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Air India lands up in Tatas' hands

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

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Later Chandrasekaran reached out to employees of Air



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

PTI

India asking them to work together to build the airline that the country needs, while asserting that the "golden age" of the carrier lies ahead. In a welcome letter, Chandrasekaran reflected on the airline's "brilliant past" and said the entire nation is now waiting to see what "we will achieve together".

Earlier, a new board of directors met formalising the management takeover.

After the Government transferred its shares to the new owner of Air India, the Ministry of Finance in a statement said the Air India strategic disinvestment transaction has been completed on Thursday with the Government receiving a consideration of ₹2,700 crore from Talace Pvt Ltd.

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AI will boom and help civil aviation sector grow: Scindia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

manner," Scindia said on Twitter.

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

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

Chronology of Maharaja privatisation

■ June 2017: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) gave in-principle approval to the consideration for strategic disinvestment of Air India and its five subsidiaries. A Panel of Ministers or Air India Specific Alternate Mechanism (AISAM) was constituted for this purpose.
■ March 2018: Government invites EoI from investors for buying 76 per cent stake in Air India, remaining 26 per cent to be with the Government.
■ The buyer was required to take ₹33,392 crore or close to 70 per cent of the beleaguered carrier's debt on its books.
■ June 2018: Government decides to go slow on Air India sale till oil prices soften.

■ January 2020: Government floats EoI for Air India privatisation. Government to fully exit Air India by selling 100 per cent. The deal would also include 100 per cent in Air India Express and 50 per cent in ground handling arm AISATS. The last date to bid was extended 5 times until December 14.
■ As per the EoI, of the airline's total debt of ₹60,074 crore as of March 31, 2019, the buyer would be required to absorb ₹23,286.5 crore.
■ October 2020: Government sweetens deal; gives flexibility to investors to decide on the amount of Air India debt they want to absorb.
■ December 2020: DIPAM

Secretary said Air India EoI received "multiple bids".
■ March 2021: Hardeep Singh Puri, the then Civil Aviation Minister said: "...There is no choice, we either privatise or we close the airline. We run a loss of ₹20 crore every day despite Air India making money now".
■ April 2021: Government starts inviting financial bids for Air India. September 15 last date to put in bids.
■ September 2021: Tata Group, Spicejet Promoter Ajay Singh put in financial bids.
■ October 8, 2021: Government announces Tata group makes a winning bid of ₹18,000 crore for Air India.

Shah: UP polls to decide country's future

PNS ■ MATHURA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday that UP polls were not just about electing MLAs or the chief minister of the state but it would also decide the future of the country.

Flanked by party candidates from the Braj area going to polls on February 10, Shah urged the voters in Mathura to support the Bharatiya Janata Party in the upcoming assembly elections.

Addressing voters in Mathura, Shah highlighted the Ram temple in Ayodhya, and Kashi Vishwanath Dham Corridor, abrogation of Article 370, and also mentioned government schemes like Ujjwala. He further stressed that the law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh had improved under the BJP government.

"This assembly election is not just to choose an MLA or chief minister. The UP election is an election which will decide India's future," Shah said.

The Union home minister said that voters in the Braj area of Uttar Pradesh had supported the BJP in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, 2017 UP assembly elections and also the 2019 Lok Sabha polls and appealed to the voters to support the party again to continue the development work being done across the state.

"UP is the biggest state in



India where over 22 crore voters live. If this state is not developed, India will lag behind. This election will express with which party or ideology the state will go. The state has seen Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party governments previously. While the SP regime would work for one community, the BSP would work for another. For the first time, overall development of UP has been done during the BJP regime," he said.

Shah also spoke on the Ram temple, and said, "Without the help of Narendra Modi government could Ram temple be constructed in Ayodhya? Could anyone redesign Kashi Vishwanath Dham? It is the BJP government which did not care about vote banks and restored the

glory of these centres of faith."

Shah also invited Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav to visit the Ram temple. "Akhilesh used to say 'Mandir wahi banayenge, magar titi nahi batayenge'. Now bhoomi puja has been done, you are also invited, you should also come," he said referring to the SP chief.

Shah paid obeisance at the Banke Bihar temple before starting his door-to-door campaign for the state Assembly polls.

Attacking the previous SP government, he asked, "Wasn't there a goonda raj? Didn't the *bahubalis* (strongmen) trouble people? Weren't the sisters and daughters humiliated?"

"Azam Khan was arrested and CrPC sections fell short

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Covid cases stabilising; Omicron BA.2 in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The prevalence of Omicron sub-lineage BA.2 is gradually increasing in India, but there are indications of a plateau in the number of cases, with just the top 10 States contributing to 77 per cent of total active cases in the country.

Sujeet Kumar Singh, Director, National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), said at a media briefing here that "Omicron sub-variant BA.2 is more prevalent in comparison to the BA.1 variant in India now. However, the BA.3 sub-variant has not been detected in India yet".

"The percentage of the highly transmissible Omicron variant increased rapidly in December and January and the prevalence of the Omicron subvariant called BA.2 is increasing in our community," the NCDC director said.

"Earlier, the BA.1 variant was dominant among the samples collected from the travellers. Now in community settings, we have found that the BA.2 sub-variant is gradually increasing," he said.

Talking about increasing cases of Omicron, Singh said



that out of the total genome sequencing reports received so far, increasing cases of Omicron have been found in the month of January.

Of the total reports received, 1,292 Omicron cases were found in December last year, whereas the number of Delta cases was over 17,000, he said.

In January so far, 9,672 Omicron cases have been found against 4,779 Delta cases, which includes 3,201 AYC variants and 1,578 Delta variants, Singh said. Mainly three States — Maharashtra, Odisha, and West Bengal — have reported the Delta variant on the basis of genome sequencing, said Singh, adding that it does not mean that only the Omicron variant is being reported everywhere.

Talking about Covid fatal-

ities, he said that those unvaccinated and people with comorbidities are in the high-risk group. "Around 64 per cent of those who died in Delhi were from the unvaccinated group with a major comorbid population," he added.

ICMR chief Balram Bhargava said that vaccines have remained beneficial for India. "Vaccine reduces deaths considerably in the vaccinated population compared to the unvaccinated individuals. Around 95 per cent of the adult population in the country have received the first vaccine dose, while 74 per cent have been fully vaccinated," said Bhargava, as he urged the States lagging behind in vaccination to ramp up the drive.

Recently, the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG) too had in its bulletin cautioned that Omicron is now in community transmission in India and has become dominant in multiple metros, where new cases have been rising exponentially. BA.2 lineage is in a substantial fraction in India and S gene dropout based screening is thus likely to give high false negatives."

Delhi HC expunges judge's 'publicity' remarks against Juhi Chawla in 5G case

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Thursday expunged remarks made in an order against actress Juhi Chawla that she had filed the lawsuit challenging setting up of 5G wireless networks in the country, citing health hazards, for gaining publicity.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh also reduced the costs imposed on Chawla from ₹20 Lakh to ₹2 lakh, saying that she did not take up the 5G issue in a "frivolous and casual manner".

The court said part amount of the costs will be retained since some of the applications filed in the suit were indeed



completely meritless.

The division bench allowed Chawla's appeal and set aside the single judge's June 4, 2021 order by which the suit filed by the actress-environmentalist and two others was dismissed with the observations that it was "defective", "abuse of process of law" and filed for "gaining publicity".

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Channi or Sidhu to lead polls, party workers will pick: Rahul

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Caught in deep political waters following rift regarding captainship, Punjab Congress top leaders — Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi and State party president Navjot Singh Sidhu — on Thursday exhorted party's national vice-president Rahul Gandhi to give the stranded ship a thrust by announcing the Chief Ministerial candidate's name in a run-up to February 20 elections.

Rahul, who gave a major push to the party's poll campaign in Punjab with his visit and also addressing a virtual rally, left it on the party work-



ers to decide.

In a clear cut departure from the party's previous stand to contest polls under "collective leadership", Rahul Gandhi made it clear that the Congress would soon announce the name of the leader "who will lead the party in Punjab polls".

"The question here is who will lead the party in Punjab...the media calls this CM candidate...Both Sidhu ji and Channi ji told me in the car that in Punjab, the big question is who will lead Congress in Punjab...It is clear that two persons cannot lead, it has to be any one. Both also assured me...and I am happy...that whoever leads, the other person would support and back him fully," said Rahul.

"Though we don't do it (announcing CM face) normally. But if the workers want, Punjab wants...We will decide on it...and for that, we will ask the party workers..."

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5 dead in Bihar after consuming intoxicant

PTI ■ PATNA

Five people died on Friday at a village in dry Bihar after consuming what the district administration called "a white chemical" though the locals alleged it was liquor.

All deaths have been reported from Ansar village in Dumrao subdivision of Buxar district.

Eight people fell ill within hours of consuming an intoxicant late on Thursday, said District Magistrate, Buxar, Aman Samir.

"Five died while three others are suffering bouts of vomiting. The boxes from which they had gulped down the

white chemical are being sent for examination to ascertain the substance," the District Magistrate told reporters after visiting the site.

Residents of the village, however, claimed that the deceased and their surviving friends hand drank concocted "daru" (liquor) from bottles of homeopathic medicine which they drank to get high, and not any white substance.

Sale and consumption of liquor is completely banned in Bihar since April, 2016. It is a punishable act in the State. The State has, however, seen more than 50 hooch deaths in half a dozen districts since November last year.

CAPSULE

PADMA FOR AZAD A POLITICAL DECISION NOT ON MERIT: CONG

Bangaluru: Senior Congress leader M Veerappa Moily said on Thursday the Narendra Modi Government's decision to confer Padma Bhushan on Ghulam Nabi Azad was a political one and not based on merit. He said the former Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister should not accept the award if he thinks that it harms the interest of the Congress party.

246 MILITANTS SURRENDER: HIMANTA

Guwahati: A total of 246 militants of United Gorkha People's Organisation (UGPO) and Tiwa Liberation Army (TLA) formally surrendered before Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Thursday.

SP releases another list of 56 candidates

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Turncoats from Bahujan Samaj Party and ministers in the Yogi Adityanath government who recently switched sides figured in the third list of Samajwadi Party as the party released a list of 56 candidates for the UP assembly elections on Thursday.

Former minister Dara Singh Chauhhan, who resigned from the Yogi cabinet and joined the SP, has been fielded from the Ghosi assembly seat of Mau district.

Besides, former minister Arvind Singh 'Gope' has been given a ticket from Dariyabad in Barabanki and Om Prakash Singh from Zamania in Ghazipur district.

Veteran SP leader and leader of the opposition in UP assembly, Ram Govind Chaudhary, will contest from Bansdih constituency in Ballia district. Three-time MP Tufani Saroj has been fielded from Kerakat seat in Jaunpur district.

The Samajwadi Party has repeated nine sitting MLAs. Sitting MLA Dharmaraj Singh Yadav 'Suresh' has been fielded from Barabanki, Ashutosh Upadhyaya from Bhatpar Rani (Deoria), Sangram Singh Yadav from Atrauliya, Nafees Ahmad from Gopalpur in Azamgarh, Durga Prasad Yadav from Azamgarh, Alambadi from Nizamabad (all in Azamgarh), Shailendra Yadav Lalai from

Shahganj (Jaunpur), Lucky Yadav from Malhani (Faizabad) and Virendra Yadav from Jangipur (Ghazipur).

The party has named eight Bahujan Samaj Party turncoats, including two rebel MLAs, Laji Verma and Ram Achal Rajbhar. While Verma has been given a ticket from Katehari, Rajbhar will contest from Akbarpur. Both the seats are in Ambedkar Nagar district.

The other BSP turncoats fielded by the SP include Daud Ahmad from Mohammadi (Lakhimpur), Tribhuvan Dutt from Alapur, Rakesh Pandey from Jalalpur (both in Ambedkar Nagar district), Sayeeda Khatoon from Domariyaganj (Siddharth Nagar), Vinay Tiwari from Chillupar (Gorakhpur) and Ramakant Yadav from Phoolpur Pawai (Azamgarh).

The SP has also fielded former minister Yashpal Chaudhary's son Varun Chaudhary from Dhaurahra constituency in Lakhimpur Kheri district.

Also, veteran SP leader Beni Prasad Verma's son Rakesh Verma, has been fielded from Kursi assembly seat in Barabanki district.

Among other candidates, the party has named Padamraj Singh Pammu from Sawaijpur, Rambali Verma from Balamau (both in Hardoi), Mohammad Naeem Gujjar from Tiloi

(Amethi), Girijesh from Babaganj (Pratapgarh), Puja Pal from Chayal (Kaushambi), Murtaza Siddiqui from Phoolpur (Allahabad), Fareed Mehfooz Kidwai from Ramnagar (Barabanki), Abhay Singh from Gosaiganj (Faizabad), KK Ojha from Mahsi (Bahraich), Dr SP Yadav from Gaisadi and Jagram Paswan from Balrampur.

The SP has fielded Vijay Kumar from Kapilvastu, veteran leader Mata Prasad Pandey from Itwa (both in Siddharth Nagar), Kajal Nishad from Campierganj, Amrendra Nishad from Pipraich, Vijay Bahadur from Gorakhpur (Rural), Yashpal Rawat from Sahjanwa, Roopwati from Khajani, Dr Sanjay Kumar from Bansgaon (all in Gorakhpur), Brahma Shankar Tripathi from Pathardewa, Ghazala from Rampur Karkhana (both in Deoria), Kamalakant Rajbhar from Didarganj and Bechai Saroj from Lalganj (both in Azamgarh).

In Ballia, the party has fielded Ziyauddin Rizvi from Sikanderpur and Sangram Singh from Phephna, Baba Dubey from Badlapur (Jaunpur), Prabhunath Singh from Sakaldih (Chandauli), Zahid Beg from Bhadohi,

Avinash Kushwaha from Robertsganj, Sunil Singh Gaur from Obra and Vijay Singh Gaur from Duddhi (all in Sonbhadra district).

623 candidates in fray for first phase polls

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Altogether 623 candidates are in the fray for 58 assembly seats in western Uttar Pradesh going to polls in the first phase where polling is scheduled on February 10.

On the last day of withdrawal of papers on Thursday, 35 candidates withdrew their nominations, Election Commission of India sources here said on Thursday.

A total of 810 candidates had filed their nominations and papers of 152 were rejected during scrutiny.

In the first phase, the highest number of candidates (15 each) are in Mathura and Muzaffarnagar while there are 14 candidates each in Ghaziabad, Dadri, Bah and Etmadpur assembly constituencies. The lowest of six candidates each are in the fray from Baraut and Baldev assembly seats.

Meanwhile, in the second phase of nominations for 55 seats where polling is scheduled on February 14, 412 nominations have been filed till now with 260 nominations filed on Thursday. Friday is the last day for filling of nominations for the second phase polls. In the third phase of nominations for 59 seats where polling will be held on February 20, now 42 papers have been filed so far with 41 filed on Thursday.

In the fourth phase of nominations which commenced on Thursday, 14 candidates have filed their papers.

Campaigning picks up for first phase polls

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Campaigning for the first phase of polls for 58 seats covering 11 districts in western Uttar Pradesh has picked up and is set to decide the fate of nine ministers in the present Yogi Adityanath government.

Thursday was the last day for withdrawal of nominations in the first phase.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's campaign is being led by Union ministers Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh. Besides, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and his two deputies Keshav Prasad Maurya and Dr Dinesh Sharma, have been holding door-to-door campaigning to woo voters.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav and Rashtriya Lok Dal chief Jayant Chaudhary will hold a press conference in Muzaffarnagar on Friday before campaigning.

On her part, Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati will hold a public meeting in Agra on February 2.

A minister in the Yogi cabinet, Atul Garg, is in the fray from Ghaziabad City assembly seat. In the 2017 elections, Garg had defeated BSP candidate Suresh Bansal by a margin of 70,055 votes to win the seat.

Besides, BJP's candidate from Thana Bhawan seat in Shamli, Suresh Rana is Sugarcane Minister in the Yogi government. Rana won this seat for the first time in 2012 by defeating Ashraf Ali Khan of the RLD by merely 265 votes.

UP Power Minister Shrikant Sharma is an MLA from Mathura City seat. In 2017, he defeated three-time Congress MLA Pradeep Mathur by a huge margin. Congress had won the Mathura assembly seat for 15 years from 2002 to 2017.

In the last elections Sharma secured 1.43 lakh votes while Mathur could muster only 42,200 votes.

Also, former Chief Minister Kalyan Singh's grandson and minister of state in the Yogi government, Sandeep Singh, has filed his nomination papers from Atrauli assembly seat of Aligarh which has been a pocket borough for the family as Kalyan Singh had won 11 times from there. In the 2017 elections, Sandeep won by more than 50,000 votes.

Notification issued for 4th phase polls

L u c k n o w (P N S) : Notification for the fourth phase of Uttar Pradesh assembly polls in the Awadh region, including Lucknow, was issued by the Election Commission of India in Lucknow on Thursday.

A total of 59 assembly seats will go to the polls in the fourth phase on February 23.

With the issuance of the notification, the process of filing nomination papers for 59 seats in nine districts of Pilibhit, Lakhimpur Kheri, Sitapur, Hardoi, Unnao, Lucknow, Rae Bareli, Banda and Fatehpur has begun. Of these seats, 16 assembly seats are reserved for Scheduled Caste candidates.

Chief Electoral Officer of UP, Ajay Kumar Shukla, said on Thursday that there were more than 2.12 crore voters in the fourth phase, including 1.14 crore males, 98.86 lakh females and 972 belonging to the third gender.

As per the election schedule, the last date for filing of nominations for the fourth phase is February 3. Scrutiny of nominations will be done on February 4 and the last

date for withdrawal is February 7. The fourth phase polling will be held on February 23 and counting will take place on March 10.

The 59 assembly seats going to polls in the fourth phase are Pilibhit, Barkhedha, Purnapur (SC), Baisalpur, Palia, Nighasan, Gola Gokarnath, Srinagar (SC), Dhaurhara, Lakhimpur, Kasta (SC), Mohammadi, Maholi, Sitapur, Hargaon (SC), Laharpur, Biswan, Sevata, Mahmudabad, Sidhauli (SC), Misrikh (SC), Sawaijpur, Shahabad, Hardoi, Gopamau (SC), Sandi (SC), Bilgram-Mallawan, Balamau (SC), Sandila, Bangarmau, Safipur (SC), Mohan (SC), Unnao, Bhagwantnagar, Purva, Mahiabad (SC), Bakshi Ka Talab, Sarojinagar, Lucknow West, Lucknow North, Lucknow East, Lucknow Central, Lucknow Cantonment, Mohanlalaganj (SC), Bachhrawan (SC), Harchandpur, Rae Bareli, Sareni, Unch Shahar, Tindwari, Baberu, Naraini (SC), Banda, Jehanabad, Bindki, Fatehpur, Ayahshah, Hussainganj and Khaga (SC).

UP Forest and Environment Minister Anil Sharma is in the fray from Shikarpur assembly seat of Bulandshahr, which is considered a BJP stronghold and the party has won this seat five times so far. In 2017, Anil Sharma won by defeating Mukul Upadhyay of the BSP by more than 50,000 votes, after which Sharma was made a minister of state in the Yogi government.

Also in the fray in the first phase is another minister in Yogi government, Kapil Dev Agarwal, who is trying his luck from Muzaffarnagar Sadar assembly seat which he won in 2017 after defeating Garurav Swarup Bansal of Samajwadi Party by a margin of 10,704 votes.

Also, UP Minister of State for Flood Control Dinesh Khatik is contesting from Hastinapur assembly seat in

Meerut. He contested the seat for the first time in 2017 and won it defeating BSP candidate Yogesh Verma.

Minister of State for Social Welfare Dr Giriraj Singh Dharmesh won the Cantonment assembly seat of Agra by a margin of 45,000 votes in the 2017 election. Earlier in 2012, he had lost the seat by a margin of 5,000 votes.

Dairy and Animal Husbandry Minister Chaudhary Laxmi Narayan has filed his nomination from Mathura's Chhatta assembly seat from where he had won in 2017 defeating former minister Thakur Tejpal and Independent candidate Atul Singh Sisodia. In 1996, Laxmi Narayan reached the assembly after winning on a Congress ticket but in 2007, Chaudhary switched allegiance and was elected as an MLA on a BSP ticket.

PGV talks to protesting job aspirants

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After attacking the government over a brutal attack on protesting job aspirants, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday spoke to the competitive exam candidates suffering from police repression in Prayagraj and assured them of her party's full cooperation in seeking justice.

After the demonstration against Railway NTPC and Group D exam results, the police had beaten the students by breaking the doors of their hostel rooms. Students narrated their oppression to Priyanka Gandhi.

"We stand with you. I will raise your point from every forum, in every forum", Priyanka Gandhi Vadra assured the students while interacting with them.

"Don't be afraid, ensure that elections

are held on your issues, on your employment issues", Priyanka Gandhi added.

"The government does not give you a job and also oppresses you. Now when leaders come to ask for votes, fix their accountability", Priyanka made an appeal.

"Job Calendar is the solution to save the recruitment process from hanging for years. We have talked about the job calendar in our youth announcement", Priyanka claimed.

She also promised the students that she would soon reach Prayagraj and meet them to discuss their problems and help them to get it resolved.

Meanwhile, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete voiced her support for the students. She said the manner in which the students were baton-charged, it seems to be a conspiracy against the youth.

"It's embarrassing. It is like a blot on

civilised society, democracy and a huge conspiracy is being hatched against the younger generation", she said.

It is worth mentioning that in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh and Patna, the capital of Bihar, the candidates created a ruckus alleging irregularities in the results of NTPC recruitment examination of the Railways.

In Prayagraj on Tuesday, students reached the railway track and tried to stop the trains. After that, in a video on social media, policemen were seen entering a guest house and brutally beating up the students. Several policemen have been suspended in this case.

On the other hand, in Patna, the candidates set fire to a train coach and stopped a goods train in front of the Rajendra Nagar terminal, alleging rigging in the RRB-NTPC exam.

Maya: UP, Bihar govts responsible for poverty, unemployment

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati lashed out at the Uttar Pradesh and Bihar governments, holding them responsible for prevailing poverty and unemployment in respective states.

Attacking the Bharatiya Janata Party over protests by railway job aspirants in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Mayawati asked the saffron party to change its "narrow mindset of making the youth sell pakoras".

The BSP chief took to Twitter to target the BJP over issues of unemployment and poverty.

"There has been a huge uproar in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar over UPNT and now over Railways' RRB-NTPC results, which is a proof of the failure of the governments. Beating up poor and unemployed youths for protesting, and playing with their future is totally unjustified", Mayawati tweeted in Hindi on Thursday.

The BSP chief further added, "Due to the wrong policies of the government, poverty and unemployment have reached their nadir. Government jobs and reservation facilities in them have become secondary. In such a situation, it is unjust to not have the examination even for small government jobs for years. The BJP should change its narrow mindset of making the youth sell 'pakoras' (snacks)".

Mayawati's remark was a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comments made during a 2018 interview to a TV news channel where he said that selling pakoras was also a form of



employment and could be seen as a form of "job creation".

Meanwhile, thousands of job aspirants, unemployed youths and students are currently protesting against Railway Recruitment Board (RRB) and non-technical popular categories (NTPC) exams following the change in the examination pattern of NTPC examinations. On Wednesday, a passenger train was set on fire and another pelted with stones during protests against the 'irregularities' in RRB-NTPC Exam 2021 in Bihar.

Later, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw urged job aspirants not to destroy public property. The Railway ministry also decided to suspend NTPC and Level 1 exams in the wake of protests across the country. Hundreds of protesters had quattered on rail tracks at several places on Tuesday, hampering train movement across Bihar.

Several trains had to be cancelled or run on alternative

routes in view of the protests.

Meanwhile, Mayawati announced six more candidates for the assembly elections on Thursday.

The tickets of some candidates already announced have also been changed. Earlier she had announced 51 candidates. Till now she has announced 117 candidates. Of these candidates, 41 belong to the Muslim community.

Even before the nomination for the UP assembly elections, many BSP candidates are facing setbacks.

The BSP has changed candidates for Dhampur seat in Bijnor and Kundarki seat in Moradabad.

In the list of candidates released by the party, Moolchand Chauhan has been given a ticket from Dhampur in Bijnor. Earlier, the party had made Kamal Ahmed its candidate from there.

At the same time, the party has declared Mohammad Rizwan as its its candidate in place of Haji Chandbabu Malik from Kundarki assembly seat of Bareilly.

BSP has fielded Yusuf Khan from Nawabganj in Bareilly. Shalini Singh from Faridpur reserved seat of Bareilly, Brimanand Sharma from Bareilly and Chandraketu Maurya from Dadraul assembly seat of Shahjahanpur.

Releasing the list of candidates, party's national general secretary Mevalal Gautam said that the list of candidates was released for the second phase of elections on January 22. He said some changes had been made in it and a new list was being issued.

Aam Aadmi Party releases its manifesto

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) issued its manifesto which it termed as Kejriwal Guarantee Letter promising attractive promises.

The AAP announced it would restore the old pension scheme of the state government employees, provide chambers to advocates and Rs 10 lakh of insurance to each of them and Rs 10 lakh insurance to each journalist among several other announcements, if voted to power.

The manifesto was released by AAP leader and MP Sanjay Singh in a press conference on Thursday with AAP state president Sabhajeet Singh and AAP leader Vaibhav Maheshwari flanking him.

Besides the above promises, the AAP promised to provide jobs to 10 lakh youths in each year of its tenure, free travel to women across Uttar Pradesh, 300 units of free electricity supply, waiver of old bills, round-the-clock electricity, teaching of Constitution of India in all government-run schools, waiver off farmers' loans, providing crop price within 24 hours in famers' bank account, hike in sugarcane state administered price every year, payment of sugarcane price immediately after its unloading at sugar mills, Rs 1 crore compensation to each of the martyred army man/policeman and government job to a member of the family, Rs 1 crore as compensation to those who lost their lives in COVID-19 duty along with government job to a member of the family.

Singh further said the AAP would set up village clinics and mohalla clinics in each village and mohalla, form a special policy to resolve the issues related to Bundelkhand and Purvanchal, give UP youths 80 per cent reservation in government jobs, complete teachers'

...announces 40 more candidates



Lucknow (PNS): Aam Aadmi Party issued the fourth list containing 40 candidates that includes a doctor, a PhD scholar, five law graduates and 13 graduates.

AAP leader and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Singh tweeted the list. As of now the AAP has announced 243 party candidates from different constituencies of Uttar Pradesh.

UP AAP president Sabhajeet Singh said that the party was giving preference to educated and Other Backward Class candidates in the election.

"People are angry with the previous governments and the incumbent ruling party as they did not inherit except making tall claims. Our party workers would meet people and tell them about AAP's Delhi model of governance and development works carried out by the Kejriwal government in the last five years. They will also tell the voters about the 'Kejriwal guarantee scheme', Singh said.

recruitment for 97,000 posts within a month after forming the government, appoint eligible candidates in compliance

with the Supreme Court's order on Bed TET 2011, resolve the issue of 45,000 jawans of PRD (Prantiya Rakshak Dal) and halve the fee for BED and BTC.

He said the AAP government would ensure a minimum stipend of Rs 25,000 to teachers of private schools for teaching work, provide legal guarantee to MSP and name it MSP guarantee law, provide Rs 50,000 per hectare compensation in case of loss of crops due to flood and other natural calamities, Rs 2,000 as allowance to those helping accident victim in reaching hospital under Farishtey Scheme, identity cards to all vendors and Rs 10 lakh insurance to each of them and regularisation in government jobs of agitating Shiksha Mitras by resolving their demands.

Singh said the AAP government would fulfill the promises on forming a government in UP and appealed to the public to give AAP a chance.

"We will probe scams, be it in Jal Jeevan Shakti Mission or Kumbh, or the land scam in construction of Lord Ram temple", he said.

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Two file papers for Lucknow seats

Lucknow (PNS): On the first day of filing of nominations for the nine Assembly constituencies of Lucknow on Thursday, two candidates filed their papers at the Collectorate.

They included Lallan Kumar, the media convener of UP Congress who filed his papers for the Bakshi Ka Talab seat and Ajay Kumar Singh from Rashtriya Rashtravadi Party who filed his papers for Lucknow Cantonment seat.

District Election Officer Abhishek Prakash informed that nine nomination forms were distributed for the Malihabad constituency, 14 for BKT, 15 from Sarojininar, 21 for Lucknow West, 15 for Lucknow North, 13 for Lucknow East, 12 from Lucknow Central, 14 for Lucknow Cantonment and 10 for Mohanlalganj. Lallan Kumar who has filed papers as a Congress candidate is a resident of River View Enclave.

As per his affidavit, the gross value of his movable assets is Rs 1,67,46,890.60 and that of his spouse is Rs 82,76,814.97. The current market value of his immovable assets is Rs 1,15,00,000 and of his wife, Rs 2,15,00,000. The grand total of his liabilities are Rs 1,16,23,552 and of his spouse Rs 52,53,516.

Lallan, who has done management development programme from IIM-Lucknow said that he was standing for elections because there were several problems which BKT faced. "There are several problems like unemployment, farmers' protests and problems of houses, water and we want to improve the situation," he said. Talking about the cases registered against him, Lallan said that they were primarily of political rivalry. Lallan said that he was associated with the Congress because he was essentially a Gandhivadi and had been with the Congress party for the past 14-15 years.

Meanwhile, 50 year old Ajay Kumar Singh, a resident of Alambagh, filed his nomination for Lucknow Cantonment seat as a candidate of Rashtriya Rashtravadi Party.

As per the affidavit filed by him the total gross value of his

movable assets is Rs 15,38,750 and that of his spouse, Rs 8,97,540. The current market value of his immovable assets is Rs 90,00,000 and of his spouse, Rs 65,00,000. His liabilities are Rs 35,000. He is a graduate from Dr Rajendra Prasad Hindi Vidyapith Devghar in Bihar.

Nominations began for the nine assembly constituencies of the Lucknow district amidst security and Covid protocols on Tuesday.

District Election Officer Abhishek Prakash said that the nomination papers process would continue from January 27 to February 3 between 11 am and 3 pm. He said that no nomination would be accepted on January 30 it being Sunday.

Prakash said for the successful and peaceful conduct of nominations as well as maintaining the Covid protocols, barricades had been put up at six crossings -- near Revenue Board, Health Directorate crossing, treasury gate and all gates including those inside the Collectorate and DFMD machines had been installed.

He said no weapons were allowed in the Collectorate and a Covid help desk was set up on the premises. He said two videographers had been posted in shifts for each constituency and they would videograph the entire process of nominations while CCTV cameras had also been installed both inside and outside the Collectorate and a public address system had been installed through which directions for nominations would be announced. The nominations for Malihabad seat would be filed in room number 19 of the DM's court for Bakshi Ka Talab in room number 20, for Sarojininar in room Number 21, for Lucknow West in room Number 22, for Lucknow North in room number 2 in the court of ADM Trans-Gomti, for Lucknow East in room number 3 in the court of ADM (J), for Lucknow Central in room number 6 of ADM 1, for Lucknow Cantonment in room number 4 in the court of deputy collector (revenue) and for Mohanlalganj in room number 5 in the court of ACM (5).

Student organisations protest at LU against RRB NTPC results

Lucknow (PNS): Various students' organisations, on Thursday, staged protest at Lucknow University against the RRB NTPC results and police lathi-charge on students in Prayagraj.

The AISA, NSUI and

Samajwadi Chhatra Sabha staged a protest on Thursday at Lucknow University against the alleged irregularities in the results of RRB NTPC exams and against the crackdown and repression of protesting students in Uttar Pradesh and

Bihar.

A student from the protesters said that in 2019, just before the Lok Sabha elections, the Railways had issued graduate-level vacancies on a large scale for 21 Railway Boards, under which 35,277 appointments

were to be made for seven posts including those of station master, guard and ticket collector (TC).

The students marching from LU gate No.1 towards IT College were stopped by the police forces midway.

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Opposition making false statements: Sharma

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Accusing the opposition of misleading the people of Uttar Pradesh, Deputy Chief Minister Dr Dinesh said that the opposition, being issueless, was indulging itself in making false statements.

Addressing media persons in Lucknow on Thursday, Sharma said, "In the last five years, Uttar Pradesh has made leaps in every aspect of development, leaving the opposition high and dry. The Bharatiya Janata Party has established a new identity of the state with ease of doing business. If 100 mobile phones are made in the country, 70 of them are made in Uttar Pradesh which can now boast of having Asia's largest data centre."

"We have improved the image of Uttar Pradesh by changing the educational environment and bringing in investments. Today, the migration of talent has stopped owing to ample opportunities



for meritorious students.

In the upcoming assembly elections, the BJP will break its own record by winning maximum seats while opposition parties, including Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party and Congress together would not reach even three digits."

Sharma further said that earlier there used to be migration of talent from Uttar Pradesh. "Now, due to proactive steps taken by the Yogi Adityanath government in the education sector in five years, people from more than 14 countries are coming here to study and teach. Happy teachers, stress-free students, employment-oriented education and fair examinations are the four objectives that our government worked upon," the deputy chief minister said.

Sharma said that earlier copying and exam centre allotment had become an industry. "We made the arrangement online. As many as 1.94 lakh CCTV cameras were installed which resulted in a transparent examination system. Also, a time table was prepared for the whole year for studies in colleges and schools. For the first time after independence, the curriculum was changed to

make it employment-oriented.

UP led the country in online education and examination and created an online library during the COVID-19 period. Sanskrit teachers were appointed in secondary schools. Students of Sanskrit who secured the first ten positions were provided Re 1 lakh and a tablet each while the process was on to set up a Sanskrit directorate in the state," he said.

"Besides, 1.5 lakh teachers were appointed in a transparent manner in basic, secondary and higher education while the remaining posts would be filled soon. In the secondary schools, about 6,000 posts were created simultaneously. A total of 250 secondary schools, 78 degree colleges have been set up and 12 universities are in the process of being set up. What is more, for the first time since independence, college teachers were given the right to conduct research.

A total of 1.3 lakh basic schools were renovated under Operation Kayakalp, 771 Kasturba schools were being run. Uniforms, shoes, socks and copy books were distributed free of cost to the children. Girls' hostels were started in 107 development blocks," Sharma claimed.

Prisoner escapes from police custody

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

An under trial prisoner escaped from police custody from King George's Medical College hospital where he was admitted after he inflicted injuries in his neck on January 26.

The accused was identified as Satveer Singh, who was booked for murder and loot by Vibhuti Khand police of Gomti Nagar and also was named in a case in Gonda district.

The police lodged a report against the accused and also registered a case against the two constables, Ravi Kumar and Yogesh Kumar, who were guarding him for dereliction of duty.

The police teams are hunting for the accused.

As per reports, Satveer had injured himself by slashing his neck with a disposable blade in the night of January 18 in the Lucknow district jail. He was admitted to jail hospital but the hospital authorities referred him to KGMU where he was brought on January 19 and admitted for some days. For the security purpose, constables Ankur and Arvind were deployed in day duty shift (from 9 am to 9 pm) and constables Ravi Kumar and Yogesh Kumar in night shift (from 9 pm to 9 am).

However, the jail officials received information around 9 am on January 26 that Satveer had escaped from the police custody when constables Ravi Kumar and Yogesh Kumar were taking charge from their fellow constables.

A team led by Sub-Inspector Om Prakash Singh reached the KGMU for verifying the information and it surfaced that Satveer escaped from police custody around 6:30 am on January 26.

On finding laxity on part of constables Ravi Kumar and Yogesh Kumar, the S-I lodged a report of dereliction of duty against them.

He also lodged a report against Satveer Singh.

Republic Day celebrated with enthusiasm and fanfare

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The 73rd Republic Day was celebrated with much fanfare and enthusiasm in the city.

District Magistrate Abhishek Prakash unfurled the flag at the Collectorate. Amongst those present included officials from the district administration and the staff of the Collectorate.

He offered floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi and then administered the pledge to the officials that they would take the voting percentage of the district to a record level and that Covid protocols would be followed.

SGPGIMS Director RK Dhiman unfurled the national flag on the institute building and spoke about the achievements which the institute had made in the past one year.

KGMU Vice-Chancellor Dr Bipin Puri unfurled the national flag on the occasion of Republic Day at the medical university and spoke about the manner in which the institute was marching forward.

Uttar Pradesh Metro Rail Corporation (UPMRC) celebrated the 73rd Republic Day with full enthusiasm at its administrative building. On this occasion, UPMRC Managing Director unfurled the Tricolour and offered salutations. The managing director, directors and officials paid tributes to the freedom fighters and architects of the Constitution.

UPMRC Managing Director Kumar Keshav in his address, expressed gratitude to the security personnel, front line workers, doctors and corona warriors for serving the country with full dedication during the pandemic. He also paid homage to the martyrs and freedom fighters.

As a precursor event to 75 Years of Independence 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', Lucknow Metro through an exhibition showcased India's ordeal from British India to today's shining



India.

At the Lucknow University, Vice-Chancellor Prof Alok Rai unfurled the national flag.

The Social Work Students' Council and The Literary Club of the LU Social Work Department organised an online quiz and an Open Mic session on Wednesday. The name of this event was "Obeisance". All the faculty members, research scholars and students participated in this online event with full enthusiasm through Google Meet platform.

Post-graduate student Shivangi Trivedi was the moderator and Prateek Agrahari the co-moderator of the event which started with a welcome address. Later, the quiz and Open Mic session was conducted.

The quiz was based on questions related to the Republic Day of India. The participants were prepared very well and displayed good knowledge on the topic. The Open Mic session was full of energy and students put forward their views in the session. Pankhuri sang a song on the occasion of Republic Day while poetry was presented by Deepak Prashant with some other participants.

The 73rd Republic Day was celebrated with great pomp at Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University in Lucknow.

A yoga session was organised jointly by the university's NCC unit, Department of Yoga and Yoga Wellness Centre at 7 in the morning, in which teachers, students and NCC cadets of the university, along with Vice-Chancellor Acharya Sanjay Singh, performed Surya Namaskar together.

After this, the vice-chancellor unfurled the national flag after garlanding the statue of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar. A march past and tableaux were taken out by the NSS Unit, NCC Unit, Security Guard, Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Committee, Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat Committee, Unnat Bharat Abhiyan Team, Gender Champion Team. The welcome address was given by Registrar Prof S Victor Babu.

Colonel Samar Vijay Singh, the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations, exhorted the students to dream and work hard to fulfill those dreams of the nation. He said that when one sets a goal and puts all energy in achieving it, then suc-

cess definitely comes and brings immense satisfaction and joy. Sharing his life experiences, he spoke about the Mahar regiment formed on the suggestion of Babasaheb who served the country by serving as the captain in the Mahar regiment.

Teachers and research scholars of the university who performed better in various categories were awarded. In the category of Research and Academic Excellence Award 2022, Dr Aditya Khamparia, Dr Babita Pandey and Prof RA Khan were awarded for computer, information communication. Dr Sufia Ahmed and Prof Sanjeev Chadha were awarded in education, legal, HR and management categories. Dr RN Bhargava, Dr PS Rajnikanth and Prof Ram Chandra were awarded in life sciences.

NCC Best Cadets Girls' Awards were given to Harshita Singh, Komal Verma, Srishti Mishra. NCC Best Cadets Boys' Awards were given to Vikrant and Zeeshan Ansari. Ankur Singh, Ashutosh Kumar, Dheeraj Kumar, Mohammad Noor Alam, Mohammad Zeeshan Ansari, Prabhat Kumar, Roop Chandra Tiwari, Sanjay Kumar, Shahbaz Shahi, Vivek Kumar, Vikas Sonkar, Vikrant Deep Singh were rewarded for their better performance in the field of sports. Best employee (non-teaching) awards were to Sandhya Dixit, Munni Devi, Chhotey Lal, Alumbusha, Pradeep Kumar and Dr Rachana Gangwar.

Swati Yadav, a student of the National Service Scheme unit of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar Central University, participated in the Republic Day Parade at Rajpath this year.

The Republic Day was celebrated with much enthusiasm at St Joseph College, Mahabadi. The programme was telecast live on YouTube for the students. BSF Assistant Commandant Swadheen Naik was the special guest.

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The borrower's attention is invited to provision of sub-section (8) of 13 of the act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Sl. No.	Name and Address of Borrower/Guarantor & Description of Mortgage Property & O/S Amount as per Demand Notice/Demand Notice Date & Possession Notice Date
1.	Borrower : M/s Triveni Collection, Address : 103, Taksal Manik Chowk, Jhansi. Proprietor : Shri Jitendra Agarwal S/o Shri Kashi Ram Agarwal, R/o : 288, Panchkuiya, Jhansi. Guarantor : Shri Anoop Kumar Agarwal S/o Shri Radha Mohan Agarwal, R/o : Chick Mohalla, Sadar Bazar Jhansi & Smt. Pushpa Agarwal W/o Shri Jitendra Agarwal, R/o : 20/169, Patkapur, Kanpur. Demand Notice Date: 16-07-2021 • Date of Constructive Possession: 25.01.2022 Description of Mortgage Property : Double stories residential building at 288 (Old House No. 6) Panchkuiya, Jhansi in the name of Shri Jitendra Agarwal S/o Shri Kashi Ram Agarwal. Area : 712 Sq. Ft., Bounded-North : Way, South : House of Pawan Agarwal, East : House of Ram Babu Sharma, West : House of Prabhat Sharma. Branch : Aantilya Talab, Distt. Jhansi O/S Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 27,21,113.00 + Intt. + Others Charges
2.	Borrower : Smt. Jhumur Banerjee W/o Late Somnath Banerjee & Kumari Shivanshi Banerjee (Minor) through Mother and natural Guardian, Smt. Jhumur Banerjee W/o Late Somnath Banerjee, R/o : House No. 1332, Civil Lines, Jhansi. Branch : Bada Bazar, Distt. Jhansi Demand Notice Date: 24-05-2021 • Date of Constructive Possession: 25.01.2022 Description of Mortgage Property : Land and Building of Freehold House Situated at Arazi No. 923 & 924, Mauza Lahar Gird, Abadi Saiyad Nagar Colony, Tehsil & Distt. Jhansi in the name of Smt. Jhumur Banerjee W/o Late Somnath Banerjee. Area : 795 Sq. Ft., Bounded-North : House of Mr. Afzar Ali, South : House of Mr. Akhtar, East : Way 6, 10 Mtr., West : Plot of Mr. Sadik Khan. O/S Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 31,36,464.60 + Intt. + Others Charges

Date : 28-01-2022 Place : Jhansi Authorised Officer :

Fullerton Grihashakti
FULLERTON INDIA HOME FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED
Corporate Office : Floor 5 & 6, B-Wing, Supreme IT Park, Supreme City, Powai, Mumbai-400076.
Registered Office : Megh Towers, Floor 3, Old No. 307, New No. 165, Poonamallee High Road, Madhavayal, Chennai-600095.

DEMAND NOTICE
UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 ("the Act") AND THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 ("the Rules")
The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Fullerton India Home Finance Company Limited (FIHFC) under the Act and in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the Act read with Rule 3 issued Demand Notice(s) under Section 13(2) of the Act, calling upon the following borrower(s) to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice(s) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The undersigned reasonably believes that borrower(s) is/are avoiding the service of the Demand Notice(s), therefore the service of notice is being effected by affixation and publication as per Rules. The contents of Demand Notice(s) are extracted herein below:-

Sl. No.	Name of the Borrower / Co-Borrowers Property Holders as the case may be	Date of Demand Notice U/s 13(2) & Total Outstanding
1	Loan Account No. : 610407210450303 1. Mohammad Azeem Shad, S/o. Zakir Husain (Borrower) 2. Zakir Husain, S/o. Khalil Ahmad (Co-Borrower) Add.1: R/o. 732, Malookpur, Bazar, Malookpur Chawki, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh-243 003. DESCRIPTION OF SECURED ASSETS / MORTGAGE PROPERTY :- Plot Situated at Khet No. 276 m, 277 m at Jagatpur, Lala Begam Bahar, Chungi, Tehsil Sadar & District Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh. Admeasuring 100 Sq. Yards.	Date : 21.01.2022 & ₹ 40,81,857.12 (Rs. Forty Lakh Eighty One Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty Seven Paise Twelve Only) NPA Date : 31.12.2021
2	Loan Account No. : 610607210609436 1. Devesh Kumar Yadav, S/o. Munni Singh Yadav (Borrower) 2. Monika Yadav, W/o. Devesh Kumar Yadav (Co-Borrower) Add.1: R/o. House Built On Plot No. 40, Khasra No. 837-S, Vikas Vihar Colony, Chhota Bharwara, Gomti Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-226 010. DESCRIPTION OF SECURED ASSETS / MORTGAGE PROPERTY :- House with Land Built On Plot No. 85 & 86 Admeasuring 199.814 Sq. Mts. Only Bearing Part of Khasra No. 1013 Situated at Bharwara (Chhota Bharwara) Pargana Tehsil & Dist. Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh Bound As Below :- • Boundaries :- • East :- Land of Other; • West :- 24 Fts. Wide Road; • North :- Plot No. 87; • South :- Plot No. 87.	Date : 21.01.2022 & ₹ 62,68,218.80 (Rs. Sixty Two Lakh Sixty Eight Thousand Two Hundred Eighteen Paise Eighty Only) NPA Date : 31.12.2021

The borrower(s) are hereby advised to comply with the Demand Notice(s) and to pay the demand amount mentioned therein and hereinabove within 60 days from the date of this publication together with applicable interest, additional interest, bounce charges, cost and expenses till the date of realization of payment. The borrower(s) may note that **FIHFC** is a secured creditor and the loan facility availed by the Borrower(s) is a secured debt against the immovable property / properties being the secured asset(s) mortgaged by the borrower(s). In the event borrower(s) are failed to discharge their liabilities in full within the stipulated time, **FIHFC** shall be entitled to exercise all the rights under section 13(4) of the Act to take possession of the secured asset(s) including but not limited to transfer the same by way of sale or by invoking any other remedy available under the Act and the Rules thereunder and realize payment. **FIHFC** is also empowered to **ATTACH AND / OR SEAL** the secured asset(s) before enforcing the right to sale or transfer. Subsequent to the Sale of the secured asset(s), **FIHFC** also has a right to initiate separate legal proceedings to recover the balance dues, in case the value of the mortgaged properties is insufficient to cover the dues payable to the **FIHFC**. This remedy is in addition and independent of all the other remedies available to **FIHFC** under any other law.
The attention of the borrower(s) is invited to Section 13(8) of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets and further to Section 13(3) of the Act, whereby the borrower(s) are restrained / prohibited from disposing of or dealing with the secured asset(s) or transferring by way of sale, lease or otherwise (other than in the ordinary course of business) any of the secured asset(s), without prior written consent of **FIHFC** and non-compliance with the above is an offence punishable under Section 29 of the said Act. The copy of the Demand Notice is available with the undersigned and the borrower(s) may, if they so desire, can collect the same from the undersigned on any working day during normal office hours.
Place : Bareilly / Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. **Sd/-**
Date : 28.01.2022. **Authorized Officer, Fullerton India Home Finance Company Limited**

Positivity rate comes down to 14 per cent in city

SHARMIL KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

The positivity rate in Lucknow district for coronavirus infection has come down to 14 per cent. It was 23 per cent on January 19, 2022 and has decreased considerably.

A senior official from the CMO office said 16,000 Covid tests were being conducted per day in the district and the focused testing had just been completed.

"This is a clear decrease in the past one week," he said.

On being asked whether they expected an increase in the number of cases in the rural areas now that there was a dip in the urban areas, he said that it was unlikely.

He admitted that the positivity rate was just the right way of estimating the drop in the number of COVID-19 cases because it gave the number of persons testing positive per hundred tests.

In case of vaccination, Lucknow has already completed over 70 lakh Covid vaccinations with the first dose of the vaccine being given to 38.1 lakh and the second dose to 29.8 lakh people. Uttar Pradesh has administered the first dose to 98.58 per cent of the eligible population and the second dose coverage is 66.87 per cent. Lucknow stands third in terms of the second dose coverage after Shahjahanpur (95.4 per cent) and Gautam Buddha Nagar (83.93 per cent).

Meanwhile, Organised Medicine Academic Guild (OMAG) president Dr Ishwar Gilada said that the pan India picture of whether the cases would rise in the rural areas would become clear in the next one week.

"There has been a slight increase in the COVID19 cases in the peri-urban and semi urban areas in the last two days in the country. In all the metro

Recovery rate improves as 8,901 more test +ve

Lucknow (PNS): Even as the recovery rate has shown an improvement, at least 20 people died of COVID-19 in the last 24 hours as Uttar Pradesh logged 8,901 new cases on Thursday. However, during the corresponding period, 16,786 people recovered from the viral infection.

At present, there are 72,393 active cases in the state. "More than 98 per cent of people are recovering at home with minor symptoms," Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said.

During a meeting of Team 9 in Lucknow on Thursday, the chief minister said that there was a steady decline in the number of active cases and positivity rate. He said that more than 25.34 crore Covid vaccinations had been administered in the state covering more than 98.58 per cent of the adult population with the first dose of the vaccine so far, while 66.87 per cent of the people had received both doses.

"Our target is to administer the first dose to 100 per cent of the population and the second dose to nearly 75 per cent of the eligible citizens by January 31. In any case, it should

be ensured that every resident of the state gets the vaccine cover before voting," Yogi said. Of the more than 1.40 lakh adolescents in the age group of 15-17, 85.21 lakh or 61 per cent have got the vaccine cover. Similarly, as per the target till January 31, 73 per cent of the eligible people will also receive the booster dose.

Meanwhile, as many as 1,491 people tested positive for novel coronavirus infection while 2,777 COVID-19 patients recovered in the state capital in the last 24 hours. Giving this information, Yogesh Raghuvanshi from the CMO office said that amongst those who tested positive were 962 males and 733 females.

He said those who tested positive included 96 travellers, 527 contacts, 401 with influenza-like illness patients, 64 pre-surgery cases, 12 healthcare workers and 16 in the Command Hospital. Among those who tested positive, 235 were in Chinhat, 269 in Aliganj, 219 in Alambagh, 144 in Indiranagar, 135 in Silver Jubilee College area, 113 in Sarojininar, 116 at NK Road, 55 in Red Cross area and 83 at Tudiaganj.

cities across the country there has been a decrease in the number of cases but the tier two cities are showing an increase," he said.

Dr Gilada said that with a midweek holiday and people tending to travel, there was likely to be less testing in the entire week across the country.

"Since the picture will not be clear till then on whether there will be a rise

in the figures or not one has to rely on the positivity rate. If the positivity rate goes down further in the next week, it will mean that the cases are decreasing and if it increases then the cases are increasing," he said.

However, he stressed that in two weeks' time everything was likely to be over and till then it was a wait and watch situation.

Scribe beaten to death in road rage case in Saharanpur

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Saharanpur police on Thursday arrested two people for allegedly beating a journalist to death after a road rage incident in the district on Wednesday.

According to the police, the journalist, who was on a motorcycle, overtook a car in which three persons were seated. Enraged by this, the three men allegedly thrashed the journalist.

"The victim, a resident of Chilkana and a reporter, was coming towards Saharanpur on his motorcycle and overtook an Alto car in which three persons were seated. There was a fight over overtaking. The victim was thrashed by the three men, causing serious injury," said Saharanpur Superintendent of Police Rajesh Kumar.

"The victim was taken to a nearby hospital where he succumbed to his injuries. The occupants of the car fled the spot. We have arrested two accused, further legal action is being ensured," the SP added.

The incident took place on Wednesday evening. The victim was identified as Sudhir Saini while the two accused held by the police were identified as Jahangir and Farman.

A case has been registered under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code in the Sikri police station of Saharanpur.

Taking cognisance of the incident, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government has sought a report from the district administration and has issued instructions to take the strictest action against the accused persons, informed the Chief Minister's Office.

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The death toll in the hooch tragedy in Paharpur village of Maharajganj Kotwali area in Rae Bareilly climbed to almost a dozen, even as eight police and excise officials were suspended and a probe was ordered in the matter.

District Magistrate of Rae Bareilly, Vaibhav Srivastava, said that there was a programme in Paharpur village on January 25, in which some people drank alcohol after which several people got sick. As per reports, more than 15 people were ill after drinking alcohol and most

were undergoing treatment in District Hospital, Rae Bareilly.

According to the villagers, some locals drank liquor bought from a Paharpur liquor contractor but soon their condition started deteriorating, after which every affected person was taken to the community health centre at Maharajganj late in the night.

Residents of Paharpur village identified as Saroj (40), Ramsumer (50), Sukhrani (45), Bansi (45), Pankaj Singh, Chandrapal, Kasim, Rambabu, Bachai and Kallu died in the CHC.

However, Lucknow

Divisional Commissioner Ranjan Kumar confirmed the death of only six people on Wednesday. He said that the villagers said that they had bought liquor from a government shop to consume it. He said that some other people who fell ill after drinking liquor were admitted to the local community health centre.

Kumar said that a case was registered against the licensed liquor shopkeeper and liquor samples were collected and an investigation had started. After the tragedy, the excise inspector and the shop staff had been found prima facie

guilty and action would be taken against them, he added.

IG, Lucknow Range, Laxmi Singh also reached the village to take stock of the situation. Authorities have ordered the suspension of eight officers, including five policemen of Rae Bareilly and three officers of the Excise department.

Additional Chief Secretary (Excise) Sanjay R Bhooresreddy said that taking cognisance of the incident, Narayan Kumar Kushwaha, in-charge of Maharajganj police station, Raj Kumar in-charge of police outpost, Rae Bareilly police constables Ratnesh Kumar Rai,

Brayesh Kumar Yadav and Shivanarayan Pal were suspended. He said that Rae Bareilly Sub-Excise Officer Rajeshwar Maurya, Excise Inspector Ajay Kumar and excise constable Dharendra Srivastava were also suspended after the incident.

Bhooresreddy said that an FIR would also be registered against those involved in the incident under sections of 272 (adulteration in food and drink), 273 (sale of harmful food and drink), of the Excise Act and Section 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the Indian Penal Code.

Functions galore on Republic Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The 73rd Republic Day was celebrated with all patriotic fervour at the Police Lines, Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW), various administrative and other offices here Wednesday. At the Police Lines premises, Divisional Commissioner (DC) Deepak Agrawal, along with Commissioner of Police (CP) A Satish Ganesh and other senior police officers unfurled the national flag and inspected the attractive parade. They also honoured some cops and offered tributes to the martyrs.

In BHU, flag hoisting ceremony was held at Amphitheatre grounds in which Vice-Chancellor Prof Sudhir K Jain, while addressing the function, said that there was a need to look at Mahamana's idea behind establishing a great institution like BHU in the current context. Rector Prof VK Shukla, Registrar Dr Neeraj Tripathi, directors of institutes, deans of faculties and others were also present. The V-C also presented Republic Day awards in various categories at a prize distribution ceremony organised at Central Office.

At BLW Stadium, the General Manager (GM) unfurled the tricolour and took the salute apart from inspecting the parade presented by the personnel and volunteers of Railway Protection Force, Civil Defense, St John's Ambulance Brigade, Bharat Scouts and Guides Parade. She congratulated the BLW family for getting the Best Production Unit award for the year 2020-21. BLW has been awarded the Best Production Unit Shield jointly with RCF, Kapoorthala.



Republic Day functions in Varanasi on Wednesday (from top left-clockwise)— DC Deepak Agrawal lifting balloons at Police Lines; GM Anjali Goyal addressing at BLW; VC Sudhir K Jain with award winning employees at BHU and Commandant MK Sharma taking salute at NDRF Battalion.

Pioneer

She also greeted all for rolling out 45 electric locomotives and 51 loco set motorised bogies during December 2021 and informed that the BLW has dedicated 9307 locomotives to the nation since inception, of which 8298 are diesel, 1000 electric, 8 conversion and 1 dual mode locomotive. Various cultural programmes were also held. The vote of thanks was proposed by Public Relations Officer (PRO) Rajesh Kumar, while the function was conducted by senior translator Amlash Srivastava. Senior officers and union representatives were also present. Later, she inaugurated the newly-constructed gym at RPF Barrack and distributed various articles to the patients at Central Hospital apart from donating a refrigerator to the hospital.

At divisional office, ANM of Urban Primary Health Centre (UPHC) Rani Kunwar was given honours to unfurl the flag in presence of the DC Deepak Agrawal. District Magistrate Kaushal Raj Sharma administered the pledge to the employees at flag hoisting ceremony at Collectorate. At DAV PG College, principal Dr Satyadev Singh and manager Ajit Kumar Singh unfurled the flag.

Postmaster General (PMG) of Varanasi Region Krishna Kumar Yadav unfurled the flag at the Regional Office at Cantt Head Post Campus and also honoured 20 postmen for their meritorious services. At 11th NDRF Battalion, Commandant Manoj Kumar Sharma highlighted the importance of the day and gave citation to many

personnel including deputy commandant (Medical Officer) Dr Pankaj Gaurav inspector Rahul Kumar, assistant sub inspector Hoshiyar Singh and chief constable Sm Mohan Singh for their outstanding work during rescue operations. At Swami Harsewanand Public School (SHPS) at Banpurwa branch, manager Baba Prakashdhyananand unfurled the tricolour flag. He was also the chief guest at flag hoisting ceremony at Swami Harshankaranand Ji Hospital and Research Centre. Namami Gange activists led by its convenor Rajesh Shukla hoisted flags near Ganga ghats. At Ashoka Institute of Technology, chief guest Hiralal Maurya unfurled the tricolour. Chairman Amit Maurya and others were also present.

Five health workers awarded

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Five health workers were awarded for their efforts to train corona positive patients and make them aware of appropriate Covid behaviour. During the Amrit Mahotsav ceremony organised at Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay (DDU) Government Hospital on the occasion of Republic Day here on Wednesday, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary honoured these five 'Covid Winners' of the district with citation for their significant contribution to the 'Covid Winner Intervention' programme conducted in collaboration with UNICEF under the aegis of the Health Department.

These felicitated five health workers were Rani Kunwar, Rajesh Gupta, Deepak Gupta, Ashok Kumar and DHEIO Hariyansh Yadav. Their appreciation letters were sent by UNICEF UP chief Ruth Lascano Leano and Director General (Health), UP, Dr Vedvrat Singh.

Speaking on the occasion, DHEIO Hariyansh Yadav said that the main objective of UNICEF's Covid Winner Intervention programme is to provide mental solace to Covid positive persons, provide mental health counseling, use of yoga and decoction to home isolation patients through telephone.

ACMO Dr AK Maurya, Medical Superintendent Dr RK Yadav, Dr Shahid from



CMO Dr Sandeep Chaudhary felicitating Hathi Bazar CHC in Varanasi on Wednesday.

Pioneer

UNICEF and other doctors and health workers were present.

In another programme organised at the office of the CMO, two government hospitals were honoured as the best service providers under Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY).

They were Community Health Centre (CHC) of Hathi Bazar under ideal block Sewapuri and Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya Mahamana Cancer Hospital in Sunderpur as they have performed the maximum number of treat-

ments in the listed hospitals of the government sector. The CHC Hathi Bazar, adopted by the Chief Minister, has treated 264 Ayushman Card beneficiaries free of cost since April 2021, while 5,644 beneficiaries have been treated at Mahamana Cancer Hospital.

Besides, during the day, a blood donation camp was organised in the Blood Bank of DDU Hospital under the joint aegis of Kashi Netradan Kutumbh and Akhil Madhyashiya Vaishya Sabha. Speaking on the occasion, CMO said that blood is an

ingredient which cannot be made. There is no other option to supply it.

It is made in the body of the person itself. Many times the amount of blood in the body of patients becomes so low that they need to take blood from someone else. In such an emergency situation, the lives of many needy people can be saved by making people aware about donating blood for the supply of blood. On this occasion, pathologist Dr LP Gupta said that donating blood is a great charity. In this camp, 40 people donated blood.

201 test positive in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Varanasi district got a relief, as the cases of COVID-19 decreased on Thursday. The active cases also decreased and no death case was reported. A total of 201 people were tested positive (5.15%) taking the tally to 10384, as per data made available by the Health department on Thursday evening. At the same time, a total of 574 (74.31%) recovered from home isolation as well as Covid hospitals taking the cumulative figure of recovered patients to 7716. So, the active cases also decreased to 2662 from 3036 which was a day earlier. It is learnt that two deaths were reported in the district on Wednesday taking the death figure to six. A total of 391 had been tested positive a day earlier.

ONE INJURED AS CRANE OVERTURNS: Panic

prevailed in Kabirchaura area when a crane engaged in the diversion work of Shahi Nala near Women's Hospital, overturned on Thursday. A paan seller sustained injury and a medical shop was partially damaged. The injured was admitted in the divisional government hospital in Kabirchaura where his condition was stated to be out of danger. According to the information, a new pipeline is being laid from Kabir Chauraha to Chowkaghat to reduce the overload of Shahi Nala. It may be mentioned that the capacity of Shahi Nala is 80 MLD but 120 MLD sewage water is currently being discharged through it. So, to reduce it's overload, the work to lay the pipeline is being carried out for the diversion of Sahi Nala. In fact, the diversion work is being carried out by the Jal Nigam for the last two years but the work could not be complet-

ed till now. To carry the pipes a crane was engaged by the implementing department. It was said that on on Thursday afternoon, with the help of crane, the work to lay down the pipes was being carried out near the divisional government hospital and in the meantime, one of its vehicles slipped and the crane overturned. A paan seller got injured and a medical shop was partially damaged. And it led to panic there. The officers of the implementing department reached the site and took the stock of first hand information about the tragedy. The injured was admitted to the government hospital where his condition was said to be out of danger. The local police also reached the spot after receiving information. Later, the work was again started after straightening the overturned crane.

SRISHTI INAUGURATED: Annual cultural and liter-

ary festival of Institute of Agricultural Sciences (IAS) 'Srishti' was inaugurated in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Thursday. In the beginning, Dean of Students Prof KK Singh, Director of the institute Prof Ramesh Chand and Students Advisor Prof Pawan Kumar Singh garlanded the statue of Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya and lit the lamp. In his address, the chief guest Prof KK Singh said that in every field, we have to become the best. 'The teachers and students of the institute have presented an example which others cannot even imagine. Arts and sports are necessary for the all-round development of the students, as they not only enhance the concentration of the students in their studies but also help them increase their ability to think and acquire knowledge,' he added.

NCR celebrates 73rd R-Day with great enthusiasm

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

Nation's 73rd Republic Day was celebrated with grandeur, gaiety, fervor and enthusiasm at North Central Railway Headquarters, Prayagraj. The program started with the flag being unfurled by General Manager Mr Pramod Kumar. On this occasion, the General Manager inspected the parade of Railway Protection Force, Bharat Scout and Guides and St. John Ambulance Brigade. The General Manager also awarded 18 Railway personnel for their outstanding performance.

Awardees included Kumar Kaushlesh Sharma, Chief Loco Inspector, Pramod Kumar, Constable Agra, Alok Kumar Tripathi, SSE/Signal, S S Sisodiya Chief Loco Inspector, Ghanshyam Meena Traffic Inspector, Vishnu Kumar Meena, SSE/C&W, Nand Kishor Dy Ticket Inspector, Akeel Ahmad Helper, Rohit Kumar Jha Loco Pilot, Virendra Kumar Assistant Divisional Engineer, Virendra Kumar Mishra SSE/Signal, Praveen Kumar Movement inspector, Kanchan Grover Senior Nursing Superintendent, Dharmendra Kumar SSE/Works, Rampal SSE, Ajay Kumar Srivastava SSE, Sanjay Kumar SSE, Mahendra Kumar JE/Signal.

General Manager Pramod Kumar released the tricolor balloons with the banner of Republic day. During the function, the General Manager gave heartfelt greetings to all the employees of North Central Railway and their families on the auspicious occasion of the 73rd Republic Day of our great nation.

General Manager's message and program on 73rd republic Day was also web-cast online utilizing a YouTube link. Award function was followed by a colorful cultural program which included Desh Bhakti medley group song, three group dance performances.

General Manager in his message to Railway men and women on the auspicious occasion of 73rd Republic Day function said, "On the occasion of 73rd Republic Day of our nation, I convey my heartiest greetings to the entire North Central Railway family. This day commemorates the birth of our Republic and adoption of our Constitution, twenty years after the declaration of "Poorna Swaraj". The great men and women, who fought tooth and nail for our independence and their persistent efforts due to which the dream for having our own Republic was realised, can never be forgotten. On this day, when we are in the year of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav,



NCR GM, Pramod Kumar inspecting the parade at NCR head office in Prayagraj

along with recalling the sacrifice and selfless service of those great personalities with gratitude, we take this opportunity to evaluate our immediate past and look ahead for our future.

In our mission to serve the nation, North Central Railway has been contributing commendably as an important constituent of Indian Railways. Our efforts are being recognised at national as well as state level".

CORE MARKS R-DAY CELEBRATIONS AT ITS HQ: Central Organization for Railway Electrification (CORE) celebrated the occasion at its Headquarters here in Prayagraj. The CORE GM Mr YP Singh said, "On the auspicious occasion of our country's 73rd Republic Day, I extend my sincere congratulations and best wishes to all officers, employees and their family members. This national festival reminds us of the great leaders of our freedom movement and also inspires us to remain grateful and committed towards our Constitution. It is the duty of all Railway men to always uphold the basic tenets of Nation-First, Always-First, in our working system.

Our organisation is constantly striving to make the nation self-reliant with the development of the secure, efficient, environment-friendly transport system for the progress of Indian Railways. The Ministry of Railways has set a target of 6000 RKM of electrification in FY 2021-22 out of which maximum electrification is being done by CORE. In spite of the challenges of Covid-19 pandemic in early months of FY 21-22, excellent progress has been shown in the current financial year.

With the electrification of the Anand Nagar-Nautanwa section, the facility of electrified rail service will be available to passengers traveling from Gorakhpur to Lumbini (Nepal) via Nautanwa. With the electrification of the Birla Nagar-Udmore section, trains from Gwalior to Etawah will be

hauled by electric locomotives. The electrification of Yeshwantpur - Chikkabanavara -Tumkur section will enable running of trains with electric locomotives up to Tumkur, which is a large suburban area near Bangalore.

It is a matter of great happiness that recently, the record of erecting the maximum number of masts in one day in the history of CORE was created with the erection of 620 masts in one day in the Ambala Project.

The Railway Electrification Women's Welfare Organisation (REWWO) is fully committed towards the welfare of employees and their family members. The sons and daughters employees of Railway Electrification Organisation were awarded cash and other prizes on the basis of the marks obtained by them in class X and XII. Arrangement of a tiffin section has been made for women employees in the CORE office".

R-DAY CELEBRATIONS AT GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL: The 73rd Republic Day was celebrated on January 26, 2022 with joy and patriotic fervor in the premises of Girls' High School And College. The Principal, Rev. Dr. Vinita Eusebius unfurled the flag which was followed by the singing of the National Anthem.

The Head Girl, Ananya Agarwal delivered the speech in English and reminded the importance of this auspicious day. Ratnapriya also delivered a speech in Hindi and churned patriotic feelings. She enlightened with the fact that this day plays an important role in the Indian History and defines the democratic structure of the nation.

The Principal Rev. Dr. V. Eusebius Congratulated and extended her heartfelt greeting on the 73rd Republic Day to the citizens of India. Staff, students and the supporting staff of Girls' High School and College. She extorted the audience and enlightened the gathering with the importance of

the Constitution and how it was drafted and adopted. She encouraged everyone present to strive for success in every area of life. She also reminded and urged not to forget the struggles and sacrifices of the freedom fighters and leaders.

The programme concluded with a special prayer by Mrs. A Sethna.

SHUATS MARKS R-DAY CELEBRATIONS :

Commenced with spectacular flag-hoisting and echoing National Anthem on the campus, the 73rd Republic Day was celebrated with fervor and zest at Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology & Science. The Vice-Chancellor Most Rev. Prof. Rajendra B. Lal hoisted the Tri-colour. Due to Covid-19 epidemic the program was organised in a simplistic manner following the guidelines. A March Past was organised by the NCC cadets. Students of Theology Institute presented a devotional song 'Dhanyawad To Prabhu Ka Kar, Uth Kar Subha Aur Sham'.

Prof. Rajendra B. Lal gave Republic Day greetings to all citizens of India. In his message he said, "we have a democratic, socialist, secular republic and we are thankful for the constitution of India. It is the responsibility of all of us to maintain the glory of the Constitution. The Constitution gives the freedom for self rule which needs self discipline and a sound mind. Everything that we do has to be within the discipline and above every discipline is moral discipline. If we all do the self rule and contain ourselves in self discipline the peace will be established in this nation. Our conduct, behavior, conduct should not create any kind of evil in the society. The quality that you want to see in God is the same quality that God wants to see in all of us. God does not want us to be filled with greed, discrimination, communalism, jealousy.

NAZARETH HOSPITAL CELEBRATES REPUBLIC DAY: The 73rd Republic Day celebrations was held at Nazareth Hospital School of Nursing Premises. This time it was celebrated in strict compliance with all the routine Covid-19 protocols, norms and guidelines. The Chief Guest of the function was Mr Tej Pratap Singh Yadav, Regional PF Commissioner, Prayagraj.

The national flag was unfurled by Mr Tej Pratap Singh Yadav. The dignitaries present for the function included Rev. Fr. Louis Mascarenhas -Director, Rev. Fr. Vipin D'Souza - Administrator, Dr. Ashok Agarwal - Med. Supt., Sr. Moncy, CSN - Matron and Doctors and Nursing fraternity of Nazareth Hospital.

R-Day celebrations at IFFCO Phulpur unit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ ALLAHABAD

The 73rd Republic Day was Organised in the parade ground of IFFCO Phulpur unit. In which the flag was hoisted by the unit head (executive director) Mr. Sanjay Kudesia at 09:30 am, the national anthem was specially presented by the staff of Kendriya Vidyalaya. After this, the parade of security guards and PAC was inspected by the unit head. The march past was done by security guards and PAC. The band attracted everyone's attention to the patriotic tunes on the occasion of parade immersion on the Republic Day. Subedar Kamlesh Dubey, who was leading the band of PAC, was rewarded by the unit

chief.

Unit Chief Executive Director Mr. Sanjay Kudesia first remembered freedom fighters first in the series of Amrit Mahotsav of Azadi. He said in his message "IFFCO contributes to the demand of about 32 per cent Phosphatic and 21 percent Nitrogen fertilizers in India". He told that our target is to start production of nano fertilizer at Phulpur unit by the end of 2022, which will work towards doubling the income of the farmers.he focused Oxygen plant Which caters to the need of not only IFFCO but the entire Prayagraj district & having capacity of production of 700 bottle per day. He also supported rural development programs by

IFFCO, Mahila Chetna Club and Om Kalyan Samiti in the surrounding villages and schools through various programs like installation of hand pumps, blanket distribution, Construction of classes, installation of solar panels, training of youth, etc. And from time to time training to farmers by CORDET, in which the method of spraying and using nano urea by drone was discussed.

After this, citations were distributed to the meritorious students of class 10th and 12th. Raffle draw was organized by Mahila Chetna Club and prizes were awarded to the winners. Presentation prepared by the children of Om Bal Vidya Mandir was telecasted.Senior

General Manager(Nano Urea) Mr. Giridhar Singh(DGM P&A),Joint General Manager Mr. Sanjay Bhandari, Mr. K. Mohan Rao (JGM),Mr. PK Singh (JGM),Mr. PK Patel (JGM),Mr. AP Rajendran (JGM Instrument),Mr. Santosh Kumar Shukla (JGM IT),Mr. Santosh Kumar Singh (DGM Finance and Accounts), President of Officers Association Mr. Sanjay Kumar Mishra and General Secretary Mr. Swayam Prakash and President of IFFCO Employees Union Mr. Pankaj Pandey and General Secretary Mr. Vinay Yadav and other senior officers and employees were present in the program.

UP RRB Exam: Two held for provoking students to disturb rail traffic

ALLAHABAD (PNS): Cops claimed to have arrested two persons identified as Pradeep Kumar and Mukesh Yadav, who had allegedly proved students preparing for competitive exams to stop the passenger train near Prayag railway station on Tuesday afternoon.

Deputy SP (Colonelganj) Ajeet Singh Chauhan told the mediapersons that police have arrested two persons who had not only provoked students preparing for competitive exams and staying in private hostels and lodges to stop passenger train at Prayag railway station but also encouraged parties when police teams had gone for search operation.

He added that police had video-graphed the entire agitation at Prayag railway station when scores of students assembled at the station to stop a passenger train in support of their demand. DSP claimed that after scanning the videography of the entire incident, the police have identified those men who led the students and established their identities including Pradeep and Mukesh .

DSP claimed that students preparing for competitive exams were used as a tool kit by the two persons.

Once their identities were made, police teams on Tuesday evening carried out raids at a private hostel cum lodge and appealed to the students to

come out from their respective rooms so that they would be able to catch the real offenders.

However, when students refused to listen to them, police then used mild force to take the students out from their respective rooms. However, taking the issue seriously, regarding the forcibly taking students out from their rooms and policemen using weapons to break doors of hostel rooms, the senior superintendent of police (Prayagraj) has suspended three police constables on the charges of dereliction of duties on Wednesday. DSP meanwhile, said that a thorough probe was conducted into the entire incident and agitators had also pelted stones on police

party when they had gone for search operation of the so called student leaders who led the entire agitation. More than a dozen policemen were hurt in the stone pelting, claimed the senior police officials. Meanwhile SP (city) Dinesh Kumar Singh told the newsspersons that police teams had conducted a search operation at a private hostel cum lodge to catch those offenders who had allegedly led the entire agitation and planned to disturb the rail traffic movement at Prayag railway station on Tuesday afternoon. However, it was alert GRP, RPF and local police that foiled the students' agitation and chased them away from the Prayag railway station.

DC unfurls tricolour atop Commissionerate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar, while unfurling the tricolour atop the Commissionerate on Wednesday said it was the bounden duty of each one of us to work as per the expectations of the masses especially the work and duties assigned to each one of us. He said the Indian Constitution had placed the onus on our shoulders and thus we all had to prove worthy on its yardstick. He said the main objective was to ensure that justice was extended to the people timely and the all need to work collectively very hard to take the country to the top-most rungs of success ladder.

He said it this day was in fact a matter of pride for each one that the President of India was from Kanpur and many more prominent personalities were also from Kanpur. He said Kanpur had emerged as a prominent place in mythology as well and was also the central point. He said the Freedom Movement of 1857 began from Kanpur and then paid rich tributes to the freedom fighters and martyrs and later paid rich tributes to Maharani Laxmibai, Azeemullah Khan, Tatya Tope and said many more martyrs were from Kanpur itself.

He said Kanpur had carved its name on the sports front and said Green Park was one such stadium which was famous across the world. He said in the times to come there shall be all round development of the city. He said we all need to strive for massive development and progress of the city. He then administered oath to the officials and staff present on the occasion. Prominent present were Additional DC Rajaram, Kunj Bihari Agarwal, SP Srivastava, Brijesh Kishore and many more officials.

Earlier the DC carried out



Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar administers oath on R-Day to Commissionerate staff.

Pioneer

an inspection of the covered swimming pool at Nana Rao Park to take a feedback of the development and modernisation work going on there. He said architecture and structure drawing will be vetted by HBTU, and Quality and Progress will be monitored regularly by the committee under the chairmanship of a professor of the HBTU Kanpur. He said the CEO was instructed to take the help of IIM-Indore to form the Module for Operation and Maintenance and Return on Investment (ROI).

He said the CEO Kanpur Smart City Limited was instructed to prepare estimate for installing solar panels on the roof top so that the arena can become energy efficient. He said

EPC Company was instructed to install a digital scoreboard as well. He also advised the

CEO to take consultancy from the Sports Authority of India (SAI) for the dimensions of the swimming pool. He said this project will be under

Special Category Project (SCP).

He said the swimming pool will be covered and swimmers can use the arena for eight months a year. He said as per norms of the International Swimming Federation (FINA) depth of the pool will be reduced, keeping in mind safety measures adopted by FINA. He added that the pool will be 50 metres x 18 metres and will be redeveloped as per norms of the Olympics. He added that the state and national level tournaments can take place in this arena and cater to International Level Practices for swimmer.

The DC said this pool will be equipped with tournaments level equipment like touch pads, spring boards and diver lines. He said the arena will have rooftop turbo ventilators to control the humidity. He said swimming enthusiasts can practice late evening as the arena will have sufficient lighting provision for the same. He said a splash pool and rain forest shower will be constructed for kids in this arena also. He said it will also have provision

for open café which will be catering to the needs of swimmers and spectators. He said the entire area will have CCTV Surveillance System, and the whole arena will be WiFi equipped. He said it will also have piped music all around along with modern and latest change rooms both for male and females separately.

It may be mentioned here that this swimming pool was constructed in the year 1968 by Nagar Maha Palika and was inaugurated by the then Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh Chandra Bhanu Gupta. This swimming arena was the first of its kind in Kanpur and umpteen well-known personalities and citizens of Kanpur learnt how to swim in this arena.

This swimming pool was a special attraction for kids of Kanpur during their summer vacations. For past many years, this swimming pool became dilapidated over the years and the filtration plant got obsolete and needed high maintenance every year. The said cost of the project was Rs 13.71 crore.

Republic Day celebrated at SPSEC



Principal SPSEC, Bhawna Gupta participates in R-Day celebration.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Sir Padampat Singhania Education Centre celebrated the glorious 73rd Republic Day on its premises. The event commenced with the unfurling of the tricolour by the Principal, Bhawna Gupta, followed by the national anthem. She highlighted the significance of the day and talked about India as a developing economy. She stressed on the need to inculcate good values in children to be good future citizens of the nation. Her motivational speech emphasised on the relevance of the core values and inspired the students to respect and abide by the Constitution of the country. She urged the gathering to join hands in solidarity to build a cleaner, brighter, healthier and a prosperous India.

The patriotic song 'Hum Sab Bhartiya Hai' reminded all the great leaders of the past signifying our role in the making of strong India. The School Captain (Boy), Akshat Agarwal, delivered a motivational speech explaining the soul sacrifice of the revolutionaries in making the country republican. The School Captain (Girl), Sonakshi Bajpai, enlightened the audience by reciting a poem brimming with patriotism. Prominent present were Administrative Manager, Surendra Yadav, the Vice-Principal, Kavita Chadha and the Headmistress, Vandana Trivedi.

DPS SARVODAYA NAGAR: Delhi Public School, Sarvodaya Nagar celebrated Republic Day with great patriotic fervour. The school was decorated with tricolours, flags, kites, balloons. The encouraging quotations on display motivated the students to work for the betterment of their country. A Special Assembly was put up on a virtual platform by the students of class III to sensitise the children about the importance of this day, so as to understand when and how the Indian Republic and its Constitution came into force.

The assembly commenced with the hoisting of the national flag by the headmistress Pratibha Shukla, followed by the rendition of the national anthem. Later a special tribute to the Covid Warriors (doctors, medical staff, sanitation workers, police) was paid through a graceful and heart touching dance performance by the students.

R-DAY AT WOODBINE GARDENIA: Republic Day was celebrated at Woodbine Gardenia School with pomp and fervour. The function was held virtually where the students took part and delivered speeches in Hindi and English and then performed a cultural programme as well. The tricolour was unfurled by the Chairman of the School, Shahid Rehman. The teachers assembled and sang the national anthem. The stage had been tastefully decorated. The Principal of the School Sumita Mukherjee also addressed the teachers.

DM warns vax centres

KANPUR: District Magistrate, Neha Sharma addressing a meeting to assess the vaccination work directed that strict action be taken against all such centres where the vaccination had been quite low. She said this was mainly because the monitoring committees were not visiting the house for door to door survey. She cautioned the staff involved in the vaccination work and said action will be taken against them. She said all those who have been left out should be vaccinated on top priority. She said the list should be shared with the prominent persons of the areas so that they can also convince the leftouts to take the vax.

NER AGM unfurls flag

CORRESPONDENT ■ GORAKHPUR



Additional General Manager (AGM), North Eastern Railway (NER), Amit Kumar Agrawal on the occasion of 73rd Republic Day on Wednesday at a function organised at Syed Modi Railway Stadium here unfurled the national flag. On the occasion he took the salute of the parade presented by Railway Protection Force (RPF), Railway Protection Special Force (RPSF) personnel and members of Civil Defence Organisation. On the occasion Agrawal also addressed the function. On the occasion of Republic Day, the message of General Manager (GM), NER, Anupam Sharma, was distributed among the railway personnel present. In the message of the General Manager, it was said that in the year 2021-22, despite the difficult challenges of Covid-19 infection, NER has made remarkable progress. In the current financial year up to the month of December last year as many as 537 special/puja/summer special trains were run in 13,339 trips. In various trains 93 additional coaches were permanently attached and 669 temporarily.

It has also been mentioned in the message of the General Manager that the gauge conversion from Shahbaz Nagar to Shahjahanpur section (four km.) was completed due to which the Pilibhit-Shahjahanpur section has been completely converted into broad gauge. Gauge conversion of Mailani-Shahgarh section (43.2 km) has been completed. Under Aunrihar-Jaunpur doubling project the doubling and electrification of Aunrihar-Dobhi section (22.9 km) and under Sitapur-Burhwal doubling project Sitapur-Parsendi section (16.75 km) has been completed and opened for passenger traffic. The electrification of Mau-Shahganj (97 km), Gorakhpur-Anandnagar-

Nautanwa (80.77 km) and Lakhimpur-Bankeganj (44.76 km) sections have been completed. Under the National Energy Conservation Award-2021, NER has got the first prize in the transport sector. General Manager has appealed to all to complete all the projects on time, give priority to the work of railway safety and security, achieve the target of passenger satisfaction and increase in revenue and contribute fully in keeping the premises clean. Keeping corona infection in mind at the venue besides arrangement for sanitiser, compliance of social distancing and other Covid-19 prevention guidelines presence of a limited number of railway personnel was ensured.

NCL CMD stresses on safe work culture

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA



In Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), a Miniratna company of the Government of India, the country's 73rd Republic Day was celebrated on Wednesday by complying with Covid protocol. During the programme organised at NCL headquarters on the occasion Chairman-cum-Managing Director (CMD) Bhola Singh unfurled the national flag and inspecting the parade took the salute. In his remarks Singh extended his best wishes to all the employees and beneficiaries of NCL on the 73rd Republic Day. He laid special emphasis on continuous and acceptable mining, environmental protection, promotion of contract workers, safe work culture and development of modern health facilities and along with it in the light of the country's energy self-reliance called upon the personnel to discharge their responsibility with integrity. Referring to the new underconstruction FMC projects of for clean coal transportation, Singh highlighted NCL's efforts towards environmental protection and reducing road coal transportation. He also told about NCL's long term efforts like making sand from overburden and coal corridor. Singh urged everyone to follow the Covid guidelines. During the programme NCL Director (Technical/ Operations) Dr Anindya Sinha, Director (Finance & Personnel) Ram Narayan Dubey, Director (Technical/Project & Planning) SS Sinha, JCC member from BMS, PK Singh, from CMS Ajay Kumar, from RCSS BS Bisht, from HMS Ashok Kumar Pandey, from CMOAI Sarvesh Singh, head of department from head-

quarters and a large number of officers and employees were present. Earlier, in NCL headquarters premises Director (Finance and Personnel) Ram Narayan Dubey by hoisting the national flag started the Republic Day programme and congratulated all employees and beneficiaries. In the light of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Dubey underlined the importance of Republic Day and saluted the great men who had played an important role in establishing the democratic system in the country. He appreciated the role of NCL in Singrauli region and nation building. Dubey gave information about the work done by NCL on many issues like welfare of workers and contract workers, development of people living in surrounding areas and Covid vaccination. He apprised the people of new initiatives started recently in the company like health awareness programme 'Umang' and for contract workers 'Samvardhan'. Republic Day was celebrated in all the areas and units of NCL.

DM pays floral tributes to Gandhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The District Magistrate, City, Neha Sharma unfurled the tricolour at the Collectorate on Republic Day and then paid floral tributes to Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi. She extended her R-Day wishes to the entire officials, staff and their families and said to strengthen democracy it was essential that each one of us made concerted and honest efforts to make it even more stronger. She said each one of us had to do ones work dedicatedly to ensure that India became one of the most strongest and powerful and developed nations. She said this would be the true service to the nation.

She said the freedom fighters had contributed and also



District Magistrate, City, Neha Sharma, addressing the officials at R-Day celebration.

Pioneer

sacrificed their lives to wrest freedom and make India an Independent country. She said thus it was the bounden duty of every person to exercise ones franchise must on

February 20, 2022 and should ensure that it was a national festival and ensure every one cast ones vote. She said the turnout should be do that there should infact be a wave of election and

every one enthusiastically voted this day. She said the role of women was important and essential. She said by voting the country will be strong and move ahead on the path of progress.

She then administered oath to the officials and the entire people who had assembled on the occasion. She said however it was essential to ensure that each person maintained the COVID-19 protocol. She said each one of us had to voluntarily wear mask and maintain the social distancing. She said the officials and individuals all will have to ensure that in the present COVID-19 times collective effort had to be made to ensure that all keep safe. Later rich tributes were paid to the freedom fighters who had laid down their lives for the country.

KDA VC explains importance of Constitution

KANPUR (PNS): The Kanpur Development Authority, Vice Chairperson, Arvind Singh while hoisting the national flag explained the importance of Constitution and said this day reminded of the freedom fighters who had laid down their lives to make a country free and thus it need to be explained to the coming generations so that they do not forget the contributions of the great patriots. He on this day the Constitution of India was fully implemented and since them India has become one of the leading nations of the world. He said Indian Constitution was not only an exclusive philosophy but also the biggest one.

He said to frame this Constitution it took two years eleven months and 18 days and included each and every segment of the society. He said the history of this country clearly indicated which direction the nation had to go and how to shape and carve its future. He said the entire people of the country live as a family and this had to me made a reality. He



KDA Vice Chairman, Arvind Singh unfurls the Tricolour.

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said nation building rested on three levels and the topmost was nation building while at middle level it was institution building and finally at the micro term it was the individual. He said all these three were complementary because it was a person which formed an institution and the institution formed the nation.

He reminded the glorious past of the KDA and said it was

a matter of pride more because of this there had been massive development. He said western mindset made us slaves and said the institution had their shortcomings and thus efforts had to be made by shunning the weaknesses. He said this day was one such opportunity. He appealed to the officials and staff to give the best for its progress and assured that KDA unitedly will work for the uplift

and development. He said this day we need to take oath and strive for the nation's progress. Others who addressed were Renu Pathak, Rohit Khanna, Dr Gudakesh Sharma, Shatrohan Vaishya and the programme was successfully conducted by the PRO, Shashi Bhushan Rai.

CSA R-DAY CELEBRATIONS: The Vice-Chancellor, CSAUAT, Dr DR Singh after hoisting the tricolour paid tributes to all the martyrs and leaders who had contributed to the freedom of the country. He said this year the food grain yield has been 307.31 million tonnes as compared to last year 303.34 million tonnes. He said the varsity has contributed significantly for the food grain production to quite an extent and given the nation umpteen varieties of food grains leading to bumper production of food grains. He said the agricultural inputs provided by the varsity has been a milestone in rapid progress in Indian agriculture and food grain production of high nutritive value.

Rihand celebrates R-Day

CORRESPONDENT ■ SONBHADRA

The 73rd Republic Day was celebrated in a joyful atmosphere amid distribution of prizes at Son Shakti Stadium, NTPC Rihand on Wednesday complying with Covid-19 prevention guidelines. The function was inaugurated by Chief General Manager (Rihand) Debabrata Paul, who was present as the chief guest by unfurling the national flag. Thereafter the people present sang the national anthem. The chief guest along with other guests gave the message of peace to the people by releasing balloons symbolising peace in the sky. Earlier the chief guest inspected the teams taking part in the ceremony and took their salute. In the sequel, project personnel for their better work in various fields were



rewarded with BUH Meritorious Award. Before the programme started in the stadium, chief guest garlanded the statue of Mahatma Gandhi at Gandhi Park. At the end of the ceremony, a friendly volleyball match was also organised by the Sports Council which was enjoyed by the spectators. The programme was mainly attended by General Managers, heads of departments, Additional General Manager (HR) V Jayanarayanan, office-bearers of Vartika Mahila Mandal, representatives of various unions and associations etc. Executive (Corporate Communications) Shiksha Gupta conducted the programme and showed the vote of thanks.

73rd Republic Day observed

PNS ■ VARANASI



In Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) the 73rd Republic Day was celebrated in a limited way. At a function organised at NER Railway Mini Stadium, Lahartara, Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Ramashray Pandey by hoisting the flag took the salute of the parade. Thereafter while congratulating everyone on the occasion of 73rd Republic Day DRM appreciated the valour and devotion of army and security forces personnel posted on the border who are making an matchless contribution in maintaining the unity and integrity of the country even in difficult circumstances. He said for India Republic Day is not just a festival, but it is pride and honour. In the function the contingents of Railway Protection Force (RPF), St John's Ambulance, Mandal Kala Samiti and NER Bharat Scouts and Guides District

Association participated. Additional Divisional Railway Manager (ADRM/ Administration) Rahul Srivastava, ADRM (Operations) SPS Yadav, ADRM (Infra) Gyanesh Tripathi, chairperson of Divisional Women's Welfare Organisation (DWWO) Sujata Pandey and all branch officers and a large number of railway employees were present. Varanasi division of NER is providing safe, secure and comfortable travel facility to the passengers through its 204 stations. The electrification of Mau-Azamgarh and Shahganj-

Azamgarh sections has been completed. The doubling of Ballia-Phepna and Madho Singh-Gyanpur Road was done. Besides, the doubling of Nandganj-Ghazipur City was completed. A new goods shed was opened at Phepna in Varanasi division. At Dudhonda Halt located in 20 km- long block section of Aunrihar-Dobhi IBS has been installed. Besides the expansion and elevation of platforms of Ankushpur, Bansdih, Revati, Bankata, Chainwan, Mohammadabad, Taraon and Manjhi halt stations of the division was done.

₹2,000 CRORE FRAUD CASE

ED arrests Karvy Group’s CMD, CFO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested CMD Comandur Parthasarathy and CFO G Krishna Hari of Karvy Group under Prevention of Money laundering Act (PMLA) in a money laundering case connected with the fraud committed through illegal diversion of clients’ securities by Karvy Stock Broking Ltd worth Rs 2,873.82 crore and pledging of these securities with banks/ NBFCs for seeking loans leading to subsequent loan default.

The ED had initiated money laundering investigation based on the FIR filed by HDFC bank with CCS Hyderabad Police under various sections of IPC for defrauding HDFC bank. Subsequently, more FIRs have been filed by other banks and few investors. The ED has recorded the statement of various employees of the Karvy Group, and conducted searches at nine locations on September 22, 2021. “The ED has uncovered the complex web of transactions designed by the senior man-

agement of the Karvy Group to misuse the securities of their clients and to raise loans fraudulently which were then rotated via multiple related companies and diverted away from the stated purpose,” the agency said in a statement. The shares of clients who did not owe any funds to KSBIL were also transferred to the margin/pool Account of KSBIL and were pledged with the banks/ NBFCs, it said. The Power Of Attorney (POA) given by the clients to KSBIL to facilitate exchange settlements was grossly mis-

used by KSBIL at the directions of the CMD and senior executives. Comandur Parthasarathy and G Krishna Hari were the main conspirators who gave instructions to others, it said. Fund trail investigation has shown that the borrowed funds were transferred to other group companies, particularly to one wholly owned subsidiary of KSBIL-- Karvy Realty (India) Limited (KRIL) and then to 14 shell companies floated by Karvy Group, it said. These have been further diverted by layering done through complex web of transactions from the several accounts of group companies without any financial rationale, the agency further said. Various financial consultants and defunct NBFCs were used to route the funds. Further, it was found that KSBIL availed loans from NBFCs to the tune of Rs 400 crore in the name of five such shell companies by pledging shares of

clients of KSBIL after illegally transferring these shares to their account. The fraudulently availed loans were used to clear pending loans of related companies, do massive stock transactions which have allegedly turned into complete losses and diverted to personally-held family companies. The ED had earlier frozen shareholding of Parthasarathy worth about Rs 700 crore. The ED is investigating the money trail to trace the proceeds of crime which are close to Rs 2,000 crore. Parthasarathy and Hari were lodged in Central Jail, Bangalore and on production warrant of ED court, they were produced before the PMLA Special Court MSJ Hyderabad on January 20, 2022. Through an order dated January 25, the Court has remanded the CMD and CFO of the Karvy Group to four-day ED custody from Thursday to Sunday.

Bank loan fraud: ED attaches assets of Hyderabad-based firm

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached immovable properties worth Rs 43.25 crore belonging to Hyderabad-based Sheetal Refineries Limited and its promoter and MD Jitender Kumar Agarwal under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) for defrauding State Bank of Hyderabad and Punjab National Bank in a bank fraud case. The ED had initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of an FIR registered by Bank Securities and Fraud Cell, Bengaluru for causing a total loss of Rs 87

crore, the ED said in a statement. “The ED investigation revealed that the accused promoters availed various credit facilities from SBH and PNB Hyderabad, by submitting fabricated financial statements, invoices, etc. They got Letters of Credit (LCs) issued from lending Banks in the name of related shell entities as if material is being purchased,” it said. Letters of Credit were discounted by the related entities and the money so received was routed back to the promoters of Sheetal Refinery. The company defaulted in payment of LCs on due date and LCs devolvement caused loss to the banks. Sheetal

Refineries owe Rs 146 crore to the banks. The diverted loan proceeds which are nothing but proceeds of crime were utilized for purchase of properties and to foreclose older loans and were not used for the stated purposes, it said. In this case, the ED had earlier attached six immovable properties of registered value of Rs 8.30 crore and five movable assets worth Rs 1.23 crore. Now, the ED has attached 15 more assets. The purchase value of these assets is Rs 43.25 crore. With the present attachment of 15 more properties located in Telangana, the total attachment in this case is Rs 52.78 crore.

If colleague honoured, greet him with appreciation: Karan Singh on Nabi’s Padma award

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Amid internal rumblings in the Congress over Ghulam Nabi Azad being awarded Padma Bhushan, senior Congress leader Karan Singh on Thursday said national awards should not become subject of intra-party controversy and if “one of our colleagues” is honoured, he should be greeted with warm appreciation rather than “snide remarks”. Singh’s comments come amid a controversy triggered soon after the announcement of the Padma awards on Tuesday evening when Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, while commenting on CPI (M) leader Buddhadeb Bhattacharya’s refusal to accept the award, said, “He wants to be Azad not Ghulam”. Several members of the group of 23 leaders who had written to Sonia Gandhi demanding an organisational overhaul in the Congress congratulated Azad for being awarded Padma Bhushan, saying it was “well-deserved”. Reacting to the row, Singh said he was distressed at the “unseemly controversy” over the well deserved Padma Award to Azad. “These National Awards should not become subject of inter-party controversy, far less of intra-party ones,” Singh, a former Union minister and party stalwart, said in a statement. “I have known Ghulam Nabi for half a century since he



first started his political career as an active participant in my second election campaign for the Lok Sabha in 1971 from the Udhampur constituency, to which he belongs,” he said. Since then, Singh said, he has seen Azad rise through sheer dint of hard work, dedication and administrative ability to becoming a Cabinet Minister, both with P V Narasimha Rao and Dr Manmohan Singh. As Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha for seven years, he played a positive and constructive role in our Parliamentary system, Singh said. Azad also served as the first Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir region, and his short stint is still remembered positively in both regions, he said. “If one of our colleagues is honoured he should be greeted with warm appreciation rather than snide remarks,” Singh said. Congress veteran and former law minister Ashwani Kumar also came out in support of Azad and hit out at Ramesh, saying his criticism of Azad is nothing less than a “shameful innuendo” and does not do justice to the ethos of the Congress.

Active Covid cases in India decline to 22,02,472

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The active Covid-19 cases have decreased to 22,02,472 and now comprises 5.46 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid-19 recovery rate has decreased to 93.33 per cent. However, more than 400 districts are still reporting over 10 per cent positivity rate. Also, the daily positivity rate - the share of coronavirus tests that return positive and considered a key marker of the pandemic’s status - is up from 16.10% to 19.59% while the weekly positivity rate was recorded at 17.75 per cent, as per the data available from the Union Health Ministry. The active cases have decreased to 22,02,472 and comprise 5.46 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has decreased to 93.33 per cent, the Health Ministry said. The death toll has climbed to 4,91,700 with 573 fresh fatalities, the data updated at 8 am stated. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 3,76,77,328 and the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.22 per cent. The cumulative doses administered in the country so far under the nationwide Covid vaccination drive has exceeded 163.84 crore. India’s Covid tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 2020, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16.

SC asks Punjab not to arrest SAD leader Majithia in drugs case till Jan 31

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday orally asked the Punjab Government not to take any coercive step against SAD leader Bikram Singh Majithia till January 31 when it hears his pre-arrest bail plea in a drugs case. In another case, the apex Court directed Maharashtra Police to not to arrest BJP MLA Nitesh Rane for 10 days in an attempt-to-murder case registered in Sindhudurg district. A bench comprising Chief Justice N V Ramana and Justices A S Bopanna and Hima Kohli took note of the submissions of senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Majithia, that the plea seeking anticipatory bail plea needed urgent hearing as the accused has been facing “political vendetta”. “This is political vendetta. He is called to police station. This is all due to the election fever,” said Rohatgi while seeking urgent hearing of the plea of Majithia. “Is it election fever. All are rushing to this court,” the bench said. The Punjab Police, which is aware of the fact that a plea has been filed in the apex court, is trying to arrest him, he said. Senior advocate P Chidambaram, appearing for the Punjab Government, said

that Majithia has gone into hiding and now appearing here through the counsel. “Is it fair Mr Chidambaram, when you know that his petition is going to be listed,” the CJI observed, adding, “Tell your government to not do anything. We will list on Monday.” The pre-arrest bail plea of Majithia, who was booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act on December 20 last year, was dismissed by the Punjab and Haryana HC on January 24 and an appeal has been filed in the apex court. In another case, sipping of the pre-arrest bail plea of Rane, son of Union Minister Narayan Rane, a bench headed by Chief Justice Ramana asked him to surrender before the trial court in the meanwhile, and seek regular bail in the matter. The Bombay High Court on January 17 had refused to grant pre-arrest bail to Rane in the case, noting that a balance was needed between conflicting considerations of personal liberty and a proper investigation in the matter. The high court had rejected the anticipatory bail applications of Rane and another accused Sandesh Sawant, but had allowed a similar plea of the third accused in the case, Manish Dalvi.

Info correct: Twitter on Rahul plaint of sharp drop in followers’ number

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After Congress leader Rahul Gandhi wrote to Twitter CEO Parag Agrawal last month flagging a sharp drop in his followers, Twitter on Thursday said numbers are ‘meaningful and accurate’. Twitter also pointed out that it does not arbitrarily censor political content and elevating political debate and open discourse is fundamental to its service and core values. Responding to him, Twitter’s vice president, Global Public Policy and Philanthropy, Sinead McSweeney has said, “Twitter is deeply committed to India” and will ensure that public conversation is healthy, which includes diverse voices, diverse points of view, allowing people to be better informed and to participate safely and comfortably.

The Twitter spokesperson said the platform has been fighting spam and malicious automation strategically and at scale with machine learning tools, and as part of those consistent and ongoing efforts to ensure a healthy service and credible accounts, follower counts can and do fluctuate. “We remove millions of accounts each week for violating our policies on platform manipulation & spam. You can take a look at latest Twitter Transparency Center update for more context. While some accounts notice minor difference, in certain cases no could be higher,” it added. Reacting to the Twitter’s response, Congress chief



spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said Rahul Gandhi’s stand has been that social media platforms cannot be suppressed, subjugated and denigrated to trolls’ space and there should instead be a healthy debate and discussion on them. “The plurality, the multi-culturalism, the open debate, the critique of policies and programmes of the government and that the social media platforms should be healthy forum for debates and discussions has been the stand of Rahul Gandhi, which now stands vindicated,” Surjewala added. In the letter dated December 27, last year, Rahul alleged that there is a shadow ban on him which restricts his tweets and the number of people who can follow him. “I want to bring your attention to what I believe is Twitter’s unwitting complicity in curbing free and fair speech in India,” Rahul wrote. He further wrote that he has been “reliably, albeit discreetly, informed by people at Twitter India that they are under immense pressure by the government to silence” his voice. Along with the letter, Rahul also sent an analysis of data from his Twitter account showing that his followers have barely increased for several months since August when his

account was suspended for eight days. “Perhaps not so coincidentally, it was precisely during these months that I raised the plight of a rape victim’s family in Delhi, stood in solidarity with farmers and fought the government on many other human rights issues. In fact, a video of mine that promised farmers that the 3 infamous farm laws will be repealed is among the most watched video on Twitter posted by any political leader in India in recent times,” Rahul said in the letter. Rahul had pointed out that the ideological battle between liberal democracy and authoritarianism across the world is being shaped on social media platforms and this places a huge responsibility on those that are at the helm of companies such as Twitter. As a leader of India’s largest opposition party, Rahul said it is his duty to raise my voice on behalf of our people against injustice. Rahul’s followers crossed 19.6 million on Thursday morning, after being stagnant at 19.5 million for many months. Responding to him, McSweeney said, “We understand increased transparency is at the foundation to promote healthy public conversation on Twitter and to earn trust. We know it is critical that people understand our processes and that we are transparent about what happens as a result. We assure you that Twitter, Inc. Treats its role as a platform service provider with utmost seriousness and we are deeply committed to India”.

Centre mulling to revisit booster dose policy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre is rethinking the relevance of the precaution Covid-19 dose to all the categories. Currently the jabs are being administered to the frontline and healthcare workers along with 60 plus population in the country. The National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) for Covid-19 held a high level meeting with NITI Aayog a day ago and sources said that the high-level panel members were skeptical about the benefits of the third dose being administered. “The NTAGI presented some research papers on third doses administered in several countries which have not helped in curbing infection, to the NITI Aayog in the meeting”, a source told. Some cases of getting infected even after a third dose have also been reported in India. The source said that the experts from NTAGI have assessed the data from the countries where booster doses have been administered. It has also studied the impacts of the third dose against the infection. The NTAGI is expected to meet the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) next

week with some more fact finding papers on the third dose, source said. However, the policy on booster or precaution dose could be revisited for the extension of the policy among other age group beneficiaries. As per the source, the precaution dose may continue among healthcare and frontline workers and 60 plus population. The NTAGI for Covid-19 also met WHO officials and said that India “will not blindly follow others” on its booster dose policy. During the meeting, officials assessed real-world data from countries across the world that are administering booster doses to their population. “Boosters have not helped the cases in any country that has administered the third dose. Besides, we will not blindly follow what other countries have done. We have to look at our local epidemiology and science, and our decisions have to be based on that assessment,” the NTAGI members discussed. Apart from local data, public health experts are also analyzing the infection patterns, behaviour of the virus, emerging variants and viral loads along with breakthrough and reinfections.

Congress to chalk out plan for Budget Session

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Top Congress leaders will hold deliberations on Friday morning to discuss the party’s strategy during the upcoming Budget Session of Parliament. Congress President Sonia Gandhi will hold discussions with senior party leaders at a virtual meeting of the Parliamentary Strategy Group. The group is headed by Sonia Gandhi, who is also the chairperson of the Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP). Other members of the group include former prime minister Manmohan Singh, Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Choudhary, senior party leaders A K Antony, KC Venugopal, Anand Sharma, Gaurav Gogoi, K Suresh, Jairam Ramesh, Manickam Tagore and Raveet Singh Bittu. The meeting is called before every Parliament session to decide the party’s strategy. The Budget Session of Parliament starts on January 31 with the president’s address to the joint sitting of both houses. The Union Budget will be presented on February 1.

RRB-NTPC protests: Congress extends full support to students

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Thursday extended their full support to the protesting students who has called a ‘Rail Roko Andolan’ against the Railway Ministry’s alleged irregularities in a recruitment exam. While Congress General secretary Priyanka Gandhi spoke on a virtual mode to few aspirants and also those affected by the police lathicharge in Prayagraj, the Congress student’s wing workers held a demonstration in front of the Railway Bhawan against police brutality on job aspirants. During the interaction, Priyanka assured the students that she would raise their voice from all forums. “Don’t get afraid. Ensure that elections are held on your issues of your employment. The Government did not give you job but commit atrocities on you and suppress you,” said Priyanka, according to a statement, issued by the Congress. Priyanka also



assured students she will visit them in Prayagraj. “When leaders come to you for vote, fix their answerability. The solution to deal with recruitment processes that are held for years is preparation of a job calendar. We have talked about job calendar in our youth manifesto,” she said. The Uttar Pradesh Police had on Wednesday arrested two people and lodged a case against around 1,000 unidentified persons in connection with the alleged rioting and blocking of the railway track by some job aspirants. Six policemen were also suspended with immediate effect for using “unnecessary force” during the incident, which took place on Tuesday. President of the National Students’ Union of India Neeraj Kundan led a protest march to

the Railway Ministry, where an effigy of minister Ashwini Vaishnaw was burnt, the outfit said in a statement. “The protesters who crossed the barricades erected by the police were detained and was taken to the Mandir Marg Police station,” it stated. Kundan said that students were the worst sufferers of the Covid pandemic. “The government is completely ignoring the education sector. Before taking vital decisions the government doesn’t consult the students concerned, instead of imposing unnecessary new rules on them. If they protest, they are beaten,” he alleged. The NSUI national president claimed that over 1,40,000 posts are vacant in CBT 2 group D since 2019. At a Press conference Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinat said Modi government issued the notification of these jobs ahead of 2019 general elections which stated that there will be examination for Group-D railway posts.

Tata to get loans from SBI-led consortium for AI

New Delhi: A consortium of lenders led by State Bank of India (SBI) will soon provide loans to Tata Group for the operations of Air India as well as to retire the airline’s high cost borrowings. After nearly 70 years, Tata Group on Thursday regained ownership of Air India. With the completion of the deal, the group will own 100 per cent stake in Air India, Air India Express and a 50 per cent shareholding in AISATS. Bankers said the SBI-led consortium has agreed to grant both term loans and working capital loans depending on the airline’s requirements. All large lenders, including Punjab National Bank, Bank of Baroda, and Union Bank of

India, are part of the consortium, they added. “Many banks have agreed for refinancing of Air India debt to Tatas and the process has begun,” one of the bankers said. Existing lenders who do not wish to participate in refinancing of debt to Tatas will get their money repaid through the refinanced amount, the banker said. Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) is among the entities that had given loans earlier to loss-making Air India. Now, the IPO-bound LIC has decided not to extend more loans to the airline and will not participate in the current funding round led by the SBI, the bankers said. Talace Private Limited -- a subsidiary of the Tata Group’s

holding company Tata Sons -- on October 8, 2021, won the bid to acquire debt-ridden Air India. It had offered Rs 18,000 crore, including cash of Rs 2,700 crore which has now been paid to the government. The term loans to Talace will help in retiring the high cost borrowings of Air India, the bankers said. The amount of loans likely to be extended by the consortium could not be immediately ascertained. “The strategic disinvestment transaction of Air India successfully concluded today with transfer of 100 per cent shares of Air India to M/s talace Pvt Ltd along with management control,” DIPAM Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said in a tweet on Thursday. **PTI**

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Scalping hair

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

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



India, like wigs and hairpieces, to increase foreign exchange earnings. It has to turn into reality now.

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

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

PICTALK



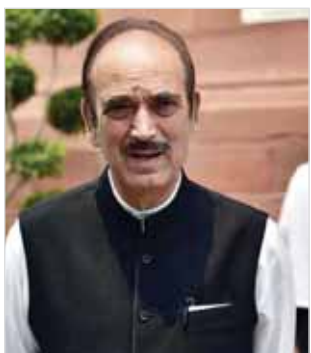
Fishermen row their boats in the Arabian Sea near the Bandra-Worli Sea Link, in Mumbai

PTI

Missing focus

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

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



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

Why Buddhadeb said no to Padma Bhushan



PRAFULLA GORADIA

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

is a work in progress.

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LEAVE GHULAM NABI AZAD ALONE

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

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

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

DON'T LET THE GUARD DOWN

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

Arunachal teen returns home



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

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

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

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

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

P Senthil Saravana Durai | Mumbai

KICKING UP A CONTROVERSY

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

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

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

Sagar Singh | Muzaffarnagar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

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

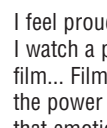


President — Ram Nath Kovind



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

Afghan ex-President — Hamid Karzai



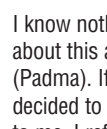
I feel proud when I watch a patriotic film... Films have the power to evoke that emotion.

Actor — Rakul Preet Singh



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

Indian women's football coach — Thomas Dennerby



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

West Bengal ex-CM — Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee

FIRST COLUMN

PRE-POLL GUARANTEES
FILL UP's HORIZON

Freebies do represent unfulfilled aspirations and needs of society



VIRENDRA SINGH RAWAT

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



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


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

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


Sardar Patel's rationale for a permanent civil service

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

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



RAKESH SARWAL



MRINALI DUDI

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

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

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

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

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

A lack of articulated and consistent goals, mismatch

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

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

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

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

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

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

There is no doubt that India's permanent civil service

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

Texas crisis exposes Pakistan's tentacles

NANDINI SINGH

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

The Texas hostage crisis at a synagogue that US President Joe Biden called an 'act of terror' has been resolved with the release of four hostages and the death of the hostage-taker but the dreadful situation has brought back the focus on Al Qaeda and its Pakistan connection.

The hostage taker identified by FBI as a British citizen named Malik Faisal Akram demanded for release of a terrorist in the US prison called 'Lady Al Qaeda', who is a Pakistan-born neuroscientist, Aafia Siddiqui. The case of the so-called Lady Al Qaeda has exposed links of Pakistan government, Al Qaeda and Taliban as Islamabad has joined forces with the terror groups to seek release of Aafia Siddiqui from the US prison.

The hostage-taker, Malik Faisal Akram, who stormed a Texas synagogue on the Sabbath and was holding hostages before he was shot and killed was demanding the release of 'Lady Al Qaeda', who is serving 86 years in a federal prison less than 30 miles from where the hostage standoff took place for attempting to murder US soldiers in Afghanistan.

Siddiqui was arrested in Afghanistan in 2008 with cyanide and plans to attack the Brooklyn Bridge and Empire State Building. Later she was extradited to the US and convicted in 2010. The demand for her release has brought a number of terror and jihadists groups together along with Pakistan establishment, who have been plotting or negotiating to seek Siddiqui's release. Terror groups in Pakistan, Afghanistan, who have taken US citizens hostage have tried to negotiate with the US Government offering they would free US citizens in return for Siddiqui's release.

This curious case of Aafia has also exposed how Al Qaeda, Taliban and Pakistan government are operating hand in glove with one another. Their causes are common and they work in collaboration with each other keeping the terror network very much activated.

Aafia was born in Karachi, Sindh in Pakistan to a Sunni family and later went to the US to study. Aafia returned to Pakistan from America for a time following the 9/11 attacks and again in 2003 during the war in Afghanistan. Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, a Pakistani Islamist militant and the principal architect of the 9/11 attacks, held by the US at the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, named Aafia as a courier and financier for Al-Qaeda. She was later placed on the FBI Seeking Information- Terrorism list and remains the only woman to have been featured on this list.

Pakistanis view her as the 'national symbol of honor and victimization' and the Pakistani news media have called her trial a 'farce' and 'politicized' from the start. In July 2019, while visiting Washington DC, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan suggested Siddiqui should be exchanged for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

I REQUEST STUDENTS THAT RAILWAYS IS YOUR PROPERTY, PLEASE DO NOT DESTROY IT. WE WILL SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS.
— RAILWAYS MINISTER
ASHWINI VAISHNAW

NO AMOUNT OF CONDEMNATION IS ENOUGH FOR THE REPRESSION OF YOUTH ASSOCIATED WITH RRB NTPC AND GROUP D EXAMINATIONS.
— CONGRESS LEADER
PRIYANKA GANDHI

LUCKNOW | FRIDAY | JANUARY 28, 2022

246 militants surrendered, says Assam CM

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

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

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

TMC to make IAS Rules issue in Budget session

Likely to move resolution in RS seeking removal of Bengal Guv

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

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



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

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

Padma Award for Azad not on merit: Cong

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

Kerala HC acquits ultras in Kozhikode twin blast case

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

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A Division Bench of the Kerala High Court on

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

All Cong corporators join NCP ahead of Malegaon civic polls

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

‘Panchayati Raj laws need amendments’

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

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

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

Panchayat raj members in a seminar held to mark the conclusion of the ninth and last workshop organized by CG3 (Connecting Governed, Governing and Governance), an initiative launched to empower local body members to take up causes for their electorate. The veteran IAS officer, who is rated as one of the master brains in the country in the system of decentralisation of power reiterated that those in power dare to bring in anti-people measures because of the failure of Grama Sabhas and Ward Committees which he described as the Basic Units of The Republic. "What former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi dreamt was transferring power to people. He had visualised Grama Sabhas and Ward Committees as institutions which were as important as legislatures and parliament. If these Grama Sabhas and Ward Committees do not succeed, the concept of decentralisation too fail," said Vijayanand. While exhorting the local body members to reject populism, he said they could play a major role in eliminating corruption. "Always bear in mind the fact that local self governments are part of federalism. The Panchayath Raj institutions should have the power and right to tax," he said. According to Vijayanand, Kerala would not have experienced the deluge and landslides it suffered since 2018 had the local self governments made use of their power and freedom effectively. "The massive floods and landslides in the State were fall out of the failure to implement the recommendations of the Madhav Gadgil Committee that was constituted to preserve the sanctity of the Western Ghats, the water tower of South India. Massive deforestation and quarrying had almost robbed the Ghats of its rain forests. The Local Self bodies in Kerala which had the power to accept the recommendations of Madhav Gadgil Committee in totality failed to do so because of the intervention of vested interests. Had these local bodies put their foot down, the State administration would not have been able to over rule them," he said.



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

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

New Delhi: After a hiatus of nearly two decades, the Government's programme to privatise state-owned firms restarted with the handing over of debt-laden national carrier Air India to the Tata Group. With the new owner shelling out Rs 18,000 crore for the buyout of the 'Maharaja', this would be the highest-ever amount garnered through privatisation, and is even more than the cumulative sum mopped up through strategic sales from 1999-00 to 2003-04. The Government had in October last year inked the share purchase agreement with the Tata Group for sale of

national carrier Air India for Rs 18,000 crore. Tatas would pay Rs 2,700 crore cash and take over Rs 15,300 crore of the airline's debt. The deal also includes sale of Air India Express and ground handling arm AISATS. The government had garnered roughly over Rs 5,000 crore during that five-year period by privatising 10 CPSEs. Besides, three hotel properties of Hotel Corporation of India and 18 of ITDC were also sold off by way of slump sale. Here is a timeline of strategic sale of central public sector enterprises

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



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

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

Biting cold in Gulmarg as mercury dips in Valley

Summer capital Srinagar records minus 1.3 degrees temp

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

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

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

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

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

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

US response on Ukraine offers little optimism: Russia

AP ■ MOSCOW

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

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

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

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

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that response from the U.S. — and a similar one from NATO — left "little ground for optimism." At same time, he added that "there always are prospects for continuing a dialogue, it's in interests of both us and Americans." Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov noted that U.S. response contained some elements that could lead to "the start of a serious talk on secondary issues" but emphasized that "the document contains no positive response on

the main issue." Those are the Russian demands for the non-expansion of NATO and the non-deployment of weapons that may threaten Russia.

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

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

Peskov added that Putin and U.S. President Joe Biden will decide whether they need to have another conversation following two calls last month. While the diplomacy sputters on, so, too, do maneuvers that have escalated tensions. Russia has launched a series of military drills: Motorized infantry and artillery units in southwestern Russia practiced firing live ammunition, warplanes in Kaliningrad on Baltic Sea performed bombing runs, dozens of warships sailed for training exercises in the Black Sea and the Arctic, and Russian fighter jets and paratroopers arrived in Belarus for joint war games.

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

Amid the tensions, thousands of Ukrainians expressed their resolve to stand up to the Russian pressure under the hashtag UkrainiansWillResist on Twitter and Facebook. "No one will force Ukrainians to accept the Kremlin ultimatum," wrote Andrii Levus, who initiated the online campaign. Beyond the fears of a Russian invasion in Ukraine, there also has been speculation that Moscow's response could include military deployments to the Western Hemisphere. While a senior

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE ■ WASHINGTON

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

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

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

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

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

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

"From our perspective, I can't be more clear -- NATO's door is open, remains open, and that is our commitment," Blinken said. Russia, which has a complicated historical relationship with Ukraine, has

fueled an insurgency in former Soviet republic's east that has killed more than 13,000 people since 2014. Russia that year also seized Crimea after the overthrow of a government in Kyiv that had resisted efforts to move closer to Europe. The United States has warned of severe and swift consequences if Russia invades, including possible personal sanctions on President Vladimir Putin, and NATO has put 8,500 troops on standby.

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

Blinken's deputy Wendy Sherman, who led a previous round of talks with Russia, said Putin seemed ready to invade despite the US warnings. "I have no idea whether he's made the ultimate decision, but we certainly see every indication that he is going to use military force sometime perhaps (between) now and the middle of February," Sherman told a forum.

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

French-led talks

In another bid to defuse tensions, senior Russian and Ukrainian officials met for eight hours in Paris with representatives of France and Germany. Dmitry Kozak, the Kremlin deputy chief of staff, said talks were "not simple" but that another round would take place in two weeks in Berlin.

World remembers Holocaust as antisemitism rises in pandemic

AP ■ BRUSSELS

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

"I have lived in New York for 75 years, but I still remember well the terrible time of horror and hatred," survivor Inge Auerbacher, 87, told the German parliament. "Unfortunately, this cancer has reawakened and hatred of Jews is commonplace again in many countries in the world, including Germany."

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

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

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

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

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

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

UN chief urges major Afghan aid increase, unfreezing assets

AP ■ UNITED NATIONS

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

international funds to pay



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

salaries of doctors, teachers, sanitation workers, electricians and other civil servants. China and Russia reiterated their calls for unfreezing Afghan assets, while U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said Biden administration is examining "various options to ease liquidity crunch."

Iran state TV shows dissidents' images after apparent hack

AP ■ DUBAI

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

FROM PAGE 1

AIR INDIA LANDS UP IN TATAS' HANDS

The Government has retained debt of ₹15,300 crore in Air India and Air India Express Ltd (AIXL) while 100 per cent shares of Air India, AIXL and the national carrier's 50 per cent shareholding in AISATS have been transferred to Talace.

It took over two decades and three attempts for the Centre to finally hand over its flagship national carrier Air India.

In a tweet, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) Secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey said the strategic disinvestment transaction of Air India has concluded successfully with transfer of 100 per cent shares of Air India to Talace along with management control.

After the Government's statement, the Tata Group also issued a statement announcing the completion of the transaction for purchase of Air India from the Government.

"The Tata Group takes over management and control of the airline, starting today. The transaction covers three entities -- Air India, Air India Express and AI SATS. Air India is India's flag carrier and premier full-service airline. Air India Express is a low-cost carrier. AI SATS provides a comprehensive suite of ground handling and cargo handling services," the Tata Group said in a statement.

Acknowledging PM Modi's commitment to reforms and faith in India's entrepreneurship spirit, which made this historic transition possible, the Tata Group said, "Our Prime Minister has in action demonstrated what his commitment to minimum government, maximum governance means."

After the handover of Air India, Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekharan said, "We're totally delighted that this process is complete and happy to have Air India back in the Tata Group. We look forward to walking with everyone to create a world-class airline."

Earlier Chandrasekharan called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday ahead of the official handover of Air India to the Tata Group. "N Chandrasekharan, the Chairman of Tata Sons called on PM @narendramodi," the Prime Minister's Office tweeted, along with a photograph of the meeting. The meeting comes after all the Government representatives of Air India tendered their resignations earlier. Later, Chandrasekharan also visited the Air India headquarters.

In October last year, Tata Group announced the winning bidder for Air India with a bid amount of ₹18,000 crore. Tata would pay ₹2,700 crore cash and take over ₹15,300 crore of the airline's debt. Tata Sons owns 84 per cent share in Air Asia which has a market share of 5.2 per cent. It also has 51 per cent stake in Vistara which has a market share of 8.3 per cent. With Air India under the stable, Tatas could be in control of 26.7 per cent market share and be the second biggest player after IndiGo.

Before the handover process to Tata Group, the Government has notified the framework agreement entered into by and between Air India Ltd and AI Assets Holding Ltd (AIAHL) for transfer of non-core assets of the national carrier post it ceasing to be a public sector com-

pany. AIAHL was set up in 2019, by the Government for holding debt and non-core assets of the Air India group. Four Air India subsidiaries -- Air India Air Transport Services Ltd (AIATSL), Airline Allied Services Ltd (AASL), Air India Engineering Services Ltd (AIESL) and Hotel Corporation of India Ltd (HCI) -- along with non-core assets, painting and artefacts, and other non-operational assets, was transferred to the SPV.

Meanwhile, a consortium of lenders led by the State Bank of India (SBI) has agreed to provide loans to Tata Group for the smooth operations of loss-making Air India. Tata Group, which won the bid to acquire the national carrier along with Air India Express and 50 per cent stake in AISATS in October last year, is expected to formally takeover the airline on Thursday.

Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhoi (JRD) Tata founded the airline in 1932 and named it Tata Airlines. In 1946, the aviation division of Tata Sons was listed as Air India, and in 1948, Air India International was launched with flights to Europe.

SHAH: UP POLLS TO DECIDE COUNTRY'S FUTURE

under which cases were lodged against him," he said referring to a Samajwadi Party leader.

He mocked Akhilesh Yadav of his criticism of law and order, says he has not right to complain about it. "Chullu bhar pani mein doob maro," he mocked in Hindi.

"Akhilesh Babu you question law and order, you should drown in chullu (handful) of water. You have no right to speak on it," he said targeting the Samajwadi Party leader.

If Akhilesh Yadav comes to power, the "goonda raj" (rule of goons) will prevail, he claimed attacking the opposition party.

But if the BJP returns to power, it will bolster development, he said.

The union minister stressed that his party has run the government in a transparent manner and even political adversaries cannot accuse them of corruption. "Akhilesh Babu stacks of notes are coming out from the houses of your supporters but there is no charge of corruption against the BJP," he said, apparently referring to the seizure of cash and jewellery from two perfume traders in Kanpur and Kannauj.

He also took a swipe at the SP's promise of free power, saying why wasn't it done earlier.

Earlier accompanied by party leaders, the minister distributed pamphlets in Satua village near Govardhan Road and got his photographs clicked with local workers.

Amidst showering of petals by women, he was seen garlanding a beaming child in a woman's lap.

DELHI HC EXPUNGES JUDGE'S 'PUBLICITY' REMARKS AGAINST JUHI CHAWLA IN 5G CASE

The actress, who was present in the virtual hearing, volunteered to work with the Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLISA) and fea-

ture in the programmes for empowering the marginalised section of the society.

Senior advocate Salman Khurshid, representing Chawla, said the actress being a public concerned person had filed the suit highlighting the impact of 5G roll out on human body, and added that unfortunately the public issue was diluted due to the hyper technical difficulties in the order passed by the single judge regarding the law of pleadings.

Chawla submitted that she would be very happy to assist in any matter of public interest and she was thankful to the court for reducing the costs imposed on her.

"I would like to mention that I moved the suit for relief to my immediate family as well as all citizens of the entire country. I have been studying the effects of harmful radiation since 2010. The aspects related to my background and actions were totally ignored. It is a serious matter but it has been sidelined," she said.

She further said she was thankful to the bench for acknowledging that the matter is serious and it would be an honour for her to render services by featuring in the programmes of DSLISA.

"We see reports in newspapers that are proving us correct. It would have been truly heartening if the costs had been struck down completely since in-principle I feel that I did not wrong. But I appreciate it nonetheless. I also request that the comments regarding garnering publicity be also expunged from the records," she said. The bench noted that Chawla has been taking up social causes and it has no intentions to doubt her when she raised the 5G issue; however, the exemptions sought by her in the suit probably hurt the single judge as she cannot say that court fees should not be charged from her.

"This portrays that the plaintiffs are approaching court in a casual way which we are sure you were not. May be you could have a better counsel who could have advices you better," it said. "We wanted her here so that she can hear us. We do not discount the fact that you want to raise a serious issue. The problem is when you show complete disregard to the law. You say you will not pay the court fees as it takes years in deciding cases. You look so frivolous when you do that," it observed.

Sharing an instance of the days when Justice Sanghi was practicing as an advocate, he said, "acha wakil bhi both kismat se milta hai" (you get a good lawyer by luck). Sometimes you land up in the wrong hands."

Justice Sanghi said one has to use his or her own intelligence also and as a litigant, have to keep their antennas open. On a lighter side, Khurshid said: "The whole issue is antennas have been put in the wrong direction. It is an attempt to put antennas in the right direction."

The bench said unfortunately what appears is that filing of an application for exemption from court fees on the ground that cases are not decided for several years, gave an impression to the single judge that the plaintiffs were not taking up their cause with any seriousness.

"It appears to us that the plaintiffs who do not come from legal background should not be made to share the blame for consequences of the manner in which the applications in the suit were drafted.

"Single judge was also disturbed by the fact

that the weblink of the hearing was shared to the public at large which led to disruption in the hearing," the bench said.

"Miss Chawla has appeared before us and volunteered that she would work with DSLISA, in whose favour Rs 20 lakh costs was awarded which has now been reduced to Rs 2 lakh, for deprived class of women and children who are in need of assistance," it said.

Khurshid told the bench that the plaintiffs have learnt a lesson from their past experience and will raise the 5G issue afresh in an appropriate manner and liberty was granted by the court in this regard.

DSLISA secretary Kanwaljeet Arora said he was a big fan of "madam Chawla" and in case she agrees to work for the committee, it will be helpful for the marginalised section and it will empower them. "This only shows that Arora is a big fan of hers... Yes we all enjoyed her movies," Justice Sanghi said.

When the bench, at the fog end of the hearing, said "may be all this happened to bring you to DSLISA", Chawla responded, "Universe has its way". The suit had sought a direction to the authorities to certify to the public at large that how 5G technology is safe to humans, animals and every type of living organism, flora and fauna.

CHANNI OR SIDHU TO LEAD POLLS, PARTY WORKERS WILL PICK: RAHUL

And the right person will take Punjab forward...and all other leaders will fight as one team," he said, while addressing the party's first major virtual rally from Jalandhar.

Till now, amidst the battle for one-upmanship, the Congress party has been building up the narrative of fighting polls under collective leadership, while projecting Channi, Sidhu and also former State unit chief Sunil Jakhar as party's face.

Sidhu, first to address the rally, raised the demand to announce the CM face while making it clear that any decision would be acceptable to him, and requested Rahul to ensure that he should have "power to take decisions...kitte darshini ghoda na bna k rakh deyo".

Channi, who always expressed his gratitude for elevating him to the Chief Minister's post, also staked his claim on the seats by seeking "one more chance" after taking into consideration his 111 days performance as the Chief Minister.

Amidst apparent unease between Channi and Sidhu, an effort was made to put up a united show when Channi addressed Sidhu as "vadde veer" (big brother) and hugged him, after inviting him to the dais during his address. "There is no fight between us... People say there is a fight between us...we don't want people to come from outside (referring to AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal) and say that we are fighting among ourselves," he said.

Earlier, Rahul kick-started his Punjab visit by paying obeisance at the Golden Temple, along with party nominees and senior leaders. He also partake langar by sitting on the floor along with Channi, Sidhu, and other leaders. Rahul offered prayers at Akal Takht - Sikhs' highest temporal seat - from outside only.

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

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

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

A decision on the reopening of schools will be taken up

classes 5-8 in the second phase, and classes 3-4 in the third phase.

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

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

The Delhi Government has been trying for the reopening of schools. Hundreds of parents have joined "BACK-TOSCHOOL" campaign and written to DPCR division. Delhi Education Minister announced on Wednesday that he will recommend the DDMA for reopening of schools in Delhi as education



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

According to sources, experts in the meeting suggested reopening of schools in a phased manner. In the first phase, schools from classes 9-12 should be reopened, then

and mental health of students were being hampered due to the curbs. Delhi schools have been closed since December 28. BJP leaders in Delhi also called upon Lieutenant Governor Bajjal last Tuesday demanding that the weekend and night curfew should be withdrawn, while odd-even restrictions should also be lifted.

Food for the soul

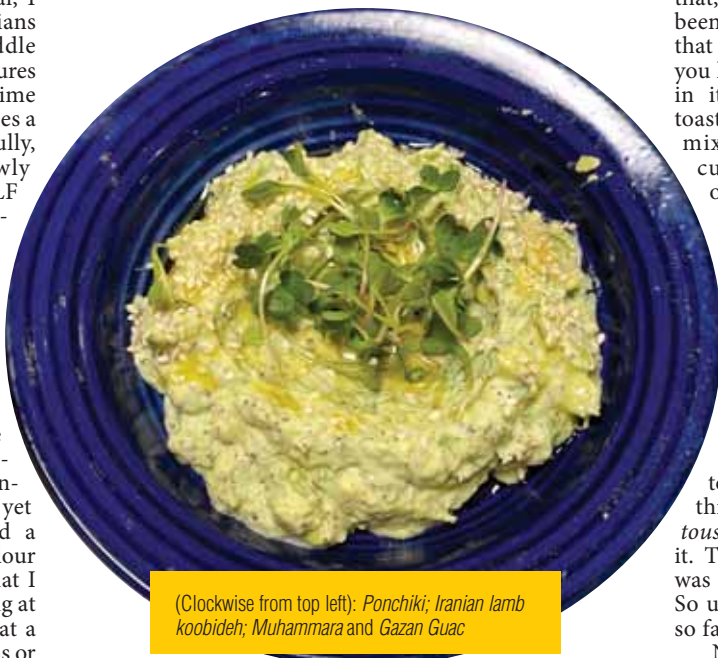
SAMEER BAWA’s taste buds are tantalised by the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean flavours of Cafe Mez



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

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

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



(Clockwise from top left): Ponchiki; Iranian lamb koobideh; Muhammara and Gazan Guac

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



A smoothie start

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

R E C I P E S

SUPER SEEDS CHIKKI

WHAT YOU NEED

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

METHOD

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



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

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

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

VEGAN SPICY PUMPKIN CAPPUCCINO

WHAT YOU NEED

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

METHOD

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



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

CHOCOLATE PRUNE BANANA MUFFIN

WHAT YOU NEED

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

METHOD

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



Now add the melted chocolate and mix.

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

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

GARLIC OLIVE TAPENADE

WHAT YOU NEED

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

METHOD

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

Courtesy: Del Monte



cover and simmer for three-four minutes.

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

coffee into a coffee mug or glass.

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

Courtesy: Abdul Sahid Khan, head trainer at Lavazza India

India look to at least finish on podium in Asia Cup

PTI ■ MUSCAT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



just six minutes from the hooter but in the end it proved to be too late.

After resolute defending in the first two quarters, the Indian defence

led by skipper and goalkeeper Savita conceded three soft goals to hand

over the match to Korea. And come Friday, the Savita-led

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AP ■ MELBOURNE

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

So far he hasn't let it close.

Nadal plays Matteo Berrettini in one semifinal on Friday at Melbourne Park, knowing he's potentially two match wins from a 21st major title.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hockey legend Charanjit Singh dies



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

His only daughter is married and based in New Delhi.

His last rites will be performed this evening in Una.

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

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



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

PTI ■ CUTTACK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ash Barty defeats Madison Keys, storms into final



IANIS ■ MELBOURNE

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

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

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

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

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

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

But at 30-all in the next game, Barty floated slice on a second-serve return barely dropped in. There was no luck involved on the next point when Barty curled a forehand for 4-1.

Still one of the hardest hitters around, Keys found the right balance between aggression and not going for too much, which has been an issue throughout

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

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

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

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

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

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

China demands US halt Olympics 'interference'

AP ■ BEIJING

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

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

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

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

China has also protested what it



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

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

Wang also complained that the

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

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

Vietnam, Myanmar settle for draw

IANIS ■ NAVI MUMBAI

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

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

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

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



the crossbar.

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

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

However, it was Vietnam who

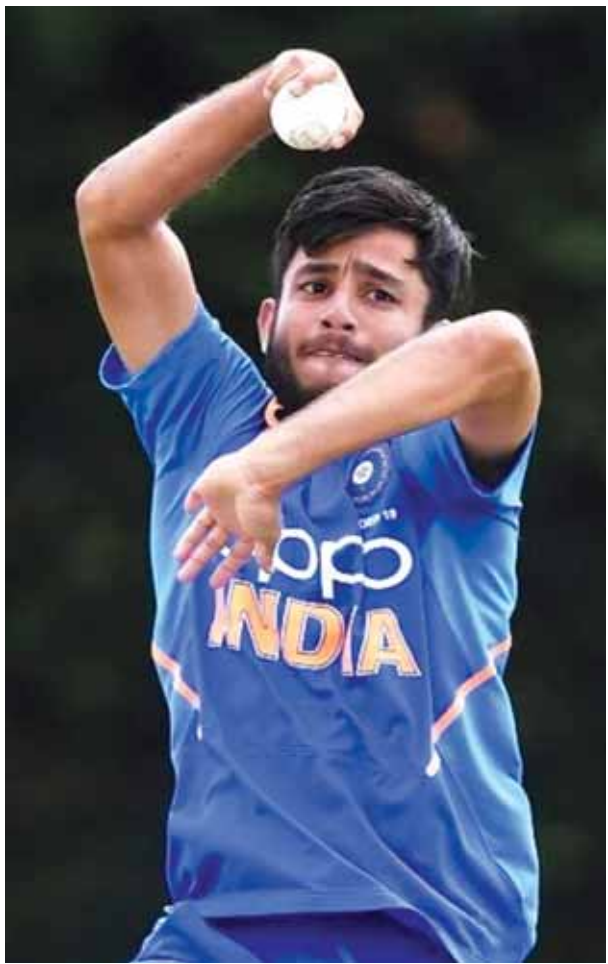
conceded the first goal when Nguyen Thi Thanh Nha brought down an advancing Noe Khin Myat inside the box, with Tun making no mistake in converting the penalty.

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

Myanmar, however, edged ahead again in spectacular fashion in the 49th minute when Tun set up Tun Khin Marlar, who found space before smashing her effort into the back of the net.

Vietnam were given a lifeline when Myanmar's Saw Thaw conceded a penalty in the 62nd minute after she brought down Nguyen Anh Thi My inside the six-yard-box.

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



RAVI BISHNOI GETS MAIDEN CALL-UP FOR WINDIES SERIES

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

While Ashwin is believed to be

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

white-ball cricket.

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

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

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

He primarily bowls googlies which is his stock delivery and occasionally

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

them lot of success between 2017 to 2019.

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

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

He underwent a knee surgery in September last year.

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

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

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

Roach returns to West Indies squad



PTI ■ ST JOHN'S (ANTIGUA)

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

February 6, 9 and 11.

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

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

in this format.

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

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

Powell's 107 leads Windies over England by 20 runs



AP ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

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

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

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

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

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

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

NZC moves all games against Indian women to Queenstown

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

"These risk mitigations

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

England first team to reach U-19 World Cup semifinals

PTI ■ NORTH SOUND

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

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

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

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

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

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



tually falling just short of a century on 97.

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

Rehan Ahmed claiming figures of four for 48.

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

Bethell came out all guns blazing in

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

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

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

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

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

Zimbabwe, West Indies win in the Plate competition

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

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

ICC unveils NFT in partnership with 'FanCraze'

PTI ■ DUBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

