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THE UMMAH AND ITS
ISRAELI CONNECT**MONEY 10**
ECONOMIC RECOVERY YET TO
ATTAIN DURABILITY: REPORT**WORLD 11**
BLINKEN URGES UNITY TO FIGHT
'RELENTLESS' RUSSIAN AGGRESSION

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SANIA MIRZA
TO END CAREER
AFTER 2022
14 SPORT

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

PTI

lakh mark. Metro cities Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata have already peaked," Agrawal said.

Agrawal had earlier predicted that the Covid-19 third wave will peak by January end.

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

According to a new Govt advisory, individuals under-

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

The Uttar Pradesh BJP president lambasted

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

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

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

employment.

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

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

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

CAPSULE

INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES CANCEL FLIGHTS TO US

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

MALLYA FACES PROSPECT OF LOSING LONDON HOME

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

INS BLAST: ACCIDENTAL DEATH CASE REGISTERED

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Both the aircraft took off from Bengaluru airport in a



span of about five minutes.

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

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

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

Akhilesh still evasive on contesting Assembly poll

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday refused to confirm reports that he has decided to contest the February-March Uttar Pradesh election. He was also evasive when asked to specify the constituency for his poll debut in UP.

Yadav is presently MP from Azamgarh. "I will seek the permission of the people of Azamgarh if I decide to contest the election. I need to seek their permission because they elected me from there," the SP chief said.

He was replying to media questions on whether he would contest the election from a constituency in Azamgarh from where he is Lok Sabha member.



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

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Heads of Af neighbours, Modi to discuss situation

India hosting conclave in virtual mode on Jan 27

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Giving details of the forth-

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

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

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

"extended neighbourhood".

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

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

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

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

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

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

These eight Air India flights are: Delhi-New York, New York-Delhi, Delhi-Chicago, Chicago-Delhi, Delhi-San Francisco, San Francisco-Delhi, Delhi-Newark, and Newark-Delhi. "Due to deployment of the 5G communications in the USA, we will not be able to operate the following flights of January 19, 2022: AI101/102 DEL/JFK/DEL, AI173/174 DEL/SFO/DEL, AI127/126 DEL/ORD/DEL, AI191/144 BOM/EWR/BOM. Please standby for further



updates," said Air India, the only Indian carrier that flies to the US. Total three carriers - American Airlines, Delta Airlines, and Air India - currently operate direct flights between India and the US. Officials said that the main concern is that C-band frequencies being used for 5G might impact the functioning of radio altimeter on airplanes.

The equipment which basically measure the height of the aircraft above the ground uses frequencies close to C-band used for 5G.

The airplane equipment also provides data for the navigation systems. 5G is the next generation of mobile internet connection and it relies on greater use of radio signals.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

The CS of Bihar could not

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

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

PM Modi to lead BJP campaign in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the Bharatiya Janata Party's election campaign for Uttar Pradesh as the party released the list of its 30 star campaigners, excluding the mother-son duo of Maneka Gandhi and Varun Gandhi.

Besides the prime minister, the high profile list includes the names of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP national president JP Nadda, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and 26 others.

However, the mother-son duo of Maneka Gandhi and Varun Gandhi has been excluded from the list. Both have won elections many times from Sultanpur and Pilibhit in Uttar Pradesh. Of late Varun Gandhi has criticised the government policies.

The BJP released a list of 30 names who will campaign for the party's candidates in UP in the first phase of the elections.

The others in the list include Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP state president Swatantra Dev Singh, Unions ministers, Dharmendra Pradhan, Smriti Irani, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Deputy Chief Ministers Dr Dinesh Sharma and Keshav Prasad Maurya. Radha Mohan Singh and Sanjeev Balyan are also on the list. Elections to the 403 assembly constituencies in Uttar Pradesh will be held in seven phases starting February 10. The polling in Uttar Pradesh will be held on February 10, 14,

Yogi most followed leader on Twitter



Lucknow (PNS): With over 17 million followers, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has become one of the most followed leaders on micro-blogging platform Twitter.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has 15.5 million followers.

Ahead of the upcoming assembly elections, a report by social media political consultancy firm Polstrat has put Yogi Adityanath on the top spot, with all others trailing him by a huge margin.

The Polstrat has released a ranking of the Twitter followers of the notable Uttar Pradesh leaders in which the Uttar Pradesh chief minister has come out to be the most popular one. The rankings have also revealed that

20, 23, 27 and March 3 and 7 in seven phases. The counting

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is not a popular choice among the public and has just 4.3 million people following her.

On the other hand, Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati lags far behind with merely 2.3 million followers.

The popularity of Yogi Adityanath continues to soar high and is a clear indication that he is the top choice among the people for the upcoming elections as well because of his unprecedented benchmark of governance.

Yogi joined Twitter in September 2015. Since then, he has been active on social media and often engages with people on the platforms. Akhilesh Yadav joined Twitter way back in July 2009, around 12 years and six months back.

of votes will be taken up on March 10.

Leaders of all hues seeking tickets for their relatives

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Almost all political parties are witnessing a unique rebellion with their leaders up in arms against the leadership, demanding tickets for the assembly polls for their sons, daughters or even relatives.

Bharatiya Janata Party MP from Prayagraj, Rita Bahuguna Joshi, has written a letter to party national president JP Nadda, seeking a ticket for her son Mayank. She claims that Mayank has been active in politics since 2009 and deserves a ticket.

"I am ready to quit if that is what it takes to get a ticket for my son," she said.

The BJP leadership has decided not to give tickets to the family members of the elected representatives, barring those who are already elected members. The party leadership is using this clause to deny tickets to the family members of its elected representatives.

One of the senior BJP leaders said that Pankaj Singh, eldest son of Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, got the ticket from Noida but his second son Neeraj Singh, who is also active in politics, has been denied a ticket.

Sources claim that this clause had angered Other Backward Classes leader Swami Prasad Maurya, whose daughter is an MP and he was asking for a ticket for his son, Utkarash Maurya, and when the leadership denied him a ticket, he left BJP and joined the Samajwadi Party.

The political grapevine is ripe that his son will contest the election on SP ticket from Unchahar assembly constituency in Rae Bareilly which is represented by sitting party MLA Manoj Pandey.

Then there is the case of BJP MP from Mohanlalganj, Kaushal Kishore, who is also a minister in the Narendra Modi's council of ministers, and two-time BJP MP Jagdambika Pal, who are also seeking tickets for their sons.

The interesting contest is between a husband and wife for the ticket.

The husband is BJP vice-president Daya Shankar Singh while his wife Swati is the Women Empowerment Minister in the Yogi Adityanath government. Both are asking for a ticket from Sarojininaragar constituency.

"I am a BJP man and there is no confusion with us. If I get a ticket, Swati will sit out and if Swati gets it, I will have to sit out," said Daya Shankar.

In Samajwadi Party, the leadership has no qualms over senior party leaders and former minister Mohammad Azam Khan, currently in jail, and his son Abdullah, who was released from jail recently would contest elections. Azam Khan would contest from Rampur and his son from Swar.

Another senior leader, Reoti Raman Singh, is a Rajya Sabha member while his son Ujjawal Raman Singh will contest from Karchhana in Prayagraj.

SP-RLD defend tainted candidates

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party-Rashtriya Lok Dal alliance has defended its candidates facing criminal charges whose names have been announced for the first phase of UP assembly elections to be held on February 10.

Out of 36 candidates in the first two lists announced by the SP-RLD alliance, 27 have criminal backgrounds. The alliance justified giving tickets to them on various grounds, including "doing social work under Covid" and working for the "backward people".

The Bharatiya Janata Party had attacked the SP-RLD alliance for giving tickets to many tainted names, including Nahid Hussain from Kairana who was arrested and sent to jail, and others involved in 2013 Muzaffarnagar communal riots. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had specifically attacked the SP for fielding tainted candidates who were behind the exodus of Hindu traders from Kairana in Shamli district. For candidate Yogesh Verma from Hastinapur, who faces over 30 criminal cases, the SP said, "He has been appraised by the people of Hastinapur and all cases against him are in public interest and under political laws," Verma was an MLA from this seat in 2007 and lost the election in 2017 as well as Bulandshahr Lok Sabha seat in 2019.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has mandated parties to publish justifications why they have given tickets to candidates with criminal cases.

In the list of SP-RLD 20 other candidates with criminal cases, similar justifications have



OUT OF 36 CANDIDATES IN THE FIRST TWO LISTS ANNOUNCED BY THE SP-RLD ALLIANCE, 27 HAVE CRIMINAL BACKGROUNDS. THE ALLIANCE JUSTIFIED GIVING TICKETS TO THEM ON VARIOUS GROUNDS, INCLUDING "DOING SOCIAL WORK UNDER COVID" AND WORKING FOR THE "BACKWARD PEOPLE"

been given on the lines, of the candidate having "done social service during the Covid period, and providing for the poor and backward people".

For one candidate from Kol seat, Shah Ishaq, the SP said he helped people during the lockdown and pandemic by providing them transportation to reach home and also to COVID-19 patients along with essential commodities.

Regarding Meerut South candidate Mohammed Adil, the SP said he works for uplift of deprived class by distributing blankets in winter and had helped poor people during COVID-19 time by supplying oxygen and arranging hospital beds and medicines.

Regarding its candidate

from Atrauli, Viresh Yadav, the SP, has cited how his father had defeated former Chief Minister Kalyan Singh and he is a former three-time MLA of the party. "He belongs from a very old political family and his father was a six-time MLA from 1962," the SP said.

The RLD too justified giving tickets to six candidates with criminal cases in the first two lists. RLD's Jewar candidate Avtar Singh Badhana faces a case in which he says an application for quashing the case is pending before the Allahabad High Court.

"He is a mass leader who has taken up issues of farmers, Dalits and OBCs. He is the best person to represent farmers and the poor," the RLD said.

Congress attacks BJP government over farmers' plight

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Congress on Wednesday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over the plight of farmers and released a White Paper titled 'Aamdani na hui dogani, dard hua sau guna' (income not doubled but pain increased hundred-fold).

Releasing the White Paper here on Wednesday, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel and All India Congress Committee's National spokesperson Supriya Shrinet said that the poor, labourers and farmers of India had faithfully voted on the promises of Modi but they betrayed them.

"The BJP, instead of doing good for the farmers, has badly hit the future of the farmers. India will never forgive them. It has been six years since Modi had promised the farmers of the country in his rally in

Bareilly on February 28, 2016 to double their income by 2022. Now it is 2022, but the income has not doubled while the pain has definitely increased a hundred times," they claimed.

Baghel said that after six years, the Modi government released the NSSO report in September, 2021 and said that the average income of farmers had come down to Rs 27 per day and the average loan had gone up to Rs 74,000 per farmer. He said the truth was that the DNA of the Modi government and the BJP was anti-farmer and anti-labourer.

"As soon as the BJP and Modi came to power in May 2014, to grab the land of the farmers, one after the other they brought three ordinances to avoid giving farmers fair compensation. Then they stopped the bonus of Rs 150 given by the state governments on wheat and paddy. The Modi government gave an affidavit in the Supreme Court that if the MSP

+ 50 per cent price was given, then the market would be ruined. They also introduced crop insurance schemes just for the profits of the companies and not for farmers," he said.

Baghel said due to imposition of tax after tax, the cost of crops had increased by Rs 25,000 per acre.

He said Modiji brought three black anti-farming laws just for the benefit of his handful of capitalist friends. He said that till date no tax was levied on agricultural machinery but still this government was imposing tax on farmers for the first time. He said oil prices were also rising which was adversely affecting the farmers.

Targeting the Yogi Adityanath government over the issue of stray animals and politics being done on the cow, he said that there was a lot of politics in the name of cow in UP. "Now people have stopped keeping cattle. Cattle markets are closed.

Animals are roaming in the open and the farmers of Uttar Pradesh are guarding their crops but they still find it difficult to save their crops," he said.

Baghel said that even the love of Yogi towards cows was exposed by their rising deaths in gaushalas. He claimed that cows were getting lean and those running gaushalas were getting fat.

He said that the Chhattisgarh government thought and implemented its schemes to solve all the problems related to animals and animal husbandry and this had reduced the number of stray animals in Chhattisgarh.

"We solved the problem of DAP of the farmers through vermicomposting. We found a solution for the stray animals in Chhattisgarh. Started buying cow dung at Rs 2 per kg and bought lakhs of tonnes of cow dung. Vermicompost work started. Today the number of stray animals

has come down drastically in Chhattisgarh," he said.

He said that if the Congress government was formed in Uttar Pradesh, then the Chhattisgarh model would be implemented for solving the problem of stray animals. "Here also cow dung will be bought so that farmers get income and people keep animals at their homes. The solution to the problems of UP is included in the pledges of Congress. In the 1970's, Indiraji started the Green Revolution campaign. The farmers have shown that they can make the country self-reliant. At that time farmers used to get support prices. Farmers want to support the price of crops but this government is not able to respect the hard work of the farmers. The result of the hard work of the farmers is that today there is a surplus of food grains but the government is discouraging the farmers," he said.

Supriya Shrinet said that the Modi government forced 700 farmers to commit suicide by bringing in three black laws. She said the Modi government, which promised to increase the income, had drowned the farmer in debt and 50.2 per cent of farmers were in debt, with an average loan of Rs 74,121 per household.

Meanwhile Congress central election committee (CEC) met on Wednesday through video conferencing for the selection of candidates for the upcoming Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, sources said. Till now, the party has announced 125 candidates for the polls. Elections for the 403 assembly constituencies in Uttar Pradesh will be held in seven phases starting February 10.

The polling in Uttar Pradesh will be held on February 10, 14, 20, 23, 27 and March 3 and 7 in seven phases. The counting of votes will be taken up on March 10.



सूचना

मेरे पिताजी के आर्मी रिकार्ड में मेरा नाम NISHANT KUMAR लिख गया है। भविष्य में मुझे निशान्त कुमार (NISHANT KUMAR) पुत्र श्री रजित कुमार सिंह के नाम से जाना व पहचाना जाय। निवासी-छपरा, भेल्टी, सारन, बिहार 841402

NOTICE

To be Informed that I have lost my high school , Intermediate & BSC marksheet,which Roll no. 1527836, 1085228 & 3073942 . And passing year's ,2015, 2017 & 2020, it's used be illigal . Kanchan Chaturvedi D/o Ashok Kumar Chaturvedi R/o Panchvati Caloney Sec-19B Mahanagar Lucknow

NOTICE

My ICSE year-2013 (Index No.T/5432/080) and ISC year 2015 (ID 5371621) from Mount Carmel College, Mahanagar Marksheets and pass certificates have been irretrievably lost. Pragya Rastogi D/o Pradeep Kumar Rastogi residing at B/305 Nirman Presidency Apts. Flt. No. 202, Mahanagar, Lko-226006.

Congress poster girl likely to join BJP

Hathras victim's family not keen to fight election

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With Priyanka Maurya, the poster girl of Congress' much publicised 'Ladki Hoon, Lad Sakti Hoon' campaign, all set to join the Bharatiya Janata Party, the grand old party received another setback when efforts to rope in the family of Hathras rape victim for the coming assembly elections also did not materialise.

The victim's family members, whom the Congress was planning to offer a ticket, claimed that they were not interested in taking any political mileage and just wanted justice.

It may be mentioned that Asha Singh, the mother of the 2017 Unnao rape victim, is among the candidates who will contest the assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh on a Congress ticket.

Sources said that the family of the 19-year-old Hathras rape and murder victim said they were not interested in contesting the election even if they were offered a ticket by the party.

The family told media persons that they could not afford to think about politics as seeking justice for the rape and murder victim ir was their first priority.

"We have not been approached by anyone so far. Our aim is to get justice for my

sister," the victim's younger brother said and added, "If anyone wants to approach us, they are welcome. But no one has contacted us so far."

Sources said that after fielding the mother of Unnao rape victim, Congress planned to offer a ticket to Hathras rape victim's family also but now since the family had refused to contest poll, the party had dropped the idea and launched a hunt for some other candidate.

On being asked about Congress' decision to give ticket to Unnao rape victim's mother, a Congress leader said the verdict in that case had been delivered and the accused had been convicted.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, along with her brother Rahul Gandhi, had gone to meet the family of the rape and murder

victim in Hathras in October, 2020, a few days after the girl died in a Delhi hospital. Assuring the family of all possible help, the Gandhi siblings had then said no one could stop them from standing for justice and truth.

Meanwhile, Congress' 'Ladki Hoon, Lad Sakti Hoon' campaign face Priyanka Maurya is likely to join the BJP on Thursday ahead of assembly elections.

After quitting Congress, Maurya levelled several allegations against the Congress after the party denied her ticket for assembly polls. Maurya said, "I have been betrayed. We were told that there will be screening, observation, and survey to select candidates for polls. But even after completing all tasks, I was not given the ticket. People kept telling me that this

184 nominations filed so far for first phase polls

Lucknow (PNS): A total of 184 nominations have been filed so far for the first phase of assembly polls in 58 constituencies of western Uttar Pradesh. The Election Commission of India said here on Wednesday that 107 nominations were filed on Wednesday whereas 77 nominations were filed earlier. Noida assembly constituency in Gautam Buddha Nagar district has the highest number of nine candidates followed by eight in Dadri, seven each in Mathura, Loni and Muradnagar and six in Sahibabad. January 21 is the last date for filing nominations for the first phase election where polling is scheduled on February 10.

THE FAMILY TOLD MEDIA PERSONS THAT THEY COULD NOT AFFORD TO THINK ABOUT POLITICS AS SEEKING JUSTICE FOR THE RAPE AND MURDER VICTIM IR WAS THEIR FIRST PRIORITY

ticket (170 Sarojini Nagar) is reserved for Rudra Daman Singh. I knew it, but I was still fighting for it. I was asked to bring girls for marathons, and people in rallies and meetings, and induct workers to Congress. I did a lot of work for it."

"My name is written as Dr Priyanka Maurya OBC in the poster but this party is anti-women... I have seen women who had been working (in Congress) for 30 years who did not get the tickets... I received a call and they said that if you want a ticket then you will have to pay and I clearly said I have no money to pay because I wanted to get the ticket based on my work," she added.

Nitin Agarwal resigns from SP, assembly

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Assembly's Deputy Speaker Nitin Agarwal on Wednesday tendered his resignation from the membership of the House and the Samajwadi Party. Nitin Agarwal, a rebel SP MLA, was elected as deputy speaker of the assembly on October 18 last year. He was a minister of state during the previous Akhilesh Yadav-led SP government.

Nitin Agarwal, elected on SP ticket to UP assembly in 2017, had defected to the Bharatiya Janata Party along with his father Naresh Agarwal, a former minister and joined the ruling party ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

Naresh Agarwal quit the SP on being denied re-nomination to Rajya Sabha by the party.

Despite defection to BJP, he was technically regarded as an SP legislator till the petition seeking his disqualification was disposed of by the assembly speaker. Speaker Hriday Narayan Dikshit had rejected the petition filed by the SP seeking his disqualification. This technicality allowed the BJP to justify the decision to field Nitin Agarwal, a Vaishya, for the post of deputy speaker traditionally reserved for the largest opposition party, which the SP is in the 17th UP assembly.

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More recoveries than fresh cases in UP

3,517 test +ve in Lucknow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

For the second day in a row, Uttar Pradesh recorded recovery of over 20,000 people in 14 hours against 17, 776 people testing positive for novel coronavirus infection during the same period.

Additional Chief Secretary Amit Mohan Prasad said here on Wednesday that 20,532 Covid-19 patients recovered, giving an indication that the third wave was on the ebb.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the third wave of COVID-19 was under control in Uttar Pradesh and the government was constantly monitoring the situation. Yogi emphasised that there was no dearth of vaccines and the Health department was keeping constant vigil on the situation through vigilance committees.

He added that door-to-door screening campaigns were carried out in villages and in localities through healthcare workers to detect suspected cases and admit those in need of treatment to hospitals through rapid response teams.

Speaking to the media following a visit to the Government Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS) in Gautam Buddha Nagar, the chief minister said that Gautam Buddha Nagar had already achieved the target of giving first dose of Covid vaccine to 100 per cent of the eligible population whereas the second dose had been admin-



People waiting in queues to get tested for Covid at KGMU in Lucknow on Wednesday

Pioneer

istered to 92 per cent of its population.

He added that a total of 62.83 lakh adolescents aged 15-17 years had got the first dose of the vaccine in Uttar Pradesh to date of which 1.16 lakh were in Gautam Buddha Nagar alone. Besides, 5.29 lakh people, including elderly and healthcare workers, had been administered the precautionary dose of the vaccine, he added. Yogi said that of the 9,500 cases reported in the district in the third wave, only 200 with chronic medical problems were in hospitals, adding that only 0.5 per cent of the patients of the total reported cases were in hospitals in UP.

He further remarked that of the 551 oxygen plants set up in Uttar Pradesh, 11 were in Gautam Buddha Nagar. He

said the district was fully equipped to deal with COVID-19 cases with 450-bed hospital, including 300 beds with oxygen and 120 with ventilators.

Meanwhile, taking a dig at the opposition parties, the chief minister said that while he had visited Gautam Buddha Nagar several times during his tenure to assess the COVID-19 situation and progress in development projects, the previous governments shied away from visiting the district for lack of development agenda.

Meanwhile, there was a spurt in the fresh Covid cases with 3,517 testing positive on Wednesday. However, 3,395 patients also recovered in the last 24 hours. Maximum cases were detected in Aliganj (502), followed by Chinhhat (423), Alambagh (381), Indiranagar

(279), NK Road (219), Silver Jubilee (214), Sarojininagar (209), Tudiaganj (167), Red

Cross (127), Aishbagh (87), Gosainganj (44), Kakori (36) and Mall (35). The fresh cases

included 147 travellers and 1,203 contacts of patients detected earlier.

75% of population of city in 18+ group fully vaccinated

Lucknow (PNS): In Lucknow, 75% of the population aged above 18 years has been fully vaccinated, District Immunisation Officer MK Singh said on Wednesday. The second dose coverage increased because of the completion of the mandatory 84 days after the first shot. "Calls were made through the Integrated Control and Command Centre to those who were due for their second dose of Covid vaccine. The dou-

ble dose increased due to the mega vaccination camps held in the district earlier" he said.

Singh said that in the 15-18 years category, the number of schools has been increased to 200 to pace up the vaccination drive. "We will see what is the response at these schools," he added. Regarding the vaccination of children aged 12-14 years, he said they are waiting for the guidelines from the Central government after which

the estimated eligible population will be calculated.

It may be noted that UP has completed 61.08% second dose coverage, with Gautam Buddha Nagar at 91.57%, Shahjahanpur 85.33%, Baghpat 75.6%, Pilibhit 69.89%, Ghaziabad 69.53% and Amethi 69.53%.

Incidentally, there were several beneficiaries who took the second dose within 45 days, but the gap was later increased to 84 days.

Development, edu among main poll issues for Muslim women

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Muslim women are exploring their options for the upcoming assembly elections and will be voting on issues such as development, education of their children and things that impact their household budget.

Prominent Muslim women said that contrary to the perception, women have been voting with a lot of awareness in recent years and for issues affect them the most.

They said Muslim women were aware of the current political scenario as also the stand of the community per se. They also said that the law against triple talaq which was enacted in 2019 was unlikely to be a poll issue for them.

Chairman of All-India Women's Personal Law Board and social activist Shaista Amber said that Muslim women have been voting on their own free will in the recent years. "The women are not influenced by their husbands, families and people they know.

They think in terms of voting for those who can do something for the real issues such as reduction in electricity bills and gas cylinder costs. I have been working extensively with the Muslim women in slum areas who are concerned about these issues. They are worried about exorbitant electricity bills," she said.

Asked whether they will take into account the triple talaq law which was enacted in 2019, she said it is unlikely. "Though the law has prevented triple talaq to some extent, men have found ways in troubling the women who end by making rounds of police stations and courts. Men don't give triple talaq to women but turn them out of the house, and the situation remains the same," she said.

She added that hate speech is something which no women would like, be it Muslim or Hindu. "Women are more concerned about the problems which they are facing due to corona. They openly point out

that they will not be going by what their husbands say," she said.

Naish Hasan, another activist, said Muslim women would not be voting on triple talaq but issues like development. "Women will always vote for those who support them and give them employment. They will not get carried away by false promises," she said.

She said Muslim women now use their minds to decide on the candidate of their choice. "There are many instances where different members of a family vote for different candidates," she added.

Tahira Husain, another activist, said the issues on which the Muslim women are likely to vote include inflation, education and security.

"Inflation is an issue because it directly affects women. Security is also an important issue," she said. Regarding triple talaq, she said it could well be an issue for those who benefitted out of it.

Innovative ideas in BJP's social media campaign

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

BJP's social media campaign for the upcoming assembly elections has some innovative ideas. Party's social media coordinator Ankit Chandel said they have been planning for the same since last year and that the social media team is well equipped for the job. He said BJP does not depend on any agency for its social media campaign. "However, the BJP makes a detailed plan till the booth level with the help of its social media team. In August and September, we carried out workshops for the same. All the social media team members were imparted training," he said. He added that even during the second wave, they connected with the booth-level workers virtually.

"The booth-level workers aged 70 years or above also connect with us online with ease. These workers then connect with voters through WhatsApp groups and pass the content to different groups. Every district of the state has a different social media account and through this also we are disseminating our messages," he said. He added that amongst the new initiatives, they have brought a live talk show with ministers on how promises have been fulfilled by the party. "We bring in a minister live everyday on the Facebook page to address issues of different kinds in the Sankalp Patra," he pointed out. He said several animation campaigns are also being undertaken in which they highlight the deeds of other political parties. "We can call these campaigns a success because we have observed that the other political parties are also copying what we have been doing. The campaigns we did in November last year are being followed by rival political parties now," he said. About the impacts made with the social media campaign, he said they have highlighted how certain candidates with a nefarious background were considered eligible by other parties and the very next day, a political leader held a press conference to announce that they were not giving tickets to such candidates.

Jayant Chaudhary may contest poll from Mant

PRABHA SHANKER ■ LUCKNOW

Rashtriya Lok Dal national President Jayant Chaudhary is likely to contest the UP assembly election to meet the demand of the party leaders and supporters and to allay fears of friction among party leaders in west UP.

Well placed sources in the party said Jayant was likely to contest from Mant seat in west UP. "In the 2017 election, RLD candidate Yogesh had given a close fight to Bahujan

Samaj Party's Shyam Sunder Sharma who won by a margin of 432 votes with each bagging over 65,000," the sources said.

They said a controversy had kicked up as leaders of both the Samajwadi Party and RLD were staking their claim on the seat.

"The RLD workers and leaders are demanding Jayant to contest the election and their demand is intensifying each day. Besides, when the top leader will contest the election, it will naturally lessen

the friction if there is any," the sources said. The RLD is facing bickering over the allotment of tickets. "The dissemination developed after the former Samajwadi Party MLA Gulam Mohammed was given the ticket on RLD symbol to contest from the Siwalkhas assembly seat," they said.

In a similar move, the RLD replaced Veerpal Rath and gave the ticket to Prof Ajay Kumar from Chhaprauli seat. The sources said some leaders of Samajwadi Party,

numbering eight, were contesting on RLD symbol in some of the constituencies of west UP. "The reason behind allowing them to contest the election on an RLD ticket is obvious but it has created dissent in the RLD cadre," the sources said. They said RLD had a strong support of the Jat community which had a big presence in this region.

Now the local leaders of RLD in west UP are criticising the decision and also questioning the wisdom

behind it. "The seats are winnable for RLD in view of support of the farmers who blindly trust the RLD. But a change may deviate them from the party," they apprehended. They said the friction which emerged following the allotment of seats will be reduced by fielding RLD supreme Jayant in the assembly election 2022.

Meanwhile, RLD has fielded Saurabh as party candidate from Muzaffarnagar seat.

High School student shot

Lucknow (PNS): Mystery shrouds the death of a high school student who was found murdered in his house on Wednesday morning. The victim was shot twice but no one noticed the incident which took place when the victim was sleeping under a tin shade near his house.

A senior police officer who rushed to the spot along with local cops claimed that they were probing the incident from all possible angles, including a love affair. The cops did not rule out the incident as 'honour killing'. A case was registered in this regard by the police and the body was sent for post-mortem.

According to reports, a

resident of Guretha in Adampur police station area of Amroha, Ramakant Sharma, died in a road accident three years ago.

The second child of the family, 14-year-old Ganesh Dutt Sharma, was running a medical store and was also studying in Class 10. It is said that Ganesh Dutt Sharma came to his village on Tuesday evening. After this, he slept in the tin shed near the cattle shed at night. His grandfather, retired teacher Mahendra Prasad, was sleeping in a nearby room. In the night, unknown assailants fired a bullet in the chest of Ganesh Dutt and escaped after confirming that he was dead.

Surprisingly no one heard the gunshot. When the family woke up on Wednesday morning, they found Ganesh Dutt lying in a pool of blood. They raised an alarm after which their neighbors gathered and the police were called. As soon as the information was received, the police reached the spot and started an investigation. ASP Chandraprakash Shukla and CO Satish Kumar Pandey inspected the scene of crime. The family members denied enmity with anyone.

Police said the deceased had a mobile phone with him while sleeping. The police are also investigating the incident considering it to be related to a love affair.

Mob on rampage after road mishap

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Agitated over the death of a local resident in Chandauli, an unruly mob went on the rampage, damaging an official vehicle of a deputy superintendent of police rank officer besides injuring several policemen including an inspector.

The incident happened on Tuesday when a person was killed and another injured in a truck collision near Katesar village under Mughalsarai police station area. Angered by the incident, the local people blocked the road and staged a demonstration. When the police tried to remove the blockade, the agitated mob went on the rampage, pelting stones on the police party. Some protesters also damaged the vehicle of Circle Officer of Sadar, Anil Rai, while Inspector Mughalsarai Brijesh Chandra Tripathi suffered head injuries.

Superintendent of Police of Chandauli, Ankur Aggarwal, said that the truck was seized after arresting the driver and the body of the deceased was sent for post-mortem. The SP said those involved in the attack were being identified from the video footage and strict action would be taken against them after registering an FIR.

Meanwhile in another incident, two brothers, residents of village Kaseru of Chandaus area near Khair Gaumat of Aligarh district, died in a road accident while returning from Bhalai village of Khair late on Tuesday evening.

According to the villagers, two brothers, Mahendra Singh (45) and Udayveer Singh (48), residents of village Kaseru, had gone to attend the death rituals of their relative in village Bhalai of Khair area on Tuesday morning. From there they were returning to their

village by bike late in the evening. Their bike was hit by a speeding heavy vehicle near Gomat Road in which Dharampal died on the spot while Udayveer Singh was seriously injured. Udayveer was shifted to Khair community health centre but when his condition deteriorated, the doctors referred him to medical college hospital. However, he died on the way and the doctors pronounced him dead upon arrival.

In the meantime, local police informed the family of the incident. Bhura Singh Solanki, president of Bali religious service organisation doing social work in the area, said that both the brothers who died in the accident were associated with the organisation and were helping the local residents. A case was registered in this regard by the police and the body was sent for post-mortem.

AKTU's Faculty of Architecture and Planning to be granted autonomy

Lucknow (PNS): The Faculty of Architecture and Planning, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Technical University, will soon be given the status of 'School of Architecture and Planning' with autonomy.

In the meeting of all the deans and co-deans of the university, Vice-Chancellor Prof PK Mishra received information from everyone about the problems being faced in the operations and also their suggestions.

Mishra said that after upgradation, efforts would be started soon to establish a separate autonomous School of Architecture and Planning. Along with this, the International School of

Pharmacy will soon be established by the university.

It was decided in the meeting that a dean (affiliation and enrollment) would be posted so that matters related to affiliation could be completed within a stipulated time period with complete transparency.

Mishra said that the pending promotion of teachers under Career Advancement Scheme (CAS) would be resolved at the earliest. Along with this, the number of lectures being broadcast on Swayamprabha channel would also be increased, he added.

The university is committed to working uniquely on teaching, research, innovation etc.

City continues to be gripped by cold spell

Lucknow (PNS): Lucknow continued to be in the grip of extreme cold on Wednesday and the day started with a dense fog cover. The state capital recorded the maximum temperature at 14.6 degree Celsius, which was seven degrees below normal, while the minimum temperature settled at 8.1 degree Celsius. It was the third day on the trot with bone-chilling conditions. Kanpur was the coldest in the state at 3 degree Celsius, followed by Agra (4.7 degree Celsius), Churk (5.5 degree Celsius) and Etawah (5 degree Celsius). The Met department has forecast severe cold day conditions to prevail over Lucknow on Thursday too.

Severe cold day conditions are also likely to be witnessed in Lakhimpur Kheri, Sitapur, Hardoi, Rae Bareilly and Barabanki. Dense fog is very likely over Lakhimpur Kheri, Sitapur, Hardoi, Unnao, Lucknow, Rae Bareilly, Farrukhabad, Kannauj, Kanpur Dehat, Kanpur Nagar, Fatehpur, Pratapgarh, Barabanki, Ayodhya,



Ambedkar Nagar, Sultanpur, Bahraich, Shravasti, Balrampur, Gonda, Siddharthnagar, Azamgarh, Mau, Ballia, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Varanasi, Siddharthnagar, Amethi and adjoining areas.

Mystery shrouds woman's death

Lucknow (PNS): A 40-year-old woman died under mysterious circumstances at her shanty in Gosainganj police station area. She was identified as Vimla Devi (40) of Nawada in Bihar. She worked at a brick kiln, owned by Ritesh of Krishna Nagar, in Chamartaliya village. Her husband Sitaram also works at the same brick kiln.

Police said Ritesh told them about Vimla's death on Tuesday afternoon. "Her condition deteriorated all of a sudden on Tuesday afternoon and she died shortly afterwards," her husband was quoted as saying by the police. The body was sent for autopsy while further

was underway.

In another case, the Thakurganj police arrested a woman who was driving a scooter with the registration number of another vehicle belonging to another woman. The accused was identified as Safia aka Alisha of Ramganj locality in the area. The other woman is a resident of Balaganj. She received several e-challans and her father Ravindra complained to the police. The police closely examined the photos in e-challans and zeroed in on Safia. She was nabbed. She told the police that she wanted to avoid being challaned.

Varanasi 2nd in UP in vaccination of 15-18 age group adolescents

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Varanasi stood second in the state in vaccination of 15-18 age group adolescents after Pilibhit with 65.27 per cent vaccination. Pilibhit was on the top with 69.58 per cent vaccination and Gonda third with 60.07 per cent. Overall in UP, on an average, 41.95 per cent teenagers got the COVID-19 jabs in just 15 days. Though some districts recorded above 60 per cent vaccination, some others performed poorly as Sambhal was at the bottom with 26.70 per cent vaccination, followed by Rampur and Agra with a slight little improvement with 27.48 and 27.73 per cent vaccination respectively.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said that the achievement was the result of

various strategies adopted by the district administration to increase the vaccination. The vaccination graph has increased due to camps in schools and efforts made by the institutions, monitoring committees, frontline workers, NCC, Nehru Yuva Kendra, Yuvak Mangal Dal, Child Remand Home and Childline to create awareness about Covid vaccine among the teenagers. Besides, the help of gram pradhans and other departments has also played a positive and meaningful role. 'There is a need to work more diligently so that we can vaccinate 100 per cent beneficiaries in the district,' he appealed to the health workers.

Meanwhile, vaccination campaign is going on in full swing in the district and on Tuesday, Varanasi achieved a

new milestone when it crossed the 50 lakh Covid vaccination mark, administering doses to 38,576 beneficiaries in 613 sessions at various vaccination centres.

Out of these, 15,431 beneficiaries were given the first dose while 21,711 second and 1,434 third (booster) doses. Among these vaccinated beneficiaries 5,841 were of 15-18 age group, 23,545 of 18-45, 5,187 beneficiaries of 45-60 years and 2,511 were above 60 years. The CMO said that so far, a total of 50,03,423 vaccine doses have been applied which included 29,58,872 (99.6%) first dose, 18,60,259 (62.6%) second and 1,0,065 third doses. As many as 1,74,228 (67.6%) adolescents have been vaccinated in the district so far.

634 TEST POSITIVE IN VARANASI: With a slight

increase, the Varanasi district recorded a total of 634 positive cases of COVID-19 on Wednesday taking the cumulative figure to 6978. At the same time, 1023 patients also recovered and so, the active cases were reported as 4151. It is learnt that a total of 629 were tested positive on Tuesday.

As per the data made available by the Health department by this evening, a total of 634 persons were tested positive, increasing the cumulative figure to 6978.

Though as many as 1023 patients who were taking treatment in home isolation as well as at the Corona hospitals recovered from the infection of deadly virus, hence the active cases were reported as 4151. No death has so far been reported in the third wave of the pandemic.

BJP Govt has added miseries of farmers during its term: Pilot

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Accusing the BJP-led Government in UP of adding the miseries of farmers to manifolds during its five years term, the former Deputy Chief Minister of Rajasthan Sachin Pilot on Wednesday said, "The Congress Party will emerge as an alternative of the saffron brigade in the state and its result of UP assembly election will also be much surprising in party favour". The SP and the BSP also failed in playing the role of the responsible opposition in UP and the Congress Party, led by Priyanka Gabbhi, fought on the road for the cause of farmers and common people, he said.

Having an informal chat with the media persons at a hotel here, Pilot blamed that the present state government virtually failed in addressing the problems of farmers and also in fulfilling its promise to make the income of food grain producers double and rather, the government led by the saf-



Former Rajasthan Dy CM Sachin Pilot addressing press conference in Varanasi on Wednesday.

Pioneer

from brigade added the woes of farmers to manifolds and left them with their miseries.

The excess on farmers increased during the last five years in UP and the union minister whose son name was figured in the killing of protesting farmers by running over his car on them, is still enjoying the ministerial post instead of sacking from the Cabinet, Pilot blamed adding, not only the state government but also the central government weakened

the farmers economically and also insult them by terming their protest against three contentious farm laws as anti-national.

The government will have to answer the insult of the farmers in the election, he said.

The state government has failed on all fronts even in controlling the COVID-19 situation during the second wave and bodies were thrown in the river, he charged and added

that the government did nothing during last five years and only tried to hide it's failure through the advertisement. Now, the BJP is trying to contest the election on the religious basis by giving slogan of 80 against 20, he blamed further.

The SP and the BSP have failed in playing the role of active opposition, he blamed claiming, the Congress Party will emerge an alternative of the ruling party in the election as it continuously fought on the road under the leadership of party state incharge and national general secretary Priyanka Gandhi for the cause of farmers, women and deprived section of society.

The party has prepared a blue print to be an alternate of the saffron brigade in the state, he claimed exuding confidence, "The result of assembly election will be much surprising.

The party candidate from Pindra Ajay Rai and party leaders were present on the occasion.

Women safe in BJP Govt: Mahila Morcha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Regional, district and city units of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Mahila Morcha have welcomed Aparna Yadav, daughter-in-law of former Chief Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, to join BJP on Wednesday. Regional (Kashi) Mahila Morcha president Namrata Chaurasia, district president Vinita Singh and city chief Kusum Patel jointly said that it has become clear that the women are all safe in the BJP government which respects all

the sections of the society.

Appreciating the steps taken by the central and state governments led by Modi and Yogi respectively for giving the respect, self-reliance, uplift and empowerment to the women, they said that earlier in the state, women were publicly harassed and the leaders of the opposition parties used to say that the culprits were just boys who did the same by mistake. Reminding the women of the tenure of the previous government, they said that the fear which became a curse not only

for the daughters but also for the mothers, waiting for safe home return of their daughters.

They said that women's protection is not just a sentence for our government but it has become the basis of our life. 'Today, whenever the girls go out of their homes, the family believe that they will return home safely,' they said, adding that under the leadership of Modi and Yogi both the central and state governments are continuously working for women empowerment.

"The freedom of Muslim women from triple talaq is a gift of the Modi government and under the Ujjwala scheme free gas connections were given to women and by providing toilets, the government helped the women not have to go out of the houses for defecation.

Besides, the future of the daughters was secured under the Sukanya Samridhi Yojana,' they said, adding that no other party has given such respects to the women as the same did by the BJP government.

SP launches drive towards its poll promises

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In connection with one of the I-poll promises given by party president and former Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, the local Samajwadi Party (SP) workers launched a drive towards creating awareness among the people. As Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had given a poll promise of giving free 300 units electricity to all in Delhi in last assembly elections which had proved very helpful for the party to come to the power there, the SP has also announced that if it comes to power in UP, it will also give 300 units of electricity free to all.

In this connection, a group of SP workers led by former corporator Ravikant Vishwakarma contacted several persons in Luxa area, following the COVID-19 guidelines and registered the names and addresses of several residents and traders seeking to get the benefits, if the party succeeds in forming its government in UP this year. The party has started using these poll promises as an election campaign weapon to gain an edge against



SP workers registering name of a trader in Luxa area in Varanasi on Wednesday in connection with its poll promise if party comes to power.

Pioneer

its rivals.

Earlier, the SP registered a complaint with the Assistant Additional Commissioner of Police Rajesh Pandey in protest against the police for serving notices to many SP leaders and workers prior to the assembly election. City SP president Vishnu Sharma said that as soon as the notices were received, the SP leaders and workers informed him the same. According to him, after

considering all the complaints seriously, the party leaders had decided to lodge their complaint with the senior police officers. He said that on Tuesday, several SP leaders and workers had received notices under Sections 107/116 of Cr PC. Sharma handed over a memorandum to the police officer during his meeting and also expressed his protest that the police were forcibly serving notices only by identifying the

leaders and workers of SP. In reply the police officer said that such notices have been served to the workers of all political parties. Sharma said that when he asked the names of BJP workers to whom such notices were served, the police officer failed to do so.

Sharma was also accompanied by former state secretary and advocate Raju Yadav, Kamal Akhtar and city spokesman Sandeep Sharma.

4 dozen camps in sectors 2 & 3 flooded

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The water of the Ganga is troubling the sages and saints coming to the Sangam. More than four dozen camps in Sector-2 and 3 have been flooded due to the rising water level and erosion of Ganga.

The affected people struggled throughout the day to transport their belongings to other camps. With the increase in water, the erosion has increased. To prevent erosion near pontoon bridges, a bund is being made by PWD by filling sand in the sack.

Earlier on Tuesday, due to rising water level and erosion, the traffic on bridge number 2 Triveni was closed for the whole day. On Wednesday, Kalpwasis came out and stood when the water reached all the camps from the erosion. Along with the administration, the team of PWD and Irrigation Department also reached.

The water level started rising rapidly in the Sangam area on Monday morning. This trend continued on Wednesday after Tuesday. Irrigation department officials said that the water level in the Sangam area would continue to rise in this manner for four days. More than 20 thousand cuses of water is being released into the Ganga from Kanpur barrage. This water is now reaching Prayagraj. Due to the arrival of this water, the erosion increased and water entered the camp also. Pontoon bridges were under threat due to rising water levels. The erosion started from the Triveni and Kali



Ganga water entered various camps due to erosion of banks in Sangam area.

bridges towards Jhansi. Due to excessive water filling in front of Triveni bridge, traffic on it was kept closed for the whole day. PWD's junior engineer Shweta Singh told the newpersons that the road has been prepared by removing the checked plate from the front of the Triveni bridge and adding soil again. Traffic started in the evening but the situation got worse on Wednesday.

According to the Irrigation

Department, the water level in the Sangam area is often around 74 to 75 meters during Magh Mela. But this time the water level of Phaphamau remained above 75 meters already ten days before the start of the fair. The water level had crossed 77 meters on Tuesday itself, which did not decrease even on Wednesday.

The camps in Gangdeep located in Sector 2 of Magh Mela area were flooded. This

affected 44 organizations. On the instructions of Commissioner Sanjay Goyal, Arvind Kumar Chauhan, who is holding the additional charge of the Mela Officer, got all these installed in Sector 5. Other basic facilities like electricity, water were made available to all the organizations in this sector. Apart from this, the affected people of Prayagwal established in Gangadeep have also been shifted to Sector 5.

SSC makes major change in correction policy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

After getting representations from some of the candidates regarding correction of their applications after the final submission and in their larger interest, the Staff Selection Commission has made a major change in their policy regarding making corrections in the applications.

Till now, no change was allowed once the candidate had finally submitted his or her application form. After the closing date for receipt of online applications, the Commission will provide a period of 5 days to enable candidates to correct/ modify

online application parameters, wherein candidates will be allowed to re-submit applications after making requisite corrections/changes in the one-time registration/ online application data, as per their requirement.

"A candidate will be allowed to correct and re-submit his modified/ corrected application two times during the 'Window for Application Form Correction' i.e. if he or she has made an error in his updated application.

Also, he will be allowed to re-submit one more modified/ corrected application after making requisite corrections/ modifications," says regional

officer of central region of SSC, Rahul Sachan. No more corrections in the application form will be allowed under any circumstances, he added.

The official further informed that only those candidates will be allowed to make corrections in the application form, whose completed online applications along-with payment of requisite fee, have been received by the Commission within the specified period. Latest modified application will be treated as the valid one and the previous application(s) submitted by such candidates will be ignored.

The Commission will levy a uniform correction charge of Rs 200 for making correction and re-submitting modified/ corrected application for the first time, and Rs 500 for making correction and re-submitting modified/ corrected application for the second time. The correction charges, once paid, shall not be refunded under any circumstances.

This policy is being introduced from CGLE-21 application which is being applied presently with last date of application Jan 23, 2022. Correction window for this examination will be open from January 28 to February 1 (11:30 pm), says Sachan.

UPPSC PCS Main exam postponed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission (UPPSC) has postponed the PCS i.e. Combined State / Upper Subordinate Services (General Selection)-2021 Main Examination (Mains) due to the speed of Coronavirus third wave and majority of the candidates getting infected.

The examination was to be held in Prayagraj, Lucknow and Ghaziabad in two sessions from January 28 to 31. Now it has been decided to

conduct it from March 23to 27. The candidates were demanding to postpone this exam for a long time.

The Public Service Commission has released the recruitment of 678 posts under PCS-2021. Against the vacancies, 7688 candidates have been successful for the main examination. Many candidates got infected with corona before the exam. The number of infected candidates is increasing continuously. Due to this, infected candidates are not able to appear in the examination.

This is the reason why the competitive students were demanding to postpone the main examination. On behalf of the aspirants, the campaign was being run on the Internet media along with writing letters to the Prime Minister, Chief Minister and Commission Chairman. Commission Secretary Jagdish said that due to the increasing outbreak of Corona, a new schedule of PCS examination has been released. The outbreak of corona is increasing continuously in the state. In view of this, the

Uttar Pradesh Higher Judicial Service (HJS) Direct and Departmental Recruitment Examination-2020 to be held on February 11, 12 and 13 has been postponed till further notice. The candidates having the qualification to appear in this recruitment examination will be considered eligible as and when the examination is held. Intimation for the examination will be given separately. This information has been given by Registrar (Judicial) Selection, Appointment and Seniority NC Pandey.

FOB to connect railway station with bus station

ALLAHABAD (PNS): There is an ambitious plan to connect Prayagraj Junction Railway Station and Civil Lines Bus Station through a foot over bridge (FOB) for the convenience of the passengers.

This plan of linking railway station with a nearby bus station has been included in the development project of Prayagraj Junction Railway Station of North Central Railway on the suggestion of the Railway Minister Ashvini Vaishnav who is keeping a watch on this remodeling plan. Railway Board is also of the view that plans should be designed to ensure international quality of facilities to the passengers.

Earlier the remodeling or renovation work of Prayagraj Junction and Kanpur Central was to be done by Indian Railway Station Development Corporation on PPP basis, but IRSDC failed to attract private players. Railways then decided

to dissolve IRSDC and take back the officers and employees to the Railway fold. After this the development of the above two railway stations-- Prayagraj Junction and Kanpur Central has been handed over to the Zonal Railway. This all had happened about two month back. The Railway Minister had expressed his wish to see Prayagraj Junction linked with Civil Lines bus station through ROB, so this has been included in the plan. This FOB will ensure hassle-free walk of about one kilometre from railway station to bus station for the passengers who had to hire a rickshaw and are often over charged. The aerial distance from railway station to bus station is less than one kilometre.

Officials are working on two options. One is to construct the FOB from the existing FOB number one of Prayagraj Junction Railway Station to Civil Lines Bus

Station parallel to Nawab Yusuf Road, and the other option is to take the FOB via Smith Road and the back portion of the DRM Office. The first option will be a bit shorter but construction will be difficult owing to traffic flow on Nawab Yusuf Road, while the second option will be longer by some meters.

This remodeling work is being done keeping in view the future flow of the passengers, and the Railway Board has created a team of dedicated personnel to see the work done in time with quality. For Prayagraj work is being done keeping in view the Maha Kumbh of 2025, and this FOB will serve the devotees a lot in establishing a link between the main railway station and the bus station.

GANG MAKING FAKE AADHAAR CARDS BUST-ED: A gang making fake Aadhaar cards was busted and five, including a pradhan, were arrested in Pulpur area of Gangapar. A printer machine,

a laptop, fake Aadhar cards, camera, eye scanner and finger scanner were recovered. It was learned that the gang members were making fake Aadhaar cards of the villagers by taking them on the bluff. Someone informed Pulpur police station in-charge Amit Rai that some people are making Aadhar cards outside the house of head Kuldeep Patel in Chaturbhujpur Barai Tara village. The matter looks suspicious. On receiving the news, the station in-charge reached the spot. The head of the village Kuldeep Patel, Mayank Tiwari resident of Saidabad, Jitendra Vishwakarma, Nagesh Kumar resident of Mandore Utaaraon, Suraj Kumar resident of Chaturbhujpur Barai Tara were nabbed and brought to the police station. When the inquiry started here, it came to know that the Aadhar card was being made fake. Four fake Aadhar cards were also recovered from them.

DC inspects facilities at Chunniganj shelter home

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar, while checking out the ground realities at the Chunniganj shelter home run by Kanpur Nagar Nigam jointly with DUDA and a private agency on Wednesday found that the DUDA and KNN officials were not visiting the shelter home on a daily basis and were apathetic to the facilities there.

He directed the district magistrate and Kanpur municipal commissioner to ensure daily checking and verification of the shelter homes by the officials.

He said the weather conditions had become unpredictable in the last few days and the chill, winds and fog were increasing day by day. He said as per the weatherman, in the next 7-10 days the average temperatures of Kanpur and its neighbouring districts would be between 18 and 22 degrees Celsius and intermittent showers were also predicted for the next few days. He said the UP government had directed the district administrations to review the weather conditions and take necessary steps.

He said the feedback from the DM was that as on date total 6,500 blankets had been distributed to the needy. He said apart from this bonfire had



Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar inspecting the Shelter Home at Chunniganj.

Pioneer

been lit at 395 sites (320 in city area and 75 in rural areas). He said shelter was being provided to around 600 people every day.

Dr Shekhar said during the visit, 5-6 people were found in the shelter home. He said the caretaker of the shelter home claimed that on an average around 20-25 persons used this facility.

He admitted that bonfires were found burning at the sites and people were found using them. He said on checking the register it was found that many individuals who were using

the facilities did not have any kind of identity card. He said directives were given to the DM and the KMC to direct the manager of the facility to click pictures of the individual on mobile phones and save them by their name and mobile numbers so in future identification could be done if required.

The DC interacted with many persons staying in the shelter homes at that time and all of them seemed satisfied with the facilities provided at the shelter homes.

The DM was also directed

to ensure bonfires at more places and to distribute more blankets to the needy and destitute.

He also asked the commissioner of police to alert all SHOs, ACPs, DCPs to ensure that no destitute or homeless was found lying at the roadside or in public places without proper shelter and protection from cold.

He said if anyone was found sleeping in the open, the person should be immediately shifted to the nearby shelter home by police officials concerned.

Society must take steps towards reducing juvenile crime: Tripathi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

District Legal Services Authority incharge Shradha Tripathi, while addressing the juvenile girls in Rajkiya Balika Grah at Swarup Nagar on Wednesday, said the juvenile justice system in India contemplated legal response with respect to two categories of children, namely those who were in conflict with law as they had committed crime and those who were in need of care and protection being children from deprived and marginalised sections of society.

She said it had been decided to hold a Lok Adalat on March 12, 2022 under the District Legal Services Authority, to be chaired by the district judge, to sort out the problems.

She said for girls who had not attained the age of 18 years, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act provided for a special approach towards the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency and provided a framework for protection, treatment and rehabilitation of female children.

She said the principal role of the juvenile justice was to provide specialised and preventive treatment services for children and young people as means of "secondary prevention" rehabilitation and improved socialisation. She said this Act thus provided for a special approach towards the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency and a framework for protection, treatment and rehabilitation

of children in the purview of the juvenile justice system, especially the girls. She said juvenile crimes were just a few of the reasons which turned teenagers into criminals as there were many more like parental neglect, addiction to drugs, unemployment, poverty, love revenges and abundance of alcohol.

Tripathi said more attention should be paid to the issue of juvenile crime and some solution should be brought to it.

She said not only the government but even the society must take steps towards reducing juvenile crime. She said everyone should join and fight against this issue.

She said proper facilities and proper education should be provided for the children in

the juvenile homes. She said the girls should be properly counselled and should be talked to properly and treated like children and not like criminals, as only then it would be possible to bring any change and reduce the juvenile crimes in the country.

She said the Government of India had banned female foeticide, and provided right to education, right to be brought up in safe environment, right against abusive family members, right against child marriage and sexual harassment. She then took feedback from the girl inmates about the food, general facilities and education provided in the shelter home. She said in view of COVID-19 wave, extra care needs to be taken and social distancing should be strictly followed.

Illicit arms factory unearthed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Bidhnu police have unearthed an illicit arms manufacturing unit in Gadharianpurwa in Ghatampur late on Tuesday night.

Police recovered over two dozen illicit arms and equipment used in the manufacture of country-made pistols from there.

The illicit arms unit was unearthed on a tip-off given by three criminals arrested by the police with country-made pistols near Shambhuwa ROB during vehicle checking late on Monday night.

It may be recalled that when the Bidhnu police were carrying out vehicle checking drive near Shambhuwa ROB late on Monday night, the SOG team alerted the cops about three bike-borne youths armed with country-made pistols reaching there from Ghatampur.

The police spotted three bike-borne youths coming from Ghatampur. Seeing the police force, when they took a U-turn, they were chased and caught by the cops. During the search, police recovered three country-made pistols from them.

The accused disclosed that they were carrying the pistols to the city for sale.

Station House Officer Atul Kumar Singh along with SOG squad raided a house in Gadharianpurwa village in Patara, Ghatampur, and unearthed the illicit arms manufacturing unit. However, two youths present in the unit managed to escape.

Besides, two thieves, including a minor, were caught red-handed stealing the cell phones in the crowd in separate incidents in Barra-5 on Tuesday night. They were beaten up and handed over to police and the cops recovered the stolen cell phones from them.

Dr RK Mishra of Barra-6 is a professor of a university in Jammu. His wife Aparna Mishra lives here with children. On Tuesday night, she had gone to a nearby vegetable market where, taking advantage of the crowd, a 13-year-old boy removed the cell phone from her jacket and escaped.

On her raising alarm, the people caught hold of the fleeing thief and handed him over to police. At the same time, about 100 metres away from this spot, a youth stole the cell phone of a plumber Dharmendra Kumar and escaped. He was also nabbed by the local residents and handed over to police. The cops recovered the stolen cell phones from both the accused and took them to Janata Nagar police outpost.

Rape accused injured in encounter

KANPUR (PNS): A rape accused sustained bullet injury in an encounter with the police on Wednesday morning. He was admitted to hospital.

According to reports, the eight-year old daughter of a painter living in Barasirohi area of Kalyanpur, had gone to buy milk from a nearby shop on Monday night.

When she was returning home with the milk, neighbouring youth Akash Gaur teased her and started touching her inappropriately.

On protest, he gagged her and dragged her towards the nearby jungle where he raped the girl. Seeing her deteriorating condition, Akash escaped from the spot. When the girl returned home she informed her mother about the incident.

SUICIDE: A polytechnic student was found hanging from the ceiling fan of his hostel room of Vision Institute of Engineering College in Hathipur under Maharajpur police area late Monday night. He was identified as Suraj Patel (20) of Ghuwaikheda, Bindki (Fatehpur) pursuing third year studies of mechanical branch by living in room No.39 on the third floor of the hostel. When he did not come out of his room on Tuesday morning, friends peeped through the window and found him hanging.

NER making continuous efforts in field of energy conservation

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR

North Eastern Railway (NER) is continuously making efforts in the field of energy conservation. In the form of non-conventional energy sources, solar plant, solar pump, solar geyser and street light are being used on a large scale. Besides, priority is being given to the use of star-rated electrical equipment. As a result the consumption of non-traction electrical energy has come down significantly, Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Pankaj Kumar Singh said. Till December 2021 in NER a total of 4.72 MWP capacity roof top solar panels have been installed. In this financial year till December from 4.26 MWP solar panel a total of 32.87 lakh units of solar energy was produced resulting in saving of railway revenue of ₹1.42 crore.

In NER more than 77 per cent route km has been electrified and at present 162 pairs of express/passenger special trains are running with electric

locos as a result there has been a huge reduction in diesel consumption. Since the loco shutdown in the year 2021-22 till now a total of 5,021 kilo litres of HSD has been saved by which railway revenue of about ₹43.5 crore has been saved.

In view of the commendable contribution in the field of energy conservation, North Eastern Railway has received the first prize of National Energy Award-2021 in the transport sector. Besides, considering the commendable contribution in the field of energy conservation, Gorakhpur station got the first prize of Uttar Pradesh Energy Conservation Award in commercial building category, second prize went to Gonda railway station, while Divisional Railway Manager's office, North Eastern Railway, Lucknow, got third prize in government building category and Mechanical Workshop, Izzatnagar, has got the second prize in industrial category.

TEENAGED GIRL FOUND: Railway Protection

Force (RPF), North Eastern Railway makes constant efforts to provide security to the passengers. In the same sequence, the escort party of train No 15910 found a 15-year-old girl in an unclaimed condition recently. After inquiry the girl was handed over to the Childline, Gorakhpur, CPRO PK Singh said. Besides, the RPF Gomtinagar, found a 13-year-old girl in an abandoned condition in train No 15077. After inquiry the girl was handed over to Childline, Gomtinagar.

On the other hand, the escort party of found two girls aged 12 and eight years respectively in an unclaimed condition in train No. 15070. After interrogation, both the girls were handed over to the Child Line, Gonda. Besides the RPF post, Azamgarh and Crime Intelligence Branch (CIB), Varanasi, caught a person along with seven illegal e-tickets from a shop in Azamgarh. Taking action under the Railway Act a was registered in this connection.

Voters' Day to be observed on Jan 25

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

District election officer (DEO)/District Magistrate has directed all office/departamental heads to observe National Voters' Day in all offices on January 25 as per instructions of Election Commission of India (ECI). He said competitions like essay, drawing, debate, speech, quiz etc will be organised. He asked the officials to organise programmes for administering oath in offices and motivate all to exercise their franchise. He directed to ensure compliance of Covid-19 prevention guidelines during the programmes.

MEETING ORGANISED: In view of the elections and for reviewing the crime Deputy Inspector General (DIG)

should be kept over social media

About depositing of arms the DIG directed to complete it without delay and take proper action. If any licensee was not cooperating. For critical and vulnerable polling stations, the DIG directed to visit all the such places and make arrangements in advance as per the ground level situation. The officers were directed to visit all the places where the forces have to stay and ensure availability of all necessary civic amenities. The meeting was attended by Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Sanjay Kumar, ASP (Operation) Mahesh Singh Attari, all the Circle Officers (COs) and inspector incharge of election cell.



Vindhyachal Range, RK Bharadwaj and Superintendent of Police (SP) Ajay Singh held a meeting of gazetted officers of the police at Police Lines on Tuesday. Addressing it the DIG directed for cent per cent compliance of the orders of the government as well as authorities and for ensuring compliance of model code of conduct. He directed the officers to control illegal trade, manufacturing and transportation of illicit liquor and take the stringent action for holding elections in a free and fair manner. He said that a close watch

VIDEO CONFERENCE: Additional Chief Electoral Officer (ACEO) of the state addressed the officers concerned with elections through video conferencing at NIC on Tuesday. The ACEO became aware with situation related with district contact/control centre, nodal officer, DCC whether it was active 24 hours, disposal of complaints, cVIGIL, number of flying squads and its activities, action against complaints along with videography. He also became aware about the press releases, includ-

Sensitivity towards environment will give newer avenues, direction: Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Vice Chancellor of Chandra Shekhar Azad University of Agriculture and Technology, Dr DR Singh, while addressing the Environment Youth Parliament 2022 at the university auditorium on Wednesday, said youth of the country were the future of India.

He said awareness and sensitivity towards the environment would give newer avenues and direction and with concerted efforts of youth India could become stronger and World Guru. He appealed to the students to remain focused on their personal and national goals. He said opportunities for youth to engage in governance and participate in political and decision-making processes depended largely on the political, socio-economic and cultural contexts where social norms resulted in multiple forms of discrimination against young women. He said both formal and informal engagement could be understood as political participation, and both were beneficial for a vivid and resilient democracy and should be supported.

He said there was strong evidence that the participation of young people in formal, institutional political processes was relatively low when compared to older citizens across the globe and this challenged the representativeness of the political system and led to the disenfranchisement of young people. He said people

under the age of 35 were rarely found in formal political leadership positions. He said one-third of the population of the country was excluded in the political system as eligibility for the national Parliament started at 25 years or higher and it was a common practice to refer to politicians as 'young' if they were below 35-40 years of age. Dr Singh said youth were not represented adequately in formal political institutions and processes such as legislatures, political parties, elections and public administrations. He said the situation was even more difficult for both young women as well as women at mid-level and decision-making and leadership positions. He said in order to respond to the needs of young people, and to guarantee that their basic human rights were recognised and enforced, young people's active and meaningful participation in their societies and in democratic practises and processes was of crucial importance. He emphasised upon the need for bringing the youth on a common platform and added that they could play an active role in protecting and improving the environment. He said youth could make their homes, schools and youth organisations more environment-friendly by adopting environment-friendly practises, recycling of different materials as well as preserving resources such as water and electricity. He said youth could contribute by starting their own initiative,

reduce and reuse paper, prefer recycling more and save resources, purchase sustainable products etc. He appealed to people to be in touch with the nodal officer on mobile number 9451169013. Others who took part in the Environment Youth Parliament included Dr YK Singh, Dr Dharam Singh, Dr Shalini Verma and many more.

COACHING CENTRES HOLDING CLASSES DESPITE SCHOOLS BEING CLOSED: Despite closure of schools and colleges in city in the wake of rising cases of COVID-19, the 'coaching mandi' is holding classes in a hush hush manner. It has been brought to the notice of the district administration that despite the order for closure of coaching centres, those in the 'coaching mandi' in Kakadev are audaciously running under political patronage.

Higher Education Officer Dr Ripudaman Singh said strict action would be taken against all such coaching centres if they held classes till January 23.

Recently, several complaints had been made by the parents of children that coaching centres were forcing students to not only come to classes but also pay the fees although there had been no teaching since the last one month. Most of the children complained that the centres claimed that they had been allowed to run classes three days a week and were following the social distancing norms.

Most of the centres are running classes with a student-strength between 200 and 500.

Singh said that a drive to check if any coaching centre was calling students for offline classes was being carried out. He said as per government guidelines all the coaching centres had to adopt online mode of teaching till further orders and any coaching centre found violating the guidelines would be sealed.

It may be mentioned here that two types of coaching centres are running in the city, one preparing students of JEE and NEET and the other for Class XII. These are run within school premises and by the teachers where they hired accommodation where they accommodate 100 students in one batch and run three batches a day. The fee works out to Rs 500 per students for XII for physics, chemistry and mathematics group. The others are those running in the 'coaching mandis'. These coaching centres charge between Rs 75,000 and Rs 1.50 lakh for the session.

However the bigger banners in Kanpur are charging between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 2 lakh for the whole year. The reason for calling students is because they have already charged the fee and thus it is convenient for them to call the child to the coaching. Recently as there were no classes the parents had protested against this, and this forced the coaching centres to covertly call their students for the offline studies.

Road to provide connectivity

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

The Nigahi project of the Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), a Miniratna company of Government of India, will soon start the construction of an RCC road connecting Jarha panchayat with the Mada-Parsona main road. The estimated cost of this 4.65 km long road is ₹2.13 crore and it will connect the residents of Jarha gram panchayat with hospital, Anganwadi, school and other government facility centres. The construction work



of this road is estimated to be completed in the next four months and also its maintenance and upkeep for five years will also be done by the company itself. At present in view of the unpaved road due to the problem of waterlogging in rain, the health and basic needs of villagers are hampered. With the construction of this road, more than 7,000 people of Jarha gram panchayat will get relief from the problem in commuting throughout the year, especially during the rainy days.

ICE to be held in Bhadohi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Carpet Export Promotion Council (CEPC) has decided to organise next India Carpet Expo (ICE) in Bhadohi Carpet Expo Mart and the dates proposed are October 14-17 this year. This decision was taken at a meeting of the Committee of Administration (COA) of the CEPC organised in Agra recently.

The meeting also took many other decisions. It has decided to start long awaited election process for the post of vice-chairman, CEPC, early next month. The council has

taken up the issue for upward revision RoDTEP rates and removal of value cap of RoDTEP rates very aggressively and also deputed council's officials for collection of required data. Finally, it succeeded in getting the desired data from the members and the same is under compilation for submission to the government. The CEPC is hopeful for upward revision and/or removal of value cap of RoDTEP Rates. The council is also actively taking up the issue for continuation of Interest Equalisation Scheme after September this year at the highest level. Besides, the COA

decided for strengthening the Kaleen label by re-designing by adding QR Code and extensive branding support of the same in the international markets to create its demand and acceptability globally. It also decided for formation of regional committees of region based committee members to take up and resolve the issues of the members on priority. The members can take up their issues with the regional committees for immediate redressal at their level. If any issue could not be resolved at the regional level the same can be forwarded to the Chairman, CEPC for suitable redressal.

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

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

For the first time since Covid-19 broke out in Kerala in 2020, the Kerala Government has termed the situation grave as well as serious and called for urgent restrictions and regulations. Veena George, health minister, who addressed the media on Wednesday after a Cabinet meeting said that 34,199 persons were diagnosed with the pandemic after testing 91,983 samples during the last 24 hours.

The death toll reached 51, 160 as 49 persons succumbed to Covid-19 during the last 24 hours as Kerala is experiencing the death continuing its “Thaandav”

across the State, according to a Government doctor. The Test Positivity Rate on Wednesday was 37.17 per cent.

A review meeting has been called for Thursday in which ministers, department secretaries as well as health professionals would take stock of the present situation. “The meeting scheduled for Thursday would decide whether to shut down schools and colleges in the State. We will consider bringing in high curfew and week end shut down,” said Veena George.

The minister denied the allegations made by Leader of the Opposition that the CPI(M) district conventions and the Mega Thiruvathiras (traditional dance and song programme presented by hundreds of women at Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur and Ernakulam praising Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan) were responsible for the spurt in the number of patients.

She said the double attack by the delta variant of the Covid and the Omicron were responsible for the shooting up of the pandemic cases in Kerala. Pinarayi Vijayan, suffering from a serious ailment, is undergoing treatment in a United States Hospital and would be back only by the end of January.

There are 645 Omicron patients in the State, according to the Health Minister. Though she said that only 3.2 per cent of the 1.68 lakh Covid patients have been admitted to the hospital, a Kerala Government Medical Doctors association said that they were under orders not to admit patients tested positive to the hospital. “The attempt is to portray all was well in the State and we do not know how long this would succeed,” said a Government physician in General Hospital, Ernakulam.

WhatsApp rebellion on in Bengal BJP

Rebel faction holds secret talks; 30 leaders meet to chalk out future plan

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

WhatsApp rebellion continued in Bengal BJP with the rebel faction of the State party unit holding secret meetings with at least 30 saf- from MLAs, inside sources said adding the leaders met virtually on Tuesday to chalk out future plans.

Curiously the rebel faction of the party is being led by junior Union Minister Shantanu Thakur who has already threatened to launch a movement for implantation of the Citizenship Amendment Act.

According to sources the rebel faction of the State BJP unit ---including former State vice president Jayprakash Majumdar, RiteshTewari, Saytanan Basu --- held a secret

meeting with the 30 legislators “to know their views about the new office bearers who had- been inducted in the State unit of the party.”

Out of the 77 seats won by the Bengal BJP in this year’s election it lost 5 to the ruling TMC on account of resignations and defection.

The rebel leaders are likely to hold meeting with the BJP MLAs of Bankura and Purulia later this week before taking a ‘final decision’.

On what the final decision could be one of the senior leaders of the rebel group said “this does not mean that we are quitting the party and going to the Trinamool Congress ... we want the party State unit to function properly ... we want to save the BJP from dissolution in Bengal as some of the



leaders are trying to do ... these leaders are sold out to the TMC leadership... they are hand-in-glove with the Trinamool which is why they are misleading the national leadership into taking decisions not favourable to the party in Bengal.”

Some rebel leaders were likely to visit Delhi where later this month may meet national functionaries, sources said. “We will tell how some of the

leaders are trying to sell out the party to the TMC,” one of the leaders said apparently aiming at former BJP State president Dilip Ghosh. The Bengal BJP underwent a massive reshuffle last month with a number of leaders losing their jobs giving way to new faces. Many leaders see Ghosh’s hand in the reshuffle.

The rebellion had started about a month ago when one after the other at least 10 MLAs from North 24 Parganas and Bankura left the designated party WhatsApp group.

When asked, Ghosh said he was not concerned with what was going on in WhatsApp. “I am a man of the people and don’t get much time to peepin- to what is happening in the WhatsApp,” he said.

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

"PUBLIC NOTIFICATION"

Notice is hereby given to all users of railway lines and premises situated on the completed section of the under noted section of the North Eastern Railway that the 25000 Volt, 50Hz. A.C. overhead traction wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section. On and from the same date the overhead traction line shall be treated as live at all times and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said overhead lines.

Section: Mechanical workshop Gorakhpur (MEMU maintenance line). Date 20.01.2022

Chief Electrical Engineer/Con, CPRO/Vidut-9 Gorakhpur

About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No.: 09794845955

Do not travel with inflammable article in train

NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY

"Warning to Road Users"

It is notified for information of public that in connection with introduction of 2200Volt A.C. Electric Traction over the Parsendi to Biswan Section of the North Eastern Railway, Height Gauges have been erected at all the level crossing with clear height of 4.78 mtr above road level with all view to prevent loads of excessive height form coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wire. Public are hereby notified to observe the height specified to above for the purpose of loading vehicles and to see that the loads carried road vehicles do not infringe the Height Gauges under any circumstances.

The danger load of excessive height is as follows:

1. Danger to the Height Gauges and consequent obstruction to the road as well as the railway line. 2. Danger to the materials or equipment carried or the vehicle itself. 3. Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.

Dy. CEE/Con, CPRO/Elect-89 Lucknow

About any passenger amenity complaint SMS on Mob. No.: 09794845955

Never travel on roof and foot boards.

कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, विद्युत 400 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र खण्ड, चण्डी पार ड्राइनिंगन कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड, सरोजनी नगर, लखनऊ ई-निविदा सूचना

अनुमोदी फर्मों / ठेकेदारों से निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु निविदाये दो भागों में आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। ई-निविदा के द्वितीय भाग में मूल्य/दर वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in पर ई-निविदा के प्रथम भाग के खुलने की तिथि से एक दिन पूर्व 17:00 बजे तक अपलोड की जाती है। निविदा सम्बन्धी समस्त जानकारी, नियम व अर्हकारी शर्तें, निविदा प्रपत्र में अंकित है, जो वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in से डाउनलोड कर अवलोकित / अपलोड की जा सकती है, निविदा का प्रथम व द्वितीय भाग वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in पर ही अपलोड किया जा सकेगा। निविदा से सम्बन्धित कोई भी प्रपत्र, भौतिक रूप से कार्यालय में स्वीकार नहीं किया जायेगा। अद्योहस्ताक्षरकर्ता को बिना कोई कारण बताये किसी अथवा सभी निविदाओं को अस्वीकार / विभाजित / निरस्त करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित है। विस्तृत जानकारी, अन्य किसी प्रकार के संशोधन एवं तिथि विस्तार आदि के सम्बन्ध में निविदा अपलोड करने के दिनांक / समय तक कृपया वेबसाइट www.etender.up.nic.in पर लॉग ऑन करें। निविदा सं० 11 एवं 12 के खुलने की तिथि 19.02.2022 निर्धारित की जाती है।

— (1) ई-निविदा संख्या— 11 / 2021-22 : विद्युत 220 के०वी उपकेन्द्र सरोजनी नगर में स्थापित विभिन्न प्रकार के विद्युत उपकरणों एवं स्ट्रक्चर्स की स्/ब्रस पेंटिंग इत्यादि कार्य, निविदा प्रपत्र के अनुसार। (2) ई-निविदा संख्या— 12 / 2021-22: विद्युत 220 के०वी उपकेन्द्र सरोजनी नगर पर 132 के०वी० आइसोलैटरस, 132 के०वी० पोस्ट इन्सुलेटरस एवं 33 के०वी० ओइसोलैटरस को बदलने एवं अन्य सम्बन्धित कार्य, निविदा प्रपत्र के अनुसार। अधिशासी अभियन्ता विद्युत 400 के०वी० उपकेन्द्र खण्ड, चण्डी पार ड्राइनिंगन कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड, सरोजनी नगर, लखनऊ पत्रांक-73 दिनांक-19.01.2022 “राष्ट्रहित में बिजली बचाये”

Omicron causing hospitalisation, deaths: WHO chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid an ongoing resurgence across the Aworld, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned that the Omicron variant of the coronavirus is causing hospitalizations and deaths the world over, and the narrative that it is a mild disease is misleading.

The global coronavirus caseload has topped 333.5 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 5.55 million and vaccinations to over 9.68 billion, according to Johns Hopkins University. India on Wednesday reported 2,82,970 fresh Covid cases in the last 24 hours, which is a rise of over 18 percent from the previous day's count. “Make no mistake, Omicron is causing hospitalizations and deaths, and even the less severe cases are inundating health facilities,” the WHO chief said late on Tuesday.

“Omicron may be less severe, on average,

but the narrative that it is a mild disease is misleading, hurts the overall response, and costs more lives,” he added.

According to Tedros, Covid is circulating far too intensely with many still vulnerable. “For many countries, the next few weeks remain really critical for health systems. I urge everyone to do their best to reduce the risk of infection so that you can help take pressure off the system,” he emphasized.

Tedros said that we can still significantly reduce the impact of the current wave by sharing and using health tools effectively and implementing public health and social measures that we know work. “Every variant of the COVID-19 virus, including Omicron, is dangerous and can cause: severe disease, death, further virus mutations and jeopardize the effectiveness of the tools we have to fight it,” said the WHO.

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

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Indian National Congress is no more a secular party and it has degenerated into a Hindutva party, according to CPI(M) strongman Kodyiyeri Balakrishnan. Speaking to media persons, Balakrishnan, the Kerala secretary of the party said that the recent declarations by former AICC President Rahul Gandhi MP exposed the Hindutva agenda of the Congress.

“Rahul Gandhi has said that India belonged to the Hindus and only Hindus could become rulers of the country. This proves beyond any doubt that the Indian National Congress is playing the Hindu

card and it has alienated the minority communities,” charged Balakrishnan.

The CPI(M) leader claimed that minorities, especially the Muslims have started ditching the Congress and joining the CPI(M). “The Muslim community is upset with the Congress leadership for the statement by Rahul Gandhi and also the side-lining of senior Muslim leaders like Ghulam Nabi Azad, Salman Khurshid and a host of other prominent faces,” he said.

Balakrishnan’s charge comes within days of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan (who is under treatment in a hospital in USA) that the Congress has no capability of its own to take on the BJP’s Hindu agenda. But the Congress in Kerala retaliated within seconds terming the CPI(M) secretary’s statement as a precursor to anoint Mohammed Riyaz as the Chief Minister of Kerala in the event of any eventualities. “Balakrishnan is to Vijayan as what Amit Shah is to Narendra Modi. Balakrishnan knows that Vijayan’s only mission is to get Riyaz elevated as the chief minister of Kerala after him and the new found love of the CPI(M) towards the Muslim community was with this agenda,” said K Muralaeddharan MP who is a former KPCC president.

DELHI JAL BOARD DELHI SARKAR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (T)/A.C.E.(M)-4 LUCKNOW ROAD, TIMAR PUR, DELHI-110054. Short NIT. No.66 (Item no.1,2,3,4) (2021-22) E.E.(T)/A.C.E.(M)-4.						
S.No	Name of work	Estimated Cost (Rs.)	Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Earnest Money	Tender fee (Non-refundable)	Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution
1.	Installation of new water connection with water meter and replacement of old and defective water connection in Ward No.18 AC-04 under ACE(M)-04.(Re-sville). I.D 2022_DJB_214942_1	39,45,824/-	18.01.2022	79,000/-	500/-	Technical bid will be received 01.02.2022, 3:00 PM & opening of Financial bid after completion of technical bid & confirmation of EMD from Bank.
2	Improvement of Sewerage system in EE-Block Jhangipuri by Replacement / Realignment of under size 350mm dia. Sewer line into 630mm OD HDPE sewer pipe from MCD pump house / waste dumping yard to DJB sewage pump house station on kushal cinema road Jhangipuri, Mukundpur ward no II (N) Burari Constituency AC-02 under ACE(M)-4. I.D 2022_DJB_214942_2	30,92,254/-	18.01.2022	61,900/-	500/-	Technical bid will be received 01.02.2022, 3:00 PM & opening of Financial bid after completion of technical bid & confirmation of EMD from Bank.
3.	Replacement of old rusted and damaged water connection in ward no 06 under ACE(M)-04. I.D 2022_DJB_214942_3	42,11,834/-	18.01.2022	84,300/-	500/-	Technical bid will be received 01.02.2022, 3:00 PM & opening of Financial bid after completion of technical bid & confirmation of EMD from Bank.
4.	Replacement of old damaged sewer line from H. No. 165 to 222 and 108 and back side of Om Mandir in Dhaka village GTB Nagar ward in Timarpur AC-03 under ACE(M)-4. I.D 2022_DJB_214942_4	26,13,770/-	18.01.2022	52,300/-	500/-	Technical bid will be received 01.02.2022, 3:00 PM & opening of Financial bid after completion of technical bid & confirmation of EMD from Bank.
Further details in this regard can be seen at https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in sd/-						
ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER) Advt. No. J.S.V. 1022 (2021-22)			"STOP CORONA, Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"			(S.K SINGH) EXECUTIVE ENGINEER - T (M)-4

DELHI JAL BOARD OFFICE OF THE ADDL. CHIEF ENGINEER (M)-11 TENDER DIVISION (M)-11 ROOM No. 102, JAI SADAN, SHIV MANDIR MARG LAJPAT NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110024 EMAIL : ACE.M11.DJB@GMAIL.COM PH. 011-29810956				
Press N.I.T. No 48(2021-22)				
S. N o	Name of work	Estimated Cost (in Rs.)	Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution
1	Replacement of old damaged 300 mm dia Sewer line at Rahul House to Master Colony SPS Tughalkabad Village at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	25,84,393/-	2022_DJB_214994_1 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
2	Replacement of old damaged Sewer line 300 mm dia at S-53 to S-100, Okhla Phase II at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	26,19,058/-	2022_DJB_214994_2 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
3	Replacement of old damaged 300 mm dia sewer line at Sanjay Colony A-105 to B-Block SDMC School, Okhla Phase II at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	25,97,709/-	2022_DJB_214994_3 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
4	Replacement of old damaged 300 mm dia Sewer line at D-5/1 to D-1/1, Okhla Phase II at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	26,23,071/-	2022_DJB_214994_4 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
5	Replacement of old damaged 300 mm dia Sewer line at Chand Mohalla Thakur House to Hussian House Tughalkabad Village, at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	26,39,928/-	2022_DJB_214994_5 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
6	Providing and laying sewer line for connecting Sulabh Sochalya (Toilet Block) in sewer network at Indira Camp Taimoor Nagar in Okhla AC-54 under AEE (M)-54	35, 58,731/-	2022_DJB_214994_6 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 Up to 3.30 pm
Further details in this regard may be seen at (https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in)				
ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER) Advt. No. J.S.V. 1024 (2021-22)			"STOP CORONA, Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"	
			(Arif Hussain) AEE(T)M-11	

Melody queen Lata Mangeshkar still in ICU in Mumbai hosp



TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Legendary singer Lata Mangeshkar, who was admitted to the Breach Candy Hospital for treatment of Covid-19 and pneumonia on January 8, continues to be in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the hospital.

Dr Pratit Samdhani, who is attending to her at the hospital, said: “Singer Lata Mangeshkar was admitted to our hospital on Saturday night.

Apart from Covid-19, she is suffering from pneumonia. Lata ji is still in the ICU. We are trying our best to ensure that she recovers soon. Pray for her recovery”.

BJP bags 24 of 97 seats in Maha civic polls

Mumbai: The Opposition BJP emerged number one in the Nagar Panchayat elections in Maharashtra, by capturing power 24 out of the 97 urban local bodies for which results were declared on Wednesday.

Of the 106 Nagar Panchayats that went to polls, results were declared in 97 urban local bodies, while the results in the remaining nine would be announced on Thursday.

The BJP, which expanded its base in the urban areas when it was in power between 2014 and 2019, emerged number one by capturing power 24 Nagar Panchayats and winning 384 out of the total 1638 seats in 97 urban local bodies.

The Sharad Pawar-led NCP came second by capturing power in 16 Nagar Panchayats and sinning 344 seats out of total seats. The Congress close third by capturing power in 14 urban local bodies and bagging 316 seats out of the total seats. Shiv Sena emerged in the fourth place by capturing power in 11 Nagar panchayats and winning 284 seats out of the total seats.

Expressing their happiness over their party’s performance in the Nagar Panchayat polls, State BJP president Chandrakant Patil and Maharashtra’s former Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that while their party had on its own captured power in 24 urban local bodies, it had the support of other parties to take control of six other urban local bodies.

PNS

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

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The daily Covid-19 cases in Maharashtra shot up by 4,490 cases to touch a tally of 43,697 cases on Wednesday, even as the pandemic cases went up in Mumbai by 883 cases to reach the daily tally of 6,032 cases.

The State, meanwhile, recorded 214 fresh Omicron cases during the day, taking the total number of the new Covid variant registered to 2074.

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

cases to 73,25,825 cases.

Mumbai, which has been witnessing drop in the number of cases for the last few days, witnessed an increase in the fresh Covid-19 cases from 5,149 cases on Tuesday to 6,032 cases on Wednesday. With the fresh tally of fresh cases, the total Covid-19 cases rose from 10, 11,967 cases to 10,01,7999 cases.

As 46,591 Covid-19 patients were discharged from the hospitals across the state after full recovery, the total number of people discharged from the hospitals since the second week of March 2020 increased from 68,68,816 to 69,15,407 cases. The recovery rate in the state rose from 94.32 per cent to 94.4 per cent.

The number of “active cases” in the state increased

from 2,67,659 to 2,64,708. The fatality rate in the state dropped from 1.94 per cent to 1.93 per cent.

Of the total recorded cases, Mumbai accounts for 31,856 active cases, while there are 68,834 cases in Pune followed by 55,570 active cases in Thane, Raigad (15,743), Nagpur (14,296), Nashik (12,759), Palghar (8701), Ahmednagar (6777) Satara (5443) and Aurangabad (4493).

Of the 7,25,31,814 samples sent to various laboratories across the state so far, 73,25,31,814 have tested positive (10.10 per cent) for COVID-19 until Wednesday.

Currently, 23,93,704 people are in home quarantine while 3,200 people are in institutional quarantine.

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

Hyderabad: As much as 30 per cent individuals lose vaccine-acquired immunity after six months, according to a study conducted by AIG Hospitals along with the Asian Healthcare Foundation on Vaccine Immunity.

The study was conducted on 1,636 healthcare workers who were fully vaccinated against COVID-19, a press release from AIG Hospitals said. “Our study results were at par with other global studies where we found that almost 30 per cent individuals had antibody levels below protective immunity level of 100 AU/ml after six months. These individuals were majorly above 40 years with co-morbidities like hypertension and diabetes. Out of the total, 6 per cent did not develop any immune protection at all,” Dr D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman, AIG Hospitals said.

The results clearly indicat-

ed that with age, immunity waning is directly proportional which means that younger people have more sustained antibody levels than the elderly population.

One of the most important results of the study showed that people above 40 years with co-morbidities like hypertension and diabetes have significantly less antibody response after six months of getting fully vaccinated, the release further said. Individuals above 40 years with diabetes and hypertension of both genders may be at a higher risk of SARS-CoV-2 infection and these individuals should be prioritised for a booster dose after six months, AIG said.

At present, the nine-month gap for a precaution dose benefits 70 per cent of the population who can retain enough antibody levels beyond six months.

499 police personnel in Maha found infected in 24 hrs

Mumbai: As many as 499 police personnel were found infected with coronavirus in Maharashtra in the last 24 hours, an official said on Wednesday.

The infected personnel include 95 police officers.

He said 821 police officers and 3,269 police personnel (total 4,090) currently remain admitted at various facilities, including home isolation, in Maharashtra.

The total number of infected police officers in Maharashtra is 5,854 since the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020. A total of 40,959 police personnel, ranging from the rank of the constable to assistant sub-inspector, were found infected in the state, he added. “Until now, 46 officers and 459 personnel of the Maharashtra police force have succumbed to COVID-19,” he said.



A crew member onboard a water taxi service ‘Sea Pro I’ during a trial-run at Mazgaon Domestic Cruise Terminal, in Mumbai on Tuesday. The water taxi service, scheduled to operate from mid-February, will reduce travel time from two hours to 30 minutes. Currently, road and rail are the only modes of transport between Mumbai and Navi Mumbai

Arms buried in Bengal decade ago recovered

PNS ■ KOLKATA

In a frightening development the police on Wednesday recovered at least 36 guns and 450 gun parts and more than a 1000 bullets kept hidden underground in Gooltore block of West Midnapore. The arms and ammunition were reportedly buried more than a decade ago, police sources said even as war of words ensued between former rulers Left Front and

the ruling Trinamool Congress. “The source of the recovered items have not been known yet ... but it seems they are pretty old and further investigations will reveal their age and make,” as senior district official said. While TMC state spokesperson said that “the age of the arms will suggest who might have kept them and why they hid them apprehending their fall ahead of 2011 Assembly elections.”

Former Bengal minister and West Midnapore MLA Sushanto Ghosh hit backsaying “everyone knows that TMC were in alliance with the Maoists before they came to power ... and after they came to power the Maoist and People’s Committee (Maoist-backed) leaders were given top political posts in Jangalmahal area ... so it is clear who might have kept these items.”

BJP protests Maha Cong chief clarification

Latur: Former Maharashtra minister and BJP MLA Sambhaji Patil Nilangekar has termed “false” state Congress president Nana Patole’s clarification on the “Modi” reference in his controversial speech, which has triggered protests from BJP workers across the state.

Opp States against Centre’s sway over IAS babus

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■
NEW DELHI

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

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

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

in this regard to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Sources also said Mamata is believed to have spoken to some Opposition-ruled states to vehemently protest this order.

States like Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Punjab and Chhattisgarh have made up their mind to turn down the Centre's proposal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

situations, where services of cadre officers are required by the central government in public interest, the central government may seek the services of such officers for posting under the central government... and the state government concerned shall give effect to the decision of the central government within the specified time," the latest letter states.

"...wherever the state government concerned does not give effect to the decision of the central government within the specified time, the officers shall stand relieved from cadre from the date as may be specified by the central government," it adds.

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

Renewable energy gets ₹1,500 cr boost

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Experts from India and Israel deliberated on widening the scope of the bilateral Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F), approved three joint research and development projects worth USD 5.5 million and suggested measures to create a broader collaborative ecosystem between the two countries, the science and technology ministry said on Wednesday.

The discussions took place virtually on Tuesday in the presence of officials from the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the Israel Innovation Authority (IIA), GITA and various industries partners.

The experts from the two countries deliberated on widening the scope of the India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund (I4F) at its eighth governing body meeting. They approved three joint research and development projects worth USD 5.5

million and suggested measures to create a broader India-Israel collaborative ecosystem.

"The I4F programme has a lot of potential. This board meeting will give us new thoughts, new directions on how to go forward," said S Chandrasekhar, Secretary, DST and India Co-Chair, acknowledging the contributions made by Israel in the field of science and technology.

"So far, the priority areas have been agriculture, security and other important areas. There is further scope of increasing the quantum of projects received, which calls for the need to conduct more online meetings amongst the startup ecosystems of Israel and India," he said in a statement.

Amir Appelbaum, Co-Chair, Israel and chairman of the board, IIA, said despite the difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical to continue with the efforts of collaboration.

"I4F is one of the examples of collaborations which we want

to carry forward. We look forward to go through interesting applications of projects submitted in this programme," he said.

The governing body ratified the minutes of the seventh board meeting, which was followed by giving its approval to the three research and development projects with an overall budget of USD 5.5 million. The projects were "Centrally Monitored IoT Nanosensors for Molecular Diagnostics in Healthcare and Screening Applications", "NoMoreMos - a mosquito control biological solution" and "IoT-enabled satellite communication for real-time collection of agriculture and environment data across India".

The members further discussed the status of the ongoing projects under the I4F since 2018. The Israeli side introduced the new I4F website and match-making platform developed as a measure to increase the popularity of the joint programme and presented a list of programmes planned for 2022.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) has abducted a 17-year-old boy from inside Indian territory in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Siang district, state's MP Tapir Gao said on Wednesday.

Gao said the teenager, identified as Miram Taron, was abducted by the PLA from Lungta Jor area under Siyungla area on Tuesday.

Taron's friend Johny Yaiying, who managed to escape, informed the authorities about the kidnapping by the PLA, Gao told PTI over phone from Ziro, the district headquarters of Lower Subansiri district. Both are local hunters and belong to Zido village. The MP said the incident took place near the place where Tsangpo river enters India in Arunachal Pradesh.

Tsangpo is called as Siang in Arunachal Pradesh and Brahmaputra in Assam. Earlier, Gao tweeted: "Chinese #PLA has abducted Sh Miram

Taron, 17 years of Zido vill. Yesterday 18th Jan 2022 from inside Indian territory, Lungta Jor area (China built 3-4 kms road inside India in 2018) under Siyungla area (Bishing village) of Upper Siang dist, Arunachal Pradesh".

"His friend escaped from PLA and reported to the authorities. "All the agencies of Govt of India are requested to step up for his early release," he said in another tweet and posted pictures of the abducted boy.

Gao also said that he has informed Union Minister of State for Home Nisith Pramanik about the incident and requested him to take necessary action in this regard. He tagged Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and the Indian Army in his tweets. In September 2020, the PLA had abducted five youths from Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Subansiri district and released them after about a week.

Jaishankar discusses ties with Finnish, Mexican counterparts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday held discussions with his Finnish counterpart Pekka Haavisto on a host of issues, including Afghanistan. In a tweet, Jaishankar said in his wide-ranging discussions with Haavisto, he noted the steady growth of bilateral cooperation.

"Agreed that we would work to strengthen the ties further in 2022," he said.

"Exchanged views about Afghanistan in detail. India and Finland have cooperated in the past on humanitarian support there," Jaishankar said. "Expect to work closely with each other in international organisations, including the UN Human Rights Council," he added.

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

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

PTI ■ MATHURA UP

Pained over the denial of ticket for the upcoming Assembly polls, senior BJP leader S K Sharma resigned from the primary membership of the party and joined the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on Wednesday.

His close aide Niraj Rawat also followed suit. Sharma had contested the 2017 Assembly elections on the BJP ticket from Mant constituency. "The BJP has deceived me twice and the party has lost its earlier character," Sharma told reporters. Sharma said though he wanted to contest from Mathura in 2017, the BJP leadership compelled him to enter the fray from Mant and assured him a berth in the legislative council in case he lost. Though he was not offered a seat in the Upper House, Sharma said, he was instructed to work in Mant and the leadership assured him a

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

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

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

DEEPAK UPRETI ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

of Yogi ji. Be it education, connectivity, investment, everywhere work has been done on a large scale", Nadda said during the address. Welcoming the alliance of all three parties, Patel said, "Through the alliance of BJP, Nishad Party and Apna Dal, we will contest and win the UP assembly polls, and will steer the state in the direction of development".

Ahead of this announcement, the working president of Apna Dal (Sonelal) Ashish Patel had on Tuesday said that their focus is to get "winnable seats" during seat-sharing talks with BJP. "Our complete focus is to get seats that are winnable. This is our priority," Patel said.

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



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

PTI photo

Omicron variant may reduce incidence of severe Covid disease

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Omicron variant of coronavirus may reduce the incidence of severe Covid-19 disease, and the infection may become less disruptive to individuals and society in the future, according to a study conducted by researchers in South Africa.

The findings of the yet-to-be peer-reviewed study are consistent with the previous observations of Omicron displacing Delta since the variant can elicit immunity which neutralizes Delta.

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

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

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

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

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

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

DGCA extends suspension of int'l flights till Feb 28

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the rise in Omicron Covid cases, the Director-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has extended the suspension on scheduled international flights were first suspended in March 23, 2020 after a nationwide lockdown was imposed to tackle the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The suspension was extended every month allowing emergency international travel under the air bubble agreements.

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

Handbook on good practices for cooperatives released

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

To help cooperatives in India and abroad innovate and adopt best practices to not only stay competitive but also distinguish themselves as successful commercial entities, a policy recommendation handbook on SAHAKAR PRAGYA Good Practices for Cooperatives was released here.

The handbook which was jointly released by ICA AP President Dr Chandra Pal Singh Yadav and NCUI President Dileep Sanghani is based on a 'Brain Storming Session on International Good Practices Platform for Cooperatives' conducted earlier by Laxmanrao Inamdar National Academy for Cooperative Research and Development (LINAC) of NCDC. After releasing the

document, newly elected ICA AP (International Cooperative Alliance Asia and Pacific) President Dr Chandra Pal Singh Yadav pointed out that "the cooperatives have inherent advantages in tackling the problems of poverty alleviation, food security, and employment generation—a path to self-reliance.

This has also been reflected during the Covid-19 times. "I am certain that this handbook will be a beacon of light for many cooperatives looking to contribute to Atmanirbhar Bharat self-reliant India".

Yadav who is the first Indian to head ICA Asia-Pacific as its President, was of the view that energy of the youth should be channelized for the development of the country through the cooperatives. If we showcase success stories of the cooperatives among them, they will be

encouraged to venture into the cooperative sector and become job providers instead of job seekers in the corporate world.

MD NCDC Sundeep Nayak and National President Sahakar Bharati DN Thakur were also present at the event.

A compendium of guidelines, resources, methodologies, key learning, case studies of the best performing cooperatives in India and abroad and the outcome and impact, the handbook would serve as an action plan that can help these entities to achieve the goal of self-reliance.

On the occasion, NCDC-LINAC and ICAAP also signed a pact intending to assimilate and develop further on the core strengths, expertise and institutional objectives of the respective parties in the interest of advancement

of research, study, documentation and training for development of the cooperative sector. Dileep Sanghani said, "It is heartening to note that, taking a cue from Union Cooperation Minister Amit Shah, NCDC-LINAC and International Co-Operative Alliance Asia And Pacific (ICA AP) have come together to set up a platform to share their wide experience and ideas for transmitting Indian good practices of cooperatives abroad and vice versa."

"The handbook has been developed by LINAC-NCDC in consultation with eminent experts and leading organizations in the domain of cooperatives.

The consultation process for the Handbook was initiated in November 2021 inspired by the ideas of the Union Cooperation Minister," said Nayak.

FIRST COLUMN

INFLATION MUST NOT
IMPACT ECONOMY

Debt management is a priority
for the Government



SHSHANK SAURAV

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



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

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

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

The lives of train passengers matter

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

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



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

Area planning better alternative to guaranteeing MSP

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

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

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

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



BRJUENDER SINGH PANWAR

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

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

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



allied activities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is much better to directly help small and marginal farmers with an income policy or through a diversification package towards high value agriculture, the experts advise. The issue of optimum utilisation of land, water, fertilisers, labour and other inputs also needs to be considered. With a growing population, we have limited land which meets the basic needs of cereals, pulses, oils, milk, meat, fruits, vegetables, clothing, fuel and shelter. The cropping system should be tailored to local consumption patterns rather than for only getting the maximum price, irrespective of whether the produce has a demand or not.

Economic recovery yet to attain durability: Report

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COVID-19, it said.

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

The daily average generation of the GST e-way bills dipped to 2.1 million during January 1-16, 2022, from 2.3 million in December 2021. After a y-o-y growth in December 2021, the sales of petrol and diesel of state refineries slipped back to a contraction in the first half of January 2022. Even, the y-o-y growth in electricity demand eased to 1.9 per cent during January 1-16, 2022, from 2.8 per cent in December 2021, she said.

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

PTI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

₹ 12 lakh crore (73 per cent of the fiscal deficit and same as in FY22 and FY21), Ghosh said. Overall gross borrowings by the Centre and states are likely to be around ₹21 lakh crore (₹ 19.7 lakh crore in FY22) and net borrowings at around ₹14.8 lakh crore (₹ 15 lakh crore in FY22).

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

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

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

PTI

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

Among gainers were SBI, Tata Steel, Maruti, Axis Bank,

Tech Mahindra, PowerGrid, M&M and Reliance Industries.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

NIFTY 50						BSE 500					
SCRIP	OPEN	High	LOW	LTP	CHANGE	Script	Open	High	Low	LTP	SBICARD
NIFTY 50	18,129.20	18,129.20	17,884.90	17,938.40	-174.65	VEDL	319.95	330	313	324.75	876.5
ONGC	165.3	171	164.9	169.5	5.65	BAIFINANCE	7900	8043.5	7476	7570.3	877.55
TATAMOTORS	510	522.2	504.8	520.6	9.8	TATAELXSI	6510	7171.15	6370.5	6980.65	865
UPL	798	815	789.2	814	14.9	TATAMOTORS	510.35	522	504.95	520.75	870.85
MARUTI	7928.00	8060.00	7860.00	8055.00	139.85	TATAPOWER	238.65	249.75	236.35	248.5	865
COALINDIA	161	164.85	160.8	163.65	2.85	TATASTEEL	1197	1220.6	1183.1	1208.75	865
SBIN	505	517.65	503	510.05	8.25	TCS	4018	4018	3911.75	3915.8	865
HINDALCO	495.2	506.25	490.3	503.95	7.95	INFY	1918.5	1918.5	1864.25	1867.7	865
BAJAJ-AUTO	3400.95	3462.30	3383.05	3452.15	51.2	BAJAJFINSV	18289	18616.1	17881.65	18087.55	865
TATASTEEL	1196.00	1220.90	1183.00	1208.10	13.15	ALOKTEXT	32.45	34.65	30.85	32.25	865
IOC	123.6	125.6	123	125.1	1.15	WIPRO	632.6	632.6	619.1	621.3	865
AXISBANK	725.2	731.95	718.7	731.15	5.95	IRCTC	861.45	877.8	851	875.5	865
TECHM	1663.10	1676.60	1627.55	1671.35	10.6	IDEA	11.9	12.05	11.6	11.95	865
HEROMOTOCO	2695.00	2740.00	2675.00	2700.60	7.75	HINDUNILVR	2370.05	2370.05	2305.5	2310.85	865
M&M	908.95	908.95	880.8	894.2	7.05	ICICIBANK	818.2	820.8	803.25	808.35	865
POWERGRID	206	207.4	201.05	203.35	0.2	MINDTREE	4368	4368	4200	4219.85	865
RELIANCE	2530.00	2542.00	2509.00	2521.40	-0.4	SBIN	506.75	517.5	500.45	515.9	865
ITC	220.75	222.4	218.7	220.45	-0.35	HCLTECH	1219.85	1221.55	1191.15	1199.15	865
TITAN	2019.90	2027.00	1987.00	2016.85	-5.35	RELIANCE	2526.3	2541.65	2508.8	2521.4	865
DRREDDY	4695.00	4734.40	4654.95	4677.00	-16.55	LTTTS	5099	5151.5	4980.50	5079.85	865
TITAN	2598.00	2617.80	2571.10	2591.00	-9.6	SUZLON	11.81	11.95	11.67	11.67	865
NTPC	1341	135.3	132.95	134.5	-0.5	ADANIPOWER	110.25	115.2	108	113.85	865
JSWSTEEL	681	689.25	660	677.7	-2.5	HDFCBANK	1535	1539	1513.35	1518.55	865
EICHERMOT	2736.25	2746.80	2685.45	2722.95	-13.3	GRASIM	1851.3	1862.2	1798.05	1806.95	865
BAJAJFINSV	18240.00	18621.00	17873.35	18054.45	-99.1	TATACONSUM	734.2	737.85	714.05	717.9	865
CIFLA	900.05	901.6	885.1	897	-5.15	IGL	454.8	454.8	435	438.7	865
HDFCBANK	15340.00	15397.5	1513.35	1519.10	-10.15	APOLLOHOSP	4598	4600.05	4400	4512.05	865
INDUSNDRBK	897	903.8	884.15	893	-6.65	TAILBRDCST	49.95	55.15	49.95	52	865
BVCL	396	401.5	393	393.95	-4.15	GAIL	142.9	148.5	142.45	148	865
DISSLAB	4350.00	4350.00	4465.00	4479.45	-47.7	SAIL	105.35	105.8	103.6	104.65	865
BRIITANIA	3620.00	3627.55	3565.00	3583.45	-38.45	AXISBANK	725.6	731.75	718.6	729.6	865
SUNPHARMA	848	848	834	836.9	-9.8	ADANIGREEN	1923	1955.9	1905	1937.85	865
ULTRACEMCO	7599.90	7599.90	7333.00	7456.75	-99.15	ONGC	165.1	170.9	165.1	170.15	865
HCLTECH	1220.00	1220.50	1190.00	1201.75	-18	DEEPAKNT	2572	2603.65	2534.05	2566.45	865
BHARTIARTL	714	715	701.7	703.45	-10.9	TRENT	1144	1211.95	1137.7	1167.65	865
ICICIBANK	816	821	803.25	809.8	-13.3	DELTAACORP	283.5	295	278.55	293.7	865
WIPRO	631	631.65	619	623	-10.3	HFCL	90	91	87.35	88.2	865
SBLIFE	12630.00	1272.10	1240.60	1245.00	-20.9	ITC	252.9	262.6	251	260.05	865
TATACONSUM	7349.5	738	714	719	-12.45	AXIANPORTS	219.6	222.4	218.75	220.35	865
HDPC	2681.00	2698.85	2608.10	2617.20	-45.3	ADI	6750	6750	6551	6692.4	865
TCS	4012.00	4012.00	3910.50	3914.70	-68.9	ADANIENIT	1842	1856.55	1811.8	1849.2	865
KOTAKBANK	1945.00	1945.00	1900.10	1908.40	-33.75	PNB	39.15	40.15	38.7	40	865
NESTLEIND	19370.00	19444.95	18572.10	19017.35	-362.25	BIOCON	351	369.2	351	366.95	865
HDFCLIFE	665	667.4	652.25	656.4	-12.7	YESBANK	13.81	13.89	13.71	13.79	865
BAIFINANCE	7850.00	8045.00	7473.00	7590.00	-154	INDUSINDBK	895	903.7	884.1	893	865
GRASIM	1845.00	1863.90	1796.30	1808.45	-43.8	MARUTI	7916	8059.45	7858.45	8008.5	865
HINDUNILVR	23640.00	2368.60	2305.05	2312.00	-57.5	GANKBARODA	92.5	96.35	91.55	95.85	865
ADANIPORTS	7617.5	7617.5	736	743.55	-19.4	BODREJPROP	1900	1900.05	1820	1850.1	865
ASIANPAINT	3370.00	3370.00	3267.75	3282.95	-90.75	BATAINDIA	1978	2041.35	1963.55	2033.6	865
SHREECEM	26950.00	27099.50	26350.00	26395.00	-760.55	IBULHSGFIN	220.15	221.75	217.35	218.8	865
INFY	1916.00	1916.00	1862.85	1865.00	-55.75	LICHSGFIN	379	379	367.3	371.1	865
						LT	2023	2026.8	1987.2	2019.35	865
						NAUKRI	5379	5400	5002	5019.4	865
						TECHM	1667	1676.9	1628.2	1669.1	865
						BHEL	60.95	62	59.95	61.85	865
						ANGELONE	1390	1425	1365	1419.75	865
						JSWSTEEL	677	689.1	660	674.6	865
						HINDPETRO	319	328.7	318.35	324	865
						HINDALCO	495.9	506.15	491	504.85	865
						IBREALEST	163.25	163.3	158.7	159.85	865
						RBLBANK	150.9	153.15	147.6	150.85	865
						BSOFT	533	533	502.55	512.7	865
						KOTAKBANK	1942.5	1942.5	1900.3	1905.95	865
						ASIANGREEN	3375	3375	3268.7	3281.1	865
						TRIDENT	61.4	62	61.4	61.4	865
						HAL	1380.25	1441	1372.05	1433.25	865
						JINDALSTEL	402.6	413.4	398.4	408.95	865
						HDPC	2660.25	2680	2608.95	2618.65	865
						M&M	902.65	905.65	880.8	894.1	865
						ASHOKLEY	135.45	138.15	130.5	137.45	865
						STELTECH	270	273.7	247.6	249.4	865
						ZEEL	316.35	318.45	308.55	317.6	865
						IDFCFIRSTB	47.75	49.15	47.15	48.9	865
						ULTRACEMCO	7627	7627	7356	7431.95	865
						NICINDIA	67.5	72.8	67.05	71.1	865
						BANDHANBNK	293	306.85	287.7	303.7	865
						DLF	402.2	411.75	398.55	408.3	865
						SOBHA	945.1	1045	919.6	1022.2	865
						COALINDIA	160.4	164.8	160.4	163.85	865
						EICHERMOT	2741	2745.75	2686.8	2719.1	865
						PVR	1565	1588.15	1559.15	1573.25	865
						HAPPSTMNDS	1241.95	1280	1241.95	1272.85	865
						POWERGRID	205.45	207.2	201.3	204.65	865
						HEROMOTOCO	2682	2739.1	2682	2739.1	865
						CHAMBLFERT	463.05	485	460.6	483.15	865
						ZENSARTECH	475.05	486.75	451.8	474.75	865
						NATIONALNUM	107.1	110.5	106.9	109.15	86

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

AP ■ DUBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

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

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

"We were able to add study participants to see more clearly the effect of vaccination," Professor Alex Sigal, from Africa Health Research Institute tweeted on Tuesday.

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

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

This indicates that Omicron can re-infect Delta infected individuals but not vice-versa, giving Omicron an advantage over Delta, they said. "The implications of such displacement would depend on whether Omicron is indeed less pathogenic than Delta. If so, then the inci-

dence of COVID-19 severe disease would be reduced and the infection may shift to become less disruptive to individuals and society," they authors of the study noted.

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Israel minister denies police used NSO spyware on protesters

AP ■ JERUSALEM

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ BEIJING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Influential fashion journalist André Leon Talley dies at 73

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

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

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



Taliban Prime Minister Mohammad Hassan Akhund speaks during an economic conference at the former Presidential Palace in Kabul, Afghanistan, Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022. Even as Afghanistan faces a humanitarian catastrophe and its economy teeters on the brink of collapse, the United Nations representative on Wednesday told a Taliban-organized economic conference in the capital Kabul there have been some advances, including a surprising \$1 billion in exports. AP/PTI

Blinken urges unity to fight 'relentless' Russian aggression

AP ■ KYIV (UKRAINE)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

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

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

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

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

had been kept secret and his client was being denied access to them. The CEC directed that no part of the report should be kept confidential and the whole report should be provided to the petitioner, the report said.

The ECP had kept the documents away from the public domain after PTI had objected to sharing the documents with Akbar S. Babar, the ruling party's founding member and the petitioner in this case, it added.

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

Talking to reporters after the hearing, Minister of State for Information Farrukh Habib said that PTI was the only political party that attaches any importance to transparency in the fund-collection process.

He alleged that Babar was on the payroll of opposition PML-N and had been exposed by the findings of the scrutiny committee.

Babar, told reporters that the decision on declassification of documents was historic. He said the report documents that at least PKR 836,897,508 and USD 1.6 million, collected domestically, have no source and details.

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

PTI ■ BEIJING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

New York AG says Trump's company misled banks, tax officials

New York (AP): The New York attorney general says her investigators have uncovered evidence that former President Donald Trump's company used fraudulent or misleading valuations of its golf clubs, skyscrapers and other property to get loans and tax benefits.

In a court filing late Tuesday, lawyers for Attorney General Letitia James told a judge they have not decided whether to bring a lawsuit in connection with the allegations, but that investigators should be allowed to question Trump and his two eldest children under oath as part of the civil probe.

The Trump Organization issued a statement Wednesday calling the investigation baseless and politically motivated.

The court documents contain the attorney general's most detailed accounting yet of a long-running investigation into allegations that Trump's company exaggerated the value of its holdings to impress lenders or misstated what land was worth to slash its tax burden.

The Trump Organization, James' office said, overstated the value of land donations

made in New York and California on paperwork submitted to the IRS to justify several million dollars in tax deductions.

When giving estimates of Trump's wealth, the company misreported the size of his Manhattan penthouse, saying it was nearly three times its actual size a difference in value of about 200 million, James' office said, citing deposition testimony from Trump's longtime financial chief Allen Weisselberg, who was charged last year with tax fraud in a parallel criminal investigation.

James' office detailed its findings in a court motion seeking to force Trump, his daughter Ivanka Trump and his son Donald Trump Jr. to comply with subpoenas seeking their testimony.

Investigators, the court papers said, have developed significant additional evidence indicating that the Trump Organization used fraudulent or misleading asset valuations to obtain a host of economic benefits, including loans, insurance coverage, and tax deductions. In its statement, the Trump Organization said the only one

misleading the public is Letitia James.

She defrauded New Yorkers by basing her entire candidacy on a promise to get Trump at all costs without having seen a shred of evidence and in violation of every conceivable ethical rule, they wrote. Three years later she is now faced with the stark reality that she has no case.

Donald Trump Jr. said on Twitter that the investigation is nothing more than political retribution from her on behalf of the entire Dem Party. She should be disbarred!

The disclosure comes as Trump has been laying the groundwork for a potential comeback campaign for president in 2024. He held his first rally of the new year last weekend in Arizona, where he slammed the monsters that are using law enforcement for political retribution at the local, state and federal level and aired an anti-James video that highlighted her past anti-Trump statements.

Trump's legal team has sought to block the subpoenas, and it asked a federal court last month to put an end to James'

investigation. That lawsuit is pending. His lawyers say James is improperly attempting to obtain testimony in her civil probe that could be used in a parallel criminal investigation overseen by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg.

In a statement late Tuesday, James' office said the evidence gathered so far shows that her investigation should proceed unimpeded.

For more than two years, the Trump Organization has used delay tactics and litigation in an attempt to thwart a legitimate investigation into its financial dealings, James said.

Thus far in our investigation, we have uncovered significant evidence that suggests Donald J. Trump and the Trump Organization falsely and fraudulently valued multiple assets and misrepresented those values to financial institutions for economic benefit. Although James' investigation is separate from the criminal investigation, her office has been involved in both, dispatching several lawyers to work side by side with prosecutors from the Manhattan D.A.'s office.

China condemns plans by Slovenia to upgrade Taiwan ties

AP ■ BEIJING

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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

UN agency: Palestinians in crisis-hit Lebanon need funds

AP ■ BEIRUT

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

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

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

DDA HOLDS MEETING

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

The following major decisions were taken:

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

The main highlights of the budget are given below: -

♦ Civic Infrastructure

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

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

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

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

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

♦ Housing Projects & In-situ Development for Slum Rehabilitation

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. The work for the development

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

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

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

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

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

♦ Other projects:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Police should be prompt and sensitive: CM Ashok Gehlot

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

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

Speedy punishment in 510 cases of POCOS

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

solved in record time. **Cases registered by courts decreased from 30 to 16 per cent**

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

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

Action against organised crimes

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

Timely promotion and service benefits to Police Personnel

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

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

Chief secretary Shri Niranjan Arya said that mandatory FIRs are important for improving the law and order. **Autonomous rooms in 674 police stations**

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

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

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



BITES signs MoU with CSIR-CRRI BITES Limited

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CISF organises special Covid vaccine booster dose camp

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

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



the protection of the booster vaccine by January 20.

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

CISF has already vaccinated

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

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

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

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

Feminisation of poverty

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

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

♦ Feminisation of Poverty and Responsibilities

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

♦ Feminisation of lack of education, malnutrition and poor healthcare

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

Social factors such as gender inequality,

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

♦ Women's liberation: truth or illusion?

Associating earning a livelihood with women's liberation and equality is inappropriate. The achievements made by women are undervalued. With patriarchy entrenched in the core value system, women getting a share in the family inheritance is restricted or negligible. Earning a livelihood is not enough to solve women's problem. The struggle and deprivation they face are much more in comparison to the small amount of money they can earn. They are struggling for basic minimum survival, dignity and support from their family, society and the country. This has to change as it is damaging the basic foundation of our rich culture and heritage. Only then, can we attain freedom in the true sense.

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

BHEL's Coal to Methanol plant dedicated to nation

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

SA go 1-0 up after India self-destruct in 1st ODI

PTI ■ PAARL

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

After an inaccurate first over, the usually accurate Bumrah got his act together and had opener Janneman Malan (6) caught behind with an outswinger. Expecting an incoming ball, Malan was caught on the crease with his loose push taking the outside edge. South Africa struggled to 39 for one in 10 overs with Indian bowlers

restricting the flow of runs.

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

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

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

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

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

Yash Dhull test positive for COVID

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)



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

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

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

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

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

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

NZ's white-ball tour of Aus postponed

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Rahul third player to captain India in ODIs without captaincy

PTI ■ PAARL (SOUTH AFRICA)

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ BARBADOS

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

He added that the domestic structure in England is similar to that of Australia's.

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ DUBAI

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

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

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

strike-rate of 131.44.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Azam, who has been named captain.

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

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



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

PTI ■ SYDNEY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ BASSETTERRE (ST KITTS)

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

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

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

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

Earlier, coming at number three after England were 26 for

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

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

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

South Africa log comfortable 121-run win over Uganda

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

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

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

U-19 World Cup updates

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



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

a wicket each.

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

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

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SANIA MIRZA TO END CAREER AFTER 2022 SEASON

enced her decision.

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

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

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

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

injury to focus on doubles and enjoyed exceptional results.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Sindhu cruises into second round of Syed Modi International

SHALABH SAXENA ■ LUCKNOW

It was a cakewalk for top-seed PV Sindhu as she sailed past Tanya Hemanth 21-9, 21-9 to enter the pre-quarters of Syed Modi India International Badminton Championship at UP Badminton Academy on Wednesday.

Two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu took just 27 minutes to prove her supremacy, displaying phenomenal court coverage and accurate drops. She will now face Lauren Laim of the USA, who edged past Ira Sharma 15-21, 21-16, 21-16. Samiya Imad Farooqui, Kanika Kanwal, Evgeniya Kosetskaya, Supanida Katethong and Yaelie Hoyaux were the other major shuttlers who moved into the next round of the women's singles category.

Samiya will square off against compatriot Kanika Kanwal, who saw off USA's Disha Gupta 21-15 16-21 21-6, while Sai



will cross swords with Aakarshi Kashyap, who had reached the quarterfinals at India Open. In the men's singles, 10th seed Chirag Sen eased past Ansal Yadav 21-9, 21-6 while Kaushal and Mithun Manjunath also entered the next round.

Venkat Gaurav Prasad and Juheel Dewangan beat compatriots Maini Boruha and Kshitij Tyagi 21-18, 21-17 whereas the second seed Malaysian pair of Chen Tang Jie and Peck Yen Wei defeated the Indian pair of Prateek Ranade and Kanika Kanwal 21-14, 21-12.

However, things got worse for the tournament which has already lost its sheen due to coronavirus as eight more players tested positive. Riddhi Kaur Toor, Likhita Srivastava, Satyendra Malik, Apoorva Javdekar, Deepak Kharti, Kushal Raj and Garv Sahani tested Covid positive and were forced to leave the tournament. The organisers are collecting the samples of the players on a daily basis.



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

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

AFIFA World Cup play-offs spot within their grasp, hosts India would seek a winning start against an under-prepared and lower-ranked Iran in their women's AFC Asian Cup campaign opener here on Thursday.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

Osaka, Barty advance towards Australian Open showdown

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



AP ■ DOHA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Top javelin thrower under dope scanner

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Osaka, Barty advance toward Australian Open showdown

AP ■ MELBOURNE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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