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ISRAELI CONNECT

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BLINKEN URGES UNITY TO FIGHT
'RELENTLESS' RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

MONEY 9
ECONOMIC RECOVERY YET TO
ATTAIN DURABILITY: REPORT

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SANIA MIRZA
TO END CAREER
AFTER 2022
12 SPORT



Covid 3rd wave to peak on Jan 23: IIT-K study

'Cases to remain below 4L /day, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata past peak'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With 2,82,970 new coronavirus infections, including 8,961 Omicron variant cases, India's active cases have increased to 18,31,000, the highest in 232 days. The infections are likely to spike further till January 23 when the third Covid-19 wave in the country may peak with daily cases likely to remain below the four lakh mark, said Manindra Agarwal, a scientist at the Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur and one of the researchers associated with the Sutra Covid model.

Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata have already reached their peak in case numbers in the past seven days, he said.

According to Agrawal, Covid-19 cases will peak in Maharashtra, Karnataka, UP, Gujarat, and Haryana this week, while States like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Tamil Nadu may peak next week.

"The daily cases are projected to peak on January 23 in India and stay below the four



A crowded subway at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus railway station amid concern over rising cases of Omicron variant of Covid-19 across the country, in Mumbai on Wednesday

PTI

lakh mark. Metro cities Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata have already peaked," Agrawal said. Agrawal had earlier predicted that the Covid-19 third wave will peak by January end.

"Across the country, the trajectories are changing significantly. I speculated earlier that it is due to ICMR guidelines for a changed testing strategy. However, at many places, these guidelines are not yet implemented and still, the trajectory has changed!" he said.

According to a new Govt advisory, individuals under-

taking inter-State domestic travel and contacts of confirmed Covid cases do not need to get tested unless identified as "high risk" based on age or comorbidities. In his view, there are two plausible reasons for the change in the Omicron-led case trajectory in India.

"There are two groups in the population, one with less immunity against Omicron and the other with more. The mutant first spread in the first group causing a sharp rise. Now the first group is exhausted and so the spread is slower," he explained.

Agrawal noted that there was a lot of concern when the Omicron variant started spreading in November last year.

However, he said, in the last week or so, people almost everywhere have concluded that the variant causes only "mild infection" and have decided to handle it with standard remedies instead of getting tested.

The death toll in India has climbed to 4,87,202 with 441 fresh fatalities. There has been a 0.79 per cent increase in Omicron cases since Tuesday, the Ministry said.

MSY's daughter-in-law, first CDS Rawat's brother join BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the season of shifting political loyalties in poll-bound Uttar Pradesh, the BJP on Wednesday won over Samajwadi Party (SP) patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav's daughter-in-law Aparna Yadav. Aparna joined the saffron outfit here at BJP headquarters.

Aparna is married to Prateek Yadav, son of Mulayam Singh Yadav's second wife. SP president Akhilesh Yadav is his son from his first marriage.

Meanwhile, Colonel Vijay Rawat, the brother of India's first Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat, joined the BJP on Wednesday in Uttarakhand ahead of the State polls. "My father (Gen Laxman Singh Rawat) after retiring from the Army, was with the BJP. Now I have got an opportunity. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision is special. All his work is for the progress of this nation. That is what encouraged me to join the BJP. His plan for Uttarakhand is a product of a great vision," Colonel Vijay Rawat said. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami was also present.

General Bipin Rawat, who was born in Uttarakhand, his wife, and 12 others died last month after their chopper crashed in Tamil Nadu's Coonoor.



Aparna Yadav, former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav's daughter-in-law, joins THE BJP in the presence of UP Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya (L) and State BJP chief Swatantra Dev Singh (R), at party HQ in New Delhi on Wednesday

PTI

Aparna, in her early thirties, who was making overtures to the BJP for long, joined the party in the presence of Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya and BJP nState chief Swatantra Dev Singh.

The BJP may be fielding her in the UP Assembly polls, though a seat 'fitting her political background' is yet to be decided, sources said.

Praising Aparna, Maurya said she had been from time to time expressing views that showed her inclination towards the BJP.

The Uttar Pradesh BJP president lambasted

Samajwadi Party for its alleged support to criminals in its ticket distribution in western Uttar Pradesh. Farmers and women never felt safe when the Samajwadi Party was in power, he alleged.

Singh said Aparna has faith in good governance of Prime Minister Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and her induction in the BJP will boost the party.

Expressing her admiration for Modi, she said the nation's interest has always been a priority for her and praised several schemes of the BJP Government for cleanliness, woman empowerment and

employment.

The switch, a shot in the arm for BJP, comes at a time when a number of OBC leaders have quit the BJP and joined the SP.

Aparna had contested the 2017 Assembly polls on the SP ticket from Lucknow Cantonment but lost to BJP's Rita Bahuguna Joshi, now a Lok Sabha member.

Bahuguna is now herself pitching for a seat for her son and written a letter to the BJP president JP Nadda to the effect saying she may quit her Lok Sabha seat if the party were to stick to one member one ticket guideline.

CAPSULE

INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES CANCEL FLIGHTS TO US

Dubai: Major international airlines cancelled flights heading to the US or changed the planes they're using on Wednesday, the latest complication in a dispute over concerns that 5G mobile phone service could interfere with aircraft technology.

MALLYA FACES PROSPECT OF LOSING LONDON HOME

London: Embattled liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya, who is based in Britain for over five years, faces the prospect of bailiffs knocking on the doors of his luxury London home any time now after a British court ruled that a bank pursuing its unpaid dues can take charge of the high value property.

INS BLAST: ACCIDENTAL DEATH CASE REGISTERED

Mumbai: The Mumbai Police registered an accidental death case in connection with the explosion on-board the INS Ranvir at the Naval dockyard the day before in which 3 Navy personnel were killed and 11 hurt, an official said.

Mid-air collision of 2-IndiGo planes averted by a whisker

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two IndiGo planes with hundreds of passengers on board came close to colliding with each other mid-air on January 7 shortly after taking off from Kempegowda International Airport (KIA), at an altitude of over 3000 feet over Bengaluru.

The incident occurred when IndiGo flights 6E 455 departing for Kolkata and 6E 246 for Bhubaneswar were given permission to depart at the same time. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), which is investigating the matter, has said that it would take the strictest action against those responsible for the incident. The incident was not recorded in any logbook and was not reported by the Airports Authority of India.

Both the aircraft took off from Bengaluru airport in a



span of about five minutes.

DGCA said that the two IndiGo planes were involved in "breach of separation" at Bengaluru airport. Breach of separation happens when two aircraft cross the minimum mandatory vertical or horizontal distance in the airspace. Both these aircraft departed from the Bengaluru airport within a span of approximately 5 minutes on the morning of January 7.

"On the morning of the incident, the north runway was being used for departures

and the south runway for arrivals. Later, the shift in charge decided to close the south runway but failed to inform the air traffic controller of the south tower," said officials. As a result, the two flights were given permission for take-off at the same time from the converging runways. This resulted in a situation where the aircraft moving in the same direction were about to collide with each other. A radar controller saw this and immediately intervened to alert the aircraft.



Army jawans patrol in a snow-covered area near the LOC in Poonch on Wednesday

PTI

Heads of Af neighbours, Modi to discuss situation

India hosting conclave in virtual mode on Jan 27

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Situation in Afghanistan and in the neighbourhood will figure prominently in the first summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and heads of State of five Central Asian nations on January 27. India is hosting the conclave in the virtual mode.

Leaders of the five nations were to be invited as chief guests for the Republic Day parade this year. The raging corona pandemic forced India to change the schedule. The Republic Day parade for the second consecutive year will not have any foreign country chief guest.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was the chief guest for last year's parade, but he had to cancel the visit due to surge in pandemic in his country. Giving details of the forth-

coming high-profile event, the Ministry of External Affairs said here on Wednesday the Prime Minister will host the first India-Central Asia Summit. Leaders are expected to deliberate on steps to take forward relations to newer heights as well as the evolving regional security situation.

The virtual summit will be held with the participation of the five Presidents - Kazakhstan's Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Uzbekistan's Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Eomali Rahmon, of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan's Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and Sadyr Japarov of Kyrgyz Republic. Most of these countries share border with Afghanistan. India has lot of stakes in the restive country. This will be the first engagement of its kind between India and the Central Asian countries at the level of leaders, the Ministry said in a statement.

The first India-Central Asia Summit is a reflection of India's growing engagement with the Central Asian countries, which are a part of India's

"extended neighbourhood".

Modi paid a visit to all Central Asian countries in 2015. Subsequently, there have been exchanges at high-levels at bilateral and multilateral forums.

During this summit, the leaders are expected to discuss steps to take forward India-Central Asia relations to newer heights. They are also expected to exchange views on regional and international issues of interest, especially the evolving regional security situation.

The summit is symbolic of the importance attached by the leaders of India and the Central Asian countries to a comprehensive and enduring India-Central Asia partnership, the statement said.

The inception of the India-Central Asia Dialogue at the Foreign Ministers' level, the third meeting of which was held in New Delhi from December 18-20, 2021, has provided an impetus to India-Central Asia relations, the statement said.

Female elephant in Surajpur dies of electrocution

STAFF REPORTER ■ SURAJPUR

A female elephant died of electrocution after it came in contact with a high voltage electric wire in Chhattisgarh's Surajpur district, a Forest Department official said.

The incident took place on Wednesday at around 2 am in a forest near Darhora village when a herd of four elephants was passing through, Surajpur Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) BS Bhagat said.

Soon after being alerted by locals, forest personnel rushed to the spot and a postmortem was done, he said.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the female elephant, aged around 49, came in contact with an 11 KV power transmission line which was sagging at a low height in the forest and got electrocuted, he said. The electricity department has been informed for necessary action, he added.

According to the Forest Department, as many as 43 elephants died in Chhattisgarh, mainly in the northern part, between January 2019 and November 2021 due to various reasons, including electrocution.

Air India suspends 8 flights to US over 5G interfering with altimeter

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Air India canceled eight flights on India-US routes from Wednesday onwards due to the deployment of 5G internet in North America which could interfere with aircraft's navigation systems. Air India which serves four US destinations, including New York, San Francisco, Chicago, and Newark with Boeing 777s, said those flights would be curtailed or face changes in aircraft type starting from Wednesday.

These eight Air India flights are: Delhi-New York, New York-Delhi, Delhi-Chicago, Chicago-Delhi, Delhi-San Francisco, San Francisco-Delhi, Delhi-Newark, and Newark-Delhi. "Due to deployment of the 5G communications in the USA, we will not be able to operate the following flights of January 19, 22: A1101/102 DEL/JFK/DEL, A1173/174 DEL/SFO/DEL, A1127/126 DEL/ORD/DEL, A1191/144 BOM/EWR/BOM. Please standby for further updates," said Air India, the only Indian carrier that flies to the US.

SC summons Bihar, Andhra CSs for delay in clearing Covid death claims

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered the personal presence of Chief Secretaries of Andhra Pradesh and Bihar via video conference at 2 pm over non-payment of ex-gratia compensation to kin of those who died of Covid-19.

The court ordered them to disburse compensations in three days and review rejected applications. At 2 pm the CS of AP appeared through the virtual mode and assured the SC that whoever has not received the Covid compensation will have their applications reviewed or else he is "ready to face contempt".

The bench of Justices MR Shah and Sanjiv Khanna later noted in its order that, the "CSs of AP and Bihar turned up through virtual mode. It is reported that by now AP has received 49,292 applications, 31,000 were found eligible and 6,000 were rejected. AP says payments to 28,000 claimants have been made. Another 10,000 is remaining out of which 5,000 clearance is there



and payment will be there in the next three days. Also, 6,000 rejected claims will be examined by the grievance redressal committee suo motu. If it is found that the rejection has been incorrect, the State shall reach out to all those claimants and give them the opportunity to remove defects. The AP CS has assured the court that AP shall ensure that not a single claimant who is eligible for compensation shall be deprived of it. We trust and hope that the CS will stand by what he has assured to this court."

The CS of Bihar could not

speak to the bench despite being connected due to audio issues.

However, the advocate appearing assured the SC that all attempts will be made to reach the poor and illiterate so that they can submit their applications. "Looking into the peculiarity of the State, more effort is needed by the State of Bihar to reach the eligible persons, / kin/ family members of the ones who succumbed to Covid-19," the court ordered. The top court further ordered that "no claims be rejected on technical grounds."

Kejriwal to visit U'khand for AAP's door to door campaign

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Delhi chief minister and the national convener of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Arvind Kejriwal will visit Uttarakhand to participate in the door to door campaign of the party ahead of assembly elections next month. The party's spokesman Navin Pirshali informed on Wednesday that Kejriwal and 14 other senior leaders of AAP including deputy chief minister of Delhi, Manish Sisodia will arrive in the state to interact with locals of various constituencies through the campaign. He said that AAP leaders and



Kothiyal to woo different sections of potential voters through virtual campaign

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and chief ministerial candidate of the party Ajay Kothiyal is all set to woo different sections of voters in the second phase of the seven-day long virtual campaign Navparivartan Samvad which is scheduled to commence from January 21. The media co in-charge of the party, Uma Sisodia said that the second phase of the campaign will start from January 21 and would be different as Kothiyal

will be the only AAP leader to virtually address the different section of people, unlike the first phase in which several senior leaders address the public. She said that Kothiyal will address and interact with different sections of voters like the first time voters, women voters, state agitators and their families, people associated with transportation like autorickshaws and taxi unions, government and outsourced employees, ex-

army personnel and youths. It will be a seven-day long campaign which will end on January 27. Sisodia said that over 40 lakh people connected with AAP through various social media platforms in the first phase and the party expects to connect with more people in the second phase, especially those living in the remote areas to raise awareness about AAP's vision for the state.

Delhi's cabinet ministers Gopal Rai, Satendra Jain, Rajendra Pal Gautam and Imran Hussain besides MLAs Jarnail Singh, Atishi, Praveen Kumar, Sanjeev Jha and Kuldeep Kumar will participate in the campaign too. The state in-charge of AAP Dinesh Mohaniya and chief ministerial candidate of the party colonel (retd) Ajay Kothiyal will join the campaign too.

Pirshali said these are 15 star campaigners of the party who will commence the campaign soon in the poll-bound state. He said that the party has already sent a list of these leaders to the Election Commission of India (ECI) in Delhi and to the authority concerned in Uttarakhand. He added that the party holds expertise in the door to door campaign and the participation of senior leaders will surely benefit AAP in the upcoming assembly elections.

Kumaon Uni's graphene making tech transferred to Pvt company

PNS ■ NAINITAL

The technology to make graphene from waste plastic developed by the Professor Rajendra Singh Nanoscience and Nanotechnology Centre of the Chemistry department of Kumaon University was transferred by the National Research Development Corporation (NRDC) to Hexorp private limited.

The nanoscience and nanotechnology centre's professor Nand Gopal Sahu informed that the chemistry department of the university had started work on the technology for making graphene from waste plastic in 2016. The team of professor Sahu then prepared a project at the National Mission on Himalayan Studies at GBPIHED, Kosi Katarmal, Almora. Considering the

quality of the material, the mission granted financial assistance of Rs 2.24 crore to the project. The team also

was initiated in 2018-19 and has now been fully developed. The team built a 100 kilogramme waste

20 kilogrammes of graphene per day.

Sahu informed that considering the utility of graphene, Hexorp had applied for the technology. An agreement was reached between the company, Kumaon University, NRDC and GBPIHED. The technology transfer could not take place earlier due to the Covid pandemic. The technology transfer took place on Wednesday. Sandeep Pandey, Manoj Kalakoti, Sunil Dhali, Neha Karki, Himani Tiwari, PS Dhapola, Gaurav, Chetna Tiwari and others were also part of the team involved in the project. The university's vice chancellor professor NK Joshi, registrar Dinesh Chandra and others were also present during the technology transfer.



applied for a patent for the technology. The technology

plastic upcycling machine. This machine can make 15 to



Police and BSF personnel conduct flag march in Chakrata in view of the Assembly election

Pioneer photo

RTO to resume booking slots for learning licenses

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The regional transport office (RTO) in Dehradun will resume the booking of slots for learning licenses (LLs) from Friday after keeping it close for two weeks when 11 staff members were found positive for Covid-19. However, new applicants would not be allowed to book the slots due to the heavy backlog in the RTO.

The regional transport officer (administration) Dinesh Chandra Pathoi informed that the booking of the slots was closed due to the shortage of staff in the office but other works were being carried out in the RTO following the covid protocols and standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the



transport department. He said that considering the current Covid situation, only 50 slots will be allowed to book on daily

basis for LLs from Friday. Since there is a backlog of thousands of applications for LLs, only those who had already booked the slots

will be allowed to reapply again and new applicants will not be entertained at least this month, added Pathoi. He also informed that driving tests of only 75 applicants of permanent driving licenses will be allowed and the numbers might be increased the next month. He appealed to the people arriving in RTO to follow Covid guidelines and added that no applicant will be allowed to enter the RTO premises without masks.



DELHI JAL BOARD
OFFICE OF THE ADDL. CHIEF ENGINEER (M)-11
TENDER DIVISION (M)-11
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EMAIL : ACE.M11.DJB@GMAIL.COM PH. 011-29810956



Press N.I.T. No 48(2021-22)

S. No	Name of work	Estimated Cost (in Rs.)	Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution
1	Replacement of old damaged 300 mm dia Sewer line at Rahul House to Master Colony SPS Tughalkabad Village at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	25,84,399/-	2022_DJB_214994_1 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
2	Replacement of old damaged Sewer line 300 mm dia at S-53 to S-100, Okhla Phase II at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	26,19,058/-	2022_DJB_214994_2 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
3	Replacement of old damaged 300 mm dia sewer line at Sanjay Colony A-105 to B-Block SDMC School, Okhla Phase II at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	25,97,709/-	2022_DJB_214994_3 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
4	Replacement of old damaged 300 mm dia Sewer line at D-5/1 to D-1/1, Okhla Phase II at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	26,23,071/-	2022_DJB_214994_4 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
5	Replacement of old damaged 300 mm dia Sewer line at Chand Mohalla Thakur House to Hussian House Tughalkabad Village, at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	26,39,928/-	2022_DJB_214994_5 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
6	Providing and laying sewer line for connecting Sulabh Sochalaya (Toilet Block) in sewer network at Indira Camp Taimoor Nagar in Okhla AC-54 under AEE (M)-54	35,58,731/-	2022_DJB_214994_6 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 Up to 3.30 pm

Further details in this regard may be seen at (<https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>)

ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER) Advt. No. J.S.V. 1024 (2021-22)

"STOP CORONA, Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"

Sd/- (Arif Hussain) AEE(TM)-11



DELHI JAL BOARD DELHI SARKAR
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (T)/A.C.E.(M)-4
LUCKNOW ROAD, TIMAR PUR, DELHI-110054



Short NIT. No.66 (Item no.1,2,3,4) (2021-22) E.E.(T)/A.C.E.(M)-4.

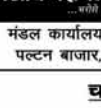
S.No	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Earnest Money	Tender fee (Non-refundable)	Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution
1.	Installation of new water connection with water meter and replacement of old and defective water connection in Ward No.18 AC-04 under ACE(M)-04 (Re-invite). I.D 2022_DJB_214942_1	39,45,824/-	18.01.2022 04 P.M. onward	79,000/-	500/-	Technical bid will be received 01.02.2022, 3:00 PM & opening of Financial bid after completion of technical bid & confirmation of EMD from Bank.
2.	Improvement of Sewerage system in EE-Block, Jangirpuri by Replacement / Realignment of under size 350mm dia. Sewer line into 630mm OD HDPE sewer pipe from MCD pump house / waste dumping yard to DJB sewage pump house station on kushal cinema road Jangirpuri, Mukundpur ward no II (N) Burari Constituency AC-02 under ACE(M)-4. I.D 2022_DJB_214942_2	30,92,254/-	18.01.2022 04 P.M. onward	61,900/-	500/-	Technical bid will be received 01.02.2022, 3:00 PM & opening of Financial bid after completion of technical bid & confirmation of EMD from Bank.
3.	Replacement of old rusted and damaged water connection in ward no 06 under ACE(M)-04. I.D 2022_DJB_214942_3	42,11,834/-	18.01.2022 04 P.M. onward	84,300/-	500/-	Technical bid will be received 01.02.2022, 3:00 PM & opening of Financial bid after completion of technical bid & confirmation of EMD from Bank.
4.	Replacement of old damaged sewer line from H. No. 165 to 222 and 108 and back side of Om Mandir in Dhaka village GTB Nagar ward in Timarpur AC-03 under ACE(M)-4. I.D 2022_DJB_214942_4	26,13,770/-	18.01.2022 04 P.M. onward	52,300/-	500/-	Technical bid will be received 01.02.2022, 3:00 PM & opening of Financial bid after completion of technical bid & confirmation of EMD from Bank.

Further details in this regard can be seen at <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>

ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER) Advt. No. J.S.V. 1022 (2021-22)

"STOP CORONA, Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"

Sd/- (S.K SINGH) EXECUTIVE ENGINEER - T (M)-4



पंजाब नेशनल बैंक
पंजाब नेशनल बैंक
मंडल कार्यालय : देहरादून पूर्व, 1 पीपली हाउस-1, पल्टन बाजार, देहरादून, फोन नं 0135-2710107

चपरासियों की भर्ती

पंजाब नेशनल बैंक, मंडल कार्यालय-देहरादून-पूर्व के अंतर्गत शाखाओं में चपरासी के पद पर भर्ती हेतु आवेदन आमंत्रित किए जाते हैं :-

जिले का नाम	पदों की संख्या	वर्गानुसार
देहरादून	अनुसूचित जाति(SC)	04
	अनुसूचित जनजाति (ST)	01
	आर्थिक कमजोर वर्ग (EWS)	02
	पिछड़ा वर्ग (OBC)	02
	सामान्य (Gen)	14
कुल रिक्तियाँ		23

सामान्य अनुदेश:

- आय सीमा : दिनांक 01 जनवरी 2022 को न्यूनतम 18 वर्ष तथा अधिकतम सामान्य वर्ग के अस्थायी हेतु 24 वर्ष, अन्य पिछड़ा वर्ग के अस्थायी हेतु 27 वर्ष, अनुसूचित जाति/जनजाति वर्ग के अस्थायी हेतु 29 वर्ष, मूलपूर्व सैनिक हेतु सेना में की गयी सेवा + 3 वर्ष, 1984 दंगों के मूलक के परिवार सदस्य हेतु + 3 वर्ष। विकलांग (सामान्य वर्ग) अस्थायी हेतु 34 वर्ष, विकलांग (अन्य पिछड़ा वर्ग) के अस्थायी हेतु 37 वर्ष, विकलांग (अनुसूचित जाति/जनजाति वर्ग) के अस्थायी हेतु 39 वर्ष। (अधिकतम 45 वर्ष की आयु)
- शैक्षणिक योग्यता : न्यूनतम एवं अधिकतम 10+2 या उससे समकक्ष।
- वैतनमान : 14500-28145 वैतन एवं भत्ते नियमानुसार।
- आवेदन की अंतिम तिथि: 31.01.2022 सायं 5 बजे तक, इच्छुक अस्थायी सादे कागज पर अपने आवेदन पत्र पर, नाम, पिता का नाम, स्थाई पता (फोन/मोबाइल नम्बर सहित) आयु प्रमाण पत्र, शैक्षणिक योग्यता, मूल निवास प्रमाण पत्र, जिला रोजगार कार्यालय पंजीकरण प्रमाण पत्र (वैकल्पिक), जाति प्रमाणपत्र, (EWS) ई० डब्ल्यू० एस० प्रमाणपत्र, पासपोर्ट साइज फोटो, पहचान पत्र (सभी प्रमाण पत्र अनिवार्य) दिनांक 31.01.2022 सायं 5 बजे तक या इससे पहले पंजाब नेशनल बैंक मंडल कार्यालय: देहरादून पूर्व, पी एन बी हाउस 1, पल्टन बाजार, देहरादून पर प्रेषित कर सकते हैं।
- चयन प्रक्रिया: बैंक द्वारा निर्धारित मापदंडों के हिसाब से अस्थायियों को चयनित किया जाएगा।
- भर्ती प्रक्रिया बिना कोई कारण बताये निरस्त/निलम्बित की जा सकती है।
- आपी अद्वैत व असत्य जानकारी वाले आवेदन पत्र बिना कोई कारण बताये निरस्त कर दिये जाएंगे।
- आरक्षण: राज्य आरक्षण के नियमानुसार।
- उपरोक्त रिक्तियों हेतु केवल देहरादून जिले के अधिवासी (domicile) अस्थायी ही आवेदन प्रस्तुत कर सकते हैं।

मंडल प्रमुख



Piramal Capital & Housing Finance
Piramal Capital & Housing Finance
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Ltd. (Formerly Known as Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd.) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, Demand Notice(s) issued by the Authorised Officer of the company to the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) mentioned herein below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) 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 under Sub-Section (4) of the Section 13 of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement rules, 2002. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets. The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Piramal Capital & Housing Finance Ltd. (Formerly Known as Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd) for an amount as mentioned herein under with interest thereon.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Description of Secured Asset (Immovable Property)	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Date of Possession
1.	(Loan Code No. 00004698)/ Dehradun Branch), Md Arshad (Borrower) Sakila Bano (Co- Borrower)	Khasra No.497 Ka Situated at Mauza Mehuwala Mafi Pargana Central Doon Dehradun Uttanchal:- 248001	27-May-21 for Rs 9,90,467.00/-	17-Jan-22
2.	(Loan Code No.00005759)/ Dehradun Branch), Sonali Sudan (Borrower) Seema Sharma (Co- Borrower)	Khatra Khatoni 2493, Kh No.61 Mi Min Mauza Arkadiya Grant, Pargana Parwadon, Dehradun Dehradun Uttanchal:- 248001	12-May-21 for Rs 17,34,161.00/-	15-Jan-22
3.	(Loan Code No.00007858)/ Dehradun Branch), Madhu Sharma (Borrower) Salman Saleem (Co- Borrower)	Khasra No.607, Baktawarpur, Grant Pargana Panchwadon, Dehradun Dehradun Uttanchal:- 248001	17-May-21 for Rs 20,65,395.00/-	15-Jan-22
4.	(Loan Code No.00008715)/ Dehradun Branch), Deepak Raj Gurung (Borrower) Seema Gurung (Co- Borrower)	Khasra No 89/1 Mi Mauza East Hope Town Pargana Pachwadon Pargana Pachwadon Dehradun Dehradun Uttanchal:- 248001	14-Jun-21 for Rs 22,19,070.00/-	15-Jan-22
5.	(Loan Code No.00007288)/ Dehradun Branch), Vijay V (Borrower) Preeti Singh (Co- Borrower)	Khasra No 87 Ka Khatra No 433 Mauza Harbhajwala Dehradun Dehradun Dehradun Uttanchal:- 248001	14-Jun-21 for Rs 18,35,197.00/-	17-Jan-22
6.	(Loan Code No.00004127)/ Dehradun Branch), Sartaj Ali (Borrower) Mahtab So Maksud Ahmad (Co- Borrower)	Kh No.500, New Kh No.720 Ka Situated at Majra Central Doon Dehradun Dehradun Dehradun Uttanchal:- 248001	14-Jun-21 for Rs 17,84,837.00/-	17-Jan-22
7.	(Loan Code No.00006596)/ Dehradun Branch), Vinod Kumar (Borrower) Neelam Kumari (Co- Borrower)	Kh No 345 Min Mauza Shishambada, Pargana Pachwadon, Dehradun, Dehradun, Dehradun Dehradun Uttanchal:- 248001	14-Jun-21 for Rs 17,20,672.00/-	15-Jan-22
8.	(Loan Code No.00008211)/ Dehradun Branch), Nikhil Kumar (Borrower) Puneet R/ Maya Devi (Co- Borrower)	Khatra No.457 Kha No.153 Min Mauza Arcadia Grant Pargana Centrifoond Pargana Centrifoond Dehradun Dehradun Uttanchal:- 248001	16-Jun-21 for Rs 12,44,206.00/-	15-Jan-22
9.	(Loan Code No.00008418)/ Dehradun Branch), Danish Mohammad (Borrower) Javedali Mohamad (Co- Borrower)	Khatra No.440, Khasa No. 1737 Ka Mehuwala Mafi Centrifoond Centrifoond Dehradun Dehradun Uttanchal:- 248001	16-Jun-21 for Rs 9,71,691.00/-	17-Jan-22
10.	(Loan Code No.00006727)/ Dehradun Branch), Vinod Kumar (Borrower) Neelam Kumari (Co- Borrower)	Kha No.345 Min Mauza Shishambada Pgn- Pachwdn Pgn- Pachwdn Dehradun Dehradun Uttanchal:- 248001	16-Jun-21 for Rs 5,96,730.00/-	15-Jan-22

Sd/- (Authorised Officer)
PIRAMAL CAPITAL AND HOUSING FINANCE LTD.
Formerly known as Dewan Housing Finance Corporation Ltd.

Date : January 20, 2022
Place: Uttaranchal

Rawat writes to Nadda, wishes to refrain from contesting election

Ex-CM uninterested in contesting polls, wants to focus efforts on formation of BJP Govt under Dhami again

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Former chief minister and the current MLA of Doiwala, Trivendra Singh Rawat has written to the Bharatiya Janata Party national president JP Nadda, expressing his wish to refrain from contesting the Assembly election. In the letter to Nadda, Rawat has stated that he wishes to focus his efforts on the Assembly elections to facilitate the formation of the BJP State government under chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami.

Rawat said in the letter that there had been a leadership change in the state with youth leader Pushkar Singh Dhami being made the chief minister. "In the changed political scenario, I should not contest the Vidhan Sabha election 2022. I had made you aware of my views in the past too," he wrote in letter to Nadda. He cited the various organisational posts he has held in the past including BJP national secretary, Jharkhand in-



charge, co-in-charge in Uttar Pradesh for the 2014 Lok Sabha election apart from

working in election campaigns in Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi,

Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh. Rawat stated that he wants to spend all his time to facilitate formation of BJP government in Uttarakhand under Dhami once again. Citing this reason, he has asked Nadda to agree to his request this time so that he can focus all his efforts on formation of the BJP government in the state.

Rawat also said that he and the state had received unprecedented encouragement and support from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Expressing gratefulness to people of Uttarakhand and his Doiwala constituency, he said that he is confident that people of this constituency will continue to support the BJP.

Meanwhile, following Rawat's letter to Nadda, senior party leaders were reportedly discussing the viable changes needed to field the party candidate from Doiwala constituency.

—Covid - 19— Six deaths, 4402 new Covid-19 cases in U'khand on Wednesday

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The third wave of the pandemic of Covid-19 is continuing unabated in Uttarakhand. On Wednesday, the state Health department reported the death of six patients from the disease. The department also reported 4,402 new cases of the disease. With them the active case count has climbed to 22,962 in the state.

The cumulative count of Covid-19 patients in the state is now at 3,82,133 while a total of 3,43,753 patients have recovered from the disease so far. A total of 7,462 people have died in the state so far from Covid-19. The recovery percentage of the disease further dropped to 89.96 per cent while the positivity rate was 11.85 per cent on Wednesday.

Death of two patients each was reported at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh and Kailash hospital Dehradun while one patient each died at Premeek hospital Dehradun and Metro hospital Haridwar on Wednesday.

The state health department reported 1678 new patients from Dehradun, 694 from Haridwar, 592 from Nainital, 376 from Udham Singh Nagar, 238 from Pauri, 225 from Almora, 148 from Bageshwar, 126 from Tehri, 123 from Pithoragarh, 75 from Champawat, 73 from Chamoli, 38 from Uttarkashi and 16 from Rudrapur on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, 85 trainee officers of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and staff members at Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) Mussoorie were found infected with the Covid-19. These officers were part of a group of 480 which had arrived in the academy on Sunday. All the

officers found positive have been isolated in the academy.

The active case count of Covid-19 in the state has now jumped to 22,962. Dehradun with 9,724 cases is at the top of the table of active cases while Haridwar has 3,199 active cases of the disease which is followed by Nainital district with 3,174 active cases. Uttarkashi is at the bottom of the table with 106 active cases of the disease.

In the ongoing



vaccination drive 37,758 people were vaccinated in 1154 sessions in the state held on Wednesday.

85 IAS trainees & staff test +ve for Covid at LBSNAA

PNS ■ NEW TEHR

With the number of Covid-19 cases rising consistently in Uttarakhand, 85 Indian Administrative Service (IAS) trainees and staff members have tested positive for Covid at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) in Mussoorie.

According to sources, trainee IAS officers and employees of LBSNAA had come to the academy campus on Sunday, out of which 442 trainee IAS officers and staff members were administered RT-PCR tests by the Health department team at Dehradun railway station. About 40 people also underwent RT-PCR tests at the academy in Mussoorie and it was found that 85 were Covid positive.

The nodal officer of Health department in Dehradun, Dr Rajiv Dikshit said that the IAS trainees and staff tested Dehradun on Sunday and RT-PCR tests were conducted at the railway station in Dehradun and at Mussoorie where it was found that 85 persons including IAS trainees and staff members were infected with the Covid virus.

Rawat's decision shows that BJP leaders have sensed defeat- Cong

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The letter of former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat to BJP national president stating that he is not interested in contesting the ensuing assembly election has given a the Congress another reason to hit at the BJP. The Congress media in-charge of Garhwal region Garima Dasauni said that wary of the imminent loss in the elections the BJP leaders are surrendering before the battle. She said that Rawat's letter to the BJP national president JP Nadda in which he is expressing his wish to refrain from contesting the Assembly elections shows the lava that is simmering inside the BJP which in coming days would explode as a volcano. She said

that the former CM is upset at the continued neglect he is experiencing in the party and the series of decisions taken by CM Pushkar Singh Dhami which reversed his earlier decisions. Dasauni said that it is apparent that the BJP leaders have seen the writing on the wall and surrendered even before the start of the battle. She said that the reason mentioned by Rawat for not contesting the elections is hard to digest. "Rawat in his letter has said that he wants to work for the party so he should not be fielded in the election. The situation is different from what he claims. Trivendra Singh Rawat is not so popular that he can lead the party to victory on his own," she said.



The Congress leader added that the statement of Rawat also reflects that there is a dearth of leaders in BJP who can lead the party and help others to contest because all the leaders are considering themselves as contestants.

Farmers' income reduced in Modi regime- Vallabh

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The national spokesman of Congress party Gaurav Vallabh has said that instead of fulfilling its promise of doubling the income the Modi government has reduced the income of the farmers.

Addressing media persons here on Wednesday he said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had assured the farmers on February 28, 2016 that their income would be doubled before 2022 but instead of this the pain of the farmers has increased 100 times in the last few years. He said that in September 2021 the NSSO report mentions that the average income of farmers has come down to Rs 27 per day and the average loan on a farmer is Rs 74,000.

He along with the national general secretary and party observer Mohan Prakash released a booklet on the plight of the farmers on the occasion.

Vallabh said that the NSSO report of September 2021 reveals that instead of doubling the income the Modi government has increased the cost of farmers by many folds.

He said that 50.2 per cent farmers are debt ridden and the average debt on every farmer



family is Rs 74,121.

The Congress spokesman claimed that the rearing animals too have become a loss making profession under Modi regime. He said that a farmer engaged in animal husbandry is able to earn Rs 16.24 per day on an average.

Vallabh said that on one hand Modi government is claiming to hand over 6,000 per farmer as Kisan Samman Nidhi that snatched up to Rs 25,000 per hectare from the farmers by increasing the prices of diesel, imposing tax on tractor and farm equipment and fertilizers. The prices of the seed and electricity too were raised. The Congress leader said that demanding repeal of farm laws, lakhs of farmers were forced to agitate for 380 days in which 700 farmers lost their lives.

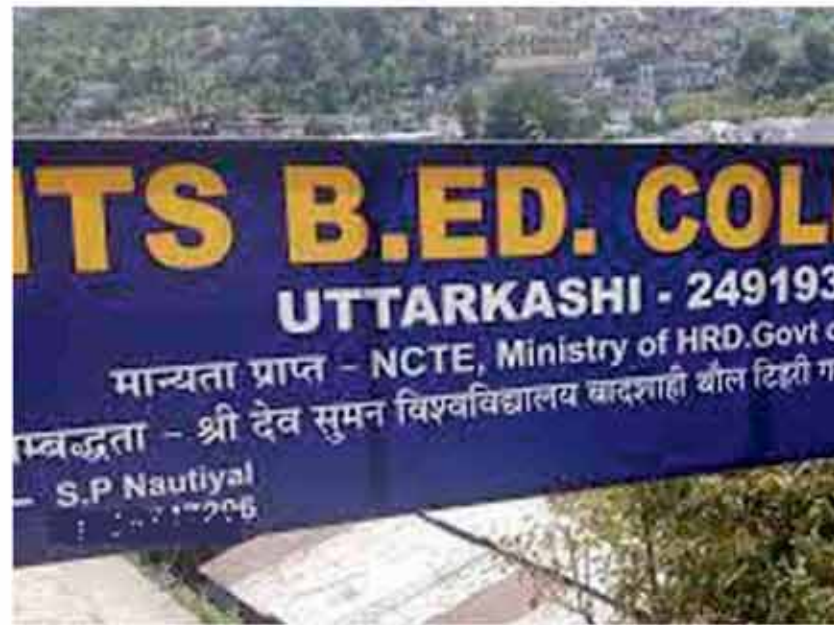
B.Ed College running in a house in Uttarkashi; inquiry ordered

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Acting on a complaint that a private college BEd college in Uttarkashi is functioning from a three-room house from last ten years in gross violation of norms the Higher Education minister Dhan Singh Rawat has asked the additional chief secretary Radha Raturi to conduct an inquiry. The inquiry orders were given on January 7.

In the complaint a former administrator of a college has claimed the college (PITS BEd) college, Uttarkashi has no teachers, library and classrooms but the Shri Dev Suman university has given an approval to admit 100 students in an academic year to this college.

In separate letters sent to the Raj Bhawan, state administration and officials of the university former administrator Pradip Aswal has claimed that the college building was completely damaged in the 2013 disaster. A sum of Rs two crore was paid by the insurance company as compensation but the college owner Shambu Prasad Nautiyal has not constructed the new building yet. In his letter Aswal claimed that Nautiyal has been running the college from his three-room house for the last 10 years. Aswal said that he has sent a complaint with an affidavit to the governor, higher



education minister, VC and registrar of the Shri Dev Suman University. He said that the college is preparing for counseling for 100 seats of BEd for session 2021-23. He said that recently the VC of the university P P Dhyani inspected the college and ordered its closure but later took no action. Aswal in his letter has also leveled serious allegations on the VC Dhyani.

Aswal's letter not only raises question marks over the functioning of the state

and university administration but the affiliation committee of the university has come under the scanner. As per the norms of the National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE), a BEd college should have a building of 24,500 square feet in which two multipurpose halls of three thousand square feet each and four class rooms of 600 square feet should be there. The college should have a library with 3,000 books and should have common rooms

for boys and girls, principal's room and a playground. The 100 seat BEd College should have 14 teachers with a principal of the rank of professor.

Aswal in his letter claimed that the examination centre of the students of this college is made in a private institute of Haridwar. It is done by the owner of the college in collusion with the officials of the university, the complaint alleges.

Date for reopening Badrinath to be declared on February 5, Kedarnath on March 1

PNS ■ JOSHIMATH

The date for reopening of the Badrinath temple will be decided on the occasion of Vasant Panchami on February 5. The date will be ritually arrived at the palace of the erstwhile royal family of Tehri in Narendranagar. The date for reopening of the Kedarnath shrine will be arrived at on the occasion of Mahashivratri on March 1.

The Badrinath Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) media in-charge Harish Gaur informed that the programme on

February 5 will be held in a brief form considering Covid-19 guidelines and the rising cases of Covid. The rituals will begin at 10 AM on the occasion.

Members of the erstwhile royal family including Manujyendra Shah, MP Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah, the Rawal (chief priest) of Badrinath, Isvari Prasad Nambhodari, BKTC chairman Ajendra Ajay Bhatt, vice chairman Kishore Panwar and CEO BD Singh among others will also be present on the occasion.

"Reopening date of the Badrinath temple will be decided on Feb 5 (Vasant Panchami), for the Kedarnath shrine on Mar 1 (Mahashivratri). The portals of Gangotri and Yamunotri will be reopened on May 3 (Akshay Tritiya)"

Similarly, the date for reopening of the Kedarnath shrine will be arrived at ritually on the occasion of Mahashivratri on March 1. The date for reopening of the Kedarnath shrine will be decided at the Omkareshwar temple in Ukhimath. As per the traditions, the portals of Gangotri and Yamunotri will be reopened for the public on the occasion of Akshay Tritiya on May 3. The formal announcement of the timings of reopening these two shrines is made by the temple committees and priests on the occasion of Yamuna Jayanti and the Hindu new year.



First randomisation of EVM & VVPAT held in Doon

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The first round of randomisation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) was held in the presence of the district election officer of Dehradun/district magistrate R Rajesh Kumar and political representatives on Wednesday.

The randomisation of a total of 2,370 EVMs and 2,714 VVPAT machines was held during the first round in the district for all 10 constituencies. Besides this, randomisation of 2,370 control units (CUS) was also carried out in the presence of political representatives. Kumar informed that the randomisation process was carried out with the help of EMS (EVM Management System) software developed

by the Election Commission of India and a copy of the same will be sent to the representatives of all political parties too.

In the first round of the randomisation, 341 EVMs and 414 VVPATs were for Chakrata, 171 EVMs and 192 VVPATs for Vikasnagar, 253 EVMs and 285 VVPATs for Sahaspur and 292 EVMs and

270 EVMs and 312 VVPATs were for Raipur, 178 EVMs and 206 VVPATs for Raipur, 190 EVMs and 213 VVPATs for Dehradun Cantt, 221 EVMs and 244 VVPATs for Mussoorie, 215 EVMs and 243 VVPATs for Rishikesh and 239 EVMs and 272 VVPATs for Doiwala constituencies. The DM said that the returning officers

EVMs on January 22 and 23 in the district.

He directed all the ROs to submit the name and details of personnel to get EVMs and asked them to stay vigilant at every front till the elections. All ROs and representatives of political parties like Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Aam Aadmi Party and Uttarakhand Kranti Dal were



333 VVPATs for Dharmpur constituencies. Besides this, (ROs) of respective constituencies would get the also present during the randomisation process.

Opp States against Centre’s sway over IAS babus

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■
NEW DELHI

The Centre's effort to impose "supremacy" over the IAS, IPS officers, particularly those discharging duties within their respective State/UT cadres, seems to run into rough weather. Only the BJP-ruled States are ready to accept the 'Proposal for Amendments in IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954'.

The proposed amendment states that an officer whom the Centre wants on deputation would "stand relieved" from his or her respective cadre, even if the state government concerned disagreed or didn't give its consent within the specified time.

Top sources in the government said that not even the JD (U)-BJP alliance government in Bihar is not ready to comply with the latest diktat of Centre on top level of Indian bureaucracy. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has already written a protest letter

in this regard to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Sources also said Mamata is believed to have spoken to some Opposition-ruled states to vehemently protest this order. States like Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Punjab and Chhattisgarh have made up their mind to turn down the Centre's proposal.

DOPT sources mentioned that the amendments will be tabled in the budget session of Parliament. "I feel that only the BJP-ruled States will oblige. Though the move is good as the Centre will finally have its supreme authority on its IAS even in cases of punishment, but States will have its own reservation," said a top serving IAS of a State.

Another top IAS told The Pioneer that the proposal is nothing but a move to force the officer dance to the tune of the Centre. "When the officer, like in the case of West Bengal

Chief Secretary, will not meet Centre's expectations then her-will end up being harassed at the Centre," remarked the officer. The move is understood to have come by the Centre after West Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay, did not acknowledge the central government orders to report just a day before his retirement, which was issued after Mamata Banerjee and the chief secretary failed to attend PM Modi's Cyclone Yaas review meeting.

The January 12 proposal is an amendment to the existing one which has consent of the States or UTs before the officer reports to Centre as guided by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

A top DOPT official justified the changes as proposed as it is being done to overcome the shortage of IAS officers in the central government. The letter is an extension of an earlier amendment proposal that was sent to the states three weeks ago. In the first proposal, the

Centre asked the states to specify a certain number of officers whom they would relieve for central deputation. The first amendment proposal was sent to the states on December 20 and they were asked to respond by January 5. Subsequent reminders seeking a response were sent on December 27 and January 6. Now the January 12 letter to States has sought them to respond before January 25.

The initial draft proposal said the "actual number of officers to be deputed to the central government shall be decided by the central government in consultation with the state government concerned".

And in the case of disagreement with the concerned state, "the matter shall be decided by the central government, and the state governments concerned shall give effect to the decision of the central government within a specified time". However, in the latest letter, the Modi government has tweaked its draft proposal. "In specific

situations, where services of cadre officers are required by the central government in public interest, the central government may seek the services of such officers for posting under the central government... and the state government concerned shall give effect to the decision of the central government within the specified time," the latest letter states. "...wherever the state government concerned does not give effect to the decision of the central government within the specified time, the officers shall stand relieved from cadre from the date as may be specified by the central government," it adds.

Calling the amendment "against the spirit of cooperative federalism", Mamata wrote: "The amendment upsets the time-tested harmonious arrangements which have existed between the Centre and the states in the matter of posting of IAS and IPS officers."

Renewable energy gets ₹1,500 cr boost

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved the equity infusion of Rs 1,500 crore in Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA).

The Cabinet also approved the payment of ex-gratia amount of Rs. 973.74 crore pertaining to remaining claims submitted by Lending Institutions and approved extension of National Commission for Safai Karmchairs (NCSK) for three years.

Briefing media, Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said that infusion of Rs.1500 crore in IREDA will generate approximately 10200 jobs per year



and CO2 equivalent emission reduction of approximately 7.49 Million Tonnes CO2/year. "To lend Rs.12000 crore approximately to the RE sector, thus facilitate the debt requirement of RE of additional capacity of approximately 3500-4000 MW.

To enhance its network which will help it in additional RE financing, thus contributing better to the Government of India targets

for RE. To improve the capital-to-risk weighted assets ratio (CRAR) to facilitate its lending and borrowing operations," said Government in a statement.

By granting ex-gratia payment of difference between compound interest and simple interest during the six month moratorium period to distressed/vulnerable category of borrowers, irrespective of whether the borrower had availed of moratorium or not, the scheme would equitably help small borrowers bear the stress on account of the pandemic and get back on their feet.

Operational guidelines for the scheme are already issued with the approval of the Cabinet. The said amount of Rs. 973.74 crore will be disbursed in accordance with the said operational guidelines," said Government.

Israel discuss widening scope of bilateral industrial R&D and technological innovation fund

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Experts from India and Israel deliberated on widening the scope of the bilateral Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F), approved three joint research and development projects worth USD 5.5 million and suggested measures to create a broader collaborative ecosystem between the two countries, the science and technology ministry said on Wednesday. The discussions took place virtually on Tuesday in the presence of officials from the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the Israel Innovation Authority (IIA), GITA and various industries partners. The experts from the two countries deliberated on widening the scope of the India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F) at its eighth governing body meeting. They approved three joint research and development projects worth USD 5.5

million and suggested measures to create a broader India-Israel collaborative ecosystem. "The I4F programme has a lot of potential. This board meeting will give us new thoughts, new directions on how to go forward," said S Chandrasekhar, Secretary, DST and India Co-Chair, acknowledging the contributions made by Israel in the field of science and technology. "So far, the priority areas have been agriculture, security and other important areas. There is further scope of increasing the quantum of projects received, which calls for the need to conduct more online meetings amongst the startup ecosystems of Israel and India," he said in a statement. A m i r a m Appelbaum, Co-Chair, Israel and chairman of the board, IIA, said despite the difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical to continue with the efforts of collaboration. "I4F is one of the examples of collaborations which we want

to carry forward. We look forward to go through interesting applications of projects submitted in this programme," he said. The governing body ratified the minutes of the seventh board meeting, which was followed by giving its approval to the three research and development projects with an overall budget of USD 5.5 million. The projects were "Centrally Monitored IoT Nanosensors for Molecular Diagnostics in Healthcare and Screening Applications", "NoMoreMos - a mosquito control biological solution" and "IoT-enabled satellite communication for real-time collection of agriculture and environment data across India". The members further discussed the status of the ongoing projects under the I4F since 2018. The Israeli side introduced the new I4F website and match-making platform developed as a measure to increase the popularity of the joint programme and presented a list of programmes planned for 2022.

China’s PLA abducts boy from inside Indian territory in Arunachal Pradesh: MP Tapir Gao

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has abducted a 17-year-old boy from inside Indian territory in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Siang district, state's MP Tapir Gao said on Wednesday. Gao said the teenager, identified as Miram Taron, was abducted by the PLA from Lungta Jor area under Siyungla area on Tuesday. Taron's friend Johnny Yaiping, who managed to escape, informed the authorities about the kidnapping by the PLA, Gao told PTI over phone from Zirol, the district headquarters of Lower Subansiri district. Both are local hunters and belong to Zido village. The MP said the incident took place near the place where Tsangpo river enters India in Arunachal Pradesh. Tsangpo is called as Siang in Arunachal Pradesh and Brahmaputra in Assam. Earlier, Gao tweeted: "Chinese #PLA has abducted Sh Miram

Taron, 17 years of Zido vill. Yesterday 18th Jan 2022 from inside Indian territory, Lungta Jor area (China built 3-4 kms road inside India in 2018) under Siyungla area (Bishing village) of Upper Siang dist, Arunachal Pradesh". "His friend escaped from PLA and reported to the authorities. "All the agencies of Govt of India are requested to step up for his early release," he said in another tweet and posted pictures of the abducted boy. Gao also said that he has informed Union Minister of State for Home Nisith Pramanik about the incident and requested him to take necessary action in this regard. He tagged Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and the Indian Army in his tweets. In September 2020, the PLA had abducted five youths from Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Subansiri district and released them after about a week.

Jaishankar discusses ties with Finnish, Mexican counterparts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday held discussions with his Finnish counterpart Pekka Haavisto on a host of issues, including Afghanistan. In a tweet, Jaishankar said in his wide-ranging discussions with Haavisto, he noted the steady growth of bilateral cooperation. "Agreed that we would work to strengthen the ties further in 2022," he said. "Exchanged views about Afghanistan in detail. India and Finland have cooperated in the past on humanitarian support there," Jaishankar said. "Expect to work closely with each other in international organisations, including the UN Human Rights Council," he added.

Later, in another tweet, Jaishankar said he had a warm conversation with Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard Casaubon.

Miffed over denial of ticket, BJP leaders quits party, joins BSP

PTI ■ MATHURA UP

Pained over the denial of ticket for the upcoming Assembly polls, senior BJP leader S K Sharma resigned from the primary membership of the party and joined the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on Wednesday. His close aide Niraj Rawat also followed suit. Sharma had contested the 2017 Assembly elections on the BJP ticket from Mant constituency. "The BJP has deceived me twice and the party has lost its earlier character," Sharma told reporters. Sharma said though he wanted to contest from Mathura in 2017, the BJP leadership compelled him to enter the fray from Mant and assured him a berth in the legislative council in case he lost. Though he was not offered a seat in the Upper House, Sharma said, he was instructed to work in Mant and the leadership assured him a

ticket from the same constituency this time. However, that was not to be the case. Sharma said he did not seek a "single penny" from the BJP but mentioned that he had given enough to the party. "Now, I have resigned from all positions in the BJP and joined the BSP. Not only this, I will also contest as the BSP candidate from Mathura," Sharma, who is expected to file his nomination papers on Thursday, said. Meanwhile, alliance partners Samajwadi Party (SP) and Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) seem to have locked horns over the Mant Assembly seat. Despite the pact between the two parties, SP's national spokesperson Sanjai Lathar claimed that the party has given him a go ahead to contest from the constituency while RLD candidate Yogesh Nauhar has already filed his nomination papers claiming that he is the official candidate of the alliance.

Covid-19 cases in Maharashtra shot up by 4,490 cases

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The daily Covid-19 cases in Maharashtra shot up by 4,490 cases to touch a tally of 43,697 cases on Wednesday, even as the pandemic cases went up in Mumbai by 883 cases to reach the daily tally of 6,032 cases. The State, meanwhile, recorded 214 fresh Omicron cases during the day, taking the total number of the new Covid variant registered to 2074.

On a day when the Covid-19 claimed 49 lives as against 53 deaths registered on Tuesday, the state recorded 43,697 fresh infections as against Tuesday's tally of 39,207 deaths. With fresh infections, the total number of Covid-19 cases in the state went up from 72,82,128 cases to 73,25,825

cases. Mumbai, which has been witnessing drop in the number of cases for the last few days, witnessed an increase in the fresh Covid-19 cases from 5,149 cases on Tuesday to 6,032 cases on Wednesday. With the fresh tally of fresh cases, the total Covid-19 cases rose from 10, 11,967 cases to 10,01,7999 cases. As 46,591 Covid-19 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March 2020 increased from 68,68,816 to 69,15,407 cases. The recovery rate in the state rose from 94.32 per cent to 94.4 per cent. The number of "active cases" in the state increased from 2,67,659 to 2,64,708. The fatality rate in state dropped from 1.94 per cent to 1.93 per cent.

BJP will contest UP polls with Apna Dal, Nishad Party: Nadda

DEEPAK UPRETI ■ New Delhi

BJP National President JP Nadda on Wednesday announced that his party will contest the upcoming Uttar Pradesh polls jointly with Apna Dal and Nishad Party.

The party will contest on 403 seats, he said. However, the seat-sharing formula is yet to be finalised and spelled out.

The announcement was made after a BJP Central Election Committee meeting that was held here with Union Ministers Amit Shah, Anurag Thakur, UP CM Yogi Adityanath, BJP national president JP Nadda, Apna Dal (S) leader Anupriya Patel and Nishad Party chief Sanjay Nishad attending it. "Today a big change is being seen in UP under the leadership of Modi ji and due to the tireless efforts

of Yogi ji. Be it education, connectivity, investment, everywhere work has been done on a large scale", Nadda said during the address. Welcoming the alliance of all three parties, Patel said, "Through the alliance of BJP, Nishad Party and Apna Dal, we will contest and win the UP assembly polls, and will steer the state in the direction of development". Ahead of this announcement, the working president of Apna Dal (Sonelal) Ashish Patel had on Tuesday said that their focus is to get "winnable seats" during seat-sharing talks with BJP. "Our complete focus is to get seats that are winnable. This is our priority," Patel said.

"Some of these seats include Pratapgarh Sadar, Vishvnathganj, Shohratgarh, Sevapuri, Chhanbey, Soraon, Jahanabad," he said.



The Naval brass band performs during a rehearsal for the Beating Retreat ceremony at Vijay Chowk, in New Delhi, on Wednesday

PTI photo

Omicron variant may reduce incidence of severe Covid disease

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Omicron variant of coronavirus may reduce the incidence of severe Covid-19 disease, and the infection may become less disruptive to individuals and society in the future, according to a study conducted by researchers in South Africa. The findings of the yet-to-be peer-reviewed study are consistent with the previous observations of Omicron displacing Delta since the variant can elicit immunity which neutralizes Delta.

The researchers from Africa Health Research Institute observed in samples from 23 people infected with Omicron in November and December that the variant escapes neutralising immunity elicited by Delta infection.

This indicates that Omicron can re-infect Delta-infected individuals but not vice-versa, giving Omicron an advantage over Delta, they said. "The implications of such displacement would depend on whether Omicron is indeed less pathogenic than Delta. If so, then the incidence of Covid-19 severe disease would be reduced and the infection may shift to

become less disruptive to individuals and society," the authors of the study noted. The finding is an update to the study by the same research team which found enhancement of immunity against Delta variant with Omicron infection. "We were able to add study participants to see more clearly the effect of vaccination," Professor Alex Sigal, from Africa Health Research Institute tweeted on Tuesday.

The earlier part of the study, posted on the pre-print repository MedRxiv, used data from 15 previously vaccinated and unvaccinated people who were infected with the Omicron variant.

The scientists used plasma, a blood product which contains antibodies, from the participants to test the ability of the antibodies to control both Omicron and Delta in the lab - a so-called 'neutralisation' test. The results show a developing antibody response to Omicron, with neutralisation increasing 14-fold over this time.

However, the team also observed that the participants developed some enhanced immunity against the Delta variant, with Delta neutralisation increasing 4.4-fold.

DGCA extends suspension of int’l flights till Feb 28

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the rise in Omicron Covid cases, the Director-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has extended the suspension on scheduled international passenger flights till 28 February 2022. Flights under air bubble arrangements will not be affected, it said.

"The authority has decided to extend the suspension of Scheduled International commercial passenger services to/from India till 2359 hrs IST of 28th February 2022," reads an official order of the DGCA. The decision comes as the world is braving a fresh wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, driven by Omicron, the latest variant of COVID-19.

The DGCA had on November 26, 2021, announced that India will resume scheduled international passenger flights from December 15, 2021. Just a day later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked the Civil Aviation Ministry and the DGCA to review its decision in wake of the rising concerns of the COVID-19 variant Omicron.

On December 1, 2021, the DGCA revoked its November 26 decision without saying how long the suspension of scheduled international flights will continue. International flights were first suspended in March 23, 2020 after a nationwide lockdown was imposed to tackle the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The suspension was extended every month allowing emergency international travel under the air bubble agreements.

India has air transport bubbles with Afghanistan, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Canada, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Iraq, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Maldives, Mauritius, Nepal, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Tanzania, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, US and Uzbekistan. The agreements allow both-way air travel under some terms and conditions. No direct air travel is allowed to countries not covered under air travel bubble agreements.

Kerala Govt calls situation grave after 2 yrs of Covid-19 breakout

37% people found +ve after testing over 91K in 24 hrs: Min
KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

For the first time since Covid-19 broke out in Kerala in 2020, the Kerala Government has termed the situation grave as well as serious and called for urgent restrictions and regulations. Veena George, health minister, who addressed the media on Wednesday after a Cabinet meeting said that 34,199 persons were diagnosed with the pandemic after testing 91,983 samples during the last 24 hours. The death toll reached 51,160 as 49 persons succumbed to Covid-19 during the last 24 hours as Kerala is experiencing the death continuing its "Thaandav"

across the State, according to a Government doctor. The Test Positivity Rate on Wednesday was 37.17 per cent. A review meeting has been called for Thursday in which ministers, department secretaries as well as health professionals would take stock of the present situation. "The meeting scheduled for Thursday would decide whether to shut down schools and colleges in the State. We will consider bringing in nigh curfew and week end shut down," said Veena George. The minister denied the allegations made by Leader of the Opposition that the CPI(M) district conventions and the Mega Thiruvathiras (traditional dance and song programme presented by hundreds of women at Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur and Ernakulam praising Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan) were responsible for the spurt in the number of patients.

She said the double attack by the delta variant of the Covid and the Omicron were responsible for the shooting up of the pandemic cases in Kerala. Pinarayi Vijayan, suffering from a serious ailment, is undergoing treatment in a United States Hospital and would be back only by the end of January. There are 645 Omicron patients in the State, according to the Health Minister. Though she said that only 3.2 per cent of the 1.68 lakh Covid patients have been admitted to the hospital, a Kerala Government Medical Doctors association said that they were under orders not to admit patients tested positive to the hospital. "The attempt is to portray all was well in the State and we do not know how long this would succeed," said a Government physician in General Hospital, Ernakulam.

WhatsApp rebellion on in Bengal BJP Rebel faction holds secret talks; 30 leaders meet to chalk out future plan

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

WhatsApp rebellion continued in Bengal BJP with the rebel faction of the State party unit holding secret meetings with at least 30 safe from MLAs, inside sources said adding the leaders met virtually on Tuesday to chalk out future plans. Curiously the rebel faction of the party is being led by junior Union Minister Shantanu Thakur who has already threatened to launch a movement for implantation of the Citizenship Amendment Act. According to sources the rebel faction of the State BJP unit ---including former State vice president Jayprakash Majumdar, Ritesh Tewari, Saytanan Basu --- held a secret

meeting with the 30 legislators "to know their views about the new office bearers who had been inducted in the State unit of the party." Out of the 77 seats won by the Bengal BJP in this year's election it lost 5 to the ruling TMC on account of resignations and defection. The rebel leaders are likely to hold meeting with the BJP MLAs of Bankura and Purulia later this week before taking a 'final decision'. On what the final decision could be one of the senior leaders of the rebel group said "this does not mean that we are quitting the party and going to the Trinamool Congress ... we want the party State unit to function properly ... we want to save the BJP from dissolution in Bengal as some of the



leaders are trying to do ... these leaders are sold out to the TMC leadership... they are hand-in-glove with the Trinamool which is why they are misleading the national leadership into taking decisions not favourable to the party in Bengal." Some rebel leaders were likely to visit Delhi where later this month may meet national functionaries, sources said. "We will tell how some of the

leaders are trying to sell out the party to the TMC," one of the leaders said apparently aiming at former BJP State president Dilip Ghosh. The Bengal BJP underwent a massive reshuffle last month with a number of leaders losing their jobs giving way to new faces. Many leaders see Ghosh's hand in the reshuffle. The rebellion had started about a month ago when one after the other at least 10 MLAs from North 24 Parganas and Bankura left the designated party WhatsApp group. When asked, Ghosh said he was not concerned with what was going on in WhatsApp. "I am a man of the people and don't get much time to peep into what is happening in the WhatsApp," he said.

Netaji tried to convince Aparna not to join BJP, claims Akhilesh

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav tried hard to convince his daughter-in-law Aparna Yadav to not join the BJP, party chief Akhilesh Yadav said on Wednesday and expressed his happiness that the SP's socialist ideology is expanding its reach. Akhilesh Yadav, who sent his sister-in-law best wishes for her move to the BJP, also addressed speculation on whether he would contest the assembly elections and said he would consult the people of his parliamentary constituency Azamgarh. "If I contest the assembly election, it will be after taking permission from the people of Azamgarh who have elected me as MP," he told reporters when asked if he would enter into the electoral fray for the

coming elections. In his first response to Aparna Yadav joining the BJP, Akhilesh Yadav said he would like to congratulate her and extend her his best wishes. "I am also happy that our socialist ideology is expanding. I hope that our ideology will reach there and work to save the constitution and democracy," the SP president said. "Netaji (Mulayam Singh Yadav) tried very hard to convince her," he said when asked if efforts were made to stop Aparna Yadav from joining the ruling party. Aparna Yadav is married to Prateek Yadav, the son of Mulayam Singh Yadav's second wife, while Akhilesh Yadav is his son from the first marriage. She joined the BJP in the presence of Uttar Pradesh

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya and its state chief Swatantra Dev Singh. Expressing her admiration for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, she said the nation's interest has always been a priority for her and praised several schemes of the BJP government for cleanliness, woman empowerment and employment. There had been much speculation about her joining the BJP, and the development highlights the rift in the SP's ruling family at a time Akhilesh Yadav has been working to rally the party's base in the run up to the state assembly polls beginning next month. Maurya was also quick to attack Akhilesh Yadav, saying he has not been successful in his family and was also "unsuccessful" as chief minister and MP. **PTI**

Omicron causing hospitalisation, deaths: WHO chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid an ongoing resurgence across the world, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned that the Omicron variant of the coronavirus is causing hospitalizations and deaths the world over, and the narrative that it is a mild disease is misleading. The global coronavirus caseload has topped 333.5 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 5.55 million and vaccinations to over 9.68 billion, according to Johns Hopkins University. India on Wednesday reported 2,82,970 fresh Covid cases in the last 24 hours, which is a rise of over 18 percent from the previous day's count. "Make no mistake, Omicron is causing hospitalizations and deaths, and even the less severe cases are inundating health facilities," the WHO chief said late on Tuesday. "Omicron may be less

severe, on average, but the narrative that it is a mild disease is misleading, hurts the overall response, and costs more lives," he added. According to Tedros, Covid is circulating far too intensely with many still vulnerable. "For many countries, the next few weeks remain really critical for health systems. I urge everyone to do their best to reduce the risk of infection so that you can help take pressure off the system," he emphasized. Tedros said that we can still significantly reduce the impact of the current wave by sharing and using health tools effectively and implementing public health and social measures that we know work. "Every variant of the COVID-19 virus, including Omicron, is dangerous and can cause: severe disease, death, further virus mutations and jeopardize the effectiveness of the tools we have to fight it," said the WHO.

36 guns, 1K bullets buried in Bengal decade ago recovered

PNS ■ KOLKATA

In a frightening development the police on Wednesday recovered at least 36 guns and 450 gun parts and more than a 1000 bullets kept hidden underground in Goaltore block of West Midnapore. The arms and ammunition were reportedly buried more than a decade ago, police sources said even as war of words ensued between former rulers Left Front and the ruling Trinamool Congress. "The source of the recovered items have not been known yet ... but it seems they are pretty old and further investigations will reveal their age and make," as senior district official said. While TMC state spokesperson said that "the age of the arms will suggest who might have kept them and why they hid them apprehending their fall ahead of 2011 Assembly elections." Former Bengal minister and West Midnapore MLA Sushanto Ghosh hit backsaying "everyone knows that TMC were in alliance with the Maoists before they came to power ... and after they came to power the Maoist and People's Committee (Maoist-backed) leaders were given top political posts in Jangalmahal area ... so it is clear who might have kept these items."

PM Modi to lead poll campaign in Uttar Pradesh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the Bharatiya Janata Party's election campaign for Uttar Pradesh as the party released the list of its 30 star campaigners, excluding the mother-son duo of Maneka Gandhi and Varun Gandhi. Besides the prime minister, the high profile list includes the names of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP national president JP Nadda, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and 26 others. However, the mother-son duo of Maneka Gandhi and Varun Gandhi has been excluded from the list. Both have won elections many times from Sultanpur and Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh. Of late Varun Gandhi has criticised the government policies. The BJP released a list of 30 names who will campaign for the party's candidates in UP in the first phase of the elections.

COVID BULLETIN

Over 4K Covid-19 cases logged in Maha; Mumbai records 883 alone

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The daily Covid-19 cases in Maharashtra shot up by 4,490 cases to touch a tally of 43,697 cases on Wednesday, even as the pandemic cases went up in Mumbai by 883 cases to reach the daily tally of 6,032 cases. The State, meanwhile, recorded 214 fresh Omicron cases during the day, taking the total number of the new Covid variant registered to 2074. On a day when the Covid-19 claimed 49 lives as against 53 deaths registered on Tuesday, the state recorded 43,697 fresh infections as against Tuesday's tally of 39,207 deaths. With fresh infections, the total number of Covid-19 cases in the state went up from 72,82,128

cases to 73,25,825 cases. Mumbai, which has been witnessing drop in the number of cases for the last few days, witnessed an increase in the fresh Covid-19 cases from 5,149 cases on Tuesday to 6,032 cases on Wednesday. With the fresh tally of fresh cases, the total Covid-19 cases rose from 10,11,967 cases to 10,01,79,999 cases. As 46,591 Covid-19 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March 2020 increased from 68,68,816 to 69,15,407 cases. The recovery rate in the state rose from 94.32 per cent to 94.4 per cent. The number of "active cases" in the state increased

from 2,67,659 to 2,64,708. The fatality rate in the state dropped from 1.94 per cent to 1.93 per cent. Of the total recorded cases, Mumbai accounts for 31,856 active cases, while there are 68,834 cases in Pune followed by 55,570 active cases in Thane, Raigad (15,743), Nagpur (14,296), Nashik (12,759), Palghar (8701), Ahmednagar (6777) Satara (5443) and Aurangabad (4493). Of the 7,25,31,814 samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far, 73,25,31,814 have tested positive (10.10 per cent) for COVID-19 until Wednesday. Currently, 23,93,704 people are in home quarantine while 3,200 people are in institutional quarantine.

BJP bags 24 of 97 seats in Maha civic polls

Mumbai: The Opposition BJP emerged number one in the Nagar Panchayat elections in Maharashtra, by capturing power 24 out of the 97 urban local bodies for which results were declared on Wednesday. Of the 106 Nagar Panchayats that went to polls, results were declared in 97 urban local bodies, while the results in the remaining nine would be announced on Thursday. The BJP, which expanded its base in the urban areas when it was in power between 2014 and 2019, emerged number one by capturing power 24 Nagar Panchayats and winning 384 out of the total 1638 seats in 97 urban local bodies. The Sharad Pawar-led NCP came second by capturing power in 16 Nagar Panchayats and sinning 344 seats out of total seats. The Congress close third by capturing power in 14 urban local bodies and bagging 316 seats out of the total seats. Shiv Sena emerged in the fourth place by capturing power in 11 Nagar panchayats and winning 284 seats out of the total seats. Expressing their happiness over their party's performance in the Nagar Panchayat polls, State BJP president Chandrakant Patil and Maharashtra's former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis said that while their party had on its own captured power in 24 urban local bodies, it had the support of other parties to take control of six other urban local bodies. **PNS**

Cong no more secular, has degenerated into Hindutva party: CPM

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Indian National Congress is no more a secular party and it has degenerated into a Hindutva party, according to CPI(M) strongman Koderiya Balakrishnan. Speaking to media persons, Balakrishnan, the Kerala secretary of the party said that the recent declarations by former AICC President Rahul Gandhi MP exposed the Hindutwa agenda of the Congress. "Rahul Gandhi has said that India belonged to the Hindus and only Hindus could become rulers of the country. This proves beyond any doubt that the Indian National Congress is playing the Hindu card and it has alienated the minority communities," charged Balakrishnan. The CPI(M) leader claimed that minorities, especially the Muslims have started ditching the Congress and joining the CPI(M). "The Muslim community is upset with the Congress leadership for the statement by Rahul Gandhi and also the side-lining of senior Muslim leaders like Ghulam Nabi Azad, Salman Khurshid and a host of other prominent faces," he said. Balakrishnan's charge comes within days of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan (who is under treatment in a hospital in USA) that the Congress has no capability of its own to

take on the BJP's Hindu agenda. But the Congress in Kerala retaliated within seconds terming the CPI(M) secretary's statement as a precursor to anoint Mohammed Riyaz as the Chief Minister of Kerala in the event of any eventualities. "Balakrishnan is to Vijayan as what Amit Shah is to Narendra Modi. Balakrishnan knows that Vijayan's only mission is to get Riyaz elevated as the chief minister of Kerala after him and the new found love of the CPI(M) towards the Muslim community was with this agenda," said K Muraleedharan MP who is a former KPCC president. Muraleedharan, son of former chief minister K Karunakaran, said that the Congress does not have any issues in the CPI(M)'s agenda or missions. "They do have clear mandate to rule the State till 2016. But Koderiya Balakrishnan should not forget that it was he who warned the people of Kerala that if the Congress-led UDF wins the 2021 assembly election, a Muslim would become the chief minister of the State," said Muraleedharan. Mohammed Riyaz is the second husband of Veena, elder daughter of Pinarayi Vijayan. Riyaz was the president of the CPI(M) youth wing DYFI and a first time MLA and a minister holding the important portfolio of Public Works Department and Tourism in the council of ministers led by his Mama (uncle).

Melody queen Lata Mangeshkar still in ICU in Mumbai hosp



TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar, who was admitted to the Breach Candy Hospital for treatment of Covid-19 and pneumonia on January 8, continues to be in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the hospital. Dr Pratit Samdhani, who is attending to her at the hospital, said: "Singer Lata Mangeshkar was admitted to our hospital on Saturday night. Apart from Covid-19, she is suffering from pneumonia. Lata ji is still in the ICU. We are trying our best to ensure that she recovers soon. Pray for her recovery". **PTI**

'Modi' remark row: BJP MLA asks Maha Cong chief to publish pic of 'goon'

Latur: Former Maharashtra minister and BJP MLA Sambhaji Patil Nilangekar has termed "false" state Congress president Nana Patole's clarification on the "Modi" reference in his controversial speech, which has triggered protests from BJP workers across the state. Patole has kicked up a controversy with his purported remark in a video that he could "beat up, bad mouth Modi". He later clarified that he was referring to a local goon named Modi in Bhandara district, and was not talking about Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Nilangekar issued a statement demanding that Patole publish the photograph of the said man and share his details. "The language used by Maharashtra Congress president is frightening. He is not talking about holding the rule of law, which is the testimony to the current law and order scenario in the state. Patole's language shows that the idea of the rule of law is not acceptable to Congress. **PTI**

30% people lose vaccine acquired immunity against Covid after 6 months: Study

Hyderabad: As much as 30 per cent individuals lose vaccine-acquired immunity after six months, according to a study conducted by AIG Hospitals along with the Asian Healthcare Foundation on Vaccine Immunity. The study was conducted on 1,636 healthcare workers who were fully vaccinated against COVID-19, a press release from AIG Hospitals said. "Our study results were at par with other global studies where we found that almost 30 per cent individuals had antibody levels below protective immunity level of 100 AU/ml after six months. These individuals were majorly above 40 years with co-morbidities like hypertension and diabetes. Out of the total, 6 per cent did not develop any immune protection at all," Dr D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman, AIG Hospitals said. The results clearly indicat-

ed that with age, immunity waning is directly proportional which means that younger people have more sustained antibody levels than the elderly population. One of the most important results of the study showed that people above 40 years with co-morbidities like hypertension and diabetes have significantly less antibody response after six months of getting fully vaccinated, the release further said. Individuals above 40 years with diabetes and hypertension of both genders may be at a higher risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection and these individuals should be prioritised for a booster dose after six months, AIG said. At present, the nine-month gap for a precaution dose benefits 70 per cent of the population who can retain enough antibody levels beyond six months. **PTI**

499 police personnel in Maha found infected in 24 hrs

Mumbai: As many as 499 police personnel were found infected with coronavirus in Maharashtra in the last 24 hours, an official said on Wednesday. The infected personnel include 95 police officers. He said 821 police officers and 3,269 police personnel (total 4,090) currently remain admitted at various facilities, including home isolation, in Maharashtra. The total number of infected police officers in Maharashtra is 5,854 since the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020. A total of 40,959 police personnel, ranging from the rank of the constable to assistant sub-inspector, were found infected in the state, he added. "Until now, 46 officers and 459 personnel of the Maharashtra police force have succumbed to COVID-19," he said. **PTI**

FIRST COLUMN

INFLATION MUST NOT IMPACT ECONOMY

Debt management is a priority for the Government



SHSHANK SAURAV

US Economist Milton Friedman had said that inflation is taxation without legislation. A price rise hurts most to those who sit at the bottom of the pyramid in the social structure. Recent data released by the government shows that consumer price index (CPI) has increased to 5.59 percent in December. If we just see the data on the face of it then it will appear that rural inflation crossed 5 percent and food inflation has also peaked to 4 percent in December. In a way this is worrying because CPI numbers are reaching the RBI mandated upper limit of 6 percent. But the Devil lies in the details. A closer look at the data reveals that inflation has gone down in December as compared to previous month and the index has shown a decline of 1.18 percent. Despite the pandemic and the farmers' protest, food prices have increased moderately but skyrocketing prices of edible oil needs to be kept under control. Initiatives like National Edible Oil



Missionare good for long run but immediate measures must be taken to contain the increasing price. Providing free ration to large part of the population has certainly helped the lower class which faced issues of job loss and decline in income. Wholesale price index (WPI) for December has shown price rise of 13.6 percent. The stark divergence between CPI and WPI is another point which indicates the strong domestic demand. It can be taken as a positive indicator where Indian manufacturers are using their pricing power and the volume is allowing retailers to make profit even after absorbing some of the wholesale price rise. There can be counter arguments that such kind of divergence between these two indicators means retailers are losing their profit margin but the increased indirect tax collection doesn't support this view. In pandemic, people used more goods as compared to services and therefore price rise in goods were more. WPI covers only goods and therefore this divergence includes this aspect also. All the major economies of the world are facing inflationary trends and US inflation hit 39 years high in December when it touched 7 percent. There are concerns that Federal Reserve will hike the interest rate and pandemic era stimulus will be cut back. If this happens then it will impact India also and capital outflow can be seen. Our foreign exchange reserves are sufficient to cover such short-term impacts. This situation is not all bad from Indian perspective. Action taken by US Fed will have impact on exchange rate also and in all likelihood, INR will weaken against USD, if RBI doesn't intervene. This situation will be favorable for Indian exporters, particularly IT and ITES industry.

RBI is entrusted with the responsibility of managing the inflation rate within the given range of 2 to 6 percent. Recent surge in inflation is transitory in nature and it is largely due to increase in input prices (cost push) caused by interruption in global supply chain. In the current scenario, the central bank should continue to prioritize growth and employment over inflation. Real interest rate in India is near to zero and a low borrowing cost is good for a developing economy. The Government has increased the spending in the pandemic era and increased borrowing but RBI's balance sheet expansion cannot continue forever in the same manner and debt management should be one of the priorities for the government. The pandemic is still not over and therefore the low interest regime should continue to push the growth as governments alone can't shoulder the expansion.

(The writer is a Chartered Accountant, and public policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

The lives of train passengers matter

Even if a derailment does occur, in spite of all the precautions and measures, the damage the coaches suffer should be minimal to reduce casualty figures



SUDHANSHU MANI

Nine passengers died and nearly forty were injured following the derailment of several coaches of Bikaner-Guwahati Express around 5 PM on January 13 at Domahani in Mainaguri area of West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district. The derailment caused many of the twelve coaches which derailed to capsize or climb over another coach. Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw announced that he was personally monitoring the rescue operations. An ex-gratia of ₹5 lakh each to the kin of the deceased, ₹1 lakh for those injured grievously and ₹25,000 for those who suffered simple injuries was announced.

The safety record of Indian Railways (IR) has improved in recent years. Without going into the nitty-gritty of statistics, it is clearly seen that the number of fatalities has come down drastically if we leave aside run-over and level crossing accidents for which IR is not directly culpable. This has become possible due to many factors, like greater stress on upkeep of track and allied infrastructure and large-scale induction of LHB coaches.

The LHB coaches were developed by Linke-Hofmann-Busch of Germany. They are considered to be "anti-telescopic", which means they do not get turned over or flip in case of a collision (chiefly head-on). These coaches are made of stainless steel and the interiors are made of aluminium which make them lighter as compared to conventional rakes. They come equipped with "advanced pneumatic disc brake system" for efficient braking at higher speeds. These modern coaches offer a higher carrying capacity, have higher speed potential, lighter in weight and have increased coal life.

This accident has, however, brought into focus once again, the issue of avoidable fatalities in an accident by switching over to a safer coach design. The causes of the accident can be many, which incidentally, in this case is a traction motor of the locomotive falling down, something which is rather bizarre as this equipment is secured very strongly. The idea should be that even if a derailment does occur, in spite of all the precautions and measure, the damage it causes to the affected coaches should be so controlled that it causes minimal casualties.

It is being said that had the train been provided with LHB type coaches instead of the vintage ICF (Integral Coach Factory) type, no life would have been lost. This premise in itself is correct as successive accidents have shown that whenever ICF type coaches are involved in derailment at high speeds, coaches climb and capsize causing heavy casualties whereas similar accidents with LHB coaches have practically no casualties and certainly no fatalities.

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THE RAILWAYS CAN DECIDE TO USE ITS FUNDS MORE MEANINGFULLY, TAKING THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO BITE THE BULLET AND LET THE OLD MAKE WAY FOR THE NEW, WHICH WOULD NOT ONLY MEAN MORE LHB TYPE COACHES BUT ALSO MORE MODERN TRAIN SETS LIKE TRAIN 18 AND THEIR UPGRADED VERSION IN ALUMINIUM BODY

(The writer is a retired General Manager, Indian Railways. The views expressed are personal.)



IR principally employs two types of coaches. One is the ICF type which is based on a design imported in 1950s. The other is the LHB type which follows a German design imported in the late 1990s. For common understanding, the latter coaches are designed with a coupler, which gets strongly interlocked with the coupler of the adjacent coach, preventing relative sideways and vertical movements of the coaches with respect to each other and, therefore, coaches do not climb or capsize, even if there is a derailment. ICF type coaches, on the other hand, have no such restraining arrangement, causing them to mount each other or capsize individually when facing absorption of kinetic energy in case of a derailment. At the same time, the more recent Train 18 type coaches are even safer with their semi-permanent type couplers, anti-climbing feature and safer structural designs.

After such an accident occurs, much ado follows berating the IR for delaying faster proliferation of LHB type coaches. Railways, however, huffed and hawed on the issue till 2017, when a series of such accidents forced it to stop manufacture of ICF type coaches, switching over completely to LHB types as far as new manufacture was concerned. The problem of a large legacy fleet of ICF type coaches with years of useful life

still remained, given that an ICF type coach has a useful life of 25 years. As of today, the number of coaches on IR is around 40000 ICF type and 25000 LHB type which means that a large number of even faster trains run with ICF type coaches.

The crescendo which has built up, just as in the past when such an accident took place, runs down ICF type coaches calling them coffins on wheels. This is an exaggeration as this type of coaches have served the country well since 1950s. Lives of railway passengers always mattered, but in recent years, perhaps due to the penetration of social media, they matter much more and rightly so. Some drastic measures are, therefore, called for. The solution is rather plain. Scrap ICF type coaches in a greater haste and increase the pace of manufacture of LHB type coaches to replace them.

The order is not tall; thanks to some measures taken by railway Production Units, particularly Integral Coach Factory since 2016, IR can be geared to manufacture 9000 coaches per year. If that is achieved from April 2022, as many as 25000 oldest ICF type coaches can be replaced, prematurely, by safer LHB type coaches or train sets, relegating the balance to inferior services which can then complete their full useful life without putting lives of passengers

to danger. IR is a large system and some derailments of passenger trains would occur even if the rail infrastructure is improved further but more and more LHB type coaches would mean that the risk of fatalities in such derailments would be greatly reduced.

The inevitable question would be about the extra ₹15000-20,000 crore that it would cost. First of all, it is not a big amount given that it would definitely save hundreds of lives in the years to come. Second, IR has shown unprecedented haste in abandoning and stabling a large fleet of its functioning diesel locomotives, speeding up electrification and manufacturing a large number of electric locomotives to showcase its commitment towards use of green energy; that the power consumed by its electric locomotives is hardly green is another matter.

IR can, therefore, decide to use its funds more meaningfully, taking this as an opportunity to bite the bullet and let the old make way for the new, which would not only mean more LHB type coaches but also more modern trainsets like Train 18 and their upgraded version in aluminium body. Modern train sets would not only mean safer travel but also more comfortable passenger experience. It is time for IR to decide on a bold initiative to provide safer travel to its passengers.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

ITNA JHOOTH TELEPROMPTER BHI NAHIN JHEL PAYA (NOT EVEN THE TELEPROMPTER COULD HANDLE SUCH LIES). —CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI



DON'T THOSE GETTING EXCITED AT THE TECH GLITCH REALISE THAT THE PROBLEM WAS AT WEF'S END? —BJP LEADER TAJINDER PAL SINGH BAGGA



Area planning better alternative to guaranteeing MSP

India's experience with cropping patterns is overproduction of a commodity that causes an abrupt fall in prices and heavy losses to farmers

The committee set up by the Union Government at the end of the long-drawn farmers' protest to decide on the issue of MSP should consider dismantling the discriminatory price policy and instead adopt the Area Planning approach with an inbuilt guarantee of MSP.

This will reduce the huge Government expenditure and help in optimum utilisation of our scarce land and water resources, fertilisers and other inputs by controlling overproduction.

The practice of Area Planning, already adopted as the alternative mechanism by developed countries like the USA, Australia and the UK, is a tested approach and has proven its worth. In Australia, the departments of agricul-



BRIJENDER SINGH PANWAR

(The writer is a senior journalist and Chairman, Panwar Group of Institutions, Solan, Himachal Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)

ture and food provide information and advice to the Australian Planning Commission and local governments to ensure strategic planning at the farmers' level for the growth of agriculture as per demand of domestic human and animal requirements and industrial use and exports.

In the US and Australia, the zoning process regulates the types of activities that can be accommodated on a given piece of land as well as the amount of space devoted to those activities. Subsidies are also linked to area allocated under a crop. In case of the UK, all farms above five hectares have to get approval for use of land, not only for growing crops but also for constructing buildings, carry out excavations and engineering operations for



allied activities.

In India, we have been observing that the overproduction of any commodity causes an abrupt fall in prices and heavy losses to farmers. If procurement is done by the Government, it leads to heavy loss to the exchequer when international prices are lower. Implementation of Area Planning can take care of both these problems and also save on costs of inputs and post-harvest management. Besides,

Area Planning will help in optimising the use of scarce resources such as water and fertilizers by preventing a glut in the production of individual commodities.

Before appraising the new approach, we have to understand the ground realities of MSP at the all-India level. As per the estimate reported by NSSO (77th round) in the Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) of agri-households for the agricultural year July 2018 to June 2019, just 8.8 per cent of them sold any crop to the government agencies at MSP. The value of that agri-produce was just 8 per cent of the total value of agriculture (crops plus livestock).

Going by the Census and National Accounts data, the percentages come down to 5.6

and 2.2, respectively. At the national level, that translates to less than one per cent in most of North-Eastern states to as high as 50 per cent in Chattisgarh, 30 per cent in Telangana, 28 per cent in Punjab, and 23 per cent in Haryana.

Past experience indicates that farmers from Punjab and Haryana have benefitted the most from the MSP regime because they are more organised and enjoy a lead in resources and production due to the onset of Green Revolution in the 1960s. Of late, procurement has spread in states like Chattisgarh and Telangana for paddy and Madhya Pradesh for wheat. It has resulted in lopsided production. Even though MSPs are announced for 23 commodities,

the price support essentially runs for wheat and rice and that too in selected states. We see a highly distorted picture of incentive structure which favours the wheat and rice producing states.

Agricultural economists and experts say MSP distorts the basic logic of the supply-demand mechanism, slows down the process of diversification and is economically a very expensive and inefficient policy instrument besides leading to massive leakages and corruption. It cannot augment incomes of small and marginal farmers who represent almost 87 per cent of the total farming community. With an average holding size of 0.9 ha, unless farmers move rapidly towards high-value agriculture, there is not much scope to

achieve better incomes for small land holders in an economically efficient and sustainable way.

It is much better to directly help small and marginal farmers with an income policy or through a diversification package towards high value agriculture, the experts advise.

The issue of optimum utilisation of land, water, fertilisers, labour and other inputs also needs to be considered. With a growing population, we have limited land which meets the basic needs of cereals, pulses, oils, milk, meat, fruits, vegetables, clothing, fuel and shelter. The cropping system should be tailored to local consumption patterns rather than for only getting the maximum price, irrespective of whether the produce has a demand or not.

Major airlines cancel, change flights to US over 5G dispute

AP ■ DUBAI

Major international airlines cancelled flights heading to the US or changed the planes they're using Wednesday, the latest complication in a dispute over concerns that 5G mobile phone service could interfere with aircraft technology.

Some airlines said they were warned that the Boeing 777, a plane used by carriers worldwide, was particularly affected by the new high-speed wireless service. The aircraft is the workhorse for Dubai-based Emirates, a key carrier for East-West travel, and its flight schedule took one of the biggest hits.

It was not clear how disruptive the cancellations would be. Several airlines said they would try to merely use different planes to maintain their service. The cancellations and changes came a day after mobile phone carriers AT&T and Verizon said they would postpone new wireless service near some US airports planned for this week.

The US Federal Aviation Administration has cleared a number of aircraft to fly into airports with 5G signals, but the Boeing 777 is not on

list. Similar mobile networks have been deployed in dozens of other countries-sometimes with concessions like reducing power of networks near airports, as France has done. But in the US, the issue has pitted FAA and airlines against Federal Communications Commission and the telecoms companies.

The 5G service uses a segment of the radio spectrum that is close to that used by radio altimeters, which are devices that measure the height of aircraft above the ground and help pilots land in low visibility.

The FCC, which set a buffer between the 5G band and the spectrum that planes use, determined that it could be used safely in the vicinity of air traffic. AT&T and Verizon have said their equipment will not interfere with aircraft electronics. But FAA officials saw a potential problem, and telecom companies agreed to a pause while it is addressed.

On Wednesday, Emirates announced it would halt flights to several American cities due to "operational concerns associated with planned deployment of 5G mobile network services in US at certain airports." It said it would contin-

ue flights to Los Angeles, New York and Washington. "We are working closely with aircraft manufacturers and relevant authorities to alleviate operational concerns, and we hope to resume our US services as soon as possible," the state-owned airline said. Of particular concern appears to be Boeing 777. Emirates only flies that model and Airbus A380 jumbo jet.

Japan's All Nippon Airways said that FAA "has indicated that radio waves from 5G wireless service may interfere with aircraft altimeters."

"Boeing has announced flight restrictions on all airlines operating the Boeing 777 aircraft, and we have cancelled or changed the aircraft for some flights to/from the US based on the announcement by Boeing," ANA said.

It cancelled 20 flights over the issue to cities such as Chicago, Los Angeles and New York. Japan Airlines similarly said that it had been informed that 5G signals "may interfere with radio altimeter installed on Boeing 777." It said it will stop using model in continental US for now. Eight of its flights were affected Wednesday-three passenger trips and five for cargo.

Omicron wave may cut future severity of COVID disease: S African Study

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

The Omicron variant of coronavirus may reduce the incidence of severe COVID-19 disease, and the infection may become less disruptive to individuals and society," they authors of the study noted.

The finding is an update to the study by the same research team which found enhancement of immunity against Delta variant with Omicron infection.

"We were able to add study participants to see more clearly the effect of vaccination," Professor Alex Sigal, from Africa Health Research Institute tweeted on Tuesday. The earlier part of the study, posted on the pre-print repository MedRxiv, used data from 15 previously vaccinated and unvaccinated people who were infected with the Omicron variant.

The scientists used plasma, a blood product which contains antibodies, from the participants to test the ability of the antibodies to control both Omicron and Delta in the lab -- a so-called 'neutralisation' test. The results show a developing antibody response to Omicron, with neutralisation increasing 14-fold over this time.

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Israel minister denies police used NSO spyware on protesters

AP ■ JERUSALEM

An Israeli Cabinet minister claims that police used controversial spyware to surveil protesters, a day after a newspaper investigation prompted outraged lawmakers to seek a formal inquiry.

On Tuesday, a Hebrew-language business paper published allegations that the Israel Police used NSO Group spyware to hack the phones of the leaders of protests against former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, municipal leaders and other citizens without proper oversight. The police denied the report's findings and said they operate according to the law, and the NSO Group said it does not identify its clients.

Pegasus, the sophisticated spyware made by the Israeli spyware company, has been linked to snooping on human rights activists, journalists and politicians across the globe. The US has barred group from American technology, saying its products have been used by repressive regimes. Omer Barlev, the minister in charge of the police.

Beijing grapples with Delta, Omicron infections as more Covid-19 cases surface ahead of Winter Olympics

PTI ■ BEIJING

Chinese capital Beijing reported five new COVID-19 cases of the Delta variant on Wednesday, days after the first Omicron case was detected in the city bracing to host the Winter

Olympics from next month. Four of the infected people are the employees of a cold storage company in Fangshan district.

The fifth person, who lives with one of those employees, also works in the cold storage industry, Liu Xiaofeng, deputy director of the Beijing Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, (DCP) told a news conference here.

The Delta variant was detected from samples. All of the cases have been transferred to designated hospitals for medical treatment, he said.

The city which is bracing to host the Winter Olympics from February 4 reported first case of Omicron variant on January 16 prompting the health officials to ramp up testing and tracing. Concerns were heightened as millions of people were set to travel across the country to celebrate

the week-long Spring Festival and Chinese New Year from the end of this month.

Chinese officials blamed the lone Omicron case in Beijing on international mail delivered from Canada to Beijing via the US and Hong Kong.

The single Omicron case detected in Beijing was traced back to an international document from Canada, and it was found to have similar strains from those in North America and Singapore, according to health officials.

Few days ago, the Omicron variant was found in the nearby Tianjin city. Since Beijing reported one locally transmitted case on Saturday, the infected cases have involved Haidian, Chaoyang, Fangshan and Fengtai districts by Wednesday in the current COVID-19 outbreak in the capital city, the state-run China Daily reported.

The DCP has released the tracks of the new cases and asked the residents who have been to those places during the same period to report to local communities as soon as possible. Liu said residents should not leave Beijing before receiving nucleic acid testing results.

Influential fashion journalist André Leon Talley dies at 73

New York: André Leon Talley, the towering former creative director and editor at large of Vogue magazine, has died. He was 73. Talley's literary agent David Vigliano confirmed Talley's death to USA Today late Tuesday, but no additional details were immediately available. Talley was an influential fashion journalist who worked at Women's Wear Daily and Vogue and was a regular in front row of fashion shows in New York and Europe. At 6-feet-6 inches tall, Talley cut an imposing figure wherever he went, with his stature, his considerable

influence on fashion world, and his bold looks. In a 2013 Vanity Fair spread titled "The Eyeful Tower," Talley was described as "perhaps industry's most important link to past." Designer Tom Ford told magazine Talley was "one of last great fashion editors who has an incredible sense of fashion history. ... He can see through everything you do to original reference, predict what was on your inspiration board." Designer Diane von Furstenberg praised Talley on Instagram, writing: "no one saw world in a more glamorous way than you did ... no one was grander and

more soulful than you were." In his 2003 memoir, "A.L.T.: A Memoir," Talley focused on two of most important women in his life: his maternal grandmother, Bennie Frances Davis and late fashion editor Diana Vreeland. "Bennie Frances Davis may have looked like a typical, African American domestic worker to many of people who saw her on an ordinary day, but I, who could see her soul, could also see her secret: that even while she wore a hair net and work clothes to scrub toilets and floors, she wore an invisible diadem," he wrote. AP

Blinken urges unity to fight 'relentless' Russian aggression

AP ■ KYIV (UKRAINE)

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged western nations Wednesday to remain united in the face of what he called "relentless" Russian aggression against Ukraine and reassured Ukraine's leader of their support.

Blinken told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during a visit to Kyiv that the U.S. And its allies were steadfast in backing his country and its democratic aspirations amid growing fears of a potentially imminent Russian invasion.

"The Ukrainian people chose a democratic and European path in 1991. They took to the Maidan to defend that choice in 2013, and unfortunately ever since you have faced relentless aggression from Moscow," Blinken said, referring to Ukraine's trajectory since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"Our strength depends on preserving our unity and that includes unity within Ukraine," he said to Zelenskyy. "I think one of Moscow's long-standing goals has been to try to sow divisions between and within our countries and quite simply, we cannot and will not let them do that." The Biden administration said earlier it was providing an additional \$200 million in defensive military aid to Ukraine to help protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Zelenskyy

thanked Blinken for the assistance, which was approved in late December but not formally confirmed until Wednesday, as well as for his visit and assurances of support.

"This (military) support not only speaks to our strategic plans of Ukraine joining the alliance, but more importantly to the level of our military, our military supplies," he said, referring to Kyiv's desire to join NATO over Russia's strong objections. "If we want dramatically fast steps in modernizing the military, we need help especially in these tough times," Zelenskyy said. "Your visit is very important."

It underlines once again your powerful support of our independence and sovereignty." The aid announcement came at the start of Blinken's hastily arranged visit as U.S. And western officials stepped up increasingly dire warnings about a possible Russian invasion.

Blinken said Russian President Vladimir Putin is now in position to launch military action against Ukraine at will and at very short notice with more than 100,000 troops massed on its border and plans to add more. "We know that there are plans in place to increase that force even more on very short notice and that gives President Putin the capacity, also on very short notice, to take further aggressive action against Ukraine," Blinken told staff at U.S. Embassy in Kyiv.

Pakistan's election commission orders declassification of key documents in Imran Khan's party's foreign funding case

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's election commission has ordered the declassification of key documents linked to the foreign funding case against the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf, a move that could potentially spell more trouble for Prime Minister Imran Khan, a media report said on Wednesday.

According to a damning report released earlier this month by the Election Commission of Pakistan's Scrutiny Committee, Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) had grossly under-reported funds received from foreign nationals, firms and also concealed bank accounts. The ruling party had under-reported an amount of Rs PKR 312 million over a four-year period, between FY 2009-10 and FY 2012-13, the report said.

The year-wise details reveal that an amount in excess of PKR 145 million was under-reported in FY 2012-13 alone, it said. These documents were part of this Scrutiny Committee report, but were not released along with the report, the Dawn newspaper said.

These documents, which will be made public, will include all the papers sought by the ECP through the state of Pakistan, in its letter dated July 3, 2018, the newspaper report said. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikander Sultan Raja passed the order on Tuesday, when the counsel for the petitioner said that certain critical portions of the report

had been kept secret and his client was being denied access to them. The CEC directed that no part of the report should be kept confidential and the whole report should be provided to the petitioner, the report said. The ECP had kept the documents away from the public domain after PTI had objected to sharing the documents with Akbar S. Babar, the ruling party's founding member and the petitioner in this case, it added.

Describing the Scrutiny Committee's report as 'dishonest', Babar's counsel Syed Ahmad Hassan Shah said meaningful scrutiny was not possible unless critical pieces of evidence were made public, in line with an earlier order of the commission. The CEC directed PTI counsel Anwar Mansoor to file a written reply by the next date of hearing and adjourned the hearing till February 1, the report said.

Talking to reporters after the hearing, Minister of State for Information Farrukh Habib said that PTI was the only political party that attaches any importance to transparency in the fund-collection process. He alleged that Babar was on the payroll of opposition PML-N and had been exposed by the findings of the scrutiny committee. Babar, told reporters that the decision on declassification of documents was historic. He said the report documents that at least PKR 836,897,508 and USD 1.6 million, collected domestically, have no source and details.

UN agency: Palestinians in crisis-hit Lebanon need funds

AP ■ BEIRUT

A UN agency appealed Wednesday to international community to donate tens of millions of dollars to help improve living conditions for Palestinians in crisis-hit Lebanon. The appeal by agency for Palestinian refugees, or UNRWA, is asking for an additional USD 87.5 million is to provide Palestinian refugees with cash assistance to poorest, cover hospital expenses, as well as transportation for children so that they can go to school.

UNRWA says more than 210,000 Palestinian refugees are among most vulnerable and that some basic commodities have become out of reach for many as Lebanon sinks deeper into economic meltdown.

It added that more than 58 per cent of Palestinian refugees here have reduced numbers of meals they eat every day. About 400,000 Palestinian refugees and their descendants mostly live in a dozen refugee camps in Lebanon.

China asks Taliban to meet 'expectations of international community' for recognition

PTI ■ BEIJING

China has asked Taliban's interim administration in Afghanistan to meet "expectation of international community" in response to Islamist group's appeal to Beijing to help it get the global recognition.

"We hope the Afghan side will respond further to expectation of international community, establish an open and inclusive political architecture, adopt moderate and prudent domestic and foreign policies, firmly combat all sorts of terrorist forces," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing on Tuesday.

The new Afghanistan government should also "live on friendly terms with other countries, especially its neighbours, and integrate into international family at an early date", he said responding to a question quoting reports from Kabul that Taliban had sought China's help to get global diplomatic recognition.

China has been asking the Taliban to crackdown on the separatist East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) active in the volatile Muslim-majority Xinjiang province, which shares borders with Afghanistan.

No country has so far recognised Taliban government despite the diplomatic campaign from Pakistan which firmly backed Afghan militant group to seize power in August last year.

Taliban's failure to form an inclusive government with other Afghan political leaders, exclusion of Afghan women from public life as well as girls from education besides its alleged links with transnational terrorist groups remained main reservations of the global community to extend diplomatic recognition.

On Wednesday, acting Afghan Prime Minister Mullah Hasan Akhund appealed for international recognition of Taliban government, saying "I ask all governments, especially Islamic countries, that they should start recognition."

"Afghanistan has met all criteria and conditions needed for recognition of a government, therefore I am calling upon world countries to recognise legitimate government (of) Islamic Emirate and extend support to Afghans," China's state-run Xinhua news agency quoted Akhund as saying while addressing an economic conference in Kabul.

This is first time that Akhund made a major public appearance since he assumed role in September last year, Xinhua report said. Zhao said China has noted that "the Afghan interim government has actively engaged in international exchange, and quite a few countries".

"We hold that international community should support Afghan people in seeking a development path in keeping with their national realities and realising lasting stability and development on basis of respecting country's sovereign independence and territorial integrity," he said.

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS DUE TO NON-INTERLOCKING WORKS

In order to upgrade the infrastructure & enhance safety standards, South East Central Railway will undertake the Pre-Non-Interlocking & Non-Interlocking Works in connection with commissioning of 3rd line connectivity at Jaithari in Nigaura - Jaithari - Chhulha double line electrified section of Bilaspur Division. To execute this work, South East Central Railway will take 9 days traffic blocks from 23.01.2022 to 31.01.2022. During this period the following trains will temporarily be affected on the dates as shown under:-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS		
Train No.	Train Name	Date of Cancellation (from originating station)
22867	Durg - Hazrat Nizamuddin Humsafar Express	25.01.2022 & 28.01.2022
22868	Hazrat Nizamuddin - Durg Humsafar Express	26.01.2022 & 29.01.2022
18201	Durg - Varanasi Jn - Nautanwa Express	21, 26 & 28.01.2022
18202	Nautanwa - Varanasi Jn - Durg Express	23, 28 & 30.01.2022

For any other information passengers are requested to contact Railway Enquiry No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

RailMadad Helpline No. 139 • Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in & download Railmadad app.



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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

THE BATALA COOP.SUGAR MILLS LTD.,BATALA DISTT.GURDASPUR(PUNJAB) BCSM/Sugar/2021-22/01 Website:www.smbatala.com Email: batala.csm@rediffmail.com e-Tender Notice Sale of Sugar

Online tenders are invited for sale of Sugar of approximate 9,12,446 Qtls "As is where is basis" (i.e. 4,24,641 Qtls. for the season 2019-20 and 4,87,805 Qtls for the season 2020-21) lying in all the nine Cooperative Sugar Mills of the State of Punjab. The detail of quantity of sugar to be sold by season wise and mills wise is given below :-

S.NO.	NAME OF THE COOP. SUGAR MILLS	Sugar stock and season wise in qtls.		
		2019-2020	2020-21	Total
(1)	Ajnala CSM	62901	57197	120098
(2)	Batala CSM	59500	35558	95058
(3)	Bhogpur CSM	25061	102805	127866
(4)	Budhewal CSM	24811	16918	41729
(5)	Fazilka CSM	10127	6562	16689
(6)	Gurdaspur CSM	71628	73524	145152
(7)	Morinda CSM	39962	96133	136095
(8)	Nakodar CSM	38613	28017	64230
(9)	NawanShahr CSM	92438	73091	165529
	Total	424541	487805	912446

The tender showing mill wise quantity for sale, minimum quantity to be quoted in tender etc will be uploaded on government website on 2nd (date) of every month till the completion of stock available for the season 2019-20 and 2020-21 <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in> in accordance of monthly quota allotted by GOI alongwith quota carry forward by GOI, if any. Tender to be filled upto or before 11.00 AM on the every 7th (date) of every month. Tender will open on the 7th (date) of every month at 2.00 PM in the presence of bidder who wish to be present in the office of Batala CSM/Sugarfed, Punjab.

The Earnest Money is @Rs.100.00 per quintals and to be deposited alongwith tender on web portal <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>. The details for submission of e-bids will be available on the e-tender portal <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in> and also on website www.smbatala.com. The Batala Coop. Sugar Mills Ltd., Batala reserves the right to cancel any or all the e-bids without assigning any reason.

For participation in the above e-tendering process, the bidders shall have to get themselves registered with the website <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in> and get user ID, Password, Class-3 digital Signature is mandatory to participate in the e-tendering process. For any clarification or difficulty regarding e-tendering process, please contact us on 94173-70679, 89686-22017 and 94650-92961.

In this regard any corrigendum, correction, appendix, time extension/ postponement if any, will be uploaded on <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in> and www.smbatala.com. All tenderers are requested to go through the said website on regular basis. GENERAL MANAGER, CSM, Batala

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियंता, लोक निर्माण विभाग, रायपुर मण्डल क्रमांक 2 (छत्तीसगढ़) ई-प्रोक्युरमेंट निविदा सूचना

दिनांक 18/01/2022

निम्नांकित कार्यों हेतु ऑनलाईन निविदा "डी" श्रेणी एवं अधिक श्रेणी के ठेकेदारों हेतु निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है, एन.आई.टी. क्रं- 118 एवं 119 (द्वितीय आमंत्रण) डाउनलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि 01.02.2022 एवं एन.आई. टी. क्र-120 से 121 तक (तृतीय आमंत्रण) डाउनलोड करने की अंतिम तिथि 27.04.2022 है।

एन.आई.टी. क्र/ निविदा क्र	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की अनुमानित लागत (लाख में)
1	2	3
NIT NO. 118 Tender No. 90942	देवभोग अनुविभाग के अन्तर्गत विभिन्न मार्गों में स्थित पुल-पुलियों का/ साधारण/ विशेष मरम्मत का कार्य। (द्वितीय आमंत्रण)	रु. 27.50 लाख
NIT NO. 119 Tender No. 90943	जिला महासमुन्द्र विकासखंड सरावपाली के अंतर्गत शासकीय आवासीय भवनों में रंगाई पोताई एवं मरम्मत का कार्य। (द्वितीय आमंत्रण)	रु. 25.00 लाख
NIT NO. 120 Tender No. 90944	कसबोल अनुविभाग अन्तर्गत विभिन्न नदियों पर बी.टी. सिंचन का कार्य कुल लं. 8.00 कि.मी.। (तृतीय आमंत्रण)	रु. 146.76 लाख
NIT NO. 121 Tender No. 90945	जिला महासमुन्द्र विकासखंड सरावपाली में सिंचित कोट सरावपाली न्यायालयीन कर्मचारियों के निवे डी टाईंग आवासगृह का निर्माण कार्य (तृतीय आमंत्रण)	रु. 69.66 लाख

उपरोक्त निर्माण कार्यों की निविदा की सामान्य शर्तें, धरोहर राशि, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञप्ति, निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी ई-प्रोक्युरमेंट वेब पोर्टल <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> अथवा विभागीय वेबसाइट <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> से डाउनलोड की जा सकती है। (राशि रु. 100.00 के नाम ज्युडिशियल स्ट्याम्प पर निर्धारित प्रपत्र में शपथ-पत्र एवं न्यूनतम राशि रु. 10.00 के नाम ज्युडिशियल स्ट्याम्प पर एनक्जूर-3 का शपथ पत्र निष्केपेसीटी उपलब्धता बाबत जानकारी एवं अन्य जानकारी एनआईटी के 2.10 में संलग्न संशोधित प्रपत्रानुसार प्रस्तुत करें।) निविदा में होने वाले समस्त संशोधन का प्रकाशन केवल उपरोक्त वेबसाइट पर किया जावेगा, पृथक से समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशन नहीं किया जावेगा।

हस्ता/ -
R.o. No. : 66955/6
R.o. Date. : 19/01/2022
अधीक्षण अभियंता,
लो.नि.वि. रायपुर मण्डल क्र. 2 (छ.प्र.)

China condemns plans by Slovenia to upgrade Taiwan ties

AP ■ BEIJING

China on Wednesday condemned plans by Slovenia to upgrade relations with self-governing Taiwan, a move likely to spark diplomatic and economic retaliation against tiny Central European country. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said China was "shocked by this and strongly opposed to it," but gave no immediate details on how Beijing would respond.

"It is a dangerous statement made by Slovenian leader that overtly challenges one-China principle and supports Taiwan independence," Zhao told reporters at a daily briefing, referring to comments Monday by Slovenia's Prime Minister Janez Jansa.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary and has been ratcheting up diplomatic pressure on island to force it into political concessions. "No one should underestimate strong determination, firm will and strong ability of Chinese people to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity," Zhao said.

Mallya faces prospect of bailiffs knocking on doors of his luxury London home any time now

PTI ■ LONDON

Embattled liquor tycoon Vijay Mallya, who is based in Britain for over five years, faces the prospect of bailiffs knocking on the doors of his luxury London home any time now after a British court ruled that a bank pursuing its unpaid dues can take charge of the high value property.

The 65-year-old former Kingfisher Airlines boss intends to appeal against ruling on Tuesday, when a High Court procedural judge concluded that Mallya's position in matter was "completely hopeless" at end of an extended stay from eviction due to the pandemic.

The 18/19 Cornwall Terrace property, which is located in one of central London's prime hubs of Regent's Park near Madame Tussauds wax museum, is of such high value that court only referred to it as being worth "many tens of millions of pounds".

Deputy Master Matthew Marsh noted in a virtual hearing this week to deliver his judgment that Mallya's 95-year-old mother was currently resident at property.

Economic recovery yet to attain durability: Report

Mumbai: Rating agency Icra on Wednesday said while there is some evidence of the economic recovery becoming broad-based in the third quarter of fiscal 2022, it is yet to attain the durability being sought by the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) as a precursor to policy transmission.

The agency expects the real GDP to expand 6-6.5 per cent year-on-year in the third quarter of FY2022 (+8.4 per cent in Q2 FY2022). It also sees the RBI maintaining the status quo in the upcoming monetary policy review to be held in February.

Its Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said economic activity rebounded in December 2021, even as many sectors continued to trail the performance recorded in October 2021.

Encouragingly, the quarterly data suggests a modest broad-basing of the recovery in Q3 FY2022, relative to Q2 FY2022, when compared to respective pre-COVID-19 volumes.

“However, the onset of the third wave of COVID-19

has triggered state-wise restrictions, which have expectedly interrupted the momentum in the ongoing month, reiterating that the recovery is yet to attain durability,” Nayar said in a report released on Wednesday.

The agency said the y-o-y performance of 10 of the 15 high-frequency indicators improved in December 2021 compared to November 2021. These include generation of GST e-way bills, non-oil merchandise exports, electricity generation, two-wheeler output as well as aggregate deposits and non-food credit of scheduled commercial banks.

The report further said the y-o-y performance of nine of the 15 high-frequency indicators in December 2021 trailed the growth seen in October 2021.

FASTag toll collections and retail payments rose to all-time highs in December 2021, while the monthly mobility for retail and recreation rose above the level of baseline period for the first time since the onset of

COVID-19, it said.

Nayar further said that following the re-imposition of state-wise restrictions to curb the third wave of COVID-19, the early data for January 2022 is expectedly weak.

The daily average generation of the GST e-way bills dipped to 2.1 million during January 1-16, 2022, from 2.3 million in December 2021.

After a y-o-y growth in December 2021, the sales of petrol and diesel of state refineries slipped back to a contraction in the first half of January 2022.

Even, the y-o-y growth in electricity demand eased to 1.9 per cent during January 1-16, 2022, from 2.8 per cent in December 2021, she said.

The agency said that with the fresh uncertainty triggered by Omicron and the associated restrictions, it expects a status quo on the stance of the monetary policy as well as the reverse repo rate in the upcoming RBI policy meeting, in spite of the rise in the retail inflation in December 2021. **PTI**

Economy needs more nursing; Budget shouldn't focus on fiscal consolidation alone: SBI

Mumbai: House economists at the nation's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) have urged the government to budget for nursing the pandemic-ravaged economy and not to focus too much on fiscal consolidation as there is a need for more stabilisation measures to sustain the fledgling recovery.

And one of the best way to begin the new fiscal is to complete the share sale of LIC this fiscal. This can go a long way in repairing the overstretched balance sheet which in turn will bring down fiscal deficit to a much lower 6.3 per cent in FY23 as the public coffers will be left with a cash surplus of at least Rs 3 lakh crore to begin the new fiscal, SBI chief economist Soumya Kanti Ghosh said in a pre-Budget note on Wednesday.

He said the Budget should not correct the fiscal deficit by more than 30-40 bps as most sectors of the economy still need support.

Pencilling in a 6-6.5 per cent fiscal deficit for FY23, down from 6.8-7.1 per cent from FY22, he said the Budget should also allow for very

gradual fiscal consolidation. For FY23, the fiscal consolidation should remain limited to 30-40 bps from the current fiscal.

He also cautioned against any new taxes like wealth tax or others at this point as that could do more harm than benefit.

Assuming the government keeps the expenditure growth at 8 per cent over FY22 estimates at Rs 38 lakh crore in FY23 and receipts (minus borrowing and other liabilities) would grow by 10.8 per cent, it would lead to fiscal deficit of around ₹ 16.5 lakh crore or 6.3 per cent of GDP in FY23.

If LIC share sale passes through in FY22, the government might be ending fiscal with a large cash balance of ₹3 lakh crore. This can come handy in supporting a large part of government fiscal deficit without taking recourse to market borrowings, as per the note.

Against this background, the net market borrowings of the Centre is likely to be around ₹ 8.2 lakh crore and with repayments of ₹ 3.8 lakh crore, gross borrowings is expected at

₹12 lakh crore (73 per cent of the fiscal deficit and same as in FY22 and FY21), Ghosh said.

Overall gross borrowings by the Centre and states are likely to be around ₹21 lakh crore (₹ 19.7 lakh crore in FY22) and net borrowings at around ₹14.8 lakh crore (₹ 15 lakh crore in FY22).

Ghosh also pointed out that unlike in FY22, when RBI has done OMOs of around ₹ 2.6 lakh crore, helping government borrowing programme without disruptions, in FY23, such support is not likely.

He specifically called for continuing support to MSMEs saying the 6.33 crore of such units contribute 29 per cent of GDP, employing over 11 crore. And one of the ways to help them is let bank lend them more by verifying their cash-flows seamlessly through GST 4/TR on real-time basis.

Another step could be extending the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) till end FY23 to enable completion of the entire targeted ₹ 4.5 lakh crore of credit flow under it. **PTI**

Sensex crashes 656 pts, Nifty cracks below 18K tracking global rout

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The BSE gauge Sensex plummeted over 656 points and the NSE Nifty dropped below the key 18,000-mark on Wednesday as global market rout cast a shadow on domestic equities.

Starting off on a positive note, the BSE benchmark gave up its early gains and briefly slipped below the psychological 60,000-barrier before closing at 60,098.82, tumbling 656.04 points or 1.08 per cent - its weakest level since January 7.

Likewise, the NSE barometer Nifty plunged 174.65 points or 0.96 per cent to close at 17,938.40 as 35 of its stocks closed with losses.

Infosys fell the most among Sensex stocks, declining by 2.77 per cent. Among other major laggards were Asian Paint, HUL, Nestle, Bajaj Finance, Wipro and Kotak Bank -falling as much as 2.71 per cent. On the Sensex, 22 shares suffered losses.

Among gainers were SBI, Tata Steel, Maruti, Axis Bank, Tech Mahindra, PowerGrid, M&M and Reliance Industries.

In the broader market, BSE Midcap declined by 0.34 per cent while Smallcap ended almost flat.

Sectorally, BSE IT index dropped 1.95 per cent, Teck fell 1.79 per cent, Bankex was down 0.52 per cent and Telecom was 0.97 per cent lower.

Market breadth was largely negative as 1,827 stocks out of 3,495 trading stocks declined while 1,579 stocks advanced and 89 ended unchanged on the BSE.

Total turnover in the equity segment was Rs 6,386.89 crore on the BSE.

“Globally, risk sentiments took a blow as rising inflation resulting in elevated bond yield along with the on-going geopolitical tensions and surge in oil prices weighed on investor confidence. This along with consistent FII selling forced the domestic market to trade in favour of bears for the second consecutive day,” Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said.

NSE world's largest derivatives exchange for 3rd straight year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The National Stock Exchange of India has emerged as the world's largest derivatives exchange for the third consecutive year in 2021 in terms of the number of contracts traded, according to the Futures Industry Association (FIA).

In addition, the exchange was ranked fourth by the number of trades in cash equities, as per the statistics maintained by the World Federation of Exchanges (WFE) for 2021.

In a statement on Wednesday NSE said it has ranked as the largest exchange globally in equity derivatives as well as currency derivatives by the number of contracts traded. “It is a matter of great pride for us and our country that NSE has emerged as a global leader and achieved the distinction of being the largest derivatives exchange in the world for the 3rd consecutive year and the 4th largest exchange in cash equities by the number of trades,” Vikram Limaye, MD & CEO, NSE, said.

The year 2021 witnessed the total registered investor

base on NSE surpassing the 5-crore mark to reach a count of 5.5 crore investors. In the last 10 years, the equity derivatives daily average turnover increased by 4.2 times from ₹33,305 crore in 2011 to ₹1,41,267 crore in 2021. During the same period, the cash market daily average turnover surged by 6.2 times from ₹11,187 crore in 2011 to ₹69,644 crores in 2021.

In currency derivatives, the daily average turnover increased by 83 per cent from Rs 14,252 crore in 2011 to ₹26,017 crore in 2021.

Academic research has shown that a well-functioning derivatives market can offer a variety of benefits, including improved liquidity and enhanced price discovery for the underlying assets, the exchange said.

NSE has recently announced the launch of derivatives on the Nifty Midcap Select index from January 24, 2022. The midcap segment has come into focus in the recent equity market rally with broad-based participation from all classes of investors, resulting in improved liquidity in these stocks.

Cut import duty gradually on alcoholic beverages under India-UK FTA; not unfairly: CIABC to Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The apex body for liquor firms Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) has urged the government not reduce customs duties on British alcoholic beverages under the proposed India-UK free trade agreement to support domestic players unless Indian liquor manufacturers get a fair deal.

CIABC has also suggested the government to ensure that the UK allows the selling of domestic whiskies as 'Indian Whisky', irrespective of whether they are made from malt, grain spirits or molasses-based spirits.

India and the UK have formally launched negotiations for an FTA, under which duties would be reduced or eliminated on several goods traded between the two countries.

They should also remove the condition of a minimum three years maturation period for whisky and rum, the body said in a letter to the commerce ministry.

“The domestic alcoholic beverages industry only seeks just and fair level playing field for Indian producers and help them achieve global scale and success..It is therefore vital that the interests of the domestic industry are not compromised, and opportunities are created for Indian products to

reach out and conquer the world,” CIABC Director-General Vinod Giri said.

He added that the alcoholic beverages industry contributes Rs 2.5 lakh crore annually in taxes to the states, employs 20 lakh people and supports 50 lakh farmers.

“We urge our government to ensure (in the FTA) that Indian alcoholic beverage industry is permitted a truly level playing field by way of an effective customs duty that is reflective of the higher cost of production driven by the regulatory restrictions and capital cost in India; equal opportunities are created for export of Indian products to the UK, and measures are put in to prevent dumping or predatory price exports to India,” Giri added.

Giri also informed that the UK has imposed non-tariff barriers, related to product recipe and ageing, on Indian alcoholic beverages, which prevents most domestic products from accessing the British market. “These must be removed to ensure genuine quid pro quo,” he said in the letter.

On January 13 this year, India and the UK formally launched negotiations for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA), which is expected to help double bilateral trade to over \$100 billion by 2030 and boost economic ties between the two countries.

Rising premium growth, Govt reforms to strengthen insurers' profitability: Report

New Delhi: Post-pandemic recovery will sustain growth in insurance premiums, improving profitability amid favourable government reforms in the state-owned insurance sector, according to a report.

“The Indian insurance industry's growth prospects are favourable, underpinned by an expected 9.3 per cent GDP expansion in fiscal 2021, which ends March 2022, and by strong demand for health insurance in the wake of the pandemic,” Moody's Investors Service said in the report.

Total premiums grew nine per cent in the first nine months of fiscal 2021, slightly ahead of the 8.6 per cent increase in fiscal 2020, with general insurance premiums (including health) up 11 per cent and life new business premiums rising seven per cent, it said.

Robust premium growth is positive for insurers' profitability, which is currently weak because of persistently low prices and the rising cost of

claims, it said.

Meanwhile, the Government's plans to recapitalise India's dominant state-owned insurers and list the country's biggest insurer, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), on the stock market will encourage a more disciplined approach to underwriting in the respective general and life insurance sectors, it said.

This will pave the way for price increases across the market, further supporting insurers' profitability, it said.

It added that rising premiums and prices, in turn, will help insurers absorb higher claims. This pushed the average net loss ratio for general insurers to 95 per cent in the first three months of the financial year 2020-21 from 81 per cent in the previous year.

In anticipation of profitable growth opportunities, the report said that 20 of India's 34 general insurers and four of its 24 life insurers raised capital in the financial year 2019-20. **PTI**

CHANGE OF NAME

Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of ICICI Bank Ltd. that Mr. R.K. Ahuja & Mrs. Meena Ahuja were joint owners of Plot No. 1, area measuring 624 sq. mtrs., Block-A, Sector-19, Node, Dist. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. (the said property) by virtue Transfer deed dated 14.01.1993 registration No. 477/98, and after demise of Mr. R. K. Ahuja his wife Mrs.Meena Ahuja is claiming ownership of remaining ½ share of the said property which was owned by Mr. R. K. Ahuja by virtue of Mutation Letter dated 01.01.2018 in the record of Rights Authority. All persons including other legal heirs if any are hereby informed that above mentioned owner want to sell the said property, to Mr. Dhruv Mahendru, who is taking loan from ICICI Bank Ltd., for purchase of the said property, if anybody has any objection/s upon the ownership of Mrs. Meena Ahuja upon the above property its sale /Mortgage/pledge, and any kind of objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 10 days of the present.

Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants)
200, 11th Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Moti Nagar, N. Delhi-15
Ph : 011-41112527-28 / kumarassociates.advocates@gmail.com

**UJVN LIMITED**
H.O.: “UJJWAL”, Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006.
Telephone.: 0135-2763808, Fax- 0135- 2763508,
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvn.com

पञ्चांक सं. 47दिनांक 19.01.2022

Corrigendum

Tender no. 10/EE(E&M)/(SHP)/Rishikesh/2021-22 and 11/EE (E&M)/(SHP)/Rishikesh/ 2021-22 invited by the office of Executive Engineer (E&M-SHP). In both tender Section-3 SSC Clause no 11 Performance Guarantee (a) is here by amended and shall be read as “The successful tenderer shall be required to furnish performance guarantee in form of CDR/FDR/BG issued by any Nationalized/ Scheduled Bank (Other than Co-operative and Regional Rural Bank) equal to 10 % (Ten Percent) of value of contract in the given format at the time of signing of contract”. Other terms and conditions of the tender will remain unchanged.

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

Executive Engineer (E&M-SHP), Rishikesh

“Avoid wasteful use of Electricity”

NORTHERN RAILWAY
NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

1. TENDER NOTIFICATION
Name of work: Miscellaneous repair and maintenance works of MEMU coaches in MEMU Car shed Saharanpur for 02 years.
Tender Notice No.:-1/2021-22

1.1 General:- UMB division of northern railway invites Open tender through E-tendering system from eligible agencies who fulfill qualification criteria as stipulated in tender document for "Miscellaneous repair and maintenance works of MEMU coaches in MEMU Car Shed Saharanpur for 02 years".
1.2 The key details are as follows:-

Open Tender No.	30-EL-MEMU-T-01-21-22
Name of works	Miscellaneous repair and maintenance works of MEMU coaches in MEMU Car Shed Saharanpur for 02 years.
Approximate Cost	Rs. 11,61,351/-
Earnest Money	NIL
Completion Period	24 months from the date of issue of the letter of acceptance.
Validity of offer	45 days
Date of closing/opening	09.02.2022 at 10.30 Hrs./thereafter
Cost of tender document	Free

NOTE:-
1) Tenderer must provide validity of the offer for 45 (forty five) days from the date of opening of tender.
2) Public procure order 2017 issued by Rly. board vide L. No. 2015/RS(G)/779/5 Dt. 16.03.2018 shall be followed.
3) The tender can be seen or upload on web portal as under:
Website portal: <https://www.irops.gov.in>
119/2022

Serving Customers with a Smile

Tata Investment Corp posts 42.8 pc jump in consolidated PAT to ₹39.7 cr for Dec quarter

New Delhi: Tata Investment Corporation Ltd on Wednesday reported a 42.86 per cent jump in consolidated profit after tax to ₹39.73 crore in the third quarter ended December 31, 2021.

The company had posted a consolidated profit after tax of ₹ 27.81 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous financial year, Tata Investment Corporation said in a regulatory filing.

Its consolidated total revenue from operations during October-December 2021 stood at ₹ 50.97 crore as against ₹27 crore in the year-ago period, it added.

The company, which is primarily involved in investing in long-term investments such as equity shares and equity-related securities, said its total expenses during the quarter under review stood at ₹ 6.01 crore as compared with ₹ 5.04 crore a year ago. In a separate filing, Tata Investment Corporation said its board of directors approved the appointment of Farida Khambata as an additional director (non-executive, independent) with effect from January 19, 2022, up to December 11, 2024. **PTI**

Digital payments record 40 pc annual growth at Sep-end 2021: RBI data

Mumbai: Digital payments across the country registered a growth of nearly 40 per cent in a year through September 2021, as per the RBI's latest index that measures the adoption of online transactions.

The newly constituted RBI's digital payment index (RBI-DPI) stood at 304.06 during September 2021 as against 270.59 in March 2021 and 217.74 in September 2020.

“The RBI-DPI Index continues to demonstrate significant growth in adoption and deepening of digital payments

across the country” the RBI said in a statement on Wednesday.

The Reserve Bank had announced construction of a composite Reserve Bank of India – Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI) with March 2018 as base to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country.

The RBI-DPI comprises 5 broad parameters that enable measurement of deepening and penetration of digital payments in the country over different periods. **PTI**

Rupee snaps 3-day losing streak, settles 14 paise higher at 74.44 against USD

Mumbai: The rupee snapped its 3-day losing streak to settle 14 paise higher at 74.44 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, tracking positive regional peers, even as the domestic equity market settled with significant losses.

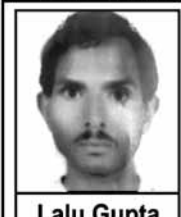
At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened lower at 74.70 a dollar, registering a decline of 12 paise from the last close. During the day, it pared losses and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.32.

The domestic unit finally settled at 74.44 (provisional) against the American currency, up 14 paise over its last close.

On Tuesday, the rupee slumped by 33 paise to close at a two-week low of 74.58 against the US dollar.”The Indian rupee gained the most in a week following stronger regional currencies. Domestic bond markets saw a recovery on suspected intervention by the central bank, which helped in rupee recovery,” said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

Also, the relentless selling of dollars from corporates caused speculative unwinding of positions, Parmar said. **PTI**

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

**Lalu Gupta**

General Public is hereby informed that one person **Namely: Lalu Gupta, S/o: Satyanarayan Gupta, R/o: H.No. 2013/4A, Street No. 14, Prem Nagar, Delhi** has been missing/kidnapped since **24.12.2021** in the area of **P. S. Patel Nagar, Delhi**. In this regard a case vide **DD No. 60-A dated 30.12.2021** has been lodged at **P. S. Patel Nagar, Delhi**.

The description of the missing person are as under: **Age: 45 years, Height: 5'6" , Hair: Black & long, Face: Round, Complexion: Shallow, Built: Thin, Wearing: Blue colour coat, white colour shirt, blue colour pant and white colour shoes in his feet.** Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing person but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this missing person kindly inform to the following.

Website: <http://cbi.nic.in>
E-mail Id - cic@cbi.gov.in
Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641
Fax No. 011-24368639
DP/1201/CD/2022

SHO
P.S. Patel Nagar, Delhi
Tel.No. 011-25872637, 8750870434

SEARCH OF MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one female (depicted in the photo), **Namely: Komal, W/o: Udhham Singh, R/o: Jhuggi No-95/255 Phase-I Shahzada Bagh Indorlok, Delhi** **Aged: 26 years,** has been missing from her residence, since 28.09.2021. In this regard a case **FIR No. 585/21 u/s 365 IPC Dated 30.09.2021, has been lodged at P.S. Sarai Rohilla, Delhi.** Her physical description is as under:

Komal
Height: 4' Feet, Complexion: Fair, Face: Round, Built: Thin, Clothing: Yellow Colour Suit and Pajami and Cream Colour Chappal on Foot.

Any person is having any information/clue about this missing female, may inform SHO, Sarai Rohilla, Delhi at E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.nic.in or website: <http://cbi.nic.in> Tele No. : 011-23014046 (Direct), 23015229 & 23015218.

S.H.O
P.S. Sarai Rohilla, Delhi
Ph. 011-23691106, 23693611

DP/1633/N/2021

SEARCH OF MISSING

General public is hereby informed that one girl (depicted in the photo), **Namely: Rinki, D/o: Dhanna Lal, R/o: H.No. E-60/183, Jhuggi Sunder Nagri, Delhi** **Aged: About 23 years,** has been missing from her house since 20.12.2021 In this regard vide **DD No. 53-A, Dated 28.12.2021, has been lodged at P.S. Nand Nagri, Delhi.** Her physical description is as under:

Rinki
Complexion: Fair, Height: 5'1" Feet, Face: Round, Built: Thin, Wearing: Yellow Colour Saree and Bare Foot.

Any person is having any information/clue about this missing girl, may inform SHO, Nand Nagri, Delhi at E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.nic.in or website : <http://cbi.nic.in> Tele No. : 11-24368638 or 24368641

S.H.O
P.S. Nand Nagri, Delhi
Ph.: 011-22585985,22583307

DP/1286/NE/2022

DDA HOLDS MEETING

Delhi Development Authority held a meeting on January 18 through video conferencing under the chairmanship of Shri Anil Baijal, Hon'ble Lt. Governor, Delhi/Chairman, DDA attended by Shri Manish Kumar Gupta, IAS, Vice Chairman, DDA and other members including Shri Vijender Gupta MLA, Shri Somnath Bharti MLA and Shri O P Sharma MLA.

The following major decisions were taken:

♦**DDA unveils a sustainable development-oriented budget:** The Authority approved the annual budget for 2022-23, with an annual outlay of ₹7,933 crore and receipts have been projected at ₹7,943 crore.

The main highlights of the budget are given below: -

♦Civic Infrastructure

1. A total allocation of ₹2,922 crore has been made in BE 2022-23, for the development of land and physical infrastructure which includes roads, sewerage, water supply, power lines and drainage mainly in the sub-cities of Narela, Dwarka and Rohini.

2. DDA has signed an MoU with NHAI for the Construction of Urban Extension Road -II (UER) by NHAI as a national highway. This road will significantly enhance the connectivity of the sub-cities of Dwarka, Rohini, Narela and the proposed land pooling areas with the rest of Delhi and the neighbouring states. By connecting the major national highways, it will contribute significantly towards easing heavy traffic congestion on Delhi roads and improving the air quality. Out of the approximate Project Cost of ₹7,700 crore (approx.), DDA has agreed to provide the viability gap funding of ₹3,600 crore which is to be released in a phased manner. ₹1,787 crore out of this will be funded from Urban Development Fund and the rest by DDA. As the work on the project has gathered pace, ₹900 crore have been released during 2021-22. For this, BE 2021-22 of ₹100 crore has been enhanced and a sum of ₹725 crore has been kept in BE 2022-23 for this project.

3. DDA is committed to providing ₹1,000 crore as a grant to

DMRC in a phased manner for the Delhi Metro Phase-IV project. In BE 2022-23 also, provision of ₹240 crore has been provided for this purpose.

4. Provision of ₹47.49 crore in BE 2022-23 has been made for the construction of sewage water drain at Sector-8, Dwarka to cater the discharge of drain water from Airport and Development and Rehabilitation of Trunk Drain No. 2 and Trunk Drain No. 5 for reusing the drain water for horticulture purpose. Once completed, this project is expected to comprehensively address the problem of inundation of IGI Airport, every time there is heavy rainfall.

♦Housing Projects & In-situ Development for Slum Rehabilitation

♦**Housing:** -An allocation of ₹2,543 Crore has been provided in BE 2022-23 for the completion of the ongoing housing projects. DDA has launched a special Housing Scheme 2021 on December 21 consisting of its existing inventories of around 18,000 flats. In addition, several projects are also likely to be completed during 2022-23 in Dwarka and Narela, DDA has projected revenue of ₹2,761 crore from the sale of flats in BE 2022-23.

♦**In Situ Rehabilitation:** For in-situ rehabilitation of Slum dwellers, the following Housing Projects are in progress:

KALKAJI EXTENSION: Construction of 3024 EWS dwelling units on Design and Build Model. Provision of ₹46 crore & ₹30 crore has been provided for this in RBE 2021-22 & BE 2022-23 respectively.

JAILORWALA BAGH: Construction of 1,675 EWS dwelling units on Design and Build model. Provision of ₹120 crore & ₹168 crore has been made in RBE 2021-22 & BE 2022-23 respectively.

In addition to the above, DDA has floated RFPs of six projects comprising 10 JJ Clusters.

♦Environmental initiatives: Parks, Water Bodies and Yamuna River Front

1. The work for the development

of the iconic Bharat Vandana Park with a project cost of ₹560 crore in Dwarka Sub-city is already in progress. The project spread over an area of 80 hectares is being executed by NBCC. Provision of ₹280 Crore has been provided in BE 2022-23.

2. DDA has played a key role in the overall development and management of green spaces in the city. DDA has prepared an action plan for rejuvenation of water bodies across Delhi accordingly a provision of ₹17.90 crore has been provided in BE 2022-23 under this head.

3. DDA has also undertaken the work of rejuvenation and restoration of the floodplains of River Yamuna at a total cost of ₹928.92 crore. The work is being taken up in a phased manner as 10 separate sub-projects. A sum of ₹35.77 crore has been provided as BE 2022-23.

4. An outlay of ₹77 crore has also been provided towards development, up-gradation, modernisation and maintenance of city parks maintained by DDA. In addition to this, there are 787 parks under DDA having a total area of 11,258 acres the total maximum average daily water requirement is 34.3 ML per day. The work of setting up Decentralised STPs/Wastewater Treatment Plants to close bore wells supplying water to the city parks is being taken up in a phased manner and steps are also being taken to recharge the bore wells. Provision of ₹7.90 crore has been provided in BE 2022-23 for setting up STPs.

Promotion of Sports: A sum of ₹546 crore has been provided in BE 2022-23 for the promotion of sports in Delhi by DDA. This includes expenditure on the ongoing project of construction of three new sports complexes at Dwarka, one at Rohini and a Golf Course at Dwarka. Apart from this, DDA is also maintaining the existing 18 sports complexes and two golf courses.

Other projects:

1. DDA has undertaken the integrated development of the East Delhi Hub project at Karkardooma with mixed land usage based on "Transit-Oriented Development norms" with mixed land usage on 30

hectares of land. This project is being executed by NBCC and involves the construction of 1524 houses in the first phase with a project cost of ₹1,168 crore. Provision of ₹426 crore has been made for the year 2022-23.

2. DDA has planned a dedicated corridor track for cyclists and pedestrians. The Delhi Cycle Walk project is being planned with the objective to take a large number of car rides out of the Delhi roads. The work on Phase 1 of the Delhi cycle walk with a dedicated corridor for cyclists and pedestrians named "Neelgai line" from Badarpur to Malviya Nagar is in progress and a provision of ₹6 crore has been made in BE 2022-23.

3. DDA has identified three commercial centres namely, Nehru Place, Bhikaji Cama Place and Basant Lok Community centre for upgradation. While the work of upgradation of the Basant Lok Community Centre has already been completed, the work in respect of Nehru Place and Bhikaji Cama Place is in progress and a provision of ₹26.60 crore has been made in BE 2022-23.

4. Provision of ₹6 crore has been made in BE 2022-23 for construction of Utsav pandals at Madangir, Dwarka, Rohini and CBD Shahdara Utsav Pandals.

♦Extension of Time for Addl FAR and Use Conversion Charges:

The Authority has also approved the extension of time up to June 30 for applicability of existing rates in respect of following as it is felt that enhancement of rates at this stage may not be in the larger public interest during the Covid 19 pandemic period:

i) Additional FAR for residential properties, Coop. Group Housing, Mixed-Use/ Commercial streets and commercial properties (excluding hotel and parking plots) arising out of MPD 2021; and

ii) Use conversion charges for Mixed-Use/Commercial Use of Premises and Shop-cum-residence plots/Complexes later designated as LSCs Now, it shall be forwarded to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India for approval.



Police should be prompt and sensitive: CM Ashok Gehlot

Rajasthan Chief Minister Shri Ashok Gehlot said that strong law and order and effective prevention of crimes are top priority of the State government. Police officers should work readily and with sensitivity for this. Any crime should be investigated thoroughly in the shortest possible time and the culprit should be punished. Police should work without any pressure, with fairness and positive thinking.

Shri Gehlot was addressing the review meeting of the Home Department through VC at the Chief Minister's residence. He said that as a result of steps for preventing crimes against women, the average time for disposal of cases of POCSO Act and women atrocities has come down considerably. The research time in rape cases has come down from 211 days in 2018 to 86 days in 2021. Due to the constitution of the Special Investigation Unit under an additional superintendent of police in the districts, the number of pending cases of atrocities against women has come down from 12.5 per cent to 9.3 per cent. He directed that this should be further reduced.

Speedy punishment in 510 cases of POCSO
Shri Gehlot expressed satisfaction that the police have punished criminals in 510 cases of the POCSO Act in 2021, out of which death penalty has been awarded in four cases and life in 35 cases. Several cases were solved in record time.

Crimes registered by courts decreased from 30 to 16 per cent

Shri Gehlot said that the policy of compulsory FIR registration has yielded better results in the state. In 2018, more than 30 per cent rape cases were registered through courts. It has come down to 16 per cent which shows the policy's success. He directed the police to follow this policy irrespective of the increase in the number of registered crimes to ensure justice.

Dedicated unit to prevent the illegal trade of narcotics

The Chief Minister directed the setting up of a dedicated unit to check the illegal trade of narcotics, drugs and narcotics in the state. He said that police should use IT and social media.

Action against organised crimes

The Chief Minister directed the police to take action against frauds by credit cooperative societies and organised crimes. He appreciated the self-defence training by the police to women and girls and said that more women should be trained. So far, more than 4,40,000 women and girls have been trained.

Timely promotion and service benefits to Police Personnel

Shri Gehlot said that police personnel discharge their responsibilities in difficult circumstances and, to maintain their morale, they should be encouraged, given promotions and other service benefits on

time.

The Minister of State for Home, Shri Rajendra Singh Yadav, said that continuous monitoring is ensured to strengthen law and order. He said that Rajasthan Police is better than other States in terms of innovations and team spirit.

Chief secretary Shri Niranjan Arya said that mandatory FIRs are important for improving the law and order.

Autonomous rooms in 674 police stations

Additional chief secretary, Home, Shri Abhay Kumar said that the percentage of pending cases in Rajasthan is much less than the national level. In 2019, Rajasthan has been ranked second in the least pending cases and in 2020, it is third. To strengthen the police 497 sub-inspector police and 4,748 constables have been appointed.

Director-general of Police Shri ML Lather said that the noose around gangs involved in organised crime had been tightened. Reception rooms have been set up in 674 police stations and work is in progress in 147.

ADG Crime Mr RP Mehrada, ADG SOG Mr Ashok Rathod, ADG Civil Rights Mrs Smita Srivastava, ADG Telecom Mr Sunil Dutt, ADG Security Mr S. Sengathir gave a detailed presentation regarding innovations, achievements, challenges and departmental activities. Principal secretary, Finance, Shri Akhil Arora and other senior officers were also present.



ITES signs MoU with CSIR-CRRI RITES Limited

RITES signs MoU with CSIR-CRRI RITES Limited, a leading Transport Infrastructure Consultancy and Engineering company has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

with CSIR-Central Road Research Institute (CRRI) to explore opportunities for cooperation in the infrastructure sector.

Under this agreement, RITES and CSIR-CRRI will collaborate for technical services, including consul-

tancy assignments, knowledge sharing, R&D and more. The partnership foresees the development of innovative and sustainable solutions that will drive the sector forward and can deliver significant value to associated stakeholders.

POWERGRID rated 'Excellent' in MoU FY 2020-21 signed with Ministry of Power

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a 'Maharatna' Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE) under Ministry of Power, Government of India has been rated 'Excellent' (Score 98.41) in Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for FY 2020-21 signed with Ministry of Power (MoP). POWERGRID has been consistently rated 'Excellent' under MoU since the first MoU for FY 1993-94.

As of December 2021, POWERGRID owns and operates about 1,72,192 ckm transmission lines and 264 Sub-stations with a transformation capacity of about 4,69,607 MVA. With the adoption of the latest technological tools and techniques, enhanced use of automation and digital solutions, POWERGRID has been able to maintain average transmission system availability >99 per cent.

CISF organises special Covid vaccine booster dose camp

CISF personnel working at DMRC, Delhi are at the forefront in ensuring smooth operations of the lifeline of Delhi Metro. More than 12,000 personnel are deployed in the DMRC unit of CISF to ensure the safety of passengers and property of Delhi Metro that connects Delhi to neighbouring districts of UP and Haryana and provides mass rapid transit to more than 35 lakh passengers in Delhi.

To combat the raging wave of the Covid pandemic and to ensure the safety of its personnel performing duties at Delhi Metro, a special drive camp for administering Covid vaccine booster has been organised at Shastri Park campus of CISF unit DMRC. The camp was inaugurated on January 9. A team of doctors from East Delhi District along with civil defence volunteers are running two centres for the administration of booster dose to CISF personnel. More than 2,500 personnel of CISF Unit DMRC have been administered booster dose of vaccine to date. CISF aims to cover all eligible personnel of DMRC under



the protection of the booster vaccine by January 20.

At the Shastri park camp, an additional counter for vaccination of eligible wards (children between age 15-18) of personnel has also been opened.

CISF has already vaccinated

over 9,000 of its personnel with the Booster Dose across the country. The booster dose vaccination drive is running across all the 353 CISF Units including 64 airports which will ensure that 100 per cent of eligible personnel are inoculated at the earliest.

CLW turns out 350 electric locomotives in the FY 2021-22

Chittaranjan Locomotive Works (CLW) scripted history by producing 350 electric locomotives in the current Financial Year 2021-22 in record 223 working days. This is the fastest in terms of working days in any Financial Year. This feat was possible under the leadership and guidance of Shri Satish Kumar Kashyup, General Manager/CLW and with his continuous motivation and encouragement to the workforce of CLW.

Shri Satish Kumar Kashyup, General Manager congratulated the entire team of CLW and appreciated their commitment and progress of production. With this trend in production, it is expected that CLW will achieve another milestone of producing the highest number of locos in a financial year.

Feminisation of poverty

Women are yet to attain freedom from the patriarchal setup, says ESHITA SINGH

Poverty is not just a lack of income and the inability to purchase, it is a deeply-rooted multifaceted complex structure comprising economic, social, demographic, cultural, political, and psychological factors.

♦Feminisation of Poverty and Responsibilities

More women are affected by poverty as compared to males. This has not happened overnight. The condition of women in poor families is pathetic. Along with all the other responsibilities, they carry the financial burden of raising their children along with helping other family members. They get minimal financial support from their family members. Sometimes their close family members are their worst foes.

♦Feminisation of lack of education, malnutrition and poor healthcare

Most families in the low-income group have many children due to a lack of awareness and absence of any responsibility towards themselves and the nation. So, they can't afford education and well-being of all their children equally. They prefer to invest their limited resources into providing nutrition and education to their male child. The girl carries the burden of this malnutrition and illiteracy throughout her life.

Social factors such as gender inequality,

dowry, female foeticide, illiteracy, lack of sanitation, malnutrition and more are the result of the prevalent social belief that expenditure on women is useless. Women face a lack of sanitation and poor healthcare facilities and are more prone to infection than males. A woman deserves proper hygiene during the menstrual cycle. They also need proper nutrition as they carry a child during pregnancy. Proper postnatal care is of utmost importance for the health of the mother and the baby.

♦**Women's liberation: truth or illusion?** Associating earning a livelihood with women's liberation and equality is inappropriate. The achievements made by women are undervalued. With patriarchy entrenched into the core value system, women getting a share in the family inheritance is restricted or negligible.

Earning a livelihood is not enough to solve women's problem. The struggle and deprivation they face are much more in comparison to the small amount of money they can earn. They are struggling for basic minimum survival, dignity and support from their family, society and the country. This has to change as it is damaging the basic foundation of our rich culture and heritage. Only then, can we attain freedom in the true sense.

(—The author is manager, State Bank of India, Jaipur.)

BHEL's Coal to Methanol (CTM) plant dedicated to nation

As part of the ongoing Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, Hon'ble Union Minister for Heavy Industries, Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey dedicated India's first, BHEL-built Coal to Methanol (CTM) pilot plant, to the Nation. Dr Nalin Shinghal, CMD, BHEL, Shri Jeetendra Singh, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Heavy Industries, Functional Directors on the Board of BHEL and senior officials of the Ministry of Heavy Industries and BHEL were present in the virtual ceremony.

Dr Pandey also inaugurated an exhibition on 'Products Developed under Aatmanirbhar Bharat' organised at BHEL's Hyderabad unit. In addition, an audio-visual presentation was made on the 'Unsung Heroes of the Indian Freedom Struggle' belonging to the Telangana Region. BHEL employees joined the programme virtually.

The Minister said that one of the important goals of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision is to build a self-reliant nation. The role of the manufacturing sector will be crucial in this. The capital goods industry is the backbone of the manufacturing sector. As



announced by our Hon'ble Prime Minister, in the recently concluded COP26 meeting, BHEL — as the largest engineering and manufacturing enterprise — will have to play an important role.

Dr Nalin Shinghal, CMD, BHEL, while enumerating the initiatives undertaken by BHEL during the 'AKAM Iconic Week'

celebrations, thanked the Ministry of Heavy Industries and the Government for supporting BHEL. He said that R&D has always been one of BHEL's core strengths and the organisation is focussed on playing a role to achieve the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26).

Notably, the 0.25 TPD capacity CTM pilot plant, indigenously designed, developed and installed by BHEL, is currently producing methanol with a purity of more than 99 per cent from high ash Indian coals. This conversion of high ash coals to methanol through gasification is the first of its kind technology demonstration in India.



The ICSI elects its New President and Vice President for the year 2022. CS Devendra V. Deshpande, elected as President and CS Manish Gupta, elected as Vice President of the Institute of Company Secretaries of India for the year w.e.f. January 19

South Africa go 1-0 up after India self-destruct in first ODI

PTI ■ PAARL

India's inexplicable middle-order collapse ensured that fine half-centuries from Shikhar Dhawan and Virat Kohli did not count for much as the team was handed a 31-run defeat by a resolute South Africa in the opening ODI here on Wednesday.

Chasing a challenging 297, India were cruising at 138 for one before wickets fell in a heap dashing the hopes of the visitors who trail 0-1 in the three-match series. India's innings ended at 265 for eight.

South Africa skipper Temba Bavuma (110 off 143) and Rassie van der Dussen (129 not out off 96) had scored contrasting hundreds en route to their 204-run stand to take South Africa to 296 for four after opting to bat. India were comfortably placed to get home when Kohli (51 off 63) and Dhawan (79 off 84) were in the middle but it all came crashing down with the end of their 92-run stand.

India have been guilty of relying too much on their top three in the past and once again, the middle-order could not capitalise on the platform provided by Kohli and Dhawan after they lost skipper K L Rahul (12) cheaply.



Chase master Kohli, playing his first game since his captaincy tenure ended across formats last weel, hardly broke a sweat in reaching his half-century before a sweep shot off Tabraiz Shami, a stroke he doesn't play regularly, led to his downfall leaving him in disbelief.

Dhawan looked in sublime touch during his stay and played the Test series' rising star Marco Jansen rather comfortably, collecting five of his 10 fours off the tall left-arm pacer.

The stage was set for the likes of Rishabh Pant (16), Shreyas Iyer (17) and debutant Venkatesh Iyer (2) to get

the job done but they fell in quick succession, leaving India at 188 for six from a strong 138 for one.

While Pant was stumped by a lightning quick Quinton de Kock, the shot selection of Shreyas and Venkatesh could have been better.

Shardul Thakur (50 not out off 43) tried his best towards the end but the damage had already been done.

Earlier, Jasprit Bumrah (2/48) was the stand out bowler for India in an otherwise ordinary bowling effort.

After a sluggish start, van der Dussen and Bavuma shared the second highest partnership ever against India in ODIs to ensure a competitive total for the home team.

South Africa opted to bat on a slow surface at the Boland Park.

The white ball did a bit early on with both Bumrah and Bhuvneshwar Kumar getting to move it off the pitch as well as in the air.

After an inaccurate first over, the usually accurate Bumrah got his act together and had opener Janneman Malan (6) caught behind with an outswinger. Expecting an incoming ball, Malan was caught on the crease with his loose push taking the outside edge.

South Africa struggled to 39 for one in 10 overs with Indian bowlers

restricting the flow of runs.

De Kock (27 off 41), playing his first game since announcing his Test retirement, and Bavuma found the going tough with the ball not coming on to the bat.

De Kock perished while trying to break the shackles. Ashwin, featuring in his first ODI since June 2017, found de Kock's stumps with a slider as the opener went for a cut shot.

It became 68 for three in the 18th over when Aiden Markram got run out from a direct hit by Venkatesh after he went for a single that was not for the taking. At that stage, it seemed South Africa would find it tough to get past 200 but a fighting stand between Van der Dussen and Bavuma changed the course of the innings.

Indian bowlers looked rather ordinary in the middle overs with the well-set South African pair rotating strike regularly besides picking up an odd boundary. Van der Dussen was the aggressor in the partnership from the word go as Bavuma played anchor.

Van der Dussen used the reverse sweep for four runs off Yuzvendra Chahal to put the leg spinner under pressure before using the conventional sweep twice to collect more boundaries.

Yash Dhull test positive for COVID

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

India Under-19 skipper Yash Dhull, his deputy Sheikh Rasheed and four of their teammates have tested positive for COVID-19, forcing them out of the Group B World Cup game against Ireland here on Wednesday.

Apart from Dhull and Rasheed, batter Aaradhya Yadav, Vasu Vats, Manav Parakh, and Siddharth Yadav were also found infected with the virus, because of which India barely managed to field an XI against Ireland.

"Three Indian players had tested positive yesterday and were already isolated. In the morning before match our captain and vice captain also tested positive in Rapid Antigen Test which is not (not considered) conclusive," a BCCI official told PTI.

"So they, as precautionary measure, were pulled out. The players included skipper Yash Dhull and his deputy Shaikh Rasheed. We only had 11 available players and six isolated,"



the official added.

While skipper Dhull and Rasheed featured in the opening game against South Africa, Aaradhya was not part of that game. Nishant Sindhu led the team in the absence of Dhull on Wednesday.

India are scheduled to take on Uganda on Saturday and it remains to be seen whether that match goes ahead. "In case all players remain in isolation, some of the stand-by players could make the main list.

NZ's white-ball tour of Aus postponed

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

The Black Caps' white-ball tour of Australia scheduled to start from January 30 has been postponed indefinitely after the New Zealand government could not guarantee relaxation in mandatory hard quarantine upon return of players back home in view of COVID-related restrictions.

The tour comprising three ODIs and one Twenty20 International was scheduled to be played between January 30 and February 8, but it now stands postponed until further notice as there is no guarantee as to when the players could return to New Zealand.

A change of stance from the New Zealand government to impose a hard 10-day mandatory quarantine in response to the Omicron wave of COVID-19 infections meant New Zealand Cricket could not secure guarantees that the Black Caps players would be allowed back into the country.

"The BLACKCAPS tour of Australia, initially scheduled for January 24-February 9, has been postponed until further notice, due to the lack of certainty over when the squad would be able to return to New Zealand," the country's cricket board said in a statement. The players were originally scheduled to depart on Monday. No tour squad had been announced.

No managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ) spots had been booked for the players and team



management when the tour was confirmed last year, in anticipation of quarantine-free travel between the two countries in February.

"Despite a proposal from New Zealand Cricket and Cricket Australia to extend the length of the tour so that the BLACKCAPS could return home at a time more manageable for the MIQ process, the Government confirmed today it had no capacity to meet the request," the NZC added.

Discussions are now continuing with Cricket Australia over when the postponed fixtures will be played. NZC and Cricket Australia officials had discussed the possibility of rescheduling the matches to push back the date the Black Caps would be looking to return home in the hope of either an easing of

restrictions or increased availability in spots in the country's overburdened managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ) system.

NZC chief executive David White said the tour was initially scheduled last year, after the Government signalled its intention to relax MIQ restrictions relating to the trans-Tasman border. "As we now know, the advent of Omicron prompted a change of strategy from the Government, resulting in a hard 10-day mandatory isolation period being imposed on all incoming travellers," said White. "NZC and CA had explored a proposal to expand the tour and to push out the date on which the squad might return to New Zealand, in the hope that might be more achievable for the Government.

Rahul third player to captain India in ODIs without captaincy

PTI ■ PAARL (SOUTH AFRICA)

In-form batter KL Rahul, who is leading India in the ongoing first ODI against South Africa, has become only the third player to lead his country in 50 overs game without having captained in 'List A' cricket previously.

The other two India players, who achieved this rare feat are wicket-keeper Syed Kirmani and flamboyant opener Virender Sehwag.

Rahul was handed the captaincy for the three-match ODI series after newly-appointed skipper Rohit Sharma wasn't fit for the series and the selectors had decided to move on from Virat Kohli, after he had resigned as the T20 captain.

KL Rahul, who hails from Karnataka, is also captaining India for the first time in his 39th ODI and the last time a player led the country before playing 50 ODIs was Mohinder Amarnath in October 1984.

It was 'Jimmy' Amarnath's 35 ODI, when he captained the side.

South Africa has decided to bat first in the ongoing game and Madhya Pradesh all-rounder Venkatesh Iyer will make his ODI debut.



Laughable to blame The Hundred for England's Ashes defeat: Morgan

PTI ■ BARBADOS

Limited overs skipper Eoin Morgan feels it's 'laughable' to use The Hundred as an excuse for England's recent Ashes debacle and insisted that 'Test cricket has always been the priority.'

England's Test side slumped to 0-4 Ashes series defeat in Australia last week. They were completely outplayed in four games by the hosts, while Joe Root and his men managed a draw in the fourth Test by the skin of their teeth.

Morgan's comments come after Test skipper Root urged the ECB to 'prioritise' his side following the Ashes defeat, implying there has been too much focus on limited-overs cricket since 2015.

"People that use that as an excuse don't watch cricket," Morgan told 'talkSPORT'.

"Test match cricket has always been the priority - it's the format for our elite players. Obviously times at the moment have been tough down in Australia during the Ashes but they always are. We've lost the last two series 4-0," he added.

Root has argued for changes in the domestic structure to incorporate more red-



ball matches at the height of summer when The Hundred - the ECB's professional franchise 100-ball cricket tournament -- takes place.

"It's laughable to point the finger at The Hundred. The Hundred is an unbelievable success," Morgan said.

He added that the domestic structure in England is similar to that of Australia's. "Our formats in county cricket and the Hundred, in the way they're structured, are exactly the same as Australia's. "People need something to blame so they'll point at probably the furthest point to reality because nobody wants to say, 'You

know what, we've not had the prep we'd have liked, we probably haven't played as we'd have liked, and we've lost.'

"That happens in all formats, but I stress Test match cricket has always been the priority." It has been claimed that Morgan has been given full-strength squads throughout the last two years in preparation for T20 World Cups but the limited overs skipper pointed out that the white ball side has often not had the luxury of a full strength team available. "As a white-ball group, we've gone on tours and played in series at home where we haven't had our full-strength side available.



Mandhana named in ICC T20I women's Team of the Year

PTI ■ DUBAI

Star India opener Smriti Mandhana was on Wednesday named in the ICC T20 women's Team of the Year for her superlative show in the format in 2021 but no Indian made the men's side.

The stylish Southpaw, who is the Indian team's vice-captain in the format, was the country's highest scorer in the format in 2021 with 255 runs at an average of 31.87.

The 25-year-old scored two fifties in the nine matches she played and got her team off to rapid starts regularly, as evident up by her

strike-rate of 131.44.

While Mandhana was the only Indian, several members of the English side feature in the team with Nat Scriver being named captain.

The experienced England all-rounder produced many impactful performances throughout the year. Batting in the middle-order, Sciver scored a total of 153 runs, including one fifty, and she also picked up 10 wickets at an excellent average of 20.20.

Accompanying Mandhana at the top is England's Tammy Beaumont.

The 30-year-old's reliable presence at the top of the order

helped England off to steady starts regularly. She played nine matches and amassed 303 runs at an average of 33.66, including three fifties.

Danni Wyatt, wicketkeeper Amy Jones and spinner Sophie Ecclestone are the other English players in the side. Gaby Lewis of Ireland, South African trio of Laura Wolvaardt, Shabnim Ismail and Marizanne Kapp and Zimbabwe's Loryn Phiri make up the rest of the playing XI.

There was no Indian representation in ICC Men's T20I Team of the Year 2021, which featured three Pakistanis including skipper Babar

Azam, who has been named captain.

Apart from Azam, opener Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheen Afridi, who had a sensational T20 World Cup were name in the squad.

All-rounder Mitchell Marsh and pacer Josh Hazlewood, who played a vital role in winning Australia's maiden T20 World Cup title, featured in the team while the trio of South Africans Aiden Markram, David Miller and Tabraiz Shamsi also made it to the playing XI. Flamboyant wicketkeeper batter Jos Buttler was the sole member of the England team.



'Never edgy', Langer ready for contract extension talks with Cricket Australia

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Content" after guiding Australia to its maiden T20 World Cup title and a dominant Ashes victory, head coach Justin Langer is looking forward to the impending contract discussion with the country's cricket board which has been subject to a lot of speculations.

Langer was appointed head coach in the aftermath of the ball-tampering scandal in 2018 to overhaul the team's culture and regain the respect of the Australian public. His contract is due to end in June.

"I'm never edgy (about his future)," Langer told 'SEN Radio' on Wednesday. "Before the World Cup and before the Ashes, we've never ever been better prepared. So it's not a coincidence I don't think that we've had the success that we've had," he said.

Langer faced criticism for his coaching methods from the players but in the past four months, he has guided Australia to a maiden Twenty20 World Cup title and a 4-0 Ashes series victory.

"Whatever happens from now on, we can all be incredibly proud of this little period. We had two missions: To win the World Cup and to win the Ashes," he said.

"To do that in such a short period is a monumental effort and we're all really satisfied with that, we're all really happy about that, we're all really, really proud of that." Langer says he feels "really content" about Australia's recent achievements.

"I sit here at the moment feeling really content with the last two series," Langer said. The former Test opener's job had been under the scanner since Australia's disappointing loss to India in Tests last year but he was backed by Cricket Australia (CA) chief executive officer Nick Hockley.

PTI ■ BASSETTERRE (ST KITTS)

Captain Tom Prest struck a run-a-ball 93 before chipping in with three wickets to help the former champions England register a 106-run victory over Canada in a group A league match of the ICC U-19 World Cup here.

Asked to bat first, Prest hit 10 boundaries in his entertaining innings though he missed a century by just seven runs as the 1998 edition winners England reached 320 for seven in 50 overs on Tuesday.

Alongside left-arm pacer Joshua Boyden (4/44) and fellow spinner Jacob Bathel (3/45), Prest (3/38) then produced a clinical performance as England bowled out Canada for 214 in the 49th over to register their second win of the tournament.

Canada kept on losing wickets at regular intervals as their batters failed to capitalise on their starts. Gurnek Johal Singh was the top scorer with a 40 ball-44.

Earlier, coming at number three after England were 26 for

1 in the seventh over, Prest shared a 90-run stand for the second wicket with opener George Thomas (52) to lay the foundation of a big total.

William Luxton (41 off 32 balls) and George Bell (57 off 37 balls) played aggressive innings down the order to take England well past the 300-run mark.

For Canada, Kairav Sharma was the most successful bowler with three scalps for 51 runs while Sheel Patel (2/52), Parmveer Kharoud (1/34) and Ethan Gibson (1/63) were the other wicket takers.

South Africa log comfortable 121-run win over Uganda

South Africa's Dewald Brevis smashed a century to help his side register a comfortable 121-run win over Uganda in their group A match in Port of Spain.

South Africa were restricted to 231 for nine by Uganda after skipper George Van Heerden chose to bat.

In reply, Uganda were bundled out for 110 in 33.4 overs. Only three of their batters were able to reach double digit scores.

U 19 World Cup updates

Skipper Prest stars in England's victory over Canada, SA and Afghanistan too log comfortable wins



The South African bowlers performed as a cohesive unit as all seven of them picked up at least

a wicket each.

Earlier, one-down Brevis, who struck 11 fours and one six

during his 110-ball knock, played a lone hand as he did not get any support from his team-mates

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Trailblazing India tennis star Sania Mirza on Wednesday announced that she will hang up her racquet at the end of 2022 season as her body is "wearing down" and the motivation and energy for everyday grind is not the same anymore.

Winner of six Grand Slam titles, including three mixed doubles trophies, Sania will retire as India's most accomplished woman tennis player.

The 35-year-old made the retirement announcement after losing the Australian Open women's doubles first round with partner Nadia Kichenok.

They lost to Slovenia's Tamara Zidansek and Kaja Juvan.

"There's a bunch of reasons for it. I do feel my recovery is taking longer and considering my son is three years old, I do feel I am putting him at risk by travelling so much with him. Unfortunately the pandemic is making us take certain decision for the well-being of ourself and family," Mirza said at the post-match press conference.

"Also, my body is wearing down. My knee was really hurting today and I'm not saying that's the reason we lost but I do think that it is taking time to recover as I'm getting older," she said.

Sania, who became world number one in doubles during her successful partnership with Swiss legend Martina Hingis, said there were a certain issues that influ-

SANIA MIRZA TO END CAREER AFTER 2022 SEASON

enced her decision.

"Also for me to find that motivation everyday to come out, the energy is not the same anymore. Right this minute, it's there but there are days where I don't feel like doing that.

"I've always said that I will play until I enjoy that grind, the process and not just winning but you have to enjoy the process and I am not sure I'm enjoying it anymore.

"I am enjoying it enough to play this season. I've worked very hard to come back, get fit, lose the weight and try to set a good example for mothers, new mothers to follow their dreams as much as they can. Beyond this season, I don't feel my body doing it. It's beat," said the world number 68.

She reached top-30 in singles with 27 being her career best rank. Sania quit singles after a wrist

injury to focus on doubles and enjoyed exceptional results.

Sania said she feels that she was playing at a decent level but she always knew that 2022 will be her last season and Wednesday's defeat was no trigger for it.

"I am playing at a good level. First week in Adelaide (event), we (she and Kichenok) beat top-10, 20 players. I am playing at a decent level. I was pretty sure this is my last season, if I do finish it. I am sure I am not coming to Melbourne to play Australian Open again.

"I had great memories here, singles, doubles and mixed doubles.

It's been a great journey. I am not looking forward to June or July, I am literally going week to week, with my body, with virus, there is so much uncertainty."

"I've always said that I will play until I enjoy that grind, the process and not just winning but you have to enjoy the process and I am not sure I'm enjoying it anymore."

"Every time I play, I feel I have a chance to win, that's why I am here."

"It is not because of disappointment of today's match. Just the way my body is. I am not sure if I can finish the season. I want to play full season, I am still (ranked) 50-60 in world, I do feel I have the level to play.

"As an athlete I feel I can go deep in tournament. But I have a bit of a meniscus issue going on my right knee, I



woke up with wrist pain couple of days ago. There is nothing wrong with it.

"At 35, I am waking up with couple of things that I don't know where they're coming from. I want to finish the season, try to play until US Open, that is my goal. But I still have to take it week-to-week, she said.

Talking about her first round match, Sania said the conditions were tough but they could have handled the match better tactically.

"Definitely conditions were tough, very gutsy, sometimes it's not about tennis. We should have won the second set. "When the wind is blowing one side and the stadium is on the other side, the ball bounced on leave and changed directions when I was hitting the ball. It was tough conditions but when you come to Australia, you can have days like this.

"On days like that, you should take a little bit more charge at net. That's where we made a mistake."

Sindhu cruises into second round of Syed Modi International

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu stormed into the second round of the Syed Modi International Super 300 tournament with a dominating win over compatriot Tanya Hemanth in the women's singles competition, here on Wednesday.

The 26-year-old from Hyderabad, who lost in the semifinals at India Open Super 500 last week, thrashed Tanya 21-9 21-9 in a lop-sided contest at the Babu Banarasi Das Indoor Stadium.

A former world champion, Sindhu will square off against USA's Lauren Lam, who managed to get past a fighting Ira Sharma 15-21 21-16 21-16.

In other women's singles matches, Samiya Imad Farooqui, who had won the Bulgarian International and finished runners-up at Polish Open last year, overcame a stiff resistance from Shruti Mundada 17-21 21-11 21-10, while Sai Uttejitha Rao



Chukka, a quarterfinalist in 2018 edition, trounced Anjana Kumari 21-9 21-12 in all-Indian matches.

Samiya will square off against compatriot Kanika Kanwal, who saw off USA's Disha Gupta 21-15 16-21 21-6, while Sai will cross swords with Aakarshi Kashyap, who had reached the quarterfinals at India Open.

Prerana Neeluri, Smit Toshniwal, Anupama Upadhyaya, Kriti Bharadwaj also entered the second round of women's singles.

In the men's singles, Kaushal Dharmamer, Chirag Sen, Mithun Manjunath and Raghu Mariswamy also made winning starts to their respective campaigns.

While Kaushal stunned Singapore's Jia Heng Jason Teh 14-21 21-11 21-16, Chirag, elder brother of Lakshya Sen, registered an easy 21-9 21-6 win over Ansal Yadav. Mithun beat Alap Mishra 21-15 21-8

and Raghu edged out Siril verma 21-19 13-21 21-18 in another match.

Kaushal, who had won the Myanmar International series and Maldives International challenge in 2019, will meet Malaysian June Wei Cheam.

Chirag, who claimed the Kenya International title in 2020, faces Russian Sergey Sirant and Mithun is pitted against Malaysian Soong Joo Ven.

Raghu takes on France's Lucas Claerhout next. Lucas defeated Siddharth Pratap Singh 21-15 21-8 in 33 minutes.

Seventh seed Indian pairing of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand Pullala brushed aside Mahek Nayak and Saumya Singh 21-1 21-4 in women's doubles competition.

Title contender Supanida Katethong, who had reached the finals of India Open Super 500 event last week, and fifth seeded Russian Evgeniya Kosetskaya also entered the second round.



With eye on quarterfinals spot, India seek winning start against Iran

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Agras, hosts India would seek a winning start against an under-prepared and lower-ranked Iran in their women's AFC Asian Cup campaign opener here on Thursday.

Hosting the continental showpiece for the second time after 1979, India would look to script history by qualifying for the quarterfinals of the 12-team tournament, which will see some of Asia's and world's best players in action.

India had finished runners-up twice -- in 1979 and 1983 -- and third in 1981.

A win against Iran at the DY Patil Stadium will assure India of at least a third-place finish in Group A. Besides the two top teams, two third-placed sides across the three groups will also qualify for quarterfinals.

Iran are the lowest ranked team in the group which also has China and Chinese Taipei. They are ranked at 70th in the world as against India's 55th. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indian team had the luxury of a good number of exposure tours and international matches last year, including against former World Cup runners-up side Brazil.

These international match experience is expected to keep Thomas Dennerby's team in good stead even though the hosts are playing without star striker Bala Devi who is recovering from a surgery.

On the other hand, debutants Iran, who began their journey in international football only in 2005, have not played any international match in the last six months.

Dennerby understands the importance of Thursday's match in the home side's bid for a knock-out berth.

"Our first target is to get to quarterfinals, we have a realistic chance to do that. Anything can happen from there on," the experienced Swede said. "They (Iran) have strong defence and it's going to be a challenge for us to score. It's not going to be an easy game. We are hoping that with some creative and good passing game, we can break down their defence," he added.

Two members of Indian team test COVID positive on eve of tournament

PTI ■ MUMBAI

COVID-19 breached the Indian women's football team's bio-security bubble here on Wednesday ahead of the AFC Asian Cup with two members testing positive for the virus, forcing the organisers to shift them to a medical facility for isolation.

"Two members of the Indian Women's Senior National Team for the AFC Women's Asian Cup India 2022 have tested positive for COVID-19, and are currently in isolation at a designated medical care facility," the All India Football Federation (AIFF) tweeted.

"The AIFF prioritises the health and safety of its players, and are following all the necessary health protocols as have been laid down by the AFC," the organising federation wrote in another tweet.

One of the members (a player) would have featured in the starting XI in the campaign opener against Iran, a source close to the AIFF said.

Osaka, Barty advance towards Australian Open showdown

[Ticket price hike for World Cup final in Qatar reaches 46%](#)



AP ■ DOHA

The cost of attending the World Cup final is up to 46% higher in Qatar than the previous tournament in Russia, fans discovered Wednesday as tickets went on sale.

The steep rise in the prices for the FIFA showpiece match contrasts with the group stage seeing a reduction in the cost of some tickets, which fans can apply for online.

The most expensive tickets on general sale for the Dec. 18 final at Lusail Stadium are 5,850 Qatari riyals (\$1,607), up 46% from the \$1,100 for the 2018 final won by France.

Category-two tickets are 3,650 Qatari riyals (\$1,003), up 41% from \$710 for the final four

years ago. Category-three tickets — the cheapest available for international fans — are 2,200 Qatari riyals (\$604), one-third more expensive than the \$455 last time. The category-four final tickets for local residents soars from the equivalent of \$110 in Russia to 750 Qatari riyals (\$206).

The cheapest seats on general sale internationally to watch the host nation open the World Cup on Nov. 21 soar 37% to \$302 (1,100 Qatari riyals) from \$220 in Russia. There's a rise of 13% for category-two tickets to \$440 (1,600 Qatari riyals) from \$390 and a similar jump from \$550 in Russia to \$618 (2,250 Qatari riyals) for the most expensive opening-game tickets.

For other matches in the group stage, Qatari residents can buy tickets for 40 Qatari riyals (\$11) — the cheapest for locals since the 1986 World Cup in Mexico. The cheapest tickets on international sale are the lowest prices since the 2006 World Cup in Germany at 250 Qatari riyals (\$69). Category-one tickets have risen marginally from \$210 to \$220 (800 Qatari riyals) while the category two will remain at \$165.

Supporters requesting to attend matches at the Middle East's first World Cup will only discover if they are successful based on a random draw at the conclusion of the first application phase which runs through Feb. 8.

Top javelin thrower under dope scanner

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A top Indian javelin thrower has been provisionally suspended after failing an out-of-competition dope test and is awaiting a hearing by the National Anti-Doping Agency's Disciplinary Panel.

According to sources tracking the development, the test was conducted after the Tokyo Olympics when there was no national camp in operation. PTI is withholding the identity of the athlete in question as no official is willing to confirm it at this point.

His name was there in the list of athletes announced by the Sports Authority of India for the camp from October 15 to December 31. But he was dropped when the camp was extended till March 31 this year.

"He failed an out-of-competition test during the around two month period from the end of Tokyo Olympics and start of the national camp.

He is now under provisional suspension pending a NADA hearing," a source privy to the development told PTI on condition of anonymity.

It is learnt that the athlete is an Asian Championships medallist and an Olympian as well.

The banned substance found in the javelin thrower's sample was not known. It is also learnt that the athlete has been a part of the Target Olympic Podium Scheme.

His samples were sent abroad for testing as the National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) was suspended last year and that could be the reason for the delay in getting the results.

Nobody in the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) is willing to say anything on the matter which is likely to be heard by the NADA Panel soon.



Osaka, Barty advance toward Australian Open showdown

AP ■ MELBOURNE

For the first set, Naomi Osaka's rediscovered love of the game meant it was anything but fun for Madison Brengle in the third round of the Australian Open.

The defending champion conceded only four points in the first four games Wednesday and rifled forehand winners seemingly at will as she breezed to 6-0 in a mere 20 minutes.

The second set started with Brengle celebrating a service hold like she'd finished a long-distance race, but gradually the No. 54-ranked American ground down Osaka to a stage in the seventh game where she finally converted a break-point opportunity — after missing her first nine chances.

That triggered a change in the former No. 1-ranked Osaka, who responded by breaking back immediately and winning the last nine points to complete a 6-0, 6-4 victory. She will next face Amanda Anisimova,

a 20-year-old American who beat Olympic gold medalist Belinda Bencic 6-2, 7-5. The winner of that is likely to face top-ranked Ash Barty in the fourth round.

Osaka won the Australian Open last year, her fourth Grand Slam title, but then withdrew from the French Open and skipped Wimbledon as she took a break for her mental health. She then was ousted early at the U.S. Open.

After a long off-season to reset, she's unbeaten in five matches in Australia this year. Asked how she rated her form, Osaka said that's not how she's approaching things. "Honestly I'm trying not to do that," she said in an on-court TV interview.

"I'm a bit of a perfectionist. If I compare myself with the past, I'll never be satisfied. "The goal for me is just to have fun ... (and) I think we're accomplishing that." Since the draw for the first major of the year was made, a big focus has been on a potential encounter between Osaka and Barty, the



2021 Wimbledon and 2019 French Open champion who is aiming to be the first Australian woman since 1978 to win her home championship.

Barty was front and center when the tournament celebrated its inaugural First Nations Day, albeit only for 52 minutes as she beat 142nd-ranked qualifier Lucia Bronzetti 6-1, 6-1.

"It was nice for me to be a part of it in a way that I feel most comfortable," Barty, who has Indigenous heritage, said of the day dedicated to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.

"Out on the tennis court is how I express myself as an athlete, it's how I'm able to express myself as a person as well.

"On a day we're bringing cultures together, bringing people together ... It was great for me to be able to play a small role doing what I love."

Rafael Nadal didn't get it all his own way in the subsequent match on Rod Laver

Arena, needing five match points before beating 126th-ranked German qualifier Yannick Hanfmann 6-2, 6-3, 6-4.

The sixth-seeded Nadal, aiming for a men's record 21st Grand Slam singles title, had two match points on Hanfmann's serve and two more on his own in the next game before finally clinching a spot in the third round when his rival sent a forehand long. Nadal converted only four of his 16 break-point chances, including one of eight in the third set, but only faced two break points on his own serve and fended them both off.

For the 35-year-old Nadal, after fatigue and injuries curtailed his 2021 season following the French Open, time on court is more important than anything else.

"I said here before the tournament started, things are not going to be perfect, but every day that I'm going to spend on court, the chances to play better are higher," he said.