

WORLD 56 PEOPLE SHOT OUTSIDE
OREGON CONCERT IN US**MONEY 6**GAIL DIRECTOR BOOKED
IN BRIBERY CASE**SPORT 7**VIRAT KOHLI QUILTS TEST CAPTAINCY,
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VIJAYWADA

NEW DELHI, SUNDAY JANUARY 16, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹4



sunday pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



OBC dominates BJP list in UP, Yogi to fight from his bastion

Dy CM Maurya to
contest from Sirathu;
list of 105 announced

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Saturday announced that Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will contest from his home constituency Gorakhpur and Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya from Sirathu in Pragraj while announcing 105 of 113 seats for the first two phases of the high state Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls.

The BJP has repeated 63 sitting MLAs and effected changes in 20 seats, changing sitting MLAs in the list of two (of seven phases) initial phases of polls on February 10 and February 14. Of the candidates whose names were announced on Sunday, 44 are from OBC and 19 from Scheduled Caste. The party has fielded ten women candidates.

In a bid to offset the impact of rebellion by OBC leaders like Swami Prasad Maurya, the party has fielded OBC and SC candidates from seats that are not reserved for these communities.



UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during his visit to inspect a Covid-19 care ward at BRD Medical Collage in Gorakhpur on Saturday PTI

The names of Yogi and Keshav Maurya have been announced though their election is not scheduled in the first two phases. BJP election-in-charge Dharmendra Pradhan said, "Yogi happily accepted party's decision for making him candidate from Gorakhpur."

Gorakhpur is Yogi's stronghold and has voted him to the Lok Sabha for five straight terms. Polling for the Gorakhpur (urban) seat will be held on March 3 — the sixth

and penultimate phase.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav took a jibe at Yogi minutes after the BJP announced him as the party candidate from his stronghold in Gorakhpur.

"Earlier they used to sometime say 'he will fight from Ayodhya' or 'he will fight from Mathura' or 'he will contest from Prayagraj and Deoband'... now see... I like that the BJP has already sent Yogi to Gorakhpur," he said.

Continued on Page 2

Channi, Sidhu in Cong's first list of 86 candidates in Punjab

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Ahead of the February 14 Assembly polls, the Congress on Saturday released its first list of 86 candidates for Punjab, fielding Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi from his traditional seat of Chamkaur Sahib and PCC chief Navjot Singh Sidhu from Amritsar East.

Two Deputy Chief Ministers of the party Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and Om Prakash Soni have been fielded from their traditional seats of Dera Baba Nanak and Amritsar Central respectively.

Without going for major surprises and not bothering for anti-incumbency, the Congress denied tickets to only four sitting legislators, including the one who returned to the party six days after joining the BJP. They are Harjot Kamal from



Moga, Balwinder Singh Laddi from Sri Hargobindpur Sahib, Nathu Ram from Balluana and Deputy Speaker of Punjab Assembly Ajaib Singh Bhatti from Malout.

Laddi had quit the Congress and joined the BJP on December 28, but six days later, he returned to the Congress fold.

Controversial Punjabi singer Sidhu Mussewala, who joined the Congress some time ago will contest from Mansa and actor Sonu Sood's sister Malvika Sood from Moga.

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K'taka tops Covid spike; Maha, Delhi cases drop

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Karnataka reported the highest number of cases across the country while the situation somewhat improved in Maharashtra and Delhi, the other two worst-affected States. But Kerala continued to report high numbers and poll-bound Uttar Pradesh is also seeing no improvement in the situation.

India overall added 2.68 lakh new Covid cases in the last 24 hours, raising the tally to 3.67 crore, including 6,041 cases of Omicron which continue to spread fast in almost all the States in the country. The Covid-19 curve appears to be on a downward slope in worst-hit Delhi and Mumbai which were made officials by the health department.

Delhi reported 20,718 fresh Covid-19 cases and 30 deaths on Saturday. The positivity rate is at 30.64 per cent. The national Capital had reported 24,383 fresh Covid-19 cases and 34 deaths on Friday, with a positivity rate of 30.64 per cent.

Meanwhile, Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain on Saturday said that it seems the national Capital has reached its peak in Covid-19 infections and the Government will think of easing restrictions when the cases decline to touch 15,000. "We can say that Delhi has reached a peak in terms of cases. Cases have started slow-



An artist gives final touches to a wall mural during the weekend curfew imposed by the Delhi Government to curb the spread of Covid-19 in New Delhi on Saturday PTI

19-related toll reached 50,674 after 17 recent deaths and 89 previously undocumented ones were made officials by the health department.

Let's see when the decline happens," he told reporters. He reiterated that the hospitalisation rate has stabilised in Delhi.

Mumbai also saw a dip in the number of cases but a rise in fatality. On Saturday, Mumbai reported 11 new coronavirus-related deaths, the highest single-day toll since July 29 last year. The city logged 10,661 fresh infections during the last 24 hours as against 13,000 plus cases on Friday.

Poll-bound Uttar Pradesh on Saturday reported 15,795 fresh coronavirus infections that pushed its active caseload to 95,148, while four more fatalities pushed the death toll to 22,953, an official statement issued here said.

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CAPSULE

KERALA TO PROVIDE SECURITY TO NUNS

Kottayam: A day after a sessions court here acquitted Roman Catholic Bishop Franco Mulakkal of the charge of raping a nun in a convent in the State, the Kerala Police on Saturday said it will conduct a threat assessment if necessary and provide protection to the nuns and their convent here if required.

KOTA: NEET ASPIRANT JUMPS TO DEATH

Kota: A 17-year-old girl from Bihar, preparing for NEET-UG, allegedly jumped to death from the sixth floor of her hostel here on Saturday morning, police said.

UNIONS FIGHTING POLLS NOT PART OF US: SKM

New Delhi: The farmer unions contesting the Punjab Assembly polls will no longer be part of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), the umbrella body that spearheaded the agitation against the now-repealed agri laws said on Saturday. SKM leaders in a press conference after their meeting at Kondli on the Singhu border also said that BKU leader Rakesh Tikait will press for sacking of Union Minister Ajay Mishra whose son is accused of mowing down protesting farmers last year.

SP MLA Nahid Hasan arrested in Gangster Act



New Delhi: The Uttar Pradesh Police on Saturday arrested Samajwadi Party MLA Nahid Hasan in an old Gangster Act case.

Nahid, who is an SP candidate from Kairana constituency in Shamli district, is a two-time SP MLA from the same constituency.

The arrest comes a day after he filed his nomination papers. Nahid was the lone candidate who filed his nomination papers on the first day of issuance of notification on the UP Assembly elections.

Police alleged that the SP politician was on run, since Gangster Act proceedings were pressed against him.

The UP Police had presented Nahid Hasan in a fast track court in the State.

EC extends ban on physical rallies, road shows till Jan 22

Indoor meetings
with maximum
300 allowed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After reviewing the Covid-19 situation in the poll bound-States, the Election Commission (EC) on Saturday extended the ban on physical rallies of political parties, road shows, padyatras, cycle and bike rallies by a week, till January 22.

The Commission, however, has granted relaxation to political parties to conduct indoor meetings with a maximum 300 persons or 50 per cent of the capacity of the hall. Earlier, the ban was imposed till 15 January.

"No road show, padyatra, cycle/bike/vehicle rally and procession shall be allowed till January 22, 2022. The commission shall subsequently review the situation and issue further instructions accord-



ingly. No physical rally of political parties or candidates (including probables) or any other group related to election shall be allowed till January 22, 2022," the EC said in a statement.

This comes after deliberations with the Union Health Secretary, Health Secretaries and Chief Secretaries of the five poll bound states.

"However, the Commission has granted relaxation for the political parties to extend indoor meetings to a

maximum of 300 persons or 50 per cent of the capacity of the hall or the prescribed limit set by the SDMA (State Disaster Management Authority)," it added.

The EC has directed all political parties to adhere to the provisions of MCC (Model Code of Conduct) and the broad guidelines of Covid.

The EC also directed State and district administrations to ensure compliance of all instructions related to the poll code and to the pandemic con-

trol measures.

The EC on Saturday held a slew of virtual meetings with the Health Ministry and the Chief Secretaries and Health Secretaries of Goa, Manipur, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, and also the Chief Electoral Officers of these five poll-going States. The Commission also discussed SDMA's restrictions and state specific extant guidelines regulating the norms of gathering of persons during the period of pandemic.

Cases rose 9-fold in Delhi, ventilator need saw only 2-fold rise from Jan 1-14

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Although the number of Covid-19 cases in Delhi rose almost by nine times between January 1 and 14, the percentage of patients on ventilator support in city hospitals grew only by double during the same period, Government data showed.

During the second wave of coronavirus when the number of cases were on similar lines, the hospitalisation rate and those on ventilator support was higher, officials said.

The City Government has, at various stages, said that people developing serious illness are mostly those who are unvaccinated and have comorbidities.

Delhi Health Minister Satyendra Jain had earlier this week said that though the cases are increasing, the hospitalisation rate has stabilised which indicates that the wave has plateaued.

According to the data pro-

vided by the government, on January 1, there were 2,716 Covid cases, while on January 14, the number of cases was 24,383.

Similarly, on January 1, the hospital occupancy was 247, out of which five patients were on ventilator support (2.02 per cent), while on January 14, the hospital bed occupancy was 2,529, out of which 99 patients (3.91 per cent) were on ventilator. It shows that the number of cases rose by 8.9 times between January 1 and 14, but the percentage of Covid patients on ventilator support saw only a two-fold rise.

An official of the health department said the data clarifies that the growth rate of percentage of ventilator patients with respect to total hospitalisation is very low.

Only those Covid patients who have comorbidity require ventilator support, but we still have to exercise caution, the official said.

Army's new combat uniform unveiled

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Keeping pace with the fast-changing nature of modern warfare, the Indian Army has opted for a new combat uniform and displayed it for the first time on Saturday. The all-weather-friendly uniform could provide camouflage to the soldiers in all kinds of terrain and battlefield.

The new uniform was donned by the elite commandos of the Parachute Regiment here on Saturday during the Army Day parade witnessed by Army Chief General MM Naravane. The Pioneer had reported on December 3 last year about the new initiative.

The newspaper had also said the marching contingents in the Republic Day parade now would don the uniform of a different era starting over 100 years ago.

Unlike the previous years



Special Forces commandos march past during the Army Day Parade at KM Cariappa Parade Ground in New Delhi on Saturday PTI

when the contingents wore the dress of their regiments, the Republic Day this year will see

the troops marching past the saluting dais in uniform ranging from those worn during

World War I, World War II and other campaigns.

The new combat uniform,

which features a mix of colours, including olive and earthen, has been designed taking into considerations aspects like areas of deployment of the troops and climatic conditions in which they operate.

The new uniform has been designed after analysing combat uniforms of armies of various other countries, in association with the National Institute of Fashion Technology. This uniform is more comfortable and it would be worn in all types of terrains, sources said.

The digital disruptive pattern is designed with help of computer aid, they said.

The shirt in the new uniform does not have to be tucked in the trouser. The shirt in the old uniform had to be tucked in. The new uniforms will not be available in the open market.

Continued on Page 2

Paralysed, lost his voice 4 yrs ago, but moving, speaking after Covid-19 shot

Bokaro: A 55-year-old man who had become paralysed and lost his voice four years ago in an accident said he was able to move and speak after he was given Covishield vaccine on January 4.

Bokaro Civil Surgeon Dr Jitendra Kumar said he was surprised and has asked for the constitution of a medical team to analyse the medical history of the case.

Dularchand Munda from Salgadih village in Bokaro said on Friday, "Glad to have taken this vaccine. I can move my legs after taking the vaccine on January 4."

As per Dularchand Munda's family, after an accident four years ago, he lost his voice and became paralysed.

But Dularchand Munda claimed that a miracle happened to him after taking the



Covid-19 vaccine. "My voice came back and my feet also moved," he said. He himself stood on his feet and walked.

Health officials are surprised.

Dr Jitendra Kumar said, "Amazed to see this. But it needs to be ascertained by scientists. Had he recovered from a medical condition not more than some days old, it could be understood but recovering suddenly from a four-year-old

medical condition after taking the vaccine is unbelievable."

Health officials said it was a subject of research.

"Accurate information and answers will be available in the coming days when the medical world will conduct research on Dularchand Munda's illness and his recovery," said Albel Kerketta, in-charge of Petarwar health centre.

According to Dularchand Munda's family, he underwent treatment after the accident, but his body part had stopped working. With this, his voice also started to falter.

Continued on Page 2

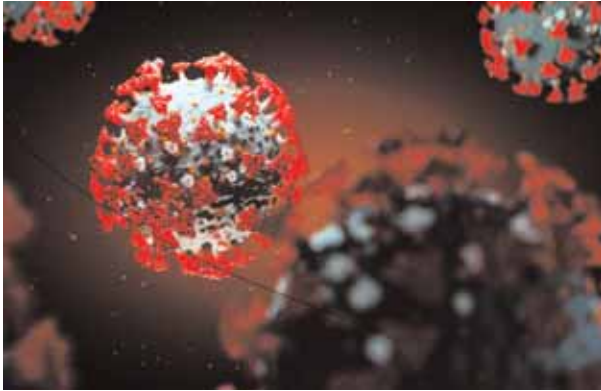
Covid cases down, 30 die, but +vity rises to 30.64%

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi on Saturday reported 20,718 daily Covid -19 cases and 30 deaths related to the infections. With this the active Covid cases have risen to 93,407 while the positivity rate recorded at 30.64 per cent.

Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain also indicated that the national Capital has reached its peak in Covid -19 infections and the Government will think of easing restrictions when the cases decline to touch 15,000.

Earlier in the day, he told reporters that Delhi is expected to record around 20,000 cases on Saturday, less than Friday's figures of 24,383 on Thursday, that were 28,867 cases recorded in Delhi, the highest since the beginning of the pandemic. "We can say that Delhi has reached a peak in terms of cases. Cases have started slowing down. Let's see when the decline happens,"



he added.

He stressed that the hospitalization rate has stabilized in Delhi.

When asked whether restrictions will be eased in Delhi as cases have come down, he said, "Let's wait. The cases have started declining. They came down to 24,000 yesterday and will come down to 20000 today. Let them come down to 15,000 or below and then we will see."

Meanwhile, according to the Delhi Government's database, on Friday, city reported 24,383 Covid-19 cases and 34 fatalities while the positivity rate surged to 30.64 per cent, according to health department data. On Thursday, Delhi had reported 28,867 Covid-19 cases, the sharpest single-day spike since the beginning of the pandemic, and 31 deaths, while the positivity rate stood at 29.21 per cent.

Unaware of new guidelines, people being turned away from Covid testing centres

New Delhi: Unaware of the new testing guidelines for Covid-19, a number of people, including those in need of a negative RT-PCR report to be able to work, are being turned away from testing centres in Delhi and surrounding areas.

According to the Centre's new guidelines, asymptomatic patients do not need to undergo a test. Also, contacts of laboratory-confirmed Covid-19 patients do not require a test unless they have comorbidities or are aged above 60.

Neha Madal, who works as a domestic help in Mayur Vihar, needed a negative RT-PCR report to be able to work in households.

"Some of the societies allow us to work only after we furnish a negative RT-PCR report. When I visited a Covid-19 testing centre, they said I cannot undergo testing because I am asymptomatic. It has impeded my work," Mandal said.

Laxmi, a resident of Lajpat Nagar, got a cold and cough, and thought of getting a test done to be on the safe side. "I consulted my doctor who said it could be due to a change in weather but I wanted to be sure and went to a nearby testing centre. They denied a test, saying I should monitor my health for a week," she claimed.

A senior government official said that district authorities in Delhi have received instructions to conduct tests of symptomatic persons and those eligible under the new guidelines.

"Even high-risk people like family members may not be tested unless they have symptoms. International travellers can get tested after producing flight tickets," the official said. On Thursday, Delhi had recorded 28,867 Covid-19 cases, the sharpest single-day spike since the beginning of the pandemic, when the city conducted 98,832 tests.

However, Friday's figure of coronavirus cases came out of 79,578 tests, with a senior government official saying the drop in cases may be due to lower testing.

Shreya Raman, whose friend contracted coronavirus two days ago, was turned away on Saturday because she did not have any symptoms.

"My friend and I live in the building and visit each other frequently, so, I thought I should also get tested. Now, I will never know if it has already spread in my house," Raman, a resident of Jangpura, said. On Saturday, in some parts of south Delhi, symptomatic people were also turned away for the lack of a doctor's prescription.**PTI**

Delhi HC, district courts to continue virtual hearing till Feb 11

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has said that it would continue hearing cases through the virtual mode till February 11.

According to an office order dated January 12, the district courts would also hear matters only through the video conferencing mode till then. "In continuation of this court's office order dated 30.12.2021, as directed by Hon'ble the Chief Justice, the existing system of hearing of cases in this court [including the courts of Registrar and Joint Registrar (Judicial)] as well as in the district courts in Delhi shall continue till 11.02.2022," the latest order said.

On December 30, the high court - which resumed physical hearings from November 22 - had decided to shift to the virtual mode from January 3 in view of rise in Covid-19 cases and the subsequent 'yellow alert' declared by the government in the national capital.

The decision to go back to the virtual system was taken after an office note was placed before Chief Justice D N Patel highlighting the rise in number of cases of Covid-19 infections.

"There is, indubitably, a sudden spurt and spike in Covid-19 cases in the NCT of Delhi. Such rise is quite alarming and worrisome. The government of NCT of Delhi has already issued 'yellow alert' in Delhi. It's high time that this court also takes all the possible precautionary and preventive measures to thwart any possibility of resurgence of any wave of extreme nature," the statement issued by the high court had said.

The statement had quoted Justice Patel saying, "I have also consulted with the esteemed members of the Administrative and General Supervision Committee of this court. They all are also of the view that immediate steps are required to be taken to safeguard the health and well-being of all the stakeholders while also ensuring that the justice delivery system remains functional."

The high court had first moved to the virtual system in March 2020 following the outbreak of Covid-19, and subsequently, few benches had started holding physical courts everyday on rotation basis.

High court holding physical courts also held hybrid proceedings, wherein lawyers have the option to attend the hearing via video conference instead of appearing in person. **PTI**

Delhi Congress launches SharabNahiRozgarDo drive

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress launched a campaign "SharabNahiRozgarDo", demanding jobs for the youth. Delhi Congress president Anil Kumar said that the campaign will be run on all social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter. "The Arvind Government's new liberalised Exise Policy, including lowering of the liquor consumption age from 25 to 21 years, will make Delhi "Nashe Ki Rajdhani," he said.

Kumar said that the latest Covid restrictions have robbed lakhs of youth of their jobs and shrunk the job market but the liquor vend network has expanded hugely as Delhi now boasts of 849 liquor shops, with at least three liquor shops in every ward.

"It is shocking to learn that Delhi's 18 Assembly constituencies, which together had only five liquor shops earlier, have now 216 liquor vends, as shops have been allowed to open everywhere, flouting all norms, rules and regulations," he said.

Kumar also said that late Prime Minister, Bharat Ratna Rajiv Gandhi, empowered the youth by giving them voting rights but Arvind has given them drinking rights at a very young age.

Congress workers keep protesting against the opening of liquor shops in residential areas, near educational institutions and places of worship, and forced the closure of many such shops.



An anti-smog gun sprays water to curb air pollution, in New Delhi on Saturday

PTI

Traffic advisory issued ahead of Republic Day Parade rehearsal

New Delhi: The Delhi Police on Saturday issued a traffic advisory ahead of Republic Day Parade rehearsal next week.

According to the advisory, rehearsals of Republic Day Parade-2022 shall be held on Raj Path on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from Vijay Chowk to India Gate.

During rehearsal, traffic will be restricted at Rajpath-Rafi Marg, Rajpath-Janpath, Rajpath-Man Singh Road and Rajpath-C-Hexagon from 9 am to 12 pm, it said, adding that Rajpath from Vijay Chowk to India Gate will also remain closed for traffic.

The parade will start from Vijay Chowk and go to C-Hexagon via Rajpath.

The traffic will be diverted. Commuters are requested to observe traffic rules, road discipline and follow directions of traffic police personnel deployed at all intersections, the advisory said. It suggested the commuters to take alter-

native route from north to south and vice versa using Ring Road (Ashram Chowk-Sarai Kale Khan-I P Flyover-Rajghat), from Lajpat Rai Marg-Mathura Road-Bhairon Road-Ring Road, from Aurobindo Marg-Safdarjung Road-Kamal Attaturk Mark-Kautilaya Marg-Sardar Patel Marg- Mother Teresa Crescent-RML-Baba Kharak Singh Marg, from Prithvi Raj Road-Rajesh Pilot Marg-Subramaniam Bharti Marg-Mathura Road-Bhairon Road-Ring Road and from Burfkhana-Azad Market-Rani Jhansi Flyover-Punchkuian Road-Hanuman Murti-Vande Matram Marg-Dhaura Kuan.

Similarly, from east to west and vice versa, the commuters have been advised to take Ring Road-Bhairon Road-Mathura Road-Subramaniam Bharti Marg-Rajesh Pilot Marg-Prithvi Raj Road-Safdarjung Road-Kamal Attaturk Marg-Panchsheel Marg-Simon Boliver Marg-Upper Ridge Road-Vande Matram Marg, etc. **PTI**

Security tightened at Ghazipur flower market day after IED found

New Delhi: Security has been tightened at the Ghazipur flower market in Delhi, a day after an improvised explosive device (IED) stuffed with RDX and ammonium nitrate was found inside an unattended bag there ahead of Republic Day, officials said on Saturday.

The IED was defused around 1:30 pm on Friday.

According to police, while the flower market is not exempted from the Covid curbs in the national capital, fruit and vegetable market is spared and is functioning.

"The security has been tightened in the market. The fruit and vegetable market is open as it comes under exempted category. People are requested to follow the Covid-appropriate behaviour." Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (east) Vinit Kumar said.

Police said that a person who had come to the market on Friday to purchase flowers spot-



A police vehicle at the Ghazipur flower market a day after an IED was found inside a bag, in New Delhi, Saturday

PTI

ted a suspicious unattended bag near his scooter at an abandoned place. He then informed

people and also alerted the Delhi Home Guards deployed there.

The person then made a PCR call around 10.30 am about the unattended bag. **PTI**

Severe cold day in parts of city, maximum dips to season's lowest

New Delhi: Delhi shivered under "cold day" conditions for a second consecutive day on Saturday recording the season's lowest maximum temperature at 14.8 degrees Celsius, with thick fog blotting out the sun.

The minimum temperature at the Safdarjung Observatory, which is considered the official marker for the city, settled at 6.1 degrees Celsius, a notch below normal, it said.

"Today also there was a layer of moderate fog/low cloud over Delhi-NCR, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and north Rajasthan. It prevented the sunlight from reaching the surface. Light north westerlies are also blowing over the region. These conditions led to a cold day," an IMD official said.

Similar conditions are predicted for Sunday too. Severe cold day conditions persisted at Narela and Jafarpur, where the maximum temperature dipped to 10.7 degrees Celsius and 10.9 degrees Celsius, seven and nine notches below normal, respectively.

Narela was also the coldest place in Delhi on Saturday. On Friday, the automatic weather stations at Narela and



Jafarpur had logged a maximum temperature of 11 degrees Celsius and 12.1 degrees Celsius.

According to the IMD, a "cold day" is when the minimum temperature is less than 10 degrees Celsius and the maximum is at least 4.5 degrees Celsius below normal.

A "severe" cold day is when the maximum temperature is at least 6.5 notches below normal.

Dense to moderate fog is predicted in Delhi for the next four days, the IMD said.

When visibility due to fog is reduced to the range of 0 to 50 metres, it

is categorised as "very dense" fog. In the case of "dense" fog, visibility is between 51 and 200 metres, "moderate" is 201 and 500 metres, and "shallow" is 501 and 1,000 metres.

The capital's air quality improved improved a bit and the 24-hour air quality index (AQI) read 258 at 4 pm, as against 348 at the same time on Friday. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'. **PTI**

Illegal constructions in Rithoj village razed amid resistance



Gurugram: The Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) on Saturday carried out a demolition drive in village Rithoj, in which Dhaba, building material shop, office and under-construction structures were demolished amid resistance from villagers.

DTCP officials said that around 500 villagers gathered at the spot and opposed the demolition drive they even tried to attack the team and blocked the way. RS Bhath, district town planner (enforcement), said that the colony was being developed in violation of rules, with-

out necessary permissions from the competent authority.

"We carried out demolition drive despite the villager's resistance. The department will soon recommend FIR against those who were involved in disputing government work. Notices were also issued to plot owners earlier as well.

We have repeatedly issued them warnings that this was an illegal colony and no construction would be allowed but it was found that construction was going on, following which a decision to demolish the illegal structures was taken," Bhath

said. Three earthmoving machines were pressed into service to demolish an illegal construction.

"Several under-construction properties were also demolished and work being carried out by the plot owners was stopped. The enforcement team was supported by a large contingent of the Gurugram police," Bhath said.

A major demolition drive was also conducted by the DTCP team on Friday in sector 93 and sector. During the drive, 3 colonies covering 10 acres were demolished. **SR**

City records power demand of 5,104 MW Higher than last winter's peak

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

At 5104 MW, Delhi's peak winter power demand clocked the season's highest, a disoms officials said on Saturday.

However, BSES authorities said that they are fully geared up to ensure adequate power availability for its around 46 lakh consumers during the winter months.

According to officials the demand this year also pipped the peak winter power demand of 2021, which had clocked 5021 MW.

"The BRPL and BYPL successfully met this season's highest peak winter power demand of 2140 MW and 1114 MW in their respective areas on January 14, 2022. Last year, the peak winter power demand in BRPL and BYPL areas had reached 2091 MW and 1107 MW respectively," he said.

The official also said the back-bone of BSES' power-supply arrangements during the winter-months includes long-term agreements from power-plants; including Hydro and Delhi based gas fuelled generat-

ing stations.

Apart from these, BSES discoms are using avenues like "Banking", "Reserve Shutdown", "Power Exchange" and ensuring sufficient "Spinning Reserves" to dispose of surplus power as well as ensuring reliable power supply, as also making arrangements to get power during summer months, the official said.

The official said that to meet power challenges; BSES uses a mix of advanced statistical forecasting models using complex algorithms, combined with state-of-the-art weather forecasting solutions, including artificial intelligence and machine learning.



Adoption of electric vehicles by ride aggregators, delivery services made mandatory

SAPNA SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Saturday announced that it has notified a draft policy under the Environment (Protection) Act 1986, has notified a draft policy on Friday, to mandate all aggregators and delivery service providers to adopt electric vehicles in their newly onboarded fleets for operations.

With this, Delhi has become the first Indian state to adopt an aggregator policy to regulate vehicular emissions from the ride-hailing industry.

Environment Minister Gopal Rai said the Delhi government has taken a robust initiative to combat air pollution. "The draft policy has been placed for public opinion for 60 days," Rai said. "The policy will provide a necessary push to the aggregator industry to become environment friendly," he added.

According to the Delhi government, aggregators and delivery services would need to ensure 10 percent of all new two-wheelers and five percent of all new four-wheelers are electric in the next three months.

"Aggregators and delivery services

will have to ensure 50% of all new two-wheelers and 25% of all new four-wheelers are electric by March 2023," Rai said.

Reena Gupta, advisor to the Environment Minister, while talking about the draft policy mentioned, "The essence of the proposed policy by the GNCTD is to ensure the entire spectrum of vehicles used by aggregators and delivery service providers are brought into the fold of a sustainable, clean and electric mobility, given the impact of large-scale adoption of clean vehicles and the serious concern over the air quality of Delhi."

It is noteworthy that Delhi Government has been taking effective vehicular pollution initiatives throughout, including measures like better traffic management system, augmentation in public transport system, generating mass awareness, drives for checking adulteration, implementation of stringent emission norms for both new and in-use vehicles, an efficient PUC system, improvement in vehicular technology, improvement in the quality of fuels, and switching over to cleaner vehicles.

PM to hold Pariksha Pe Charcha

Appeals students, teachers, parents to register for PPC-2022

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday urged parents, teachers and students to participate and register for the Pariksha Pe Charcha (PPC) 2022. PPC is an annual event where in the PM interacts with students ahead of board exams and addresses their queries on exam stress and related issues. The registration for this year PPC is underway in which along with the students of Classes 9 to 12, parents will also be able to participate in Pariksha Pe Charcha.

Saying that Pariksha Pe Charcha is a fantastic learning

experience, Modi in a social media post said, “I get the opportunity to connect with our dynamic youth, understand their challenges and aspirations better. It also gives the opportunity to discover the emerging trends in the world of education.”

Students and teachers can register at mygov.in to participate in Pariksha Pe Charcha.

“Exams are approaching and so is ‘Pariksha Pe Charcha 2022.’ Let’s talk stress-free exams and once again support our brave Exam Warriors, their parents and teachers. I urge you all to register for this year’s PPC2022,” the PM added.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in a Press statement invited students, teachers and parents to participate in the 5th edition of “Pariksha Pe Charcha 2022” and get a chance to be mentored by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

“Valuable mantras to beat exam stress, excelling in career & life and much more. Here is your chance to get mentored directly by the PM. Inviting students, teachers and parents to participate in PPC2022,” Pradhan said.

The format of this year programme is proposed to be in online mode like in 2021. An online creative writing competition is being conducted on various topics from December 28 to January 20, 2022, to select participants. Questions asked by selected winners will be featured in the Pariksha Pe Charcha programme,” a senior Ministry of Education official said.

The topics for creative writing for students include — exam stress management strategies during COVID-19, Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, a self-reliant school for self-reliant India; Clean India, Green India; digital collaboration in classrooms, environ-

mental conservation and climate change resilience.

Similarly, the theme for teachers is “National Education Policy (NEP) for Naya Bharat” while the themes for parents include — Beti Padhao, Desh Badhao; Local to Global – Vocal for Local; Lifelong Students’ Yearning for Learning.

“About 2050 participants selected through competitions on MyGov will be presented with a certificate of appreciation from Director, NCERT and a special Pariksha Pe Charcha kit comprising ‘Exam Warriors’ book in Hindi and English, written by the prime minister,” said Education Ministry official.

Last year Pariksha Pe Charcha was held on April 7 amidst the Covid pandemic in a virtual mode. The PPC 2022 date and time have not been announced yet.

In the last year’s Pariksha

Pe Charcha, the Prime Minister said children should not be pressurised by parents, teachers and others so that they can appear in exams without any pressure.

“If we decrease the pressure on students, their fear of exams will also be reduced. Parents should understand their child’s calibre and focus on their strengths. Parents must create a healthy environment for students,” PM Modi had said.

The first edition of the prime minister’s interaction programme with school and college students “Pariksha Pe Charcha 1.0” was held at the Talkatora Stadium on February 16, 2018.

In the subsequent editions of the programme, students, parents, teachers from across the nation and also from overseas interacted with him to discuss and overcome the stress emerging out of examinations in order to celebrate life.

Doctors concerned of clinical mismanagement of Covid-19

Urge Union Health Ministry to intervene into unwarranted, medication, tests

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A group of 35 doctors from across the country has flagged concern over the unwarranted testing, medication and hospitalisation during the ongoing Covid pandemic and urged the Union Health Ministry to urgently intervene for an evidence-based response to the current wave.

“While there continues to be much uncertainty amidst the outbreak of this novel disease, there is now substantive high-quality scientific literature that provides unequivocal guidance on the clinical management of Covid-19. Despite the weight of this evidence and the crushing death toll of the delta wave, we find the mistakes of the 2021 response being repeated in 2022”, said the open letter by the medical professionals.

The doctors have identified three main issues of unwarranted medication, unwarranted tests and unwarranted hospitalisation.

The letter said that the vast majority of patients with Covid-19, with asymptomatic and mild symptoms, will require little to no medication. “Most prescriptions we have reviewed in the past two weeks include several Covid-19 ‘kits’ and cocktails. The prescribing of vitamin combinations, azithromycin, doxycycline, hydroxychloroquine, favipiravir, and ivermectin for treat-



ing Covid-19 is irrational practice. Such wanton use of drugs is not without harm as the Delta wave has shown.

Outbreaks of opportunistic fungal infections like mucormycosis in India, and aspergillosis in Brazil were attributed to the widespread abuse of inappropriate medications”, said the letter.

Dr Anant Bhan, Yenepoya (deemed to be University), Mangaluru, one of the signatories, said that with almost two years of dealing with the pandemic behind us, it’s extremely important that we ensure that evidence based medical and policy decisions are made. Our letter appeals to all relevant stakeholders to focus on public health measures including vaccination, and ensure appropriate medications and diagnostics are discouraged.

In the letter signed by Dr Satendra Singh, University College of Medical Science, Dr Richa Gupta, Christian Medical College, Vellore and Dr Ashish Satav from Mahatma Gandhi Tribal Hospital, Amravati among others appealed to the central and state health authorities to stop

these “unwarranted” practices and promote evidence-based medicine.

They have suggested the Government to update the evidence-based June 2021 DGHS guidelines. Through public education and professional training, discourage the use of medications that have no supporting evidence for the treatment of Covid-19, the doctors said.

The doctors also suggested to discourage the use of unwarranted diagnostics, especially for asymptomatic and mild cases, where none are required, except for confirmatory Antigen or PCR tests and to publish guidelines in local languages. Stop any state-sponsored promotion or distribution of medications, cocktails, alternative therapies or potions that are not scientifically proven therapies, said the letter also signed by a few Indian-origin doctors such as Dr Karthik Cherabuddi from University of Florida, Dr Amita Sudhir (University of Virginia) Satchit Balsari (Harvard University) Dr Bhavna Seth (Johns Hopkins University) in the US.

Startup to be backbone of new India, says Modi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with entrepreneurs from various start-ups, through video conferencing, in New Delhi, on Saturday. Modi announces that every year January 16 will be marked as the National Start-up Day

PTI

PM announces January 16 ‘National Start-up Day’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will celebrate January 16 as ‘National Start-up Day’, announced Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday, saying “Start-ups are going to be the backbone of new India”

“To make the culture of start-ups reach the far-flung parts of the country, it has been decided to celebrate January 16 as ‘National Start-up Day’, the Prime Minister said while addressing start-ups across the country.

The Startups gave presentations to the Prime Minister on six themes- Growing from Roots; Nudging the DNA; From Local to Global; Technology of Future; Building Champions in Manufacturing; and Sustainable Development.

More than 150 startups were divided into six working

groups for the purpose of these presentations. For each theme, there were presentations by two Startup representatives, who spoke on behalf of all the startups selected for that particular theme.

During their presentation, the startup representatives thanked the Prime Minister for the opportunity to provide such a platform to share their ideas, and support to the startup ecosystem.

They shared ideas and inputs on a variety of sectors and areas including robust data collection mechanism in agriculture; making India preferred agri business hub; boosting healthcare through use of technology, tackling issue of mental health; promoting travel and tourism through innovations like virtual tours, ed-tech and job identification; space sector; connecting offline retail market with digital commerce, increasing manufacturing efficiency; defence exports; promoting green sustainable products and sustainable means of transport, among others, according to the Orime Minister’s Office.

The Prime Minister said that 2022 has brought more

new opportunities for India’s start-up sector and organizing of Start-Up India Innovation Week is also important in the 75th year of India’s independence.

“Start-ups are going to be the backbone of new India. When India completes 100 years of independence, start-ups will have an important role. Country’s innovators are making the country proud globally,” he said.

Modi also assured startups that government will support all their suggestions, ideas, innovations. He said this decade is called as ‘techade’ of India.

“In this decade, the decisions being taken by the government for innovation, entrepreneurship and startup ecosystem have three major aspects. Firstly, Entrepreneurship- to free it from beauracratic silos. Secondly, Innovation - Institutional mechanism needs to be developed. Thirdly, Handholding young innovators,” said Modi.

Prime Minister interacted with over 150 startups to boost the startup ecosystem in the country, said the PMO.

ED attaches ₹48L assets of scribe in money laundering case

Attached property belongs to journalist Rajeev Sharma held in spying for Chinese intelligence outfit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth ₹48.21 lakh belonging to journalist Rajeev Sharma under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in connection with a money laundering investigation. The attached asset is the residential property in the name of Rajeev Sharma at Pitampura here.

The ED had initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of an FIR and chargesheet filed by the Delhi Police against Sharma under the provisions of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and the Official Secrets Act, 1923.

“Investigation under PMLA revealed that Rajeev Sharma had supplied confidential and sensitive information to Chinese Intelligence officers, in exchange for remuneration thereby compromising the security and national interests of the country,” the ED said in a statement.

During investigation it was



revealed that such remuneration to Sharma was being provided by a Mahipalpur (Delhi)-based shell company that was run by Chinese nationals namely Zhang Cheng alias Suraj, Zhang Lixia alias Usha and Qing Shi along with a Nepali national Sher Singh alias Raj Bohara, it said.

“This Chinese company was acting as a conduit for the Chinese Intelligence agencies to provide remuneration for persons like Rajeev Sharma who indulged in criminal activities. The remuneration was being paid in cash through carriers as well as through cash deposits,” it further alleged.

Sharma also received

money using the bank account of his friend in order to conceal his involvement in criminal activities.

In addition to obtaining remunerations in cash, he also received remuneration in kind in the form of various paid foreign trips which were arranged by the Chinese Intelligence Agents, it said.

The ED has earlier filed a prosecution complaint (chargesheet in police parlance) in the present case before the PMLA Court, Patiala House Courts here on which the Court has taken cognizance of the matter vide order dated September 7, 2021. Further investigation is under progress, it added.

Won’t allow any unilateral attempt to change LAC status quo: Army Chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a clear warning to China, Army Chief General M M Naravane on Saturday said here the force will not allow any unilateral attempt to change the status quo on the Line of Actual Control (LAC). He also said dialogue is on between the two countries to resolve the tension at the border in Ladakh for the last two years.

Conveying this while addressing the troops on the occasion of the Army Day, Naravane said the Indian Army’s message is clear that it will not let any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo along the country’s borders succeed.

He also said last year was extremely challenging for the Army due to ongoing stand-offs at the friction points in Eastern Ladakh. The

Army Day is observed on January 15 to mark Field Marshall K M Cariappa taking over as the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, replacing his

British predecessor in 1949.

Referring to the eastern Ladakh standoff, Naravane said to keep the situation under control, the 14th round military-level talks were held between India and China recently. He said joint efforts at various levels have led to disengagement in many areas which in itself is a constructive step.

The Chief said on the basis of mutual and equal security, efforts would continue to find a solution to the current situation. He assured that the morale of the soldiers deployed on snow-capped mountains for the country’s security was sky-high.

“Our patience is a sign of our self-confidence, but no one should

make the mistake of testing it. Our message is clear, the Indian Army won’t let any attempt to unilaterally change status quo along country’s borders to succeed,” Naravane said.

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks,



the two sides completed the disengagement process last year in the north and south banks of the Pangong lake and in the Gogra area.

However, disengagement process is yet to be done in areas of Hot Springs, Depsang bulge and Demchok. Each side currently has around 50,000 to 60,000 troops along the LAC there. The Chief had described the situation the LAC as stable while interacting with the media two days back.

On the situation on the Line of Control (LOC) in Jammu and Kashmir facing

Pakistan, the Chief said the situation is better than the previous year but Pakistan is still harbouring terrorists.

Nearly 300-400 terrorists in training camps across the border are waiting to intrude into India, he said, adding a total of 194 terrorists were killed in counter-operations in the last one year. “Attempts to smuggle arms across the border through drones continue,” Naravane said.

In the interior areas of Jammu and Kashmir, there has been progressive improvement during the last two years, he

noted. Therefore, terrorist organisations across the border have been trying to create hurdles on the path of the development and they have increased their attempts, the Army chief stated. “It is a part of their conspiracy to target non-locals and poor labourers,” he added.

The security situation in the Northeast has improved significantly in the last one year due to proactive military operations, he mentioned. Because of these operations, most of the terrorist organisations in the Northeast have announced ceasefire, he said.

Naravane said the plan to creating joint theatre commands with the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force is moving ahead in a time-bound manner.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the Indian Army will remain central to securing the national interests as India grows in stature and strength. He said the Indian Army inspires confidence among the citizenry as it resolutely maintains an unflinching vigil across the frontiers of the nation.

Stolen stone idol of Goat on way back home after 40 yrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Stolen in the 1980s from a Stemple in Lokhari Village in Uttar Pradesh, a 10th century stone idol of Goat Head Yogini is all set to come back to India.

Union Minister of Culture G Kishan Reddy tweeted on Saturday, “Repatriation of our rightful artifacts continues: 10th Century Goat Headed Yogini Idol which had been illegally removed from a temple in Lokhari, Uttar Pradesh is being returned to India from UK. @NarendraModi Govt is committed to realise the Civilisational Glory of Maa Bharati.”

The Ministry of Culture informed that the stone idol had been stolen sometime in 1980s. The sculpture is of a goat headed Yogini that originally belonged to a group of stone deities in sandstone and installed in Lokhari temple, it said.

According to the statement, these had been the subject of a study by Indian scholar Vidya Daejia on behalf of National Museum in New Delhi in 1986 which was later



published under the title, “Yogini Cult and Temples: A Tantrik Tradition”.

“It is learned that the sculpture had briefly surfaced in the art market in London in 1988. In October 2021, High Commission of India received information about the finding of a goat-headed Yogini Sculpture that had matched the description of the Lokhari set, in the garden of a private residence near London,” the ministry said.

Following this, India Pride project Singapore and Art

Recovery International, London assisted the Indian High Commission in London in the identification and recovery of the statue.

Interestingly, a similar sculpture of the buffalo-headed Vrishanana Yogini, apparently stolen from the same temple at Lokhari village, had been recovered and repatriated by the Embassy of India, Paris in 2013.

This Vrishanana Yogini was installed in the National Museum, New Delhi in September 2013.

6 people shot outside Oregon concert in US

Suspect not in custody

Eugene (US): Six people were shot during a concert at an event hall in Oregon on Friday night, and the suspected shooter was not yet in custody, police said.

Officers responded to the WOW Hall in Eugene after reports of a shooting around 9:30 pm, police said in a statement.

“What law enforcement found when they came on scene is what you would exactly expect when six people just got shot,” Eugene Police Chief Chris Skinner said at a news conference. “People are just trying to get out of here, their friends are on the ground, they’re trying to help.”

Six people were taken to the hospital, and at least one of them was in critical condition, Skinner said. The extent of the other injuries was not immediately clear.

The shooting happened in a back parking lot outside the venue, police and WOW Hall

leaders said.

A concert featuring Lil Bean & Zay Bang, and other artists, was being held at the hall at the time. Police said no suspect was in custody. Skinner described “chaos” when officers arrived, and said investigators had not received much information from possible witnesses.

WOW Hall released a statement on its website acknowledging the shooting but declining to speculate on any details. “We at the WOW Hall want to thank all first responders who came so quickly to ensure everyone’s safety and administer first aid,” the message said. “We believe all staff and volunteers are safe and accounted for.”

Investigators have not determined whether the shooting was random or targeted, the police chief said.

Eugene is located about 110 miles (177 km) south of Portland, Oregon. **AP**

Prez Xi stresses on safeguarding national security, social stability as he gears up for 3rd term in power

Beijing: Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for greater efforts to safeguard national political security and social stability as he gears up for an unprecedented third term in power this year.

In an instruction to the political and legal work committee of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC), Xi said efforts should be made to ensure fair access to justice for every individual, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Saturday.

Calling on the political and legal work front to uphold the absolute leadership of the CPC and draw wisdom and strength from the party’s century-long struggle, Xi urged party officials to promote the ability to forestall and defuse major risks and improve law enforcement and judicial policies and measures.

He also stressed on deepening the comprehensive reform of political and legal work and consolidat-

ing the achievement made in the education campaign of officers of the front.

Party committees at all levels should study and resolve the prominent issues that restrain political and legal work in a timely manner and support political and legal organs to perform their duties in accordance with laws, Xi noted in the instruction.

Efforts should be made to provide a strong guarantee for advancing the ‘Peaceful China’ initiative and promoting the rule of law at a higher level, thus welcoming the 20th CPC National Congress with solid actions, he said.

The second five-year term of 68-year-old Xi as the CPC General Secretary, the central authority of power, will end this year.

He is widely expected to continue in the post for an unprecedented third term and perhaps for life after the once-in-five-year CPC Congress, scheduled to be held in the middle of this year, and re-appointed as president and head of the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC).

All his predecessors, including Hu Jintao who handed over the reins to Xi in 2012, retired after two terms in power as a widely-followed convention to encourage the new and collective leadership of the party.

A major constitutional amendment in 2018 removed the two-term limit for president to enable Xi to continue in the post.

Decks for Xi’s continuation as CPC General Secretary were cleared at the last year’s meeting of the party’s Plenum, a powerful conclave of the party, for his continuation in power, perhaps for life.

Politically, the meeting is regarded as significant for Xi, who in the last nine years of his tenure in power, has emerged as the most powerful leader after party founder Mao Zedong. **PTI**

Fire near New Jersey chemical plant spreads thick smoke

Passaic (US): A large chemical fire burned through the night and into Saturday morning in northern New Jersey, its smoke so heavy that it was detected on weather radar and seen and smelled in neighbouring New York City.

The fire at Majestic Industries and the Qalco chemical plant in Passaic spread to multiple buildings and threatened their collapse, officials said.

Water from firefighter hoses froze in cold weather and made the environment slick and hazardous for responders.

The fire was in buildings housing plastics, pallets and chlorine, officials told NorthJersey.Com.

“There have been bad fires, but this is the worst that I’ve ever seen,” Passaic Mayor Hector Lora said. Residents near the blaze were advised to close their windows but were not required to evacuate.

One firefighter was taken to a hospital after being struck by debris, officials said. He was doing well, though other firefighters slipped and fell in the slick conditions, officials said. **AP**

Kazakhstan activists recall path from protest to bloodshed

Almaty (Kazakhstan): The mass protests in Kazakhstan began peacefully over the New Year’s weekend, with marchers denouncing a sharp rise in fuel prices. They spread quickly from the western part of the Central Asian nation to more populous areas, eventually reaching its largest city of Almaty.

But something changed over the course of a week. Groups of armed men appeared in Almaty, with some seen riding in cars without license plates or with their faces covered. Marchers at the peaceful protests say these men began urging them to storm government buildings, promising to give them guns.

Clashes with police soon broke out, and by the night of Jan 5, Almaty was in chaos. City Hall was burning, as were cars and buses; stores were looted; and attempts were made to storm the presidential residence. Gunshots were heard in the streets, the internet was blacked out, and even the airport was briefly seized.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has blamed the unrest on “terrorists” who received foreign training and support. But nearly two weeks after the events that led to scores of deaths and about 16,000 arrests, the government has not presented any evidence to support its allegation of outside involvement. It remains unclear whether these more violent actors were individuals taking advantage of the mayhem to loot and vandalise stores, or if they were part of organized groups with larger political motives.

Protesters, however, say their rallies were somehow undermined, leading to the crackdown by security forces. Tokayev has said authorities didn’t use force at peaceful demonstrations. **AP**

Pak to offer permanent residency scheme for rich foreign nationals to boost weak economy

Islamabad: Pakistan has decided to offer a permanent residency scheme for wealthy foreign nationals, including Sikhs living in the US and Canada, Afghans and Chinese, to attract investment and boost its flagging economy and national growth, it emerged on Saturday.

Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry through an overnight tweet announced that the new scheme was in line with the new National Security Policy, which was formally launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday.

“In line with new National Security Policy, through which Pakistan declared geo-economics as the core of its national security doctrine, the government has decided to allow permanent residency scheme for foreign nationals, the new policy allows foreigners to get permanent resident status in lieu of investment,” the tweet said.

The Express Tribune newspaper reported that while sharing the background of the scheme, a key federal minister said that one of the purposes of opening the PR scheme was to attract rich Afghans, who were moving to Turkey, Malaysia and some other countries following the fall of Kabul last August.

“They needed to be incentivised,” Chaudhry said. In addition, the minister said, the scheme targets the Sikhs living in Canada and USA, who were willing to invest in religious sites, especially in Kartarpur Corridor but had no option to do so.

He said the third objective of the scheme was to incentivise the Chinese nationals, who wish to move or establish industrial units in Pakistan. “It’s a historic step... for the first time in the history of Pakistan foreigners are being allowed to invest in the real estate sector,”



The northern lights, or aurora borealis, illuminate the night sky above the Yllas fell in Kolari, Finnish Lapland, early Saturday **PTI**

Major winter storm: South braces for blast of snow, ice

Atlanta: Forecasts of snow and ice as far south as Georgia have put a big part of the Southeast on an emergency preparedness footing as shoppers scoured store shelves for storm supplies and crews raced to treat highways and roads as a major winter storm approached from the Midwest.

In Virginia, where a blizzard left thousands of motorists trapped on clogged highways earlier this month, outgoing Gov. Ralph Northam declared a state of emergency and urged people to take the approaching storm seriously.

In North Carolina, some store shelves were stripped bare of essentials including bread and milk.

Elsewhere, trucks began spraying a briny mixture on hundreds of miles of interstates and other roads to prevent icing across the region.

Travis Wagler said he had-

n’t seen such a run on supplies at his Abbeville, South Carolina, hardware store in at least two winters. “We’re selling everything you might expect: sleds, but also salt, shovels and firewood,” Wagler said from Abbeville Hardware on Friday.

That region faced predictions of a quarter-inch (0.6 centimeters) of ice or more on trees and power lines, which could lead to days without electricity.

“People are worried,” Wagler said.

Parts of Tennessee could get as much as 6 inches (15 centimeters) of snow, forecasters said, and northern Mississippi and the Tennessee Valley region of Alabama could receive light snow accumulations. With lows predicted in the 20s across a wide area, any precipitation could freeze, making driving difficult if not hazardous.

By Friday, the fast-moving storm had already dropped heavy snow across a large swath of the Midwest, where travel conditions deteriorated and scores of schools closed or moved to online instruction.

The storm, after its expected weekend dip into the Southeast, was then expected to head into the Northeast while dropping snow, sleet and rain around the densely populated Eastern Seaboard.

A winter storm watch extended from just north of metro Atlanta to Arkansas in the west and Pennsylvania in the north, covering parts of 10 states including Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia.

Travel problems could extend into metro Atlanta, where about 2 inches (5 centimeters) of snow brought traffic to a slip-sliding halt in 2014, an event still known as “Snowmageddon.” **AP**

Serbian environmental protesters reject lithium mining plans

Belgrade: Environmental protesters demanding the cancellation of plans for lithium mining in western Serbia took to the streets again Saturday, blocking key roads and for the first time a border crossing.

Traffic on the Balkan nation’s main north-south highway was halted for more than an hour in Belgrade, the capital, along with several other roads throughout the country, including one by Serbia’s border with Bosnia.

Minor incidents have been reported with angry drivers trying to push their way through the crowds.

Witnesses told N1 television that a man was injured in one incident in the western town of Sabac.

Environmental groups want Serbia’s populist government to halt the possibility of lithium mining in western Serbia.

Activists have pledged to press on with blockades until their demand is met and the Rio Tinto mining company is “expelled” from Serbia.

Thousands joined similar demonstrations several weeks ago, forcing the government to withdraw two laws that activists said were designed to speed up the country’s mining plans.

“This is an ecological catastrophe, that I think Serbia is already one foot in, and even a worse one (catastrophe) is threatening,” said Belgrade resident Mirjana Podolesek.

Another protester, Janko Krizan, believes that “it is our duty to come here.”

“Rio Tinto will not only pollute Serbia, but it will pollute everything else, entire system, everything,” he said.

Rio Tinto has performed explorations in western Serbia but environmental groups want the project abolished, saying that lithium mining would devastate nearby farmland, waters and the area’s entire ecosystem. **PTI**

Italian high court faults prosecutors in Vatican-linked case

Rome: Italy’s supreme court has faulted prosecutors for withholding evidence benefiting the key suspect in the Vatican’s fraud and embezzlement trial in a parallel case in the Italian courts.

The Court of Cassation ordered the Tribunal of Review to consider that evidence before deciding whether to uphold an international arrest warrant for Gianluigi Torzi, a London-based Italian broker who is wanted in both Italy and the Vatican for alleged financial crimes.

The Cassation annulled the warrant in October but the reasons for the decision were only released on Saturday. The court agreed with Torzi’s lawyers that Italian prosecutors had failed to turn over his defense evidence to the judge who initially authorized the arrest warrant in March.

When Torzi’s lawyers appealed the warrant to the Tribunal of Review, the appeals judges should have considered whether Torzi’s missing defense materials provided a “decisive” weight in his favour, the Cassation judges wrote. The Tribunal of Review upheld the arrest warrant in June without making that evaluation. The case in Italy was launched after Vatican prosecutors had already been investigating Torzi for his role in the Vatican’s bungled 350 million-euro investment in a London residential property. Vatican prosecutors have accused Torzi of trying to extort the Vatican of 15 million euros to turn over full ownership of the property. Torzi says the case is the fruit of misunderstandings.

The Vatican tribunal indicted him in July, but his status in the trial has been in limbo because of the extradition proceedings between Italy and Britain and the legitimacy of the Italian arrest warrant that launched them. The Vatican doesn’t have an extradition treaty with Britain.

In a statement Saturday, Torzi’s lawyer, Marco Franco, said the ruling appears to allow the Tribunal of Review the space “to make a new, comprehensive evaluation” of the case. **AP**

MAHINDRA RURAL HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED				Possession Notice
Corporate Office:- Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Ltd. Sadhana House, 2nd Floor, 570, P.B.Marg Worli, Mumbai 400 018 India,Tel:- +91 22 66523500 Fax:- +91 22 24972741				
Branch Office:- LDA Colony,82/870 Kanpur Road, Near Phoenix Mall, Lucknow.				
Branch Office:- 139-141, 3rd Floor, Mangal Pandey Nagar, Opp. CCS University, Meerut – 250002, Uttar Pradesh.				
(For Immovable Property) (Under Rule 8 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002)				
Whereas the undersigned being the authorized officer of M/S Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as “MRHL”), Having its registered office at Lucknow and Branch office at Meerut , under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002), and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice under Section 13(2) of the said Act calling upon you being the borrowers (names and addresses mentioned below)to repay the amount mentioned in the said notice being within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.				
The borrower mentioned herein above having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrowers mentioned herein above and to the public in general that undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on me under sub section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with the Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this 7 day.				
The borrowers mentioned herein above in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the said property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the Charge of M/S Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Ltd. for an amount and interest thereon.				
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.				
S.N.	Name of the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Description of Secured Asset (Immovable Property)	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Date of Possession
1.	(LC No.1221860 MEERUT Branch) SANDEEP KUMAR PAL (Borrower) ANJU (Co Borrower)	PLOT NO-32^ KHASRA NO-699^VILL BAMAN HERDI MUZAFFARNAGAR-251002645 East:- PLOT OF SHASHANK, West:- RASTA 25 FT WIDE, South:- PLOT OF ABDUL MANAN, North:- RASTA 18 FT WIDE	13. 08. 2021 Rs. 1,89,020/-	10-01-2022 Physical Possession
2.	(LC No.810150 MEERUT Branch) SANNAVAR (Borrower) SHAINA (Co Borrower)	A RESIDENTIAL PLOT NO-135/2, KHASRA NO-1162 MIN., NAGAR PALIKA PARISHAD,NEAR RADHA KUNJ COLONY, DAURALA ROAD, PARGANA, TEHSIL- SARDHANNA,DIST-MEERUT,UTTAR PRADESH -250341. East:- BOUNDARY OF RADHA KUNJ COLONY, West:- RASTA 12 FT WIDE , South:- PLOT OF SATYAJEET BHEEM SAIN AND KUNWAL PAL, North:- PLOT OF OWNER	13. 08. 2021 Rs. 17,58,748/-	10-01-2022 Physical Possession
3.	(LC No.630826 MEERUT Branch) RAM KUMAR (Borrower) LATA KUMARI (Co Borrower)	PLOT NO. 2, KHASRA NO 1501, JATOLI SARDHANNA, MEERUT, UTTAR PRADESH -250001 . East:- RASTA 20 WIDE, West:- PLOT OF OTHER PERSON, South :- PLOT NO 3, North:- PLOT NO 1 OF OTHER PERSON	13. 08. 2021 Rs. 9,07,604/-	10-01-2022 Symbolic Possession
4.	(LC No.585390 MEERUT Branch) SUMAN DEVI (Borrower) VIRENDRA KUMAR (Co Borrower)	KHASRA NO.1711, SHRI NAGAR COLONY, MODINAGAR, PARGANA-JALALABAD,TEHSIL-MODINAGAR, DISTT-GHAZIABAD PIN-201204. East:- 55-00” HOUSE OF SMT KASTURI, West:- 550-00”PLOT OF OTHERS , South:- 18-00” HOUSE OF SANTOSH, North:- 18-00” RASTAA 10 FOOT WIDE	13. 08. 2021 Rs. 9,27,377/-	11-01-2022 Symbolic Possession
5.	(LC No. 593212 MEERUT Branch) SANSWATI DEVI (Borrower) SHEKHAR KUMAR CHAUHAN , CHHATARPAL SINGH CHAUHAN , PUSHPA CHAUHAN (Co Borrower)	2ND FLOOR, NO.85,KHASRA NO.112/1M, SITUATED ATGREATER APPU ENCLAVE EXTENTION , REVENUE VILLAGE/ PARGANA - DAURALA , TEHSIL SARADAHNA, DISTRICT MEERUT. East:- PLOT NO.86, West:- PLOT NO.84 , South:- RASTA 25~ FOOT WIDE, North:- PROPERTY OF OTHERS	13. 08. 2021 Rs. 9,73,221/-	10-01-2022 Symbolic Possession
Place :- Meerut, Ghaziabad Date:-16.01.2022 Sd/- Authorised Officer Mahindra Rural Housing Finance Limited				

Volcano erupts in Pacific, islanders rush to escape tsunامي

Wellington: An undersea volcano erupted in spectacular fashion near the Pacific nation of Tonga on Saturday, sending large tsunami waves crashing across the shore and people rushing to higher ground.

There were no immediate reports of injuries or the extent of the damage as communications with the small nation remained problematic.

Video posted to social media showed large waves washing ashore in coastal areas, swirling around homes and buildings.

New Zealand’s military said it was monitoring the situation and remained on standby, ready to assist if asked.

Satellite images showed a huge eruption, a plume of ash, steam and gas rising like a mushroom above the blue Pacific waters.

The Tonga Meteorological Services said a tsunami warning was in effect for all of the archipelago, and data from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre showed waves of 80 cm (2.6 feet) had been detected.

Residents of American Samoa were alerted of the tsunami warning by local broadcasters as well as church bells that rang territory-wide. An outdoor siren warning system was out of service. Those living along the shoreline quickly moved to higher ground.

As night fell, there were no reports of any damage and the Hawaii-based tsunami centre cancelled the alert.

Authorities in the nearby island nations of Fiji and Samoa also issued warnings, telling people to avoid the shoreline due to strong currents and dangerous waves. The Japan Meteorological Agency said there may be a slight swelling of the water along the Japanese coasts, but it was not expected to cause any damage.

The Islands Business news site reported that a convoy of police and military troops evacuated Tonga’s King Tupou VI from his palace near the shore. He was among the many residents who headed for higher ground.

The explosion of the Hunga Tonga Hunga Ha’apai volcano was the latest in a series of spectacular eruptions. A Twitter user identified as Dr Faka’iloatonga Taumoeolau posted video showing waves crashing ashore.

“Can literally hear the volcano eruption, sounds pretty violent,” he wrote, adding in a later post: “Raining ash and tiny pebbles, darkness blanketing the sky.”

Earlier, the Matangi Tonga news site reported that scientists observed massive explosions, thunder and lightning near the volcano after it started erupting early Friday. Satellite images showed a 5-km (3 mile) -wide plume rising into the air to about 20 km (12 miles). **AP**

**3rd Circle, Public Works Department, Pithoragarh**
Email: sepwdpth@rediffmail.com

पत्रांक 320 / 984सी-03 / 2022
शुद्धि पत्र
इस कार्यालय के पत्रांक 159/984 C 03/ 2022 date 07.01.2022 के द्वारा आमंत्रित की गई निविदायें आदर्श आचार संहिता प्रभावी होने के कारण अग्रिम आदेशों तक स्थगित की जाती हैं।

दिनांक 14.01.2022

**UJVN Limited**
HO “UJJWAL”, Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephones: 0135-2763808 Fax- 0135- 2763508
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvnl.com

पत्र सं०: 46
TENDER TIME EXTENSION NOTICE-1
Due to unavoidable circumstances the date of submission and opening of following tender invited by the office of the Executive Engineer (Test), MB-II, Chinyalisaur (Uttarkashi) is hereby extended as follows:-
Tender No: NIT-02/EE(T)/MB-II/21-22
Name of work: SUPPLY, INSTALLATION, TESTING & COMMISSIONING OF FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEM FOR 220V DC (1395 AH) BATTERY BANK AT DHARASU POWER HOUSE, CHINYALISAUR, UTTARKASHI.
Last date for submission of tender :- 22.03.2022 up to 16:00 Hrs.
Due date for opening of tender :- 24.03.2022 at 11:00 Hrs.
For fuller & further details, kindly visit our website. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam’s website “www.ujvnl.com”
Executive Engineer (Test)

दिनांक : 15 / 01 / 2022
“Avoid wasteful use of Electricity”

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF A PERSON ACCUSED
See Section U/S 82 Cr. P.C.
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused **Savitri Devi R/o H.No. 1053, B-Block, Gali No. 09, Baba Colony, Sant Nagar, Burari, Delhi** has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case **FIR No. 1033/2014 U/S 498A/406/506/34 IPC, P.S. Gokal Puri, Delhi** and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said **Savitri Devi** cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said **Savitri Devi** has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant).
Proclamation is hereby made that the said accused **Savitri Devi of FIR No. 1033/2014 U/S 498A/406/506/34 IPC, P.S. Gokal Puri, Delhi** is required to appear before this Court to answer the said complaint on or before **21.02.2022**.
By Order
Sh. Nitish Kumar Sharma
Metropolitan Magistrate-09,
Karkardooma Courts, Shahdara,
Delhi
DP/1233/NE/21(Court Matter)

GAIL director booked in bribery case

5 arrested

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has booked E S Ranganathan, director (marketing) of GAIL, and arrested five persons including alleged middlemen and businessmen in a case of alleged bribery of over Rs 50 lakh for giving discounts to private companies buying petro chemical products marketed by the Maharatna PSU, officials said Saturday.

Following the registration of the case on Friday, the CBI conducted searches at about eight locations in Delhi-NCR including the office of Ranganathan at Bhikaji Kama Place in Delhi and his residence in Sector 62, Noida.

The CBI has so far recovered Rs 1.3 crore in cash from Ranganathan's premises.

Besides Ranganathan, the agency has also booked middlemen Pawan Gaur and Rajesh Kumar, N Ramakrishnan Nair who had allegedly collected bribes, businessmen Saurabh Gupta and his Panchkula -based company United Polymer Industries and Aditya Bansal and his company Karnal-based Bansal Agency, they said.

"CBI laid a trap and apprehended a private person (Gaur)

and a director of a private company (Kumar) based at Delhi when the alleged bribe of Rs 10 lakh was received by the private person from the said director of private company allegedly on behalf of director (marketing) GAIL, (Ranganathan)," CBI spokesperson RC Joshi said.

The agency has so far arrested five persons but Ranganathan has not yet been taken into custody. Searches at this premises are still on, sources said.

"Subsequent, searches were conducted at the premises of accused at Delhi, Noida,Gurgaon, Panchkula, Karnal etc, which led to recovery of Rs.84 lakh(approx), so far which include recovery of Rs 75 lakh from Gurgaon based private person. Searches are continuing at the premises of public servant," Joshi said.

It is alleged that Ranganathan was "indulging into corrupt and illegal activities in criminal conspiracy" with Gaur and Kumar who is also director of Rishab Polychem Pvt. Ltd based at Bahudargarh Road, Delhi.

Kumar and Gaur allegedly acted as Ranganathan's middlemen, by obtaining bribe from the private companies buying petro chemical products marketed by the GAIL, the FIR alleged.

It said sources informed the CBI that at the direction of Kumar, Gaur had asked Ranganathan for allowing some discount to the buyers on petro chemical products being marketed by GAIL in return of illegal gratification.

It is alleged that Kumar and Gaur met Ranganathan at his Noida residence on December 11 last year for discussing the proposal, the FIR alleged.

Two days later Gaur informed Kumar that proposal of discounts is being considered in GAIL, the FIR alleged.

In order to arrange bribes, Kumar got in touch with other prospective beneficiaries of discount, after the final decision is taken in GAIL on issuance of the discount order. Gaur, Kumar and Ranganathan again met at a five star hotel in Delhi on December 14 to discuss it further.

"Source has further informed that on December 17, 2021, Rajesh collected the demanded bribe amount from beneficiary private parties and delivered it to Gaur for Ranganathan. Source has further informed that on December 18, 2021, on the direction of Ranganathan, Nair...Has collected the said amount of Rs. 40 Lakh from the residence of Gaur. Thereafter on December 20,

2021, Gaur pursued Ranganathan for issuance of order, on which he had told him that he would sign after returning from Mumbai," an official said.

Kumar allegedly roped in two more perspective beneficiaries -- Gupta and Bansal -- and convinced them for paying bribe in exchange for the favourable orders, the FIR alleged.

Kumar on January 13, told Gupta to fulfil his side commitment for issuance of discount order from GAIL and put forth alleged demand of Rs 12 lakh from Ranganathan, it alleged.

Gaur also told Gupta to send money at the earliest after which he allegedly paid Rs three lakh to Kumar while remaining was to be sent through hawala route, it said.

"...Ranganathan on the request of Pawan Gaur and Rajesh Kumar got some checks conducted in the month of November, 2021 in the premises of some authorised stockists of GAIL. However, before the said surprise check, Sh. E.S. Ranganathan had also cautioned some of his favoured parties," the FIR alleged.

The CBI has booked the accused under IPC sections of criminal conspiracy and provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act, they said.

PM calls for innovating for India, from India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called for innovating for India and from India to tackle challenges facing the country as he counted steps taken by the government in freeing entrepreneurs and innovation from bureaucratic silos.

"Our startups are changing the rules of the game. I believe that startups are going to be the backbone of New India," he said interacting with youngsters from the world of startups through video conference. "Let us innovate for India, innovate from India."

India, he said, has over 60,000 startups with 42 unicorns.

The government is focusing on three aspects -- first, to liberate entrepreneurship and innovation from the web of government processes, bureaucratic silos; second, creating an institutional mechanism to promote innovation; and third, handholding of young innovators and young enterprises, he said.

Narrating successes during the recent years, he said 28,000 patents were granted last year as compared to 4,000 patents in 2013-14. Against registration of 70,000 trademarks in 2013-14, 2.5 lakh trademarks have been registered in 2020-21.

Similarly, in the year 2013-

14, where only 4,000 copyrights were granted, last year their number has crossed 16,000.

"India's ranking on the Global Innovation Index is improving because of the programme on innovation started in the country. India was ranked 81 in 2015 and now it is at No. 46," he said.

Startups are not just bringing innovations but are also evolving as major job creators.

The year 2022 has brought new opportunities and avenues for startups, he said adding January 16 will be celebrated as National Startup Day to help percolate startup culture to the grassroot level.

Modi said easier access to funds as well as making self-certification for compliance of nine labour and three environment laws is helping promote startups.

Innovation and technology-based solutions are being encouraged for finding solutions to challenges facing the country, he said.

The startups gave presentations on six themes -- Growing from Roots; Nudging the DNA; From Local to Global; Technology of Future; Building Champions in Manufacturing; and Sustainable Development.

More than 150 startups were divided into six working groups for the purpose of these presentations.

They shared ideas and inputs on a variety of sectors and areas including robust data collection mechanism in agriculture; making India preferred agri business hub; boosting healthcare through use of technology; tackling issue of mental health; promoting travel and tourism through innovations like virtual tours; ed-tech and job identification; connecting offline retail market with digital commerce.

Speaking after the presentations, the Prime Minister said that organisation of this Start Up India Innovation week is all the more important in this year of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav as "the role of the startups will be critical when Indian freedom reaches its centenary year."

"I congratulate all the startups of the country, all the innovative youth, who are raising the flag of India in the world of startups. For this culture of startups to reach the far-flung parts of the country, it has been decided to celebrate January 16 as National Start-up Day," Modi said.

Recalling the concept of the current decade as the 'techade' of India, he listed three important aspects of the massive changes that the government is making in this decade to strengthen the innovation, entrepreneurship and

startup ecosystem.

Measures like removing problems of angel tax, simplification of tax procedure, arranging for government funding, allowing self certification of certain labour and environment laws and removal of more than 25,000 compliances have taken the process further, the Prime Minister noted.

He said the government's effort is to institutionalise innovation in the country by creating attraction for innovation among students since childhood.

Modi said, "Our startups are changing the rules of the game. That's why I believe startups are going to be the backbone of new India...Today India is rapidly moving towards hitting the century of the unicorns. I believe the golden era of India's startups is starting now."

He also underlined the role of empowerment by entrepreneurship in addressing the problems of development and regional-gender disparities.

"Do not just keep your dreams local, make them global. Remember this mantra- let's Innovate for India, innovate from India," he exhorted the innovators.

Further, the Prime Minister suggested several areas where the startup ecosystem can play a major role.

RIL unit, Hyundai, Mahindra among 10 cos to bid under PLI scheme for ACC battery

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

RIL subsidiary Reliance New Energy Solar, Hyundai Global Motors, Ola Electric, Mahindra & Mahindra and Larsen & Toubro are among the 10 firms that have submitted bids under the Rs 18,100 crore production linked incentive (PLI) scheme for Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) battery storage, the government said on Saturday.

A total of 10 bids with capacity of 130 Gwh -- over twice the manufacturing capacity to be awarded -- were received.

Amara Raja Batteries, Exide Industries, Rajesh Exports, India Power Corporation and Lucas-TVS have also submitted bids.

"Industry has reposed its faith in India's stellar progress as a world class manufacturing destination which resonates strongly with Prime Minister's clarion call of Atma Nirbhar Bharat - a self-reliant India," an official statement said.

The government approved the PLI scheme 'National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage' for achieving manufacturing capacity of 50 Giga Watt Hour (GWh) for enhancing India's manufacturing capabilities with a budgetary outlay of Rs 18,100 crore.

Under the scheme, the



manufacturing facility would have to be set up within a period of two years. The incentive will be disbursed thereafter over a period of five years on sale of batteries manufactured in India.

"The scheme received an encouraging response from local as well as global investors as bids received is 2.6 times the manufacturing capacity to be awarded i.e. 50 Gwh," the heavy industries ministry stated.

The technical bids received for the scheme were opened on Saturday.

According to the government, the incentive structure would encourage industry to

promote fresh investments in indigenous supply chain/ deep localisation for battery manufacturing in the country.

The ACC PLI scheme is expected to result in savings to the nation on account of reduction in import of crude oil to a significant extent and increase the share of renewable energy at the national grid level, the statement said.

The scheme for ACC along with PLI scheme for the automotive sector and FAME will enable India to leapfrog to environmentally cleaner, sustainable, advanced and more efficient electric vehicles (EV) based system.

Annual investments into startups increase to \$36 bn: DPIIT Secy



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investors are taking huge interest in the country's startup ecosystem and in the last one year, annual fundings into startups have increased from USD 11 billion to USD 36 billion, a top government official said on Saturday.

Anurag Jain, Secretary in the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), said the share of investments coming to startups in India from world over, which includes domestic investments also, has risen to 6 per cent from 4 per cent earlier.

"The kind of interest which is being taken in the startup investment climate...In the last one year, annual investments into the startups have increased from USD 11 billion to USD 36 billion," he said at the National Startups Award event.

Speaking at the online event, Commerce and Industry

Minister Piyush Goyal urged startups to come up with more suggestions on making regulatory burden simpler, and easier to further promote the startup story.

"I am given to understand that 2021 has also seen over 1,000 deals with a total funding of USD 23 billion in the first nine monthsIt shows the strength of our startups," Goyal said.

The minister suggested focusing on five areas to take innovation to the next level.

The focus areas include developing solutions and content in Indic languages; encouraging products and solutions with larger social and economic impact; promoting startups in every district; creating innovation zones at different local levels where Universities can become incubators; and adoption of best practices from around the world to enhance India's competitiveness.

HDFC Bank standalone net profit rises 18% to ₹10,342 cr in Dec qtr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's largest private sector HDFC Bank on Saturday reported an 18.1 per cent rise in its standalone net profit at ₹ 10,342.20 crore for the quarter ended December 2021, helped by healthy non-interest income and fall in bad loans provisioning.

The bank had registered a net profit of ₹8,758.29 crore in the corresponding quarter of the last fiscal year. Total income on a standalone basis rose to Rs 40,651.60 crore in the October-December quarter of FY22, as against Rs 37,522.92 crore in the same period of FY21, HDFC Bank said in a regulatory filing.

Its non-interest income comprised nearly 31 per cent of net revenues at Rs 8,183.6 crore during Q3 FY22, up by about 10 per cent from a year ago.

Net interest income (interest earned minus interest expended) rose by 13 per cent to Rs 18,443.50 crore from Rs 16,317.60 crore.

The advances grew at 16.5 per cent reaching new heights driven through relationship management, digital offering and breadth of products. New liability relationships added during the quarter remained at all time high, the lender said.

Continued focus on deposits helped in maintenance of a healthy liquidity coverage ratio at 123 per cent, well above the



regulatory requirements, which positions the bank favourably to capitalise on growth opportunities, it added.

On the asset quality side, there was a rise in bank's bad loan proportion with the gross non-performing assets (NPAs) rising to 1.26 per cent of the gross advances as of December 30, 2021 as against 0.81 per cent from year ago same period.

It was down sequentially from 1.35 per cent by the end of September 2021.

Net NPAs or bad loans too rose to 0.37 per cent year on year from 0.09 per cent, but down from 0.40 per cent sequentially.

Despite the increase in bad loan ratio, its provisions and contingencies for the quarter ended December 31, 2021 fell to Rs 2,994 crore, as against Rs 3,414.10 crore for the quarter ended December 2020.

The provisioning consisted of specific loan loss provisions of Rs 1,820.60 crore and general and other provisions of Rs 1,173.40 crore. Total provi-

sions for Q3 FY22 included contingent provisions of nearly Rs 900 crore.

Bank's total deposits grew by 13.8 per cent to Rs 1,445,918 crore as of December 31, 2021. Total advances rose by 16.5 per cent to Rs 1,260,863 crore.

On a consolidated basis, bank's net profit was up by 21 per cent to Rs 10,591 crore in the December 2021 quarter, as against Rs 8,769 crore in the year-ago period.

Income (consolidated) rose to Rs 43,365 crore from Rs 39,839 crore.

"We added 294 branches and 16,852 people over the last 12 months and made other investments to position ourselves and capitalise on the growth opportunity. Operating expenses for the quarter ended December 31, 2021 were Rs 9,851.10 crore, an increase of 14.9 per cent over Rs 8,574.80 crore during the corresponding quarter of the previous year. The cost to income ratio for the quarter was at 37 per cent," HDFC Bank said in the filing.

'India's economic package has given Sri Lanka breathing space'

PTI ■ COLOMBO

India's financial package has prevented Sri Lanka from spiralling into a major economic tailspin for the time being, top economist WA Wijewardena said on Saturday, but warned that the Gotabaya Rajapaksa regime would need to seek an immediate bailout from the IMF to tide over the foreign exchange shortage grappling the country.

On Thursday, India announced a USD 900 million loan to Sri Lanka to build up its depleted foreign reserves and for food imports, amid a shortage of almost all essential commodities in the island nation.

The Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Gopal Baglay met the Central Bank Governor Ajith Nivard Cabraal and "expressed India's strong support to Sri Lanka in the wake of RBI extending over USD 900 million facilities over the last week".

"These include deferment of Asian Clearing Union settlement of over USD 509 million and currency swap of USD 400 million," the Indian High Commission's tweet said.

"India's economic package has averted an immediate economic crisis after settling of international sovereign bonds due on January 18. The swap of USD 400 million helped improve the gross reserves to



an extent. The Indian credit line of USD 1.5 billion will also ease shortages of essentials via imports from India," Wijewardena, the former Sri Lankan Central Bank Deputy Governor said.

Wijewardena said India's timely assistance has given the Sri Lankan government two

months of breathing space, the time in which tough economic reforms need to be implemented and a bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is needed for a permanent solution.

"India's intervention has helped Sri Lanka, but they cannot bail us out. While we

need to honour the promises made to India to realise the gains. In the meantime, we need to seek help from the IMF," he asserted.

Wijewardena's comments came on the heels of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Sri Lanka's Finance Minister Basil Rajapaksa con-

ducting an extensive virtual meeting on the Indian economic assistance to Sri Lanka on Saturday.

During the meeting, Jaishankar conveyed that India has always stood with Sri Lanka, and will continue to support that country in all possible ways for overcoming the economic and other challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs said.

As close friends and maritime neighbours, both India and Sri Lanka stand to gain from closer economic interlinkages, Jaishankar said during the virtual interaction.

The issue of an IMF bailout has been contentious, one that has deeply divided the Sri Lankan Cabinet.

Sri Lanka's Gross Domestic Product had contracted by a record 3.6 per cent in 2020 and its foreign exchange reserves plunged by over a half in one year through July to just USD 2.8 billion.

This has led to more than a 9 per cent depreciation of the Sri Lankan rupee against the US dollar over the past 12 months, making imports more expensive.

The island nation is also facing a severe foreign exchange crisis after the pandemic hit the nation's earnings from tourism and remittances.

Industrial, warehousing space leasing up 35 pc in 2021: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Leasing of industrial and warehousing spaces across eight major cities went up by 35 per cent during 2021 to 35.1 million square feet, driven by higher demand from third-party logistics and e-commerce players, according to Savills India.

The leasing stood at 26 million square feet in the previous calendar year.

Property consultant Savills India highlighted in a report that fresh supply rose 64 per cent to 36 million square feet from 22 million square feet during the period under review.

Third-party logistics (3PL) players and e-commerce companies continued to drive warehousing demand, accounting for 62 per cent of the total absorption in 2021, followed by manufacturing sector at 14 per cent.

Among the major eight cities in India, Delhi-NCR led with the highest absorption in 2021 at 8.1 million square feet, followed by Pune at 6.5 million square feet.

Mumbai and Bengaluru saw absorptions of 6 million square feet and 4.6 million square feet, respectively.



Apart from eight major cities, Savills India reported that leasing of industrial and warehousing space stood at 8.6 million square feet in 11 tier II, III cities while new supply was at 8.9 million square feet.

The comparative figures of tier II and III cities were not available.

Savills noted that the rental values remained stable in 2021 across the major cities.

New projects were delivered with improved specifications and of high quality environmental, health and safety (EHS) standards.

The market witnessed 4,200-plus acres of manufacturing and warehousing land

transactions across tier I and tier II cities. The industrial and logistics sector witnessed investments exceeding USD 1.5 billion in 2021.

"Continued interest in this asset class was due to its growth potential and stable returns. The market is likely to witness continued and growing interest from investors in this asset class in 2022 as well," Savills said.

The overall industrial and warehousing space stock in tier I cities stood at 266 million square feet at the end of 2021.

Meanwhile, vacancy levels in tier I cities have increased from 8.4 per cent in 2020 to 9.4 per cent in 2021, the report

Virat Kohli quits Test captaincy, a day after series defeat against Proteas

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

The inevitable came a bit early as Virat Kohli on Saturday quit as India's Test captain, saying he did his job with "absolute honesty" and time was right to quit the leadership role.

Kohli's announcement came a day after India suffered an embarrassing Test series defeat against South Africa.

Kohli was dealing with one controversy after another as he was recently removed as ODI captain by the BCCI after he decided to step down at Twenty20 captain.

His decision to quit as Test skipper has come at a time when his relation with the BCCI is so strained that he preferred to announce his decision on social media.

Kohli was appointed Test captain back in 2014 when M S Dhoni stepped down in the middle of the series against Australia.

"Every thing has to come to a halt at some stage and for me as Test captain of India, it's now," Kohli wrote in a statement which he posted on Twitter, taking everyone by surprise.

"There have been many ups and also some downs along the journey but there has never been lack of effort or lack of belief."

Interestingly, when Kohli had quit T20 captaincy, he had also

posted his message on social media.

"It's been seven years of hard work, toil and relentless perseverance everyday to take the team in the right direction. I have done the job with absolute honesty and left nothing out there," he wrote in his statement.

Kohli led India to the top of world rankings and during his tenure, the team recorded a memorable series win in Australia.

He is the third most successful captain in history of Test cricket (who have led in at least 20 Tests) in terms of Test wins behind Steve Waugh (41 wins in 57 games) and Ricky Ponting (48 in 77 games).

Kohli has 40 wins in 68 Tests in which he led India.

The 33-year-old said that perhaps he is now spent and no longer able to give 120 percent to the job.

"I have always believed in giving my 120 percent in everything I do, and if I can't do that, I know it's not the right thing to do. I have absolute clarity in my heart and I cannot be dishonest to my team."

He hasn't had the best of relationship with BCCI of late but took the opportunity to thank the establishment in his statement.

"I want to thank the BCCI for giving me the opportunity to lead my country for such a long period of time and more importantly to all the teammates who bought into the vision, I had for the team from day



Kohli was dealing with one controversy after another as he was recently removed as ODI captain by the BCCI after he decided to step down at Twenty20 captain. His decision to quit as Test skipper has come at a time when his relation with the BCCI is so strained that he preferred to announce his decision on social media.



one and never gave up in any situation," he said.

He didn't forget to thank Ravi Shastri and MS Dhoni for their contribution.

"You guys have made this journey so memorable and beautiful. To Ravi bhai and the support group who were the engine behind this vehicle that moved us upwards in Test cricket consistently, you all have played a massive role in bringing this vision to life."

"Lastly, a big thank you to MS Dhoni who believed in me as a captain and found me to be an able individual who could take Indian cricket forward," he signed off.

Stunned cricketing fraternity lauds India's most successful Test captain.

Virat Kohli's unexpected decision to quit Test captaincy stunned the cricketing world, which lauded the Indian star batter for taking his team to new heights.

Kohli ended his seven-year reign as India's most successful Test captain with memorable series wins in England and Australia being the highlight.

"Although I also am shocked by @imVkohli sudden decision, I respect his call. I can only applaud him for what he has done for world cricket & India. Easily one of the most aggressive and fittest players India has had. Hope he'd continue

to shine for India as a player," tweeted former teammate Suresh Raina.

Kohli took India to the top of world rankings and made them a formidable force in all conditions.

"When Virat took over as Test captain, India winning a test overseas was an achievement, now if India lose an overseas test series it is an upset. And that's how far he has taken Indian cricket forward,

and that will be his legacy. Congratulations on successful reign," wrote former India opener Wasim Jaffer. The great Virender Sehwag wrote:

Many Congratulations #ViratKohli on an outstanding career as India's Test Captain. Stats don't lie & he was not only the most successful Indian Test Captain but one of the most successful in the world. Can be very proud @imVkohli & looking forward to watch u dominate with the bat."

"It's always an honour to lead the dynamic Indian team. And the decision to step down is an emotional heavy moment. A journey well travelled," added former India skipper Mohamad Azharuddin.

Former India pacer Irfan Pathan wrote: "Whenever the talk of Indian cricket captains will arise in test cricket @imVkohli's name will be up there, not only for results but the kind of impact he had as a captain. Thank you #ViratKohli."

Shubman Gill likely to be middle-order enforcer



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The supremely-talented Punjab batter Shubman Gill will lend solidity to the Indian middle-order when a major reshuffle is expected to force struggling Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane out of the Test team.

The reshuffle is likely to happen in the wake of India's shock 1-2 defeat against an unfancied South Africa.

India's next Test assignment is a two-match series against Sri Lanka, starting February 25 in Bengaluru and at least two middle-order slots will be up for grabs.

Rohit Sharma is expected to be fit

for that Test series and will take up his opening slot alongside KL Rahul.

Gill has mostly played as an opener but once he recovers from his shin injury and makes himself available, it is expected that both team management and the selectors will pick him as a specialist middle-order batter.

Pujara and Rahane's exit from the national side is certain. They can only save their places if coach Rahul Dravid puts his foot down and asks the selection committee to give the out-of-form duo one last chance.

But if that happens, it is understandably going to cause a lot of heartburn to all the deserving youngsters, who might feel severely let-down for not getting the break at the right moment in their respective careers.

"I think both Pujara and Rahane will be dropped from the team for the Sri Lanka series. Shreyas Iyer and Hanuma Vihari will both play," Sunil Gavaskar said while commenting on India-South Africa series.

"We'll have to see who plays at number three. Hanuma Vihari may take Pujara's place and Shreyas Iyer could be number five in place of Rahane, but we will have to see. Nevertheless, I think there will certainly be two spots up for grabs against Sri Lanka," Gavaskar was also heard saying.

Australia, Sri Lanka register wins on day one of U-19 World Cup



PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

Australia and Sri Lanka logged their first points at the U-19 World Cup after registering comfortable victories over West Indies and Scotland, respectively, on the opening day here.

While Australia notched up a six-wicket win over West Indies, Sri Lanka beat Scotland by 40 runs in two Group D matches on Friday.

A disciplined Australian bowling unit first bundled out hosts West Indies for a paltry 169 and then returned to overhaul the target, scoring 170 for four in 44.5 overs with Teague Wyllie hitting a 129-ball 86, studded with eight

hits to the fence.

For WI, skipper Ackeem Auguste top-scored with a 67-ball 57.

In the other match, Sri Lanka, opting to bat, were all out for 218 in 45.2 overs but their bowling unit led by Dunith Wellalage (5/27) rose to the occasion to bundle out Scotland for 178 with 8 balls to spare.

Opting to bat after winning the toss, the West Indies were off to a disastrous start as they found themselves reeling at 12 for three in the sixth over at the Providence Stadium, with pacer Tom

Whitney and leg-spinner William Salzmann doing the damage. Auguste joined wicket-

keeper Rivaldo Clarke (37 off 42 balls) in the middle and the two stitched together a partnership of 95 runs for the fourth wicket, steadying the innings in the process.

However, the home team suffered another collapse following the dismissal of Clarke by Indian-origin spinner Nivethan Radhakrishnan (3/48) in the 22nd over.

Radhakrishnan struck two more blows, sending back Anderson Mahase and Johann Layne in quick succession to leave the West Indies at 131 for eight in only the 32nd over.

Cooper Connolly, who is leading the Australian team in the age-group tournament, too bagged three wickets including the significant one of Auguste, after which the hosts struggled to recover.

Opening the Australian bowling, Whitney too, returned impressive figures of 3/20 in 8.1 overs.

Batting at number nine, McKenny Clarke struck 29 off 35 balls, with the help of three sixes and two fours to stretch the innings and add some valuable runs to the West Indies total.

Indian women's cricket to quarantine in Mumbai ahead of WC departure



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The World Cup-bound Indian women's cricket team will assemble in Mumbai on Sunday for a week of quarantine before its travel to New Zealand.

The players had gathered in Dehradun recently for team bonding and youngsters in the team were also assigned tasks to develop leadership skills. The 15-squad members and three reserves have now been asked to report to Mumbai where they will isolate for a week. The team is expected to depart for New Zealand on January 24 and the players will have to undergo another quarantine upon arrival.

India play a five-match series and one off T20 against hosts New Zealand beginning February 11 before the ODI World Cup in March-April.

The team management wanted a week long training camp before departure but it could not be arranged due to rising COVID-19 cases across the country. India reached the final of the 2017 edition giving a massive boost to women's cricket in the country. The Mithali Raj-led squad is expected to go all the way this time.

Seasoned names like Shikha Pandey, Jemimah Rodrigues and Punam Raut were dropped from the World Cup squad, triggering a controversy.

Sen, Chirag-Satwik enter final, Sindhu out of title race



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

World championship bronze medallist Lakshya Sen entered his maiden World Tour Super 500 summit clash on Saturday with a come-from-behind win over Malaysia's Ng Tze Yong at the Yonex-Sunrise India Open, here.

Third seed Sen, ranked 17 in the world, will face reigning world champion Loh Kean Yew of Singapore in the summit clash on Sunday in a repeat of Dutch Open final last year.

The 20-year-old from Almora, who had joined his mentor Prakash Padukone, B Sai Praneeth and Kidambi Srikanth as a medallist at the World championships last month, notched up a 19-21 21-16 21-12 win over the world number 60 Yong in a thrilling semifinal clash.

"It is a good feeling to play my first super 500 final at my home country. The first game was pretty close, I did some errors which cost me. But I kept my calm in the second and third game and managed to pull out," Sen said after the match.

Loh, seeded fifth, was given a walkover in the other semifinals by Canada's Brian Yang after developing a sore throat and headache.

Sen will be itching to set the record straight after losing the Dutch Open final to Loh. Overall, the duo has a 2-2 head-to-head record with Sen losing two of the last three meetings.

"Both of us are playing well, it will be a good match tomorrow and I am really looking forward to playing him," Sen said about his final clash.

Both shuttlers showed their attacking prowess during the last four clash.

Sen made his opponent move across the court with his returns and used his smashes to good effect to open up a four-point lead at 10-6 after being 2-4 down initially.

The Indian entered the interval at 11-8 after Yong went wide.

After the break, Sen came up with some stiff smashes to bother the Malaysian but he couldn't sustain the pressure as Yong made it 14-14.

The Malaysian left Sen

wrong-footed with a precise net shot to take the lead.

Yong then won a video referral to take a two point lead at 16-14.

Sen controlled the proceeding thereafter to claw back at 17-17.

However, Yong grabbed two game points when a return of serve from Sen went wide and sealed it comfortably.

Yong carried the momentum in the second game, opening up a 4-1 advantage. Sen did well to erase the deficit but Young ensured he had his nose ahead at the break.

Resuming at 9-11, Sen continued his pursuit to turn things around.

He drew parity at 13-13 and crafted his way to a 19-16 lead with a powerful drive away from the forehand of his opponent. A net error from Yong gave Sen four game points and he sealed it when Yong again erred at the net.

In the decider, Sen made a confident start, leading 4-1 and then reached 9-5 with another cross court jump smash. He played another precision shot at the baseline and with Yong going wide, Sen entered the interval with a massive six-point advantage.

Sen went on a smash hitting spree thereafter to quickly jump to a 18-12 lead. He grabbed eight match points with a drop and sealed it without much ado after his opponent went to net again.

Sen had won two Super 100 titles -- Dutch Open and SaarLorLux Open -- besides three international challenge at Belgium, Scotland and Bangladesh in 2019 before COVID-19 somewhat halted his progress.

England lose openers, trails Australia by 269 runs on Day 2



AP ■ HOBART

England's top-order batting woes continued in the Ashes after Australia's tailenders led them to 303 all out in its first innings in the fifth day-night test on Saturday.

Rory Burns, recalled for the final test, was run-out for a duck while going for a needless run and Travis Head took a sharp catch from Zak Crawley at forward short leg as England reached 34-2 at the dinner break on the second day.

England, which has already lost the Ashes after losing the first three

test matches and drawing at Sydney, still trails by 269 runs with David Malan batting on 9 and captain Joe Root not out on 3.

In the second over of the tourist's innings, Marnus Labuschagne's direct hit throw caught Burns short of his crease after Crawley called for a single which was never there.

Crawley was then brilliantly caught by Travis Head reaching high above his head for 18 as the batsman got a big inside edge onto his pad which Head claimed on the second attempt from a sharp Pat Cummins delivery.

Nathan Lyon (31) had earlier scored half of the runs Australia added in the afternoon after resuming at 241-6.

Mark Wood (3-115) took two quick wickets of Mitchell Starc (3) and Cummins (2) but Lyon hit the fast bowler for three sixes and a square driven boundary much to the frustration of England.

Alex Carey played onto his stumps from Chris Woakes (2-64) after scoring 24 off 60 balls, but Lyon added 23 runs for the last wicket with Scott Boland (10 not out).

Djokovic back in immigration detention in Australia

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic was reported to be back in immigration detention Saturday after his legal challenge to avoid being deported from Australia for being unvaccinated for COVID-19 was moved to a higher court. A Federal Court hearing has been scheduled for Sunday, a day before the men's No. 1-ranked tennis player and nine-time Australian Open champion was due to

begin his title defense at the first Grand Slam tennis tournament of the year.


Police closed down a lane behind the building where Djokovic's lawyers are based and two vehicles exited the building mid-afternoon local time on Saturday. In television footage, Djokovic could be seen wearing a face mask in the back of a vehicle near an immigration detention hotel.

The Australian

Associated Press reported that Djokovic was back in detention. He spent four nights confined to a hotel near downtown Melbourne before being released last Monday when he won a court challenge on procedural grounds against his first visa cancellation. Immigration Minister Alex Hawke on Friday blocked the 34-year-old Serb's visa, which was originally revoked when he landed at a Melbourne airport on Jan. 5. Deportation from Australia can lead to a three-year ban on returning to the country, although that may be waived, depending on the circumstances. Djokovic has

acknowledged that his travel declaration was incorrect because it failed to indicate that he had been in multiple countries over the two weeks before his arrival in Australia. He has won the past three Australian Opens, part of his overall Grand Slam haul of 20 championships. He is tied with Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer for the most by a man in history.

In a post on social media Wednesday that constituted his most extensive public comments yet on the episode, Djokovic blamed his agent for checking the wrong box on the form.

talktime

SANJAY MISHRA

The actor, who is known for his roles in movies like Waah Zindagi, Masaan, Ankhon Dekhi, will now be seen in Dinesh Yadav's Turtle, which will air on January 21 on &pictures at 9 am and on Zee Cinema HD at 8 pm. He speaks with Supriya Ramesh about the movie among other things

'I don't want my work to be like the breeze that came and went away'



■ **What is Turtle about?**
It's about water crisis. We wanted to show the viewers that in the coming years, a huge water crisis is awaiting us. It has already started in a few places, water is scarce. We need to understand the value of water as it's available readily but not easily. Water is on sale in many forms but we should not take it for granted. I have done two films about climate change and water crisis, *Kadvi Hawa* and *Turtle*.

■ **What is your role in the film?**
Ashok Choudhury is my producer and this is his grandfather's story. He was a man of integrity and used to strongly address the issues of his village and move ahead to solve it by bringing in water supply. The character is the grandfather. Even before the story was ready, the grandfather was set to be a pivotal role. Ashok ji gave me his grandfather's kurta to wear as well.

■ **What made you say yes to the role?**
After doing movies like *Guthlee* and *Kadvi Hawa*, I felt self-satisfied as an actor. At the end of the day, I have a responsibility of sending a message to the society. I want people to see my work and say that I was an actor who enjoyed comic roles and then, when it came to do a serious job, I did that in spades and taught a lesson or two in the process. That was my main motive for doing this film. I am very lucky that I'm able to do such awesome projects and people actually write stories with my role in mind.

■ **Can the audience relate to the movie during these times?**



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The audience that drinks water, they can relate to this movie. It will go from a mother telling her children to drink water properly everyday to asking her children, "How dare you drink this much water, don't you know we can't afford it?" I think that this is an issue which is prevalent everywhere, not just India. Everyone can relate to this movie.

■ **You are well known for comedic roles. Is that your favourite genre?**
Yes! Why not? People prefer me in comedic roles. I love it to another level and I'm still doing them. I'm very much into it. Even the upcoming Rohit Shetty film, *Cirkus* and Anees Bazmee's *Bhool Bhulaiya* are comedy films. All these films will always be there with two different types of audiences but I'm very glad to have them appreciating my work.

■ **What have been the challenges so far?**
One huge challenge for me was to contemplate if my work would be worth registering. I don't want my work to be like the breeze that came and went away. No matter how small my appearance is in a project, I have this thought in my head that if my performance was memorable? Its a challenge for me and the characters I play. I know how to do my job but I want it to be a mesmerising one.

■ **What is that one role you will always cherish?**
As the film is made or after it's released, I make sure that I enjoy the movie set. I always think that my current movie or my next movie will be my favorite one. Otherwise, I love my role in *Kaamyaaab* and I relate to that movie more than my other projects.

CookSmart

Are you a beginner and just started to develop interest in cooking? Here are a few tips and tricks that you should know.

Always read the entire recipe properly. This will help you to understand the steps to follow in a proper order. It will also help you to know what ingredients you need and what prep is required before you actually get down to the cooking.

Ensure that the pot or the pan you use is of the correct size. Too small and the food would not cook properly. If you don't have a proper size, cook in batches.

If there is one kitchen tool that is a must — a good sharp knife. A good knife can make cutting so much easier and save time. Invest in a good knife.

Ensure that you purchase quality ingredients. Food tastes better if the ingredients are fresh and of good quality.



HomeSweetHome

Decorating or redoing the home can be a lot of fun. At the same time, it can be a daunting task. There are so many decisions to take. What colour to paint the walls? What furniture to buy? What theme one should go with? The list is endless.

A few simple guidelines can help.

Never start decorating by painting the walls first. Choose your furniture, the theme and what carpet to put. Once you have stacked up the items, then choose the wall paint.

Next comes lighting. No room is complete without a light fixture. According to many designers, no room is complete without at least three light fixtures. Living room and bedroom, they opine should have at least three light sources in addition to the overhead light.

Statement-making pieces can take a home from simple to striking one. But there is a rule of thumb — put a single showstopper in every room.



Masterstroke

King C. Gillette Soft Beard Balm is infused with rich cocoa butter, argan oil and shea butter deeply conditions, leaving your beard feeling soft and smooth. This easy-to-spread balm smoothens out the rough ends and curls, ensuring a fashionable yet sleek look.

To give your beard proper nourishment and care follow it up with beard oil, which is infused with argan, jojoba, avocado, macadamia, seed and almond oils to soften your beard and for better beard growth.

Transparent Shave Gel, which is infused with argan and white tea extracts will actively protect your skin during the shave and give visibility while styling your beard.

Beard Wash consists of coconut water, argan oil and avocado oil, leaving your beard and skin feeling fresh and clean every day.



NatureTalk

The Zebra plant may be sensitive to over and under watering. But it is pretty looking and can enhance the look of the area wherever you put. Here is how one can take care of it.

Keep the soil consistently moist throughout the active growing season. Allow the soil to dry out a bit between waterings in winters. Use a potting medium that drains well and keep it moist, not wet.

The zebra plant thrives in bright, indirect light. Use a liquid houseplant fertilizer once every one-two weeks during the spring and summer.



IT IS ALL ABOUT DRAMA

Grab your snacks and choose a comfortable spot on the sofa because here are five TV shows that will make your lockdown weekends entertaining, says SUNDAY PIONEER



ZIDDI DIL MAANE NA

Sony SAB
*ing: Shaalien Malhotra, Kaveri Priyam, Kunal Karan Kapoor, Diljot Chhabra, Aditya Deshmukh and Simple Kaul

It is a romance-driven, youthful show that will revolve around an ensemble of characters - a young team of trained and civilian volunteers who meet at the Parakram SAF (SPL. ACTION FORCE) Base Camp in search of fulfilling their aspirations while figuring out a way to fit in and survive at the camp.



WAGLE KI DUNIYA

Sony SAB
*ing: Sumeet Raghavan, Pariva Pranati, Aanjjan Srivastav and Bharti Achrekar

is a warm, slice-of-life story about Rajesh Wagle - a simple, middle-class family man, who aspires for a better lifestyle for himself and his family, yet is hesitant to take risks and move with the times. Wagle Ki Duniya celebrates the aspirations, new age stories and dilemmas of today's middle class with humor and positivity. The show emphasises that family values and togetherness is a timeless virtue and brings out the importance of near and dear ones especially at trying times like these.



BHABHI GHAR PAR HAI

&TV
*ing: Shubhangi Atre, Rohitash Gaud, Neha Pendse and Asif Sheikh

This comedy show revolves around two neighbouring couples, the Mishras and the Tiwaris, in which the husbands are attracted to each other's wives and attempt various ultimately unsuccessful and hilarious techniques to impress them



BAAL SHIV

&TV
*ing: Aan Tiwari, Mouli Ganguly, Siddharth Arora, Shrivya Pathania, Krrip Kapur Suri, Praneet Bhatt among others

Mahadev Ki Undekhi Gatha While there have been several fascinating shows on Lord Shiva and his various roop, one story that has not been shown before on Indian television is the story of his Baal Roop. Aptly positioned as Mahadev Ki Undekhi Gatha, the show Baal Shiv depicts the mythical Katha of the mother and son, Mahasati Anusuya and Baal Shiv and their eternal bond. Considered Infinite and the Unborn, Lord Shiva had taken many avatars, but he had never experienced childhood and mother's love. However, post his marriage with Devi Parvati, Mahadev takes the form of a child to fulfill Devi Parvati's wish and becomes the dutiful son of Mahasati Anusuya.

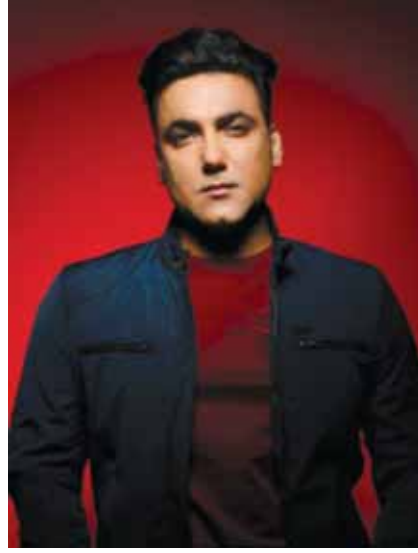
'I eat, breathe and live movies'

NAREN KUMAR, who makes his debut with Switchh, speaks with SHALINI SAKSENA about Day 1 of shoot, the fun at the sets and the good response he is getting

❖ **Was Day 1 of shoot nerve racking?**
Yes, definitely. Day 1 was nerve racking. I was having jitters on my first day of the shoot. But it was also a dream come true. It was a moment that I had been waiting for. I had been waiting for this moment forever. And it was finally here, it was bound to bring in plenty of jitters. Facing the camera for the very first time brought nervousness. But when I stood in front of the camera, it was an amazing experience. The entire team was so helpful including the co-star who were extremely supportive.

❖ **How did you get into acting?**
It was my childhood dream to be an actor. I knew that acting was my calling. I never looked at any other profession. I just knew that I would fit here, in this industry, perfectly. With this project, my dream turned into a reality. I want to thank God and of course, the entire team for making it come true. Even as a kid I used to watch movie. In fact, I was fascinated by the world of cinema. I just love movies; they are my universe. I eat, breathe and live movies. They are my universe.

❖ **Did you have fun off-screen?**
Life should always be fun. That's my




mantra. If there is no fun in life what is the point. One should always enjoy things in life— be it on-screen or off-screen. One's motto is to enjoy every aspect of life and keep working hard. There is so much to improve and do now in the future.

❖ **Why choose a web film to make your debut?**
Actually, the project was supposed to be a theatrical release. Unfortunately, the present pandemic has thrown everything out of gear. So few films are now releasing in theatres. The makers didn't want to wait and we decided that OTT was the best way forward. Today, a release on the OTT grabs more eyeballs. Also, the reach is wider. This is good. There were so many big banner movies that released on the OTT. This platform caters to wide taste of the people. The audience is so mature now. They are looking for different content. OTT offers that.

❖ **Did you expect this kind of response?**
I have taken every response as another step in the learning. It is important to take every thing that comes your way in way of response to improve your craft. The bad and the good, keep you grounded. You don't take things for granted. It just makes you want to work harder in the future.

❖ **What next?**
There are couple of projects in discussion. As of now I have signed one web series and a feature film.



ney has been full of determination and she was honoured to be the first Southeast Asian model to feature twice on the cover page of L'Officiel Latvian Edition in Eastern Europe. Ava has chosen this enchanting profession and worked tremendously to become the known face. Her journey has been showcased by the various videos and posts that she keeps sharing on social media.

The global modelling industry is back into action after the months of stagnation.

the pioneer agenda

FROM THE INSIDE

Saga of a perfect fraud

Sree Iyer's book takes the reader through myriad corruption charges, scams & illegalities that are linked with one another

2



4

Expand your vision

The most glaring limiting tendency in large majority is a narrow vision. It limits you to self-defined beliefs & perceptions

Once you start giving people that look into your life, then they just want more and more
— Lily-Rose Depp



2022 will certainly be an exciting year for Artificial Intelligence with more funding, government incentivised research and tech companies accelerating growth in this space, writes SPRIHA BISWAS

AI TRENDS FOR 2022



Andrew Yan-Tak Ng, a computer scientist and technology entrepreneur who focuses on machine learning and Artificial Intelligence (AI), said 'AI is the new electricity.'

In a world where we are all becoming increasingly dependent on technology, it would be hard to think of any industry that is untouched by AI. Just as electricity transformed almost every single aspect of our lives a 100 years ago with its incredible capabilities and convenience, in a similar manner AI is now being embedded in our daily experiences. From unlocking your phone using facial recognition software to making recommendations for restaurants that will be close by based off what you like to eat! Even when you chat with a customer care chatbot, you are literally talking with AI. We have seen phenomenal development in this space within Machine Learning, Natural Language Processing, Knowledge Management, and Pattern Recognition in the last few years, bringing more predictability, efficiency, and growth in conventional industries such as banking, healthcare, data processing as well as new industries such as content distribution platforms. The surge and adoption of AI in industries are now becoming a norm and are going through explosive growth.

At the global average level of adoption and absorption implied by our simulation, AI has the potential to deliver additional global economic activity of around \$13 trillion by 2030, or about 16 percent higher cumulative GDP compared with today. This amounts to 1.2 percent additional GDP growth per year. According to PwC's 'Global Artificial Intelligence Study: Exploiting the AI Revolution' to make this a reality, there must be a broad and overarching strategic investment from various countries in different types of AI technology. Improvements in labor productivity will drive the initial GDP positive numbers as firms seek to "augment" the productivity of their labour force with AI technologies and to automate some tasks and roles. The study also shows that 45% of total economic gains by 2030 will come from product enhancements, stimulating consumer demand. This is because AI will drive greater product variety, with increased personalization, attractiveness, and affordability over time.

In 2021, we saw some interesting breakthroughs such as Open AI's launch of DALL-E, a multimodal AI system that can generate images from text, the US Department of Homeland security using AI to recognise masked faces, Tesla's claim to build an AI humanoid that can perform repetitive tasks, IBM's AI service to assist with climate change analysis, DeepMind's announcement of Player of Games — an AI that can perform both perfect information games (like Chess) and imperfect games (like Poker) and the most recent Facebook's announcement of Metaverse — a multi-modal virtual reality uni-

verse. Certainly, this breadth and pace of development and breakthroughs in AI should be expected in 2022. Here are some key trends we will see in 2022:

AI AUTOMATION

The AI revolution is upon us, and it's only just begun. We're going to see an increasing demand for physical, manual labour as machines take over routine tasks that are now done by humans in industries such as healthcare or customer support; this will lead many people with those skill sets to have minimal employment opportunities because their job has been automated into software programs which can be accessed remotely through any device with internet access — no matter where you're located! To stay competitive during these changing times workers in the years to come will need to constantly update their skills to work alongside machines in the new AI-driven workplace. Social, emotional, and higher cognitive skills such as creativity and critical thinking will become more relevant professional skills.

VOICE & LANGUAGE DRIVEN INTELLIGENCE

Last few years we have seen significant advancement in Speech Recognition, Natural Language Processing, and Speech Synthesis, where machines can understand and speak in human language. Large dataset language models such as GPT-3 by Open AI, (the most advanced and largest language model ever built) have shown the capability of AI in generating human-like speech. We are getting very close to a stage where bots can respond with human-like intelligence evident with their choice of words and prosody (the rhythm, stress, pitch of speaking based on context) According to recent reports, AI will save 8 billion USD per annum by 2022 for Customer Service Sector. Other industries where Voice AI will create a wave is Healthcare, where advanced diagnostics will become more accessible through AI. Today, Voice Biomarkers-based AI can detect Covid with 80% accuracy! Similar advancements will be seen in detecting other pulmonary diseases and mental health diseases such as depression, anxiety, and Alzheimer's.

AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES

Over the last 2 years of the pandemic, we have seen a massive shift of purchases moving from offline to online stores which require massive feet on the ground. Hence there is a need to invest in the development and deployment of the next generation of delivery vehicles that are completely autonomous be it long-haul trucks or last-mile delivery vans. Motionial, the \$4 billion autonomous driving joint venture formed by automaker Hyundai and Aptiv, announced a partnership with Uber Technologies Inc to deliver Uber Eats food orders using self-driving

“OUT OF THE 5000 AI PATENTS FILED OVER THE LAST DECADE, 94% WERE FROM THE LAST 5 YEARS, OUT OF WHICH 60% OF THEM ORIGINATED IN INDIA. COMPUTER VISION AND NLP ARE THE LEADING SEGMENTS WITH 50% OF AI PATENTS. THERE HAS BEEN A FIVE-FOLD INCREASE IN VC FUNDING OF INDIAN AI FUNDS FROM \$200 MILLION IN 2015 TO OVER \$1 BILLION IN 2019”

vehicles. The service will kick off in early 2022 in Santa Monica, California.

Amazon has already started delivering packages with drones and testing autonomous vehicles on road. There is also a big data revolution in the automotive industry where these autonomous vehicles can gather tons of information about their passengers and surroundings, which can then be used for different purposes such as providing personalized services. The AI-powered automotive market is expected to grow up to 35 percent by 2026.

METaverse EXPANSION

Metaverse is a virtual reality platform that uses speech API, computer vision, natural language understanding to simulate real-world environments and characters, where humans can operate in their life-like avatars and collaborate and communicate with each other. The end of 2021 saw major headlines from Facebook, Nvidia, and Amazon announcing their ventures into this future of digital space. With the pandemic-driven shift to a digital world, Metaverse is expected to see growth outside gaming and media. Microsoft for example is building a version for virtual team meetings. The fashion brand H&M launched a metaverse store. Metaverse this year will become more accessible to mainstream users, and we will see a lot more experiential movies, digital stores, social networks, and digital tourism frontiers open up.

LOW CODE/ NO CODE AI

While every industry is assessing how to leverage AI to enhance their business, there are proportionately very less people who understand the depths of this technology and how it can be used efficiently. There are even fewer people today who can develop AI-based solutions for their organizations. The talent gap is a real challenge that would lead to more organisations looking for low-code/no-code deployments for AI/ML solutions for quicker turnarounds. While the machine learning models will be developed by a handful of experts, the implementation and utilization will be opened for the masses.

HUMAN FACTORS & ETHICS IN AI

With time, artificial intelligence (AI) will enter our lives in increasingly novel ways. This is not only true for professional applications, where technology already plays a major role in many fields of science and industry. What is often overlooked, however, is that intelligent machines not only find their way into individual situations or human-machine interaction contexts; increasingly also into very intimate settings, by predicting human decisions.

India has made rapid leaps in the AI space. Out of the 5000 AI patents filed over the last decade, 94% were from the last 5 years, out of which 60% of them originated in India. Computer Vision and NLP are the leading seg-

ments with 50% of AI patents. There has been a five-fold increase in VC funding of Indian AI funds from \$200 million in 2015 to over \$1 billion in 2019. While initial days we saw a wave of smart personal assistants (chatbots) in consumer electronics, today we see more complex use cases in IOT, Robotics, AR & VR being adopted at a wider scale. Our countries education institutes are also gearing up for to nurture talent in this space. At the beginning of 2022, IIT Madras incubated startup GUVI partnered with AICTE (All India Council of Technical Education) to offer free Python and AI courses online to 1 million kids from low-income groups and families

2022 will certainly be an exciting year for AI with more funding, government incentivised research and tech companies accelerating growth in this space. In the next decade, one hopes that additional curriculums are developed that teach Artificial Intelligence not just in engineering colleges, but that is also aimed at children at an elementary level from school just as we teach other subjects such as Physics, Chemistry and Math. There must be a concentrated effort towards this as in the next decade as the knowledge and skill in AI will become a must-have background for even non-software professionals. Having a conceptual understanding of AI and how it works will enable more people to contribute to its growth through new ideas and use cases.

As early as 2014, Researchers at the University of Glasgow were able to demonstrate how machines could understand our minds better than our partners as early as 2014! By merging existing technology with mind-reading apps to understand intent or thinking processes, autocorrect and speech recognition software will be able to achieve 100 percent accuracy.

Concerns concerning AI's security will continue to be prevalent. There has been a surge in government interest in artificial intelligence and security, as well as legislative recommendations. Many of these policies, on the other hand, place a greater focus on plans to fund more AI research and train more people in this sector, which will ultimately boost economic growth and creativity through the development of AI technologies, rather than on AI security. The importance of transparency, testing, and accountability for algorithms and their developers has been emphasised by countries that have proposed or implemented security-focused AI policies, though few have gotten to the point of operationalizing these policies or figuring out how they would work in practise.

To protect people's interests in this AI-driven environment, governance policies and cyber laws in India and globally as well must undergo major consideration and dramatic reform.

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Primacy of OBC: When UP ‘castes’ its vote

Caste is in the DNA of Indian democratic politics and the influence of an assorted group of politically awakened castes within the Scheduled Caste and the Other Backward Class (OBC) brackets is profound in determining election results. Therefore, any change in the caste equation sets off a chain reaction by political parties. Uttar Pradesh is witnessing a similar political upheaval triggered by the defection of OBC Ministers and leaders from the Yogi Adityanath Cabinet and the BJP. It has ensued into an avalanche of political manoeuvring by the BJP and other Opposition parties since the OBC vote matters to all parties as the group constitutes a little over one-third of the total vote. Moreover, the rebellion led to the speculation in certain quarters — a section of media and political observers — that the OBC leaders’ exodus portends the end of the BJP rule in UP.

The speculation has been fed by the perception about the ill-treatment of the OBC Ministers who claim to be the sole representative of their castes. If the assertion is given any credence, these OBC leaders found the Yogi Government a stumbling block in realising their “personal” and political aspirations. But this is not surprising. The BJP is perhaps the only party in India where leaders don’t grow bigger than the party or the Government. Moreover, no other leaders are allowed to have a unbridled sway under the regime of Narendra Modi at the Centre and Yogi in UP. However, if one examines the policy decisions and the Government outreach, there is no evidence of discrimination against the OBC or any castes in this group.

The second reason for the exodus too points towards the perception that the “Kshatriya” Chief Minister may not be able to retain majority in the forthcoming election as he has been unable to even retain the confidence of non-Kshatriya upper caste voters. And it resulted into a storm of exodus by political “weather scientists” who invariably grab any opportunity to



Devotees take holy dips and pray on the banks of the River Sarayu on a cold and foggy morning in Ayodhya on January 5, 2022

AP

ride the changing wave. Swami Prasad Maurya is one of such proud weather scientists. He is a self-proclaimed clairvoyant who sees his political future will be secured in shifting loyalty to the Samajwadi Party (SP).

However, even if the defections are about political opportunism, it doesn’t augur well for the BJP, particularly Yogi, as it sends out a hapless signal to the voters about the breaking up of the Hindu vote, mostly comprising the OBC besides a section of upper castes and SCs. The speculation also takes a dim view of the sincerity of the “sabka saath” sankalp of Modi’s BJP.

The third reason again is the perception about SP chief Akhilesh Yadav emerging as a formidable challenge against the BJP from the Opposition camp, which has no other serious player as the Congress, despite gaining some lost ground under the stewardship

of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, is unable to shed its image as a spent force. And the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is no longer in the reckoning.

Also as it is a general understanding among the parties that no single party has the wherewithal to give a successful challenge to the BJP, the defectors are pinning all their hopes on Akhilesh who seems to fit the bill. However, the divided Opposition, with some trying to revive the UPA and others the Third Front, doesn’t arm Akhilesh sufficiently against the might of the BJP despite the latter struggling to do some damage control after the exodus of OBC leaders.

The centrality of the OBC in electoral politics is undisputed but caste equations even within the group in UP is very intricate. The post-Mandal era has seen the meteoric rise in the electoral prospects of the OBC politics, but these parties

have been confined to regional pockets. The OBC vote has been sliced by smaller single-caste based parties in UP, like those of OP Rajbhar and Anupriya Patel in their area of influence. While the SP does Yadav-led OBC politics retaining the Muslim vote, the BSP has Jatavs at its base. This is because unlike Muslims and SCs, the OBC is not that homogenous political entity. Caste leaders are, therefore, subsets of that the universal OBC category. As the regional “secular” parties could not capture the whole of the OBC vote they compensate the loss by luring the expedient Muslim vote. However, the BJP, which took birth as a Hindu nationalist party, consolidated the socially heterogeneous OBC as a political entity at the national level and gradually it became the backbone of its Hindu vote. And that is why the BJP despite doing the Hindu nationalist

politics which seemingly stands in contrast to caste politics tries to consolidate the OBC vote — the core of the Hindu vote — and tries to fulfill their aspirations.

Therefore, if there is any truth in the speculation that the OBC voters have lost trust in the BJP, it certainly is the obituary for the party in UP. However, no matter how strong is the speculation, it is too early to say how the defection by a few disgruntled OBC leaders will translate into the exodus of OBC vote from the BJP. It is also interesting to note that these leaders have accused the Yogi Government of ignoring the aspiration of not only the OBC but also the youth, farmers and traders. Though in the electoral politics, the social truth is nothing but perception among the masses that shapes their preferences at polling booths, to gauge public perception is not a cakewalk.

Perceptions keep on changing in the event of competing narratives, and one should not forget that the BJP tops the art of weaving narratives.

Moreover, the electoral outcome of the changing circumstances in UP will depend on how the SCs and Muslims take the bait offered by other parties. As for Muslims, their vote is almost certain to go to any promising party or candidate that is the main contender against the BJP. If the whole of Muslim vote is not collected by a party that also grabs the OBC vote, the Muslim vote loses its strength to influence election results. That is the trickiest part of managing the Muslim vote when there are many so-called secular parties in the fray. And this is an area of concern for Akhilesh.

Second, there is no certainty if the exodus of OBC leaders will translate into the

exodus of OBC votes from the BJP because, first some OBC leaders are infamous for shifting loyalty at the time of election after enjoying their stint in Government for almost full term. Also the exodus of leaders doesn’t always predict a loss. We have an example in West Bengal. The media speculation of the BJP gaining ground had triggered a similar exodus by TMC leaders, but the election results proved all wrong.

During the last five years of the Yogi rule, the public perception is that Maurya has retained his influence on the OBC in the eastern UP, but that part of Uttar Pradesh has the constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi whose charisma has not faded particularly after delivering the Ayodhya pledge. Also the claim that Maurya is the undisputed OBC leader in the region was shattered when Maurya could not help his son win Assembly election in 2017 despite a clear BJP wave. But at the same time, the fact is history and till the BJP weaves a narrative with these facts to mould a perception that these OBC leaders quit the BJP not for the cause of their community but for their own interests, the loss for the BJP is certain.

While political pundits predict the outcome, they will be left with egg on their faces if they discount the possibility of the BJP capitalising on the Modi magic. Interestingly neither the BJP Government in UP or at the Centre has taken any policy decision which ignores the aspiration of the OBC. Instead the recent decision of the Centre to extend the OBC quota in the all-India category of the NEET is an example which the BJP can employ to weave a pro-OBC narrative.

As the Covid third wave is about to peak, the possibility of the Election Commission allowing physical election rallies is high, and then all eyes will be on Modi. Wait till the polling day before predicting any election outcome as nothing is impossible in politics.

(The writer is Associate Editor & News Editor, the Pioneer, New Delhi)

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SWARN KUMAR ANAND

PERSPECTIVE

Industrialisation in Tamil Nadu: Some worrisome trends



ANISH GUPTA



MOUSUMI BISWAS



RAHUL RANJAN

Tamil Nadu is regarded as one of the most developed States in India. The noticeable aspect of this State has been inclusive growth. In other words, economic growth and human development have been the quintessential features of this region. Tamil Nadu has one of the lowest “Gini scores” among Indian States, which indicates the lowest income or wealth inequality in this region. It shows that the distribution of wealth and resources in Tamil Nadu has been comparatively better than in many other Indian States. This is a remarkable feature of the economic growth in Tamil Nadu in geographical or spatial distribution of the same.

Undoubtedly, the State of Tamil Nadu has been consistently performing better compared to the average of whole of India, and continues to occupy the status of one of the most developed States in the country by making impressive contributions towards India’s economic growth. However, in the midst of better than all India averages in most indicators, few trends stand out as very alarming in this State.

The growth rate of Tamil Nadu’s manufacturing sector was highest among all major industrial States in the period 2000-01 to 2010-11, which stood at 8.73 per cent, and fell to 7.13 per cent during 2011-12 to 2020-21. The service sector in Tamil Nadu witnessed declining growth rate over the years. It went marginally down from 9.34 per cent in 1993-94 to 1999-00 and 9.20 per cent in 2000-01 to 2020-11.

Unfortunately, in the last decade, it saw the steepest decline (just 6.25 per cent) as compared to preceding decades.

The manufacturing sector generates the biggest number of jobs in Tamil Nadu but the share of employment in the said sector has been decreasing over the years. It plunged from 6.02 million in 1993-94 to 2.26 million in 2018-19. The construction sector provides the second largest number of employments in Tamil Nadu, and though this sector has overtaken the manufacturing sector (in terms of employment) because of rapid urbanisation, the growth in this sector is not sustainable.

This plummeting performance of the state of Tamil Nadu may be attributed to challenges related to industrial unrest. Industrial disputes hamper industrial growth and reduce the opportunity of employability.

This may also be the cause for the reduction of the number of man-days labour by the workers. In the year 2003, out of a total of 552 industrial dispute cases registered in India, 81 cases were from Tamil Nadu. In the year 2016, 102 industrial dispute cases were registered, in which 5.79 lakh workers were involved and 12.71 lakh man-days got affected.

Tamil Nadu contributed about 15 per cent of total industrial disputes in India in the year 2003 which increased to 23 per cent in 2010. When we compare Tamil Nadu’s share in industrial disputes among the seven most industrialised States (Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Combined Andhra

The plummeting performance of the State of Tamil Nadu may be attributed to challenges related to industrial unrest. The high rate of industrial and social disputes is hampering the economic growth in Tamil Nadu. Stalled projects should be resumed and the grievances of workers should be resolved promptly, otherwise the State will lose the stature that it had built up over the centuries. It will also result in skewed industrialisation where only powerful people will run the businesses and small investors will be abolished. All these issues should be noticed and taken care of by the Government in order for the State to continually prosper

Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh), then we find that it contributed about 42 per cent in the year 2003, which increased to 56.86 per cent in 2010.

Though it came down to 18.87 per cent in 2016, the damage had already been done by then. Tamil Nadu as the leading State was accounting for a sizable number of protests for various reasons.

There were protests to demand wage revision, as well as against ill-treatment and unemployment issues from different industries. Apart from these, there were also protests linked to professions such as blue-collar workers, manual labours, daily wage labours, technicians, auto engineers, Government sector jobs, sanitation workers, etc. for various issues.

Often, protests led to a law-and-order crisis which when checked stringently by the Tamil Nadu police led to even more violent outbreaks. Police firing, either to dispel the crowd or to control the situation sometimes, resulted in vehement repercussions.

The Manjolai tea estate incident is a case in point where the act of firing 2 rounds of bullets in the air, resulted in numerous deaths.

The data from 37 districts of Tamil Nadu can be broadly categorised into seven kinds of protests. The first is that of the farmers and fishermen protesting against their land being taken to be utilised for some industrial purposes, or their water bodies being targeted, or inadequate compensation

received from the Government; the second kind is the protest by residents agitating against the industries depositing waste and contaminating drinking water; the third kind of protest is similar to the second kind, except for that it is undertaken by green activists; the fourth kind of protest is by workers who are trying to reopen the stalled projects in order to resume their livelihood; the fifth is against privatisation; the sixth is due to workers coming together to demand issues related to work and social security; the seventh and the last type which is still going on is because of units closing due to the lockdown in India owing to the Covid crisis.

The high rate of industrial and social disputes is hampering the economic growth in Tamil Nadu. Stalled projects should be resumed and the grievances of workers should be resolved promptly, otherwise the state will lose the stature that it had built up over the centuries. It will also result in skewed industrialisation where only powerful people will run the businesses and small investors will be abolished. All these issues should be noticed and taken care of by the Government in order for the State to continually prosper.

(Anish Gupta and Mousumi Biswas are Assistant Professors at Delhi University and Rahul Ranjan is working with Ministry of Commerce and Industry. This article is an outcome of ICSSR-IMPRESS project titled Industrialisation and Social Unrest: A Case Study of Tamil Nadu)

