Other NFT products of 2019 edition include David Warner executing a checked lofted drive down the ground for six at the 2019, KL Rahul lofting Akhila Dhananjaya over long-off for a six and AB de Villiers showing his 360-degree range against Andre Russell.

