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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

According to a new Govt advisory, individuals under-

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

The Uttar Pradesh BJP president lambasted

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

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

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

employment.

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

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

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

CAPSULE

INTERNATIONAL AIRLINES CANCEL FLIGHTS TO US

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

MALLYA FACES PROSPECT OF LOSING LONDON HOME

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

INS BLAST: ACCIDENTAL DEATH CASE REGISTERED

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Both the aircraft took off from Bengaluru airport in a



span of about five minutes.

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

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

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



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

Heads of Af neighbours, Modi to discuss situation

India hosting conclave in virtual mode on Jan 27

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Giving details of the forth-

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

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

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

"extended neighbourhood".

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

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

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

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

Female elephant in Surajpur dies of electrocution

STAFF REPORTER ■ SURAJPUR

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

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

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

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

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

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

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

The CS of Bihar could not

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

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

THE PIONEER ANALYSIS

Four CM faces of Punjab — Channi, Mann, Sukhbir and Amarinder

AMITABH SHUKLA ■ CHANDIGARH

With the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) naming comedian turned politician Bhagwant Mann as the chief ministerial candidate, the long drawn suspense within the party and outside has ended and brought in a sense of closure for the swelling party cadres who are fighting with their tails up in the Assembly polls.

As far as the chief ministerial faces of the rival parties are concerned, it is more or less settled now. Though within Congress, as has been the case most of the time, there would be twists and turns followed by more twists and turns till a name is officially declared by the high command. So far, Congress seems to have given enough indications and sort of settled with Charanjit Singh Channi, who made a mark for himself in his short tenure after being sworn in following the unceremoni-

ous ouster of long-serving Amarinder Singh having two tenures on the top post combining nine and a half years in all.

Then comes the third serious angle in the Punjab polls—Shiromani Akali Dal where leadership has now become hereditary and has passed on to party President Sukhbir Singh Badal. His father, Parkash Singh Badal, the five-time chief minister, is now in his 90's and despite his public appearances now and then in the last five years, has clearly paved the way for his son, who also served as Deputy chief minister and Home Minister when the party was in power in alliance with the BJP from 2012 to 2017. SAD is in alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party this time after breaking its over two decade old alliance with BJP on the controversial farm laws. BSP has already been offered the post of Deputy chief minister if the alliance is voted to power.

The Patiala royal Amarinder Singh would obviously be the chief ministerial candidate of the Punjab Lok Congress-BJP alliance even though his new party would get a lesser number of seats than the BJP in the seat sharing pact. Of course, the alliance has hardly got much effect on the ground, given that in the rural areas, it has no traction while in urban pockets, BJP has some influence but overall the political analysts are almost certain that it will not cross the double digit figure. They have obviously written off the alliance as a serious contender of power despite some aggressive inductions from left, right and centre in recent days. They see the Patiala royal parting ways with Congress and deciding to fight elections more as an 'ego trip of a dethroned emperor' rather than a serious attempt at political resurrection.

As of now, it seems that the strategy of AAP in naming Mann, the popular face of the

party after a tele-voting campaign, has helped get it traction with the voters. Publicizing a phone number for tele-voting, asking voters to give missed calls, SMS and WhatsApp, helped the party connect with the voters. All of this had an element of surprise and political freshness. This was obviously a new exercise of its kind and such novelty helps the party catch the imagination of the voters. Remember the days of the "Chai pe charcha" campaign of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014 Lok Sabha polls and the "Coffee with Captain" campaign of Amarinder Singh in 2017 assembly poll which catapulted both of them to power. Of course, the man behind those popular slogans—Prashant Kishor—is now on a sabbatical, not coining any new slogan for anyone after West Bengal where Mamata Banerjee emerged victorious.

The "AAP Da CM" tele-voting exercise saw over 21 Lakh people expressing their

opinion on the number released by AAP on January 13 for voting, and 93.3 percent voted for Bhagwant Mann as their choice to be Punjab's CM. Of course, there is many a slip between the cup and the lip and this is true in politics more than anything else, it is now certain that there would be no parachute candidate in Punjab now, as was believed by almost all the other political parties. In the last Assembly polls in 2017, when AAP did reasonably well, getting the Leader of Opposition space by piping out the Akali Dal, it had not declared a CM face and obviously did not want to repeat the mistake in 2022.

On the other hand, ruling Congress has so far not made any official announcement though in 2017 it had named Amarinder Singh as the CM face of the party days before the polls. As public campaign is not allowed and no big rallies are being held due to Election Commission's Covid-19 guidelines, top leadership of

Congress (read Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi) have not yet had the opportunity to go on stage with Channi or Sidhu so that any guesses could be made.

However, Congress, on its Twitter handle, indicated that Channi could be the candidate as it shared a video clip in which Bollywood actor-cum-philanthropist Sonu Sood is seen saying that people want a person from humble origins as the Chief Minister, indicating towards Channi. In the video, there are visuals of the sitting chief minister which has fuelled speculation that the high command has sort of endorsed the name. It is understood that Channi's logical and emotional stand on the recent controversy over Prime Minister Narendra Modi's security lapse in Ferozepur seems to have helped his cause. In addition, he has in a calculated manner cultivated the image of the aam aadmi (common man) who has no pretensions to cut into the votes of the AAP.

The Congress high command knows it well that the PCC chief Navjot Sidhu is not the one to accept anyone's name as the CM face, except his own without any protest, so it is perhaps buying peace as of now by not making any official announcement. "Collective leadership" is the term coined to keep everyone happy till the crunch time comes. Sidhu has been urging the high command to name the CM face, going to the extent of saying, "Dulhe bin baraat kaisi." (What is a wedding procession without a groom). Obviously, he was referring to the wedding procession as an election campaign and groom as the chief ministerial candidate. But given the compulsions of the top leadership in keeping everyone happy, it seems, there would be no "groom" in the "wedding procession" as of now from Congress and all it would do is keep indicating and suggesting Channi's name, without doing so.

Surprisingly, in the tele-voting campaign of the AAP, Sidhu was the second most preferred CM candidate of the party getting a little over 3 percent of the votes. Many in Punjab had two interpretations or questions on this, one whether Sidhu would move to the AAP and two what kind of methodology was adopted by AAP in tele-voting where Sidhu too figured. But political speculations apart, Sidhu seems to be a few steps behind Channi as of now as the CM face of the party amongst the party cadres as well as the central leadership.

So, the name of the Captains of the respective teams as of now are out—Bhagwant Mann, Charanjit Singh Channi, Sukhbir Singh Badal and Amarinder Singh. The results would decide who has got on top.

(The writer is Senior Resident Editor, The Pioneer, Chandigarh)

BJP reaches seat sharing formula with PLC, SAD (Sanyukt) in Punjab

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Heading an evolving coalition, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has finally reached at a consensus over the seat sharing formula with its allies — Punjab Lok Congress — headed by former Chief Minister Capt Amarinder Singh, Shiromani

Akali Dal (Sanyukt) – led by Rajiya Sabha MP Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, and also Lok Insaaf Party – led by Bains Brothers.

As per the seat sharing arrangement, the saffron party will have a lion's share among the total 117 seats in Punjab, and will field its candidates on 60 to 62 seats, while Capt Amarinder-

led PLC gets 38-40 seats and Dhindsa-led Akali faction gets 10-12 seats in its share. Lok Insaaf Party, led by Simarjeet Singh Bains and Balwinder Singh Bains — both MLAs and popularly known as Bains Brothers, is likely to be part the BJP-led alliance and may contest on two to five seats.

Haryana reports 12 deaths, 8,847 fresh Covid cases

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

12 fatalities due to COVID-19 were reported in Haryana as 8847 fresh infections surfaced on Wednesday. Six deaths were reported in Karnal, two in Gurugram and one each in Sonapat, Ambala, Yamunanagar and Kurukshetra in the last 24 hours, according to the state's health bulletin. The daily positivity rate was recorded at 19.99 percent in Haryana. Gurugram, the worst affected district in the state reported the highest 2918 fresh cases followed by 1285 cases in Faridabad. Among other districts, 649 new cases were reported in Sonapat, 593 in Ambala, 452 in Panchkula, 437 in Karnal, 430 in Hisar, 321 in Rohtak. The active cases jumped to 59344 in the state with Gurugram reporting highest 24163 such cases.

The daily positivity rate of 18.94 percent was recorded in the state. The state's COVID-19 tally has reached 684664, while the state's death toll stood at 16846, the bulletin stated. Ludhiana reported the highest number of 1325 fresh cases recording the positivity rate of 25.74 percent. SAS Nagar reported 1232 cases and a positivity rate of 35.32 percent. 888 fresh cases were reported in Jalandhar, 643 in Hoshiarpur, 471 in Amritsar, 418 in Patiala, 414 in Bathinda, 330 in Ropar. There were 45505 active cases in the state. Among them, 773 were on oxygen support, 232 in critical care facilities and 53 on ventilator support, the bulletin said.

Seven deaths, 3148 Covid cases reported in Himachal

Seven persons died due to COVID-19 in the last 24 hours in Himachal taking the death toll to 3892 in the state. Two deaths were reported in Chamba district, one each in Shimla, Hamirpur, Una, Kangra and Solan. A 105-year old female in Kangra district died due to COVID, according to Himachal's health bulletin. The state also reported 3148 fresh COVID infections taking the total number of cases to 252042.

Punjab reports 27 deaths, 7849 new cases

Punjab reported 27 fatalities and 7849 fresh cases of COVID-19 on Wednesday. According to the state's health bulletin, six deaths each were reported in Amritsar and Ludhiana, five in Jalandhar, two each in Bathinda, Gurdaspur, SAS Nagar, Sangrur and one death in Hoshiarpur.

Himachal CM inaugurates Dharamshala Skyway to connect with Mcleodganj

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Himachal Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur on Wednesday inaugurated Dharamshala Skyway, a ropeway from Dharamshala to Mcleodganj in Kangra district. This 1.8 kms long ropeway has been constructed by spending an amount of Rs. 207 crore and has connected Dharamshala town with Mcleodganj.

While talking to the media-persons on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that construction of this ropeway was started in 2018 and has been developed under DFBOT mode as a public private partnership project by Dharamshala Ropeway Limited and Himachal Pradesh Tourism and Civil Aviation Department. Thakur said that this ropeway would go a long way in solving the traffic problem of Mcleodganj and also prove as an added tourist attraction. This ropeway would carry 1000 persons in one hour in one direction and total time taken by the trolley to reach Mcleodganj from Dharamshala would be five minutes and it has 10 towers and two stations.

PUNJAB POLL BUZZ

OVER 91% LICENCED ARMS DEPOSITED

Complying to directions of Election Commission of India (ECI), as many as 3,54,075 licensed weapons have been deposited in the state ahead of Punjab Assembly Elections, scheduled to be held on February 20. Giving details, Punjab Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Dr S Karuna Raju on Wednesday said that this is 91.10 percent of the total 3,90,275 licensed weapons in the state. Also, 27 without licenses weapons were also seized in the State, he added. "Some of the persons having licenced weapons, including security personnel at nationalised or private banks and other persons facing security issues, will have to approach the Deputy Commissioner for any genuine exemptions and complaint redressal," he said.

VALUABLES SEIZED AFTER CODE ENFORCEMENT

Punjab CEO Dr S Karuna Raju on Wednesday informed that after the Model Code of Conduct came into force in the state for Punjab Vidhan Sabha elections, various enforcement teams, including state nodal officers, Narcotics Bureau, BSF, among others, have seized valuables worth Rs 46.66 crores in violation of code till January 18, 2022. The surveillance teams have seized 6.60 lakh litres of liquor worth Rs two crore, while the enforcement wings have also recovered psychotropic substances amounting to Rs 44.49 crores besides confiscating unaccounted cash of Rs 1.74 crore, he added.

2376 IDENTIFIED AS POTENTIAL TROUBLEMAKERS

Chandigarh: Punjab's poll panel has identified as many as 1088 vulnerable hamlets, besides 2376 persons as probable sources of trouble. "Out of these persons, preventive action has already been initiated against 1129, while remaining would also be brought to book," said the state CEO Dr S Karuna Raju. He also informed that from a security point of view, 725 persons have been bound down under preventive sections of CrP Act. "As many as 2221 cases of non-bailable warrants have been executed, while execution in 191 cases is under process," said CEO adding that as many as 6,339 nakas are operational across the State.

3 RETURN TO CONGRESS FOLD

Three leaders — Inderjeet Singh Khokhar, Parminder Singh Rehal, and Khushwant Singh Ruby — on Wednesday returned to the Congress party fold in support of the Mohali's sitting legislator and Congress candidate Balbir Singh Sidhu. All three leaders had switched their loyalties to AAP-Azaad alliance during the previous MC election in Mohali, but returned back to the party fold "after getting disillusioned from the way of working and policies of Kulwant Singh and expressing full faith in Balbir Sidhu's leadership". Meanwhile Harjeet Kaur, who fought MC poll on AAP-Azaad alliance, also joined Congress party.

Centre misusing Central agencies to intimidate us; targeted for my stand on PM security lapse: Channi

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Accusing the Centre of misusing central agencies to intimidate him and the Congress party weeks before the state assembly elections, Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi on Wednesday alleged that he was being targeted because of his stand in the issue of security lapse during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the poll-bound state.

Channi, mincing no words, said that the Enforcement Directorate (ED) action on his nephew Bhupinder Singh Honey over a 2018 sand mining case was a 'conspiracy' by the Centre to stop the Congress from contesting the assembly elections "and the Cabinet Ministers are being threatened".

"If the chairs were empty, (at BJP's Ferozepur rally which Modi was scheduled to address) what is my fault? Why is there a vendetta against me? Had I fired at the protesting farmers then it would have been fine. But I didn't do it. Now, I am paying up," he said.

Alleging that Punjabis are being targeted by the Centre, Channi said: "Why are Punjabis being blamed. When no one did anything, no one threw a pebble at the PM or fired any shot. What did the PM mean by his sarcastic 'Dhanyavad de dena' (say thanks) remark?"

"Now, attempts are made that our people are not able to

contest elections. Relatives are being pressed. Whenever they think it's difficult to win, they let their agencies loose," said Channi.

Accusing the BJP-led Central Government to frame him through his nephew, the Chief Minister said alleged that his nephew was tortured to take his name. "What I have heard is that they wanted to arrest me last night. The courts were kept open till 6 am...My nephew was tortured to take my name...But when it did not happen, they asked the court to close. I have not met my nephew. We do not even know where he is now. I have been told that those who interrogated him told him that they would not allow us to contest elections," he added.

Pointing that his nephew was not even named in the 2018 FIR on the basis of which ED has conducted raids, Channi dubbed it as "a planted exercise".

"They are taking revenge because I stood with Punjab and people of Punjab during the Prime Minister's visit to Ferozepur. This is vindictive...They are harassing our people and want to spoil our election...This is a conspiracy to suppress us. So many of our people and Ministers are under pressure," said the Chief Minister, while addressing the media along with Deputy Chief Minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and Cabinet Ministers Brahm Mohindra, Tript Rajinder Singh Bajwa, and Sukhbinder Singh Sarkaria.

AAVAS FINANCIERS LIMITED (Formerly known as Au HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED) (CIN:L65922RJ2011PLCO34297) Regd. & Corp. Office: 201-202, 2nd Floor, South End Square, Mansarovar Industrial Area, Jaipur. 302020 Demand Notice Under Section 13(2) of Securitisation Act of 2002 As the Loan Account Became NPA therefore The Authorised Officer (AO) Under section 13 (2) of Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 had issued 60 day demand notice to the borrower as given in the table. According to the Notice if the Borrower does not deposit the Amount within 60 days, the amount will be recovered from Auction of the security as given below. As the demand Notice send to the borrower/guarantor has not been served, copy of demand notice has also been affixed on the secured assets as given below. Therefore you the borrower is informed to deposit the loan amount along with future interest and recovery expenses within 60 days, otherwise under the provisions of section 13 (4) and 14 of the said Act, the AO is free to take possession of the Security as given below.

Name of the Borrower	Date and Amount of Demand Notice Under Sec. 13(2)	Description of Mortgaged property
Mr. RAMESH, Mrs. KANTAHHA (A/c No.) LNRAI02919-200108496	30 Dec 2021 Rs. 694369/- 20 Dec 2021	SITUATED AT BHANPURI, P.C.NO. 108/39, RIC-RAIPUR, RAIPUR, CHHATTISGARH ADMEASURING 860 Sq. Ft.

Place : Jaipur Date : 20.01.2022 Authorised Officer Aavas Financiers Limited

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, Landmark Building, 4th Floor, 228A, A/C Bore Road, Kolkata 700020 CIN No: L65190GJ1994PLCO21012, www.icicibank.com

Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of Property/ Date of Symbolic Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Susant Rudra/ Akash Rudra/ Ward 26 Jagdalla Champa Janjgir Champa Chhattisgarh Champa 49567/1 LBCHM00003618839/ LBCHM00004030116/ LBCHM00005377605/ LBCHM00004963911/	P H No.02, Khasra No 231/1 and 2, Village Jagdalla, Tahasil Champa, Ward No.26, District Janjgir, Chhattisgarh, Admeasuring an area of 0.07 A.O. 282.64 Sq. Mtr/ Date of Symbolic Possession 14.01.2022	25.06.2021 Rs. 46,24,935/-	Chattisgarh

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

Date : January 20, 2022 Place: Chattisgarh Authorized Officer ICICI Bank Limited

BAJAJ HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED CORPORATE OFFICE: Cerebrum IT Park B2 Building 5th floor, Kalyani Nagar, Pune, Maharashtra 411014 BRANCH OFFICE: Bajaj Housing Finance Limited 6th Floor, RC Printers, Office No. 609,610,611, Plot No.1, Block No. 9, Rajbandha Maidaan, D B Building, Near Dental College,Escort Hospital, Raipur-492 001.

POSSESSION NOTICE U/s 13(4) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002. Rule 8-(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.(Appendix-IV) Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of M/s BAJAJ HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED (BHFL) under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(2) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued Demand Notice(s) to Borrower(s) /Co Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s) mentioned herein below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrower(s) /Co Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s) /Co Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned on behalf of M/s Bajaj Housing Finance Limited, has taken over the possession of the property described herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8-(1) of the said rules. The Borrower(s) /Co Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s) in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the below said property and any dealings with the said property will be subject to the first charge of BHFL for the amount(s) as mentioned herein under with future interest thereon.

Name of the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) (LAN No, Name of Branch)	Description of Secured Asset (Immovable Property)	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Date of Possession
BRANCH : RAIPUR (LAN No. H454FLP0338474) 1. HARSH DUBEY (Borrower) 2. SHAKUNTALA DUBEY (Co-Borrower) All At: H 9 SECTOR 1 SAMTA COLONY SUKHA JHAD WALLI GALLI RAIPUR-492001	All That Piece And Parcel Of The Non-agricultural Property Described As: PLOT NO 09 MS SAHAKARI GRH NIRMAN SAMITI MARYADIT RAIPUR CHIRHULDIH SWAMI ATMARAM WARD WARD NO 15 RIC RAIPUR TAHASIL DISTRICT RAIPUR CHHATTISGARH-492001, EAST -H/O Shukla ji, South - Road, North-H/o Goyalji, West- Nallah	20th September 2021 Rs. 22,56,569/- (Rupees Twenty Two Lac Fifty Six Thousand Five Hundred Sixty Nine Only)	14 JAN 2021
BRANCH : RAIPUR (LAN No. 454HML84219543 and 454THL84239148 and 454THL86601126) 1. RAJESH GANDECHA (Borrower) 2. DIPTI GANDECHA (Co-Borrower) All At: B 09 Shikrishna Nagar, Pahadi Chouk, Chhattisgarh, Raipur, Chhattisgarh-492009	All That Piece And Parcel Of The Non-agricultural Property Described As: KHN 536/1, 598 PNH 107, MALZA GUDHIVARI RIC RAIPUR, TEH. & DIST. RAIPUR, RAIPUR, CHHATTISGARH-492001, East : Road, West : Plot no. A/B-08, North : Road, South : Other Land	20th September 2021 Rs. 25,83,159/- (Rupees Twenty Five Lac Eighty Three Thousand One Hundred Fifty Nine Only)	14 JAN 2021
BRANCH : RAIPUR (LAN No. 454HML51889112 and 454THL51890921) 1. V S K PRABHAKAR (Borrower) At: JANTA QTER NO H1 NEAR BY SAHU KIRANA STORE DURG BHLAIDURG-491001 2. PADMAVATI VARNASI (Co-Borrower) At: JANTA QUARTER H 1 PADMINABHUPUR WARD NO 46 DURG BHLAIDURG-491001	All That Piece And Parcel Of The Non-agricultural Property Described As: H NO. 3 SECTOR 3 STREET -B G K TOWNSHIP P H NO. 90/20 DHARSIWA Raipur	20 August 2021 Rs. 65,83,322/- (Rupees Sixty Five Lac Eighty Three Thousand Three Hundred Twenty Two Only)	14 JAN 2021

Date: 20/01/2022 Place: RAIPUR Authorized Officer Bajaj Housing Finance Limited

DELHI JAL BOARD DELHI SARKAR OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (T)/A.C.E.(M)-4 LUCKNOW ROAD, TIMAR PUR, DELHI-110054. Short NIT. No.66 (Item no.1,2,3,4) (2021-22) E.E.(T)/A.C.E.(M)-4.

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

Further details in this regard can be seen at <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in> sd/- ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER) (S.K SINGH) Advt. No. J.S.V. 1022 (2021-22) "STOP CORONA, Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene" EXECUTIVE ENGINEER - T (M)-4

DELHI JAL BOARD OFFICE OF THE ADDL. CHIEF ENGINEER (M)-11 TENDER DIVISION (M)-11 ROOM NO. 102, JAI SADAN, SHIV MANDIR MARG LAJPAT NAGAR, NEW DELHI-110024 EMAIL :ACE.M11.DJB@GMAIL.COM PH. 011-29810956

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

S. N o	Name of work	Estimated Cost (In Rs.)	Date of release of tender in e-procurement solution	Last date/time of receipt of tender through e-procurement solution
1	Replacement of old damaged 300 mm dia Sewer line at Rahul House to Master Colony SPS Tughalkabad Village at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	25,84,393/-	2022_DJB_214994_1 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
2	Replacement of old damaged Sewer line 300 mm dia at S-53 to S-100, Okhla Phase II at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	26,19,058/-	2022_DJB_214994_2 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
3	Replacement of old damaged 300 mm dia sewer line at Sanjay Colony A-105 to B-Block SDMC School, Okhla Phase II at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	25,97,709/-	2022_DJB_214994_3 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
4	Replacement of old damaged 300 mm dia Sewer line at D-5/1 to D-1/1, Okhla Phase II at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	26,23,071/-	2022_DJB_214994_4 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
5	Replacement of old damaged 300 mm dia Sewer line at Chand Mohalla Thakur House to Hussian House Tughalkabad Village, at Tughalkabad Constituency AC-52 Under EE(M) 52.	26,39,928/-	2022_DJB_214994_5 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 up to 3.30 pm
6	Providing and laying sewer line for connecting Sulabh Sochalaya (Toilet Block) in sewer network at Indira Camp Taimoor Nagar in Okhla AC-54 under AEE (M)-54	35, 58,731/-	2022_DJB_214994_6 19.01.2022	31.01.2022 Up to 3.30 pm

Further details in this regard may be seen at (<https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>) sd/- ISSUED BY P.R.O. (WATER) (Arif Hussain) AEE(TM-11) Advt. No. J.S.V. 1024 (2021-22) "STOP CORONA, Wear Mask, Follow Physical Distancing, Maintain Hand Hygiene"

Vote safely to strengthen democracy, says SEC



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Election Commissioner Thakur

Ram Singh on Wednesday asked people to vote safely keeping in mind a surge in Covid-19 in the state. This would help to strengthen

democracy.

The state will vote on January 20 in the three-tier panchayat polls. The voting is scheduled from 7.00 am to 3.00 pm.

Singh said that all arrangements have been made to conduct the polls with all protocols of Covid-19. The need of the hour is that each individual has the responsibility to mandatorily follow the safety measures while going to vote.

They should stand at a safe distance in the queue at the polling station and use the mask. Health workers will be present in all 1,066 polling stations.

He said electronic devices cannot be taken to the polling stations. Eighteen documents have been approved for the identity of voters.

Beware of fake calls for Covid vaccine: Police



STAFF REPORTER ■
KABIRDHAM

Police in Chhattisgarh's Kabirdham district on Wednesday told people to be beware of thugs making fake calls in the name of Covid-19 vaccine registration.

Kabirdham Superintendent of Police Dr. Lal Umend Singh said in an advisory that fraudsters have been making calls according to complaints, an official communication said.

The caller seeks information related to

Aadhaar card and email. For verification of the Aadhaar card, he also seeks one time password received on the mobile phone.

This helps the cheats to withdraw money from people's bank accounts, the officer said.

He added that the vaccination was being done on the basis of guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. No agency has been authorized to carry out registration for vaccination.

Opposition-led states are being targeted: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Wednesday said whenever elections are announced, governments led by the country's opposition parties and its leaders are targeted. It is like playing cricket with 13 players where the umpire is also part of the team.

On his return from a three-day electioneering in Uttar Pradesh, Baghel said: "Always opposition leaders and their relatives are targeted by the Central government through the central agencies which acts as umpire after the announcement of the polls."

"It is like playing cricket with 13 players including the umpire. Why no action or raid has been done in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Goa?" On Uttar Pradesh, he said:



"The people are desperate for a change due to various reasons like rising unemployment, shortage of fertilizers, lack of payment to farmers, rising prices, damage to crops due to stray cattle."

He said that people were interested in adopting the Chhattisgarh model of "higher paddy procurement price and procurement of cow dung".

He spoke about his meeting with former Congress President Rahul Gandhi and Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi.

On extending the date for paddy procurement, he said: "If the farmers have been issued a token, the paddy will be procured. The reports from district collectors will be sought before arriving at a decision."

Complete public interest work on time: CS



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Secretary Amitabh Jain on Wednesday said works of greater public interest should be compulsorily completed within the stipulated time limit.

He was virtually chairing a meeting of senior officials to

review the outline and implementation status of flagship schemes of the state government.

These mainly relate to housing and environment, revenue, forest, home, urban administration, sports and youth welfare, skill development and employment, commerce and industry.

Jain asked officials to organize a virtual event to release the

first installment under the 'Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Bhoomihreen Krishi Mazdoor Nyay Yojana' to the rural landless labourers.

Under the Chhattisgarh Employment Mission, a special action plan should be prepared to provide employment opportunities in the production and service sector.

A draft should be prepared

for collection of data of beneficiaries under various schemes and programmes. It would help for phase-wise time-bound implementation of the schemes, he said.

The Chief Secretary asked the officials to share the revenue earned on free holding the leasehold land of the urban body. In case of profit, further action can be initiated.

The first lottery of 65,000 houses for allotment under 'Affordable Housing in Partnership' scheme should be held at Raipur and Divisional headquarters simultaneously.

The rules for regularization of unauthorized construction and commercial shops in residential areas have been simplified. A fine should be fixed up to Rs 5,000 for the approval of layout-feet in the town and country planning area, he said.

The Chief Secretary called for a campaign for settlement of cases of name change, demarcation, partition and diversion.

Cabinet sub-committee holds meet to amend rules



STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh cabinet sub-committee set up to recommend amending the rules of the Chhattisgarh Regularization of Unauthorized Development (Amendment) Act 2022 held a meeting on Wednesday.

Minister of Housing and Environment and Forest and Climate Change Mohammad Akbar chaired the meeting virtually, an official statement said.

Sub-committee members Revenue Minister Jaisingh Agrawal and Urban Administration Minister Dr. Shiv Kumar Dahariya came up with different suggestions.

The meeting discussed the simplification of the process of regularization and speedy disposal of its cases.

Police raid hookah bar, six held



STAFF REPORTER ■
BILASPUR

Chhattisgarh Police have arrested six persons, including the owner and manager, during a raid on a hookah bar in Bilaspur city.

They were arrested under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA).

Bilaspur Senior Superintendent of Police Parul Mathur identified them as Akash Yadav, Manish Chetani, Akash Kewat, Nishant Gupta, Durgesh Kori and Shankar Borkar, all res-

idents of Bilaspur city. Yadav owns the Valhalla Café in Id-gaah Chowk in the city while Chetani is the manager. The remaining are workers.

Police seized three hookah pots, three hookah flavours, a spring water box and one flavoured betel box from them.

Police also detained eight youngsters including two girls who were freed after their family was advised that they must not smoke hookah.

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel banned hookah bars in October last year.

Chhattisgarh's user charges low: Min

STAFF REPORTER ■
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Urban Administration and Development Minister Dr. Shiv Kumar Dahariya on Wednesday said the rate of cleanliness, lighting and other charges are decided by Central guidelines. Chhattisgarh's rates are less compared to other states.

The Minister was holding a discussion with representatives of the Traders Association, Raipur, led by former MLA Shrichand Sunderani here on the user charges.

The delegation handed over a representation to the Minister demanding a cut in the user charges.

The Minister said that



charges for cleanliness, lighting and other charges have been decided based on Central government guidelines. The rates of residential and commercial user charges are less as compared to Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and other states.

Similarly, the disposal of solid waste management in urban bodies is done as

per guidelines of the National Green Tribunal. The rate was fixed by the previous government in the state, which is being charged in urban bodies from the citizens, he said.

Making an appeal to the delegation, he said it is the responsibility of all to keep the surroundings clean. Every individual as a resident of any urban

body should help to keep the city clean.

Based on the interest of traders and citizens, a decision will be taken, he said

Four Naxalites surrender

STAFF REPORTER ■
DANTEWADA

Four lower rung Naxalites have surrendered to the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district, police said on Wednesday. The Naxalites were identified as Hadma Ram Madavi (40), Sukka Madavi (38), Mukka Batti (35) and Haruma alias Gukesh (32), Dantewada CRPF Deputy Inspector General of Police (Operations) Vinay Kumar Singh said.

The first two were active as DAKMS members and other two were militia members in the Fulpad Area Committee of the outlawed CPI (Maoist). The cadres will be provided facilities as per the government's surrender and rehabilitation policy, he added.

GOVERNMENT OF CHHATTISGARH, WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER,
WATER RESOURCES DIVISION, PENDRAROAD
DISTT. - GORELA-PENDRA-MARWAHI (C.G.)

e-Procurement Tender Notice
eProcurement Portal: <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> (FIRST-CALL)

SYSTEM TENDER NO. 90679/ NOTICE INVITING TENDER NO. 11/SAC/2021-22 DATED: 14.01.2022

Online Tenders are invited for the following works up to 04-02-2022 (17.30 hours IST).

System Tender No.	Group No.	Name of Work	Probable amount of contract
90679		CONSTRUCTION OF THENGADAND ANICUT SCHEME.	Rs. 278.30 Lakhs

The details can be viewed & downloaded online directly from the Govt. of Chhattisgarh Integrated e-Procurement portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) from dated 21-01-2022 at 17:31 hours (IST) onwards.

Note: All eligible/interested contractors/bidders are mandated to get enrolled on the Integrated e-Procurement portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) and get approval on specific vendor class from PWD under centralized contractor/ supplier registration in order to download the tender documents and participate in the subsequent bidding process.

Note: Election code of conduct has not been violated.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
WATER RESOURCES DIVISION
PENDRAROAD (C.G.)
For, Chief Engineer
Hasdeo Basin Water Resources Deptt.
Bilaspur (C.G.)

G- 66902/5

GOVERNMENT OF CHHATTISGARH, WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER
MAHANADI GODAVARI BASIN
RAIPUR (C.G.)

e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
eProcurement Portal: <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> (1st CALL)

System Tender No. : 90662/NIT No. : 27/SAC/2021-22, Durg, Dated : 18.01.2022

Online Tenders are invited for the following works up to 08.02.2022 at 17:30 Hour

Name of Work :- RENOVATION OF TUMAKHURD TANK NO 01, AND LINING OF CANAL L.B.C.R.D. 0 TO 1605 M.R.B.C. 0 TO 3840 M., SUB MINOR R.D. 0 TO 390 M., WITH CONSTRUCTION OF 10 NOS INLET , 11 NOS V.R.B., 01 NOS SPILL CROSSING, 01 NOS SUPER PASSAGE., 01 NOS MINOR HEAD., 01 NOS FALL AND 16 NOS. COLABA FIXING IN BLOCK DHAMDHA OF DISTRICT DURG.

Probable Amount of Contract :- **Rs. 262.89 Lakhs**

The details can be viewed and downloaded online directly from the Government of Chhattisgarh Integrated e-Procurement Portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) from Date 25.01.2022, at 17:31 Hours. (IST) onwards.

NOTE :- All eligible/intrested contractors/bidders are mandated to get enrolled on the Integrated e-procurement portal (<https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>) and get approval on specific vendor class from PWD under Centralized Contractor/Supplier Registration in order to download the tender documents and participate in the subsequent bidding process.

Executive Engineer
Tandula Water Resources Division, Durg (C.G.)
For, Chief Engineer, Maganadi Godavari Basin
Raipur (C.G.)

G- 66945/4

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
P.W.D. (B&R) AMBIKAPUR CIRCLE AMBIKAPUR

Invitation Date :- 13.01.2022

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

01. For tender detail please visit
<http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in>

02. Bid Due Date - 27.01.2022

03. Concern Division - Manendragarh

S. NO.	N.I.T. No.	Online System Number	Name of work	P.A.C. in lacks
1	126	90701	Construction of Tahsil Office Building at Kelhari Block Manendragarh Distt. Koriya (C.G.)	64.70
2	127	90713	BT Renewal Work of Belbaha Sirouli Road 3.40 Km. Lalpur to Kalamdand Salhi Road 3.00 Km. and Ghutra Approach road 2.00 Km. under Sub Division Manendragarh Distt. Korea (C.G.)	83.63

Superintending Engineer
P.W.D. Ambikapur Circle Ambikapur

G- 66914/4

State Bank of India
RAIPC, ZONAL OFFICE, BYRON BAZAR, RAIPUR (C.G.)

Ph-0771-4089154, 4040349
Fax: 0771-4040334

Tender Invitation Notice For Vehicle Sales

The vehicle seized by our branch are proposed to be sold by tender on the basis of "As is where is".

(1) No.	(2) Name of the Borrower & Address	(3) Details of Vehicle	(4) Min. Reserve Price	(5) EMD Price
1.	Shri Manish Kumar Soni S/o Shri Laxmi Prasad Soni R/o - 176 C Soni Complex, GE Road, Fool Chowk, Nayapara, Raipur, C.G.	Maruti Suzuki India Ltd. S-PRSSO-V4I, CG 04 NB 8745, Chassis No. MA3RFL4SLB158269 Eng. No. K10BN5105149	₹ 3,15,000/-	₹ 31,500/-

Interested buyers should pay 10% (Column-5) of the minimum reserve price (Column-4) by draft or banker cheque payable in favour of Assistant General Manager, State Bank of India, RAIPC, Raipur. Submit your offer amount, ID proof, Address and phone number in closed envelope with tender form in plan paper. Interested person can contact the chief manager (maintenance) on the above mentioned number for the terms and conditions of the tender and vehicle inspection information. The last date for submitting the tender form in State Bank of India, RAIPC Raipur is 27.01.2022 at 3.00 pm. Date of tender opening 27.01.2022 at 4.00 pm Place: State Bank of India, RAIPC Raipur has been fixed. The Bank reserves the right to cancel or suspend any tender/complete tender process without assigning any reason.

Date: 19.01.2022, Place: Raipur

Authorized Officer,
State Bank of India, RAIPC, Raipur

यूनियन बैंक ऑफ इंडिया
A Government of India Undertaking

Union Bank of India

Raipur Main Branch,
Add.- Ajit Tower, Ramsagar para,
Jawahar Nagar, Raipur, (C.G.)

POSSESSION NOTICE [Rule - 8 (1)]

Whereas the Authorized Officers of Union Bank of India, Raipur Main Branch, Raipur under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (Act No. 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices dated 29.05.2021 to the following borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors calling upon them to repay the amount mentioned in the Notices within 60 days from the date of said Notices.

The Borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors having failed to repay the amount, Notices are hereby given to the borrowers/ guarantor(s)/ mortgagor in particular and the public in general that Authorized Officer has taken possession of the properties, described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 9 of the said rules on dated 14.01.2022.

The Borrowers/guarantor(s)/mortgagor in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of Union Bank of India, for the amounts and interests and incidental expenses and costs and charges thereon as mentioned below -

S. No.	A- Name of the Borrowers	Description of Secured Assets	1. Date of Demand Notice
1.	A- 1. Shri Hari Prasad Agrawal 2. Shri Abhishek Agrawal 3. Smt Meena Agrawal 4. Shri Vinod Agrawal B- Raipur Main Branch	A double storied residential building at plot no. 206 comprising in part of kh no. 364/2 known as sapphire Greens Vidhan sabha Road, Vill- Baronda, PC no. 96 RIC Dharsiva-1 Dist Raipur area of 2400 sq ft owned by Hari Prasad Agrawal.	29.05.2021 ₹ 52,48,121.45 +interest since 31.03.2021 + Legal & other charges 14.01.2022
2.	A- M/s R R Sales Corporation B- Raipur Main Branch	All that piece and parcel of land and construction thereupon at Immoveable property at ground floor Shop no 8 at Sao Complex, Raipur having area of 13'12" i.e. 156 sq ft near Gurunank Chowk, Indira Gandhi Ward No. 14 part of House No. 14/1, 14/2 and 14/3 at Tehsil and District Raipur, Bounded By- North- Shop No. 07 Shri Sanjay Agrawal, South- Shop No. 09, East- Corridor, West- Abhisasha Traders	29.05.2021 ₹ 21,47,736.23 +interest since 31.03.2021 + Legal & other charges 14.01.2022
3.	A- M/s Saibaba Corporation B- Raipur Main Branch	Plot No. B-115, part of Khasra No. 401 and 418 total Plot area 255.40 sq Mtr. Or 2750 sq mt ft under the scheme no. 04 of City development (Kamal Vihar) Raipur Development Authority, Situated at sector-12, Vill- Devpuri, P H No. 114/52, RIC Raipur 2 at Tehsil and District Raipur, C.G. As per deed: North- Road, South- Plot no. B-114, East- Plot no. B-116, West- B-115 AB	29.05.2021 ₹ 32,40,435.59 +interest since 31.03.2021 + Legal & other charges 14.01.2022
4.	A- Shri Vijay Kumar and Smt Jitendra Devi B- Raipur Main Branch	Residential Flat bearing Flat No. B-205, Block No. B on the 2nd Floor with super build up area 995 sq ft situated at Multistoried residential building complex known as "Balaji Garden" condominium village Fafadhi, Raipur, C.G. constructed over the piece a parcel of land bearing the part of khasra no. 278 & 240/4, plot no. 1, 1/3, 1/2, 2.3, 4/1, 4/2 total land area 3900 sq ft situated at Village Fafadhi, P.H. No. 108, RIC Circle Raipur-1, ward no. 22 (Rajeev Gandhi Ward), Tehsil and District Raipur, C.G.	29.05.2021 ₹ 29,06,368.81 +interest since 31.03.2021 + Legal & other charges 14.01.2022

Date: 19.01.2022, Place: Raipur

Authorized Officer, Union Bank of India

Opp States against Centre’s sway over IAS babus

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Renewable energy gets ₹1,500 cr boost

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

"So far, the priority areas have been agriculture, security and other important areas. There is further scope of increasing the quantum of projects received, which calls for the need to conduct more online meetings amongst the startup ecosystems of Israel and India," he said in a statement. A m i r a m Appelbaum, Co-Chair, Israel and chairman of the board, IIA, said despite the difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical to continue with the efforts of collaboration.

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

Gao said the teenager, identified as Miram Taron, was abducted by the PLA from Lungta Jor area under Siyungla area on Tuesday. "Taron's friend Johnny Yaiping, who managed to escape, informed the authorities about the kidnapping by the PLA, Gao told PTI over phone from Ziro, the district headquarters of Lower Subansiri district. Both are local hunters and belong to Zido village. The MP said the incident took place near the place where Tsangpo river enters India in Arunachal Pradesh. Tsangpo is called as Siang in Arunachal Pradesh and Brahmaputra in Assam. Earlier, Gao tweeted: "Chinese #PLA has abducted Sh Miram

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

Jaishankar discusses ties with Finnish, Mexican counterparts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday held discussions with his Finnish counterpart Pekka Haavisto on a host of issues, including Afghanistan. In a tweet, Jaishankar said in his wide-ranging discussions with Haavisto, he noted the steady growth of bilateral cooperation. "Agreed that we would work to strengthen the ties further in 2022," he said.

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

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

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

PTI ■ MATHURA UP

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

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

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

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

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

DEEPAK UPRETI ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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



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

PTI photo

Omicron variant may reduce incidence of severe Covid disease

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DGCA extends suspension of int'l flights till Feb 28

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

Handbook on good practices for cooperatives released

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lucknow: Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav tried hard to convince his daughter-in-law Aparna Yadav to not join the BJP, party chief Akhilesh Yadav said on Wednesday and expressed his happiness that the SP’s socialist ideology is expanding its reach.

Akhilesh Yadav, who sent his sister-in-law best wishes for her move to the BJP, also addressed speculation on whether he would contest the assembly elections and said he would consult the people of his parliamentary constituency Azamgarh.

“If I contest the assembly election, it will be after taking permission from the people of Azamgarh who have elected me as MP,” he told reporters when asked if he would enter into the electoral fray for the

coming elections.

In his first response to Aparna Yadav joining the BJP, Akhilesh Yadav said he would like to congratulate her and extend her his best wishes.

“I am also happy that our socialist ideology is expanding. I hope that our ideology will reach there and work to save the constitution and democracy,” the SP president said.

“Netaji (Mulayam Singh Yadav) tried very hard to convince her,” he said when asked if efforts were made to stop Aparna Yadav from joining the ruling party.

Aparna Yadav is married to Prateek Yadav, the son of Mulayam Singh Yadav’s second wife, while Akhilesh Yadav is his son from the first marriage.

She joined the BJP in the presence of Uttar Pradesh

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya and its state chief Swatantra Dev Singh. Expressing her admiration for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, she said the nation’s interest has always been a priority for her and praised several schemes of the BJP government for cleanliness, woman empowerment and employment.

There had been much speculation about her joining the BJP, and the development highlights the rift in the SP’s ruling family at a time Akhilesh

Yadav has been working to rally the party’s base in the run up to the state assembly polls beginning next month. Maurya was also quick to attack Akhilesh Yadav, saying he has not been successful in his family and was also “unsuccessful” as chief minister and MP. **PTI**



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

BJP bags 24 of 97 seats in Maha civic polls

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

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

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

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

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

PNS

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

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

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

“Rahul Gandhi has said that India belonged to the Hindus and only Hindus could become rulers of the country. This proves beyond any doubt that the Indian National Congress is playing the Hindu card and it has alienated the minority communities,” charged Balakrishnan.

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

Balakrishnan’s charge comes within days of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan (who is under treatment in a hospital in USA) that the Congress has no capability of its own to

take on the BJP’s Hindu agenda. But the Congress in Kerala retaliated within seconds terming the CPI(M) secretary’s statement as a precursor to anoint Mohammed Riyaz as the Chief Minister of Kerala in the event of any eventualities. “Balakrishnan is to Vijayan as what Amit Shah is to Narendra Modi. Balakrishnan knows that Vijayan’s only mission is to get Riyaz elevated as the chief minister of Kerala after him and the new found love of the CPI(M) towards the Muslim community was with this agenda,” said K Muraleedharan MP who is a former KPCC president.

Muraleedharan, son of former chief minister K Karunakaran, said that the Congress does not have any issues in the CPI(M)’s agenda or missions. “They do have clear mandate to rule the State till 2016. But Kodyiyeri Balakrishnan should not forget that it was he who warned the people of Kerala that if the Congress-led UDF wins the 2021 assembly election, a Muslim would become the chief minister of the State,” said Muraleedharan.

Mohammed Riyaz is the second husband of Veena, elder daughter of Pinarayi Vijayan. Riyaz was the president of the CPI(M) youth wing DYFI and a first time MLA and a minister holding the important portfolio of Public Works Department and Tourism in the council of ministers led by his Mama (uncle).

Omicron causing hospitalisation, deaths: WHO chief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

The global coronavirus caseload has topped 333.5 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 5.55 million and vaccinations to over 9.68 billion, according to Johns Hopkins University. India on Wednesday reported 2,82,970 fresh Covid cases in the last 24 hours, which is a rise of over 18 percent from the previous day’s count.

“Make no mistake, Omicron is causing hospitalizations and deaths, and even the less severe cases are inundating health facilities,” the WHO chief said late on Tuesday.

“Omicron may be less

WhatsApp rebellion on in Bengal BJP

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

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

PM Modi to lead poll campaign in Uttar Pradesh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

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

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

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

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



The others in the list include Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP state president Swatantra Dev Singh, Unions ministers, Dharmendra Pradhan, Smriti Irani, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Deputy Chief Ministers Dr Dinesh Sharma and Keshav Prasad Maurya. Radha Mohan Singh and Sanjeev Balyan are also on the list

Elections to the 403 assembly constituencies in Uttar Pradesh will be held in seven phases starting February 10. The polling in Uttar Pradesh will be held on February 10, 14, 20, 23, 27 and March 3 and 7 in seven phases. The counting of votes will be taken up on March 10.

COVID BULLETIN

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

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

cases to 73,25,825 cases.

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

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

The number of “active cases” in the state increased

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The results clearly indicat-

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

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

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

499 police personnel in Maha found infected in 24 hrs

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

The infected personnel include 95 police officers.

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

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

PTI

Food for thought

Starvation deaths remain a stark reality even in this time and age, and the Govt must not shut its eyes

The Attorney General of India told the Supreme Court on Tuesday that no one died of starvation in recent times. That is a sweeping statement considering, as the court pointed out, the officer was relying on old data. The court was hearing a petition seeking a national community kitchen policy to avoid starvation deaths. The officer replied that the Centre has to depend on the States reporting starvation deaths, and they have not reported a single death in recent years. The court came back asking him about media reports on a starvation death in Tamil Nadu. The last reported starvation death occurred in Villupuram in Tamil Nadu on December 19, 2021, where the victim was a five-year-old boy and the autopsy revealed no trace of food in the intestine; that meant the boy had had no food for at least two days before his death. In July 2018, three children died of starvation in Delhi. Authorities performed a second post-mortem to doubly confirm the cause of death. The children had not eaten anything eight to nine days before their deaths. There is no way of saying that starvation deaths do not occur. Current data indicates the presence



of pre-starvation stages among children. A total absence of food leads to starvation. Intermittent availability of food leads to hunger which in turn leads to malnutrition that harms children by stunting their developmental milestones. What the hungry need is not just any food but nutritious food. That is the key to India's food security policy that sees hunger as an aspect of malnutrition. A person having meals of only rice may not feel hungry but will develop nutritional deficiencies. Millions of people are out there today who have to make do with a single meal or skip meals altogether. The pandemic has made access to food more difficult. Surveys show a shocking amount of food and perishables are thrown away in Indian homes every year while tonnes of grains rot in godowns across India. The Government must ensure diet diversity and adequate and subsidised animal source foods to the poor. An elementary, nutritious diet apparently costs around ₹30 per person per day. The cash transferred to the poor at present cannot sustain a family of four for a month. That is why the food policy must be rational. India today has surplus food grains. The poor can, therefore, access thrice their normal monthly rations, irrespective of ration or Aadhaar cards. The public distribution system can expand from grain and pulses to include essentials such as eggs, milk and fruits. Some States already provide eggs to mothers and children through the Anganwadi system. It is worthwhile exploring alternative foods using millets and legumes which contain nutrients and can store for long periods. We can do without religious controversies in making eggs mandatory in mid-day meal schemes; fruit or milk being the option for non-egg eaters. Nutrition, not merely food, is the great equaliser.

PICTALK



Enthusiasts take part in a boat race at Dumas beach, in Surat

PTI

Poll heat

As the Assembly election battle enters the last lap, the campaign is getting fiercer

As the dates for Assembly election to five States steadily approach, the electoral arena is agog with activity in all quarters. The Election Commission is busy taking swift decisions aimed at ensuring maximum voter participation while making sure that all the stakeholders are kept out of harm's way, lurking at every corner in the form of the highly transmissible Omicron variant of the Coronavirus family. The political players, as is their wont, are busy raking up mud at their opponents and running one another down, and the candidates are leaving no stone unturned to woo the voters and weighing their options to switch allegiance to another party that may form the next Government in their State. From the looks of it, the BJP — which is in power at the Centre and in most of the States going to polls over the next 50 days — is under considerable pressure because it has the most at stake. Even central leaders such as Narendra Modi and Amit Shah have been forced to unleash their charisma in the hinterland as they well realise that it is the virtual semifinal before the 2024 general elections.



Of course, the saffron party is playing covertly, too, to ensure that it has the upper hand in political exchanges. After going through a series of setbacks in the shape of some of its OBC leaders recently joining the SP camp, it recently staged a coup of sorts when it took into the fold Samajwadi Party patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav's daughter-in-law Aparna in Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous and one of the most politically crucial States. Meanwhile, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav is deeply involved in a fierce battle of the ballot and pulling out all the stops to cement the place of his party in the Assembly and the Government. While the BJP is hesitant of naming any chief ministerial candidates, apparently for fear of triggering a factional feud, the young AAP has gone ahead and announced that its leader Bhagwant Mann would be the Chief Minister if the party comes to power in Punjab. To give it credit, the AAP national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal really went by people's choice (or so he claims) after nearly 15 lakh people responded to the his party's 'Janta Chunegi Apna CM' drive, in which the party had asked people to name their choice for the Punjab CM. With just days to go for voting, it's really down to the wire.

The Ummah and its Israeli connect

The ever-present shadow of Israel looms large over the goings-on in the Islamic world, sometimes for real and at other times only in imagination

Fixation with Israel haunts the Ummah (pan-Islamic community), sometimes credibly so, other times imagined rather creatively. Even the distant, multicultural and multi-confessional (with Muslim majority) Malaysia insists on its passport with the inscription: "This passport is valid for all countries except Israel." With no territorial or commercial disagreement besetting any Israeli-Malaysian dimension, yet former Malaysian leader Mohammad Mahathir had called it a "State of robbers", "the enemy" and described Jews as "hook-nosed", "rule this world by proxy" etc. At the heart of this deep-rooted angst is the emotive and unresolved issue of Palestine by a narrow stretch of country, Israel, with a population of less than 7 million Jews, that irks and rangles many in the global Ummah of nearly 2 billion. Even as the Ummah itself remains mired in disagreements of sectarian, ethnic and political nature — almost all within attribute the overt or covert hand of Israelis *a la* 'Zionist Conspiracies', that contextualises their perceived problems. Indeed, Israeli spy agency Mossad does play a hyper-intrusive role in safeguarding its sovereign interests, but perhaps not as fantastically as popularly imagined.

Three recent, simultaneous and completely unrelated incidents in distant lands illustrate this Israeli-Jewish fascination. A US citizen of Pakistani origin, MIT-trained neuroscientist Dr Aarifa Siddiqui, currently convicted for 86 years in the US on charges of shooting at US Army and FBI officers while in custody in Afghanistan, was at the centre of a hostage drama. The intensely followed and disputed trial had all the elements of intrigue, counterespionage and murky trails and the Pakistan Government was forced to defend her case publicly, in vain. However, during the long-drawn court proceedings, she had tried to fire her lawyers as they were Jewish and she explicitly wrote to the courts that Jews were "cruel, ungrateful and back-stabbing" people! Recently, a gunman in a small town in Texas took four



hostages at a synagogue, including the resident Rabbi — the hostage taker's singular demand was the purported release of the incarcerated 'Lady Al Qaida' Dr Aarifa Siddiqui. The telltale symbolism and conflation of the synagogue, rabbi and hostage drama for a convicted terrorist of Pakistani descent picked up from Afghanistan — usual admixture, somehow commingling Israel/Jews into the same, perhaps unwarrantedly.

Around the same time, as part of the longstanding sectarian shadowboxing between the Shia Iranian leadership and the Sunni Saudi Arabian royal family, an unprecedented accusation by Gen Alireza Tangsiri, Commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Navy, seeks to shame the other. He implied that the Saudi royal family is descendants of Jews who fought the holy Prophet, "We cannot bear to see injustice in a Muslim country that is perpetrated by the Zionists and the seeds of the Jews", adding, "These are the very same Jews, and I'd better say Zionists, whose hearts have never aligned with Islam, and even with the Prophet in his time". Again, the political blame game within the Ummah was sought to be set-



ISRAEL OFFICIALLY DENIES ANY PERNICIOUS ROLE IN THE TUMULT WITHIN THE UMMAH, THOUGH IT HAS MADE STRATEGIC INROADS WITH THE NOW-EXTREMISMWARY SHEIKDOMS IN THE ARAB WORLD

tled by invoking the familiar watermarks of Zionism and Jews, following the taint and hate associated with the same, irrespective if factual history or the modern-day State of Israel has anything to do with the same.

Concurrently, another eerie spectre of the fabled Israeli connect (more indelibly so this time) unfolded within the Ummah's irreconcilable adherents with the mysterious landing of a private plane belonging to the notorious Libyan warlord, Khalifa Haftar, at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport. Embroiled in violent clashes with various factions (backed by various international powers) for the spoils of Libya in the post-Gadhafi era, Khalifa was supposed to be supported by powers like Syria, Russia and, incredulously, even the UAE, who would rather have a Gadhafiesque dictator in Khalifa to keep the extremists out. So, while Khalifa's nemesis and current Libyan Prime Minister Abdulhamid Mohammed Dbeibeh is believed to have recently met Mossad director David Barnea to 'normalise' relations with Israel — yet it is the surreal landing of Khalifa's plane in Israel to seek its support for his presidential candidature, that speaks volumes of the Israeli

acquiescence in the Ummah's muddle. The clear sign of the importance of garnering Israel's support in any domestic power bid, even if thousands of kilometres away, is unmistakable.

Israel officially denies any pernicious role in the tumult within the Ummah, though it has made strategic inroads with the now-extremism-wary Sheikdoms in the Arab world. It has tellingly opened an Embassy in the UAE and plans to do so in Bahrain and Morocco soon (it already has one in Jordan and Egypt). Saudi Arabia's heir apparent, Mohammad Bin Salman (MBS), also had to unconvincingly deny reports that he last year secretly met the then Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu at the Red Sea port of Neon. Clearly, a lot of backroom plotting, machinations and emotions are vested in the 'Israeli connect' that underlie the regional turmoil — how much of it is real or imagined, remains unanswered but what is true is that the issue of Palestine is on the backburner, and Israel looks stronger than ever.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PUBLIC INTEREST VS PERSONAL CHOICE

Sir — The Centre's statement in the Supreme Court that it does not want to implement forced vaccination has sparked off a debate over balancing "public interest" with "personal choice". The Government further said that though the Union Health Ministry urged everyone to take the anti-COVID vaccine, it never forced anyone to get "vaccinated against their wishes". Likewise, the Centre does not advise making a vaccine certificate mandatory for any purpose. While the Centre's stand on vaccination is fair in terms of people's rights, it must be noted that many States have made vaccination more or less compulsory. The vaccination certificate is compulsory in several parts of the country where infection is on the rise.

Such restrictions are accepted by people because these are imposed in public interest. Hence, people need to comply with vaccination rules as well. There is no denying that people's freedom and rights must be preserved. On the other hand, reckless behaviour on flimsy pretext cannot be tolerated. While forcing people to get vaccinated without their consent is against personal liberty, being unvaccinated poses a threat to public health. It must be understood that several countries have made vaccination compulsory. Public interest and personal choice must be properly balanced. There must be exemptions where required. Public safety is more important than personal liberty when there is a health crisis.

Venu GS | Kollam

MUTED R-DAY CELEBRATIONS

Sir — There will be no chief guest for the second year in a row at the Republic Day parade as the plan to host foreign leaders has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to news reports, the plan to host the heads of five Central Asian countries — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — has been cancelled owing to the pandemic conditions in India as well as in these respective countries.

Meanwhile, the number of people permitted to attend the Republic Day

Humans are humans, above all



With Australia winning the Ashes in Hobart, the cricketers were posing with the 'urn' in front of the camera amid a champagne shower. Noticing the absence of Usman Khawaja in the huddle due to his religious reservations about alcohol, captain Pat Cummins instructed teammates to put the bottle away and invited him to join in the celebrations! And now the frame has no trace of champagne bottles; rather Khawaja is seen embraced in the middle of the front row just beside the captain, with all heartily laughing and sharing the joy. Can

there be any better picture of divinity, humanity and brotherhood in these communally vitiated times where feelings of hatred with dominant mindset have been turned into synonyms of 'masculinity' and 'nationalism'.

Recently, Ajaz Patel had praised the atmosphere in the New Zealand cricket team and the country as a whole where his religious sentiments are given special consideration, with his right to offer *namaz* fully respected. While Patel had taken birth in Mumbai as an Indian Muslim, Khawaja was born in Islamabad. Yet both have been embraced into Australian/New Zealand society warmly with due rights, equality and dignity. Instead of zealously beating their trumpet of 'liberalism', Indians should draw inspiration from such instances and learn to treat human beings as human beings by transcending the petty barriers of religion, ethnicity or nationality.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

parade this year is likely to be curtailed to approximately 5,000-8,000 due to the health situation, which is quite dangerous and serious, with seats reserved for construction workers, frontline health workers and others, according to senior officials of the Defence Ministry. This proves that the Republic Day celebration is there now just for the sake of name. With these developments, it is high time that the Republic Day celebration must be cancelled altogether for the next few years, until the health scare goes away from our country.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

EC'S HUMANITARIAN INITIATIVE

Sir — The Election Commission has shown a good gesture by accepting the demand of all political parties to defer the date of Punjab election from February 14 as the Guru Ravidas Jayanti falls on February 16, and lakhs of devotees visit Varanasi to pay obeisance on Magh Purnima every year.

SOUND BITE

Goa wants a change and the AAP has been getting a tremendous response in the coastal State.

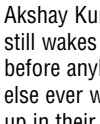


Delhi Chief Minister —Arvind Kejriwal



I thank Verizon and AT&T for agreeing to delay 5G deployment around key airports.

US President —Joe Biden



Akshay Kumar still wakes up before anybody else ever wakes up in their life.

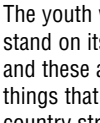


Actor — Lara Dutta



When you go towards a stump mic it doesn't look good, so that was something avoidable.

Former India captain —Sunil Gavaskar



The youth wants to stand on its feet and these are the things that make a country strong.


Congress leader —Priyanka Gandhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

INFLATION MUST NOT IMPACT ECONOMY

Debt management is a priority for the Government



SHSHANK SAUROV

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



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

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

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

The lives of train passengers matter

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



SUDHANSHU MANI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Area planning better alternative to guaranteeing MSP

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

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

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

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



BRIJENDER SINGH PANWAR

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

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

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



allied activities.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

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

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

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

AP ■ DUBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ JOHANNESBURG

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

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

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

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

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Israel minister denies police used NSO spyware on protesters

AP ■ JERUSALEM

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ BEIJING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Influential fashion journalist André Leon Talley dies at 73

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

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

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

Blinken urges unity to fight 'relentless' Russian aggression

AP ■ KYIV (UKRAINE)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Talking to reporters after the hearing, Minister of State for Information Farrukh Habib said that PTI was the only political party that attaches any importance to transparency in the fund-collection process. He alleged that Babar was on the payroll of opposition PML-N and had been exposed by the findings of the scrutiny committee.

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

UN agency: Palestinians in crisis-hit Lebanon need funds

AP ■ BEIRUT

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ BEIJING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS DUE TO NON-INTERLOCKING WORKS

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

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

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

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



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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

दिनांक 18/01/2022

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

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

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

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

China condemns plans by Slovenia to upgrade Taiwan ties

AP ■ BEIJING

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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

Economic recovery yet to attain durability: Report

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COVID-19, it said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Overall gross borrowings by the Centre and states are likely to be around ₹ 21 lakh crore (₹ 19.7 lakh crore in FY22) and net borrowings at around ₹ 14.8 lakh crore (₹ 15 lakh crore in FY22). Ghosh also pointed out that unlike in FY22, when RBI has done OMOs of around ₹ 2.6 lakh crore, helping government borrowing programme without disruptions, in FY23, such support is not likely.

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

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

The year 2021 witnessed the total registered investor

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

claims, it said.

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

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

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

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

CHANGE OF NAME

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

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



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

पञ्चांक सं. 47दिनांक 19.01.2022

Corrigendum

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

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

Executive Engineer (E&M-SHP), Rishikesh

Avoid wasteful use of Electricity

NORTHERN RAILWAY
NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)

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

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

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

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

Serving Customers with a Smile

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

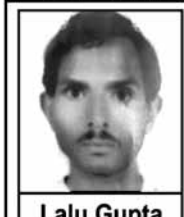
At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened lower at 74.70 a dollar, registering a decline of 12 paise from the last close. During the day, it pared losses and witnessed an intra-day high of 74.32.

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

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

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

SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



Lalu Gupta

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

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

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

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

SEARCH OF MISSING/KIDNAPPED

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

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

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

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

DP/1633/N/2021

SEARCH OF MISSING

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

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

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

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

DP/1286/NE/2022

DDA HOLDS MEETING

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

The following major decisions were taken:
♦**DDA unveils a sustainable development-oriented budget:** The Authority approved the annual budget for 2022-23, with an annual outlay of ₹7,933 crore and receipts have been projected at ₹7,943 crore. The main highlights of the budget are given below: -

♦Civic Infrastructure

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

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

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

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

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

♦Housing Projects & In-situ Development for Slum Rehabilitation

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. The work for the development

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

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

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

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

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

Other projects:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Police should be prompt and sensitive: CM Ashok Gehlot

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

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

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

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

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

Dedicated unit to prevent the illegal trade of narcotics

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

Action against organised crimes

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

Timely promotion and service benefits to Police Personnel

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

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

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

Autonomous rooms in 674 police stations

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

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

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



BITES signs MoU with CSIR-CRRI BITES Limited

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CISF organises special Covid vaccine booster dose camp

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

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



the protection of the booster vaccine by January 20.

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

CISF has already vaccinated

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

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

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

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

Feminisation of poverty

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

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

♦Feminisation of Poverty and Responsibilities

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

♦Feminisation of lack of education, malnutrition and poor healthcare

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

Social factors such as gender inequality,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

PTI ■ PAARL

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

restricting the flow of runs.

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

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

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

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

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

Yash Dhull test positive for COVID

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

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

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

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

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



the official added.

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

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

NZ's white-ball tour of Aus postponed

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Rahul third player to captain India in ODIs without captaincy

PTI ■ PAARL (SOUTH AFRICA)

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ BARBADOS

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ DUBAI

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

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

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

strike-rate of 131.44.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Azam, who has been named captain.

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

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



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

PTI ■ SYDNEY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ BASSETTERRE (ST KITTS)

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

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

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

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

Earlier, coming at number three after England were 26 for

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

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

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

South Africa log comfortable 121-run win over Uganda

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

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

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

U 19 World Cup updates

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



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

a wicket each.

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

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

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SANIA MIRZA TO END CAREER AFTER 2022 SEASON

enced her decision.

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

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

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

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

injury to focus on doubles and enjoyed exceptional results.

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

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

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

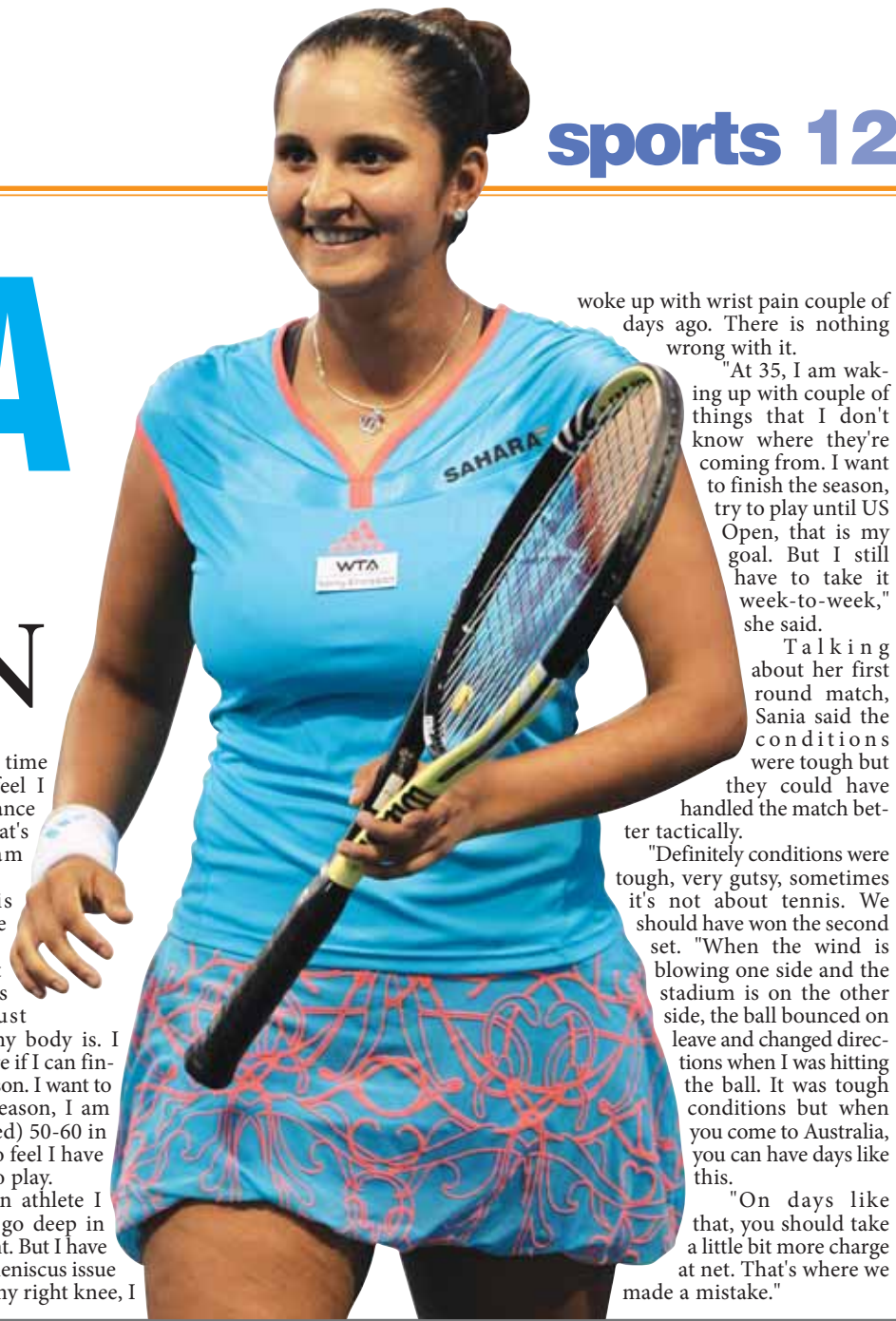
It's been a great journey. I am not looking forward to June or July, I am literally going week to week, with my body, with virus, there is so much uncertainty."

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Sindhu cruises into second round of Syed Modi International

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

Osaka, Barty advance towards Australian Open showdown

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



AP ■ DOHA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Top javelin thrower under dope scanner

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Osaka, Barty advance toward Australian Open showdown

AP ■ MELBOURNE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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