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THE MIZORAM WAY TO
BETTERING DEMOCRACY

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RUSSIAN STRIKES HIT WESTERN
UKRAINE AS OFFENSIVE WIDENS

MONEY 9
MARKETS EXTEND GAINS
FOR FOURTH DAY

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Didi bats for Opp unity, gloats over Cong rout

Cong can be part of it, but can't lead as it's lost credibility, says TMC chief

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

After BJP's stupendous performance in the Assembly polls, a rattled Opposition is trying to put up a brave face and once again resurrected the idea of putting up a united face against the saffron outfit in the battle of 2024. Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress chairperson Mamata Banerjee has made the first move in this direction.

Reaching out to regional parties to push for an anti-BJP alliance a day after the saffron camp swept elections in four States, Mamata on Friday sought to edge the Congress out of any prospective Opposition formation, stating there was no point in waiting for the grand old party as its lacked "fire in the belly".

Mamata on Friday said that a grand alliance of all the parties could be stitched together for the 2024 general elections. But she added that Congress has lost its relevance to lead any coalition so to say.



"All political polities that want to fight the BJP should walk together... we can all fight together if Congress wants," she said. "But the Congress has lost its credibility for its 'repeated failures' to provide leadership in the battle against the BJP.

"There is no point depending on the Congress (for leadership) which is not the party it used to be in the olden days ... it has lost its historicity, credibility and everything, it is not dependable now ... now it

is time for all the regional parties to unite ... all political parties that want to fight BJP must work together ... a decision on this can definitely be taken," she said drawing an instant reaction from Congress Lok Sabha Leader Adhir Chowdhury who said that Banerjee was "acting like a BJP's agent".

Chowdhury, who is also the Bengal Congress president, said, "Now she is saying that the Congress is losing its relevance but she has to answer why is

she helping the BJP by raising alliance to cut the Congress votes ... why did she go to Goa where the Congress could have won if the TMC did not cut votes ... it is clear as to who is whose friend when both Narendra Modi and Mamata calls for a Congress-less India."

The Bengal Chief Minister also cast doubt on the Uttar Pradesh election results saying the Opposition Samajwadi Party was defeated in the elections by deceit and advising its chief Akhilesh Yadav to organize the masses in favour of forensic examinations of the electronic voting machines.

Referring to the suspension of a top official for removing EVMs, she said, "When a DM (read ADM) is suspended for taking away EVM machines ... then it becomes a significant issue ... so I think Akhilesh has been defeated by deception ... He was defeated by BJP's election machinery, (tampered) EVMs and central agencies ... So I think instead of getting upset or depressed Akhilesh should organize the masses and demand forensic examination of the voting machines... to see if these were the same machines used by people to vote and then brought in for counting."

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BJP in huddle to elect CMs in Goa, U'khand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP leadership is actively engaged in deciding the Chief Ministers in Uttarakhand and Goa where the saffron party is set to form a Government for the second and third time in a row respectively.

To make the task difficult for the BJP leadership, Pushkar Dhami, who got the CM post barely a few months before the State poll and led it to the historic successive win, has lost his own election.

Dhami on Friday resigned as Chief Minister and said he had been asked to continue till the formation of a new Government.

According to sources, a final decision will only come from Prime Minister Narendra Modi who was instrumental in shifting two CMs in the State to preempt anti-incumbency in the Hill State.

BJP General Secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya though gave subtle hints that Dhami may not be in the reckoning. Asked about Dhami, Vijayvargiya said, "We have internal democracy. MLAs will choose their leader. No one can comment on who will be the Chief Minister. Dhami is a

national leader now."

However, another BJP leader Tejinder Bagga, who was also looking after elections in the State, tweeted, "Dhami once again", fueling speculation of BJP going with Dhami's face again.

Sources said Satpal Maharaj, State Minister and one-time Congressman, and Dhan Singh Rawat, who has been a front-runner for CM post twice in the past, are in the race for the coveted chair in Uttarakhand.

Union Ministers Piyush Goyal and Dharmendra Pradhan have been tasked with zeroing in on the CM face by the Central BJP leadership. Two senior BJP leaders Vijayvargiya and Prahlad Joshi are already camping and interacting with the newly-elected MLAs.

Dhami, 46, is considered as the protégé of Maharashtra Governor and former Uttarakhand Chief Minister Bhagat Singh Koshyari, whom he served as an Officer on Special Duty and an adviser. He was chosen as BJP wanted to perform better in the Kumaon region where Congress had fared better in the 2017 Assembly polls.

Continued on Page 2

Mann to take oath at Bhagat Singh's village

Kejriwal to attend ceremony on Mar 16



AAP's Punjab Chief Minister designate and Sangrur MP Bhagwant Mann flashes the victory sign as he arrives to meet party supremo and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in New Delhi on Friday

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Steering the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) to a historic victory, Punjab's Chief Minister-elect Bhagwant Mann will take the oath of office and secrecy along with his Cabinet colleagues on March 16 at Khatkar Kalan, associated with martyr Bhagat Singh.

Mann, who considers Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh his idol since the beginning of his political career in 2012, wears the freedom fighter's trademark 'basanti' turban, and starts addressing his rallies with martyr's 'inquilab zindabad' slogan, had already

declared to take oath in the village in Nawanshahr district.

AAP's national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia, besides other senior leaders are expected to attend the oath-taking ceremony.

Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit on Friday dissolved the present Vidhan Sabha, after the State Cabinet, led by the "caretaker" Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, made the formal recommendation to him. The term of the next Vidhan Sabha will start from the first day of the session of the Assembly.

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CAPSULE

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION INCREASES BY 1.3%

New Delhi: Industrial production expanded by 1.3 per cent in January on an annual basis, mainly on account of improved performance of mining and manufacturing sectors, official data showed on Friday.

DECIDE ON MARKAZ OPENING: HC TO GOVT

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Friday asked the Centre to come with a clear stand as to what objection it has in fully re-opening the Nizamuddin Markaz.

CO-PILOT KILLED IN ARMY CHOPPER CRASH

Srinagar: An Army helicopter on its way to pick up sick BSF personnel crashed near the Line of Control (LoC) in north Kashmir's Gurez Sector on Friday, killing its co-pilot and critically injuring the pilot, officials said.

CBSE BOARD EXAMS TO START ON APRIL 26

New Delhi: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Friday announced that the term-II board exams for Class 10 and 12 will commence on April 26, as it released the schedule for the papers.

India regrets accidental firing of missile into Pak, orders probe

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after Pakistan lodged a strong protest over an unarmed Indian supersonic missile crashing into its territory, the Defence Ministry on Friday regretted the incident and said a technical malfunction led to the accidental firing of the missile. The Indian Charge d'Affaires in Islamabad was summoned by Pakistan there on Friday to register its protest.

In a statement, the Defence Ministry also said a court of inquiry was instituted to ascertain the cause of the accident and said the Indian Government has taken a very serious view. It is a matter of relief that there was no loss of life due to the accident, it said.

"On 9 March 2022, in the course of routine maintenance, a technical malfunction led to the accidental firing of a missile. The Government of India has taken a serious view and ordered a high-level Court of Enquiry. It is learnt that the missile landed in an area of



Pakistan. While the incident is deeply regrettable, it is also a matter of relief that there has been no loss of life due to the accident," the statement said. Pakistan on Thursday said an unarmed Indian supersonic missile took off from Sirsa and landed at a place 124 km within Pakistani territory on

Wednesday evening.

The missile, it said, was cruising at an altitude of 40,000 feet and endangered passenger flights in both Indian and Pakistani airspace, and also civilians and property on the ground.

Major General Babar Iftikhar, Director General, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) of Pakistan Armed Forces, said at 1843 hours on March 9, "a high-speed flying object was picked up inside Indian flying territory by Air Defence Operations Centre of the Pakistani Air Force. From its initial course the object suddenly maneuvered towards Pakistani territory and violated Pakistan's airspace ultimately falling near Mia Channu."

There were no human casualties. While there were no sensitive installations in the area where it landed, a wall did fall, the Pakistan military said. "Whatever caused this incident to happen, it is for the Indians to explain," he said.

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Murmur in Cong against Gandhi siblings

Disgruntled Cong leaders meet at Azad's residence

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Unsettled by successive poll debacles, disgruntled Congress leaders, including those from the infamous G-23, met on Friday at the residence of former Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad.

Among those present were party MPs Anand Sharma, Kapil Sibal, and Manish Tewari. Sources said they discussed the party's poor performance and the need to evolve a strategy to resurrect the grand old party that has become a laughing stock across the country over its "management" by the Gandhi siblings.

The meeting also comes ahead of the Congress Working Committee meeting to be convened by party chief Sonia Gandhi shortly to assess the Congress performance in these Assembly polls in five States. Group-23 leaders include Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand

Sharma, Kapil Sibal, Manish Tewari, Shashi Tharoor, Vivek Tankha, Mukul Wasnik, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Rajinder Kaur Bhattal, Prithviraj Chavan, Milind Deora, Sandeep Dixit, Raj Babbar, Kaul Singh Thakur and Akhilesh Prasad Singh. They are likely hold a series of meetings in the next few days.

They have also sent a missive to other Congress leaders, including Parliamentarians, State units, former Chief Ministers and others who have been feeling "suffocated" since time.

"Punjab, Uttarakhand and Goa were given on platter to the BJP and no one can deny this fact except the Gandhi siblings," said a senior leader, adding, few the Gandhi siblings rely on a set of youngsters who have no experience to deal with the emerging political challenge.

Senior Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge termed the Assembly poll results

unfortunate but said the party will win back the confidence of people soon.

"In my political career spanning 50 years, I have seen many highs and lows of the Congress party. It is unfortunate to see the Assembly results, but one should remember that we are the only ones who can fight fascist forces. We will regain the confidence of the people soon," Kharge, the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, said.

While the party lost its Government in Punjab due to infighting and its decision to replace Amarinder Singh at the eleventh hour, it failed to take advantage of the anti-incumbency in Goa, Uttarakhand and Manipur. The Congress is now in power only in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Maharashtra. Last year Gandhis ignored suggestions in choosing alliance partners in West Bengal, which upset Mamata Banerjee to the

extent that she played a big role in spoiling the Congress; chance in Goa by putting up TMC candidates,

AICC member V Narayanan rued that the party, whose incumbent Government in Punjab lost to the AAP, fumbled in the election with mismanagement of the party. While hailing Rahul Gandhi for having all the right intentions, he said the former party chief has not delivered for the last 20 years and that the public has also not accepted him.

"Moreover, his sister Priyanka, who led the party's charge in the poll battle in Uttar Pradesh where the BJP retained power, could not make a mark. We have fumbled in the election badly with mismanagement of the party. We are fighting against the juggernaut of Modi sarkar and with their lies, money power and muscle power," Narayanan, also a party spokesperson, said.

Continued on Page 2

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Maha Budget stresses 5-point dev prog

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI:

In its ₹24,353 crore revenue deficit budget for the year 2022-23, the Maharashtra Government on Friday announced a State Amnesty scheme to recover pending penalty dues from taxpayers, complete waiver of arrears amounting to ₹10,000 or less per year, reduction in Value Added Tax (VAT) on Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and stamp duty on construction, gold-silver delivery order documents.

With a budget that laid stress on development in various sectors, Maharashtra Deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, who holds the state Finance portfolio, unveiled what he called Panchasutri (five-point) of development programme with an outlay of ₹1,15,215 crore for Agriculture, Health, Human resources, Transport and Industry. He said that the state government would set aside ₹4 lakh crore for this programme in the next three years. Friday’s was the

third budget presented by the three-party Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government ever since it assumed office on November 28,2019.

The budget estimates presented by Pawar for 2022-23 pegged estimated revenue receipts at ₹4,03,427 crore, as against the revenue expenditure of ₹4,27,780 crore. In effect, the budget indicates a revenue deficit of ₹24,353 crore crore during the year ending March 31, 2023.

“Even though the economy has slowed down, we intend to revive the economy through Panchasutri of Development Programme. This expenditure and expenditure on welfare schemes being inevitable, the resulting deficit may be viewed favourably,” Pawar said.

One of the major tax concessions that the Finance Minister came in the form of a reduction in Value Added Tax (VAT) from 13.5 per cent to 3 per cent on CNG used by people as fuel for their cars and auto rickshaws. “Environment friendly Natural Gas is largely

used for domestic piped gas and CNG powered motor vehicles, autorickshaws, taxis and private vehicles. We propose to reduce the rate of value added tax on natural gas from 13.5 percent to 3 percent to encourage the use of environment-friendly natural gas and to provide relief to the citizens.

As a result, we will incur a revenue reduction of ₹800 crore,” Pawar said.The minister came out with an amnesty scheme to recover pending penalty dues from taxpayers.

Called the “Maharashtra Settlement of Arrears of Tax, Interest, Penalty or Late Fee Scheme-2022” that Pawar announced is applicable for This Scheme is applicable on various taxes levied by Sales Tax Department before introduction of GST Act. The taxpayers can avail of the benefits from the Amnesty Scheme from April 1, 2022 to September 30, 2022.

Pawar also announced tax concession on stamp duty, which aims to incentivize the construction business. Under

this concession, time period in which stamp duty paid on earlier deed to be adjusted against subsequent deed, is being increased from one year to three years as per the provision of article 5 (g-a) (ii) of Maharashtra Stamp Act.

“If any donor is transferring land without consideration to the corporations, local self-governing bodies under jurisdiction of State of Maharashtra free of cost, then current Stamp Duty of 3 percent on gift deed or 5 percent on sale deed is being fully exempted,” the minister said, adding that the state government would incur a revenue loss ₹21 crore during the year.

Pawar also announced a waiver of stamp duty waiver on gold-silver delivery order documentation imported into the state.

To encourage increased travel by people through various modes of water transport, the minister announced a waiver of the tax levied by the Maharashtra Maritime Board on passengers as well as pets, vehicles and goods traveling by

ferries and Ro-Ro boats operating on newly launched waterways from January 1, 2022, for three years. Under the Panchasutri (five-point) of development programme, the minister mad an allocation of ₹23,888 crore is proposed for agriculture and allied sectors, ₹5,244 crore for health sector, ₹46,667 crore for human development and human resources, ₹28,605 crore for transportation infrastructure and ₹10,111 crore for development of Industry and Energy sector.

Pawar announced an incentive grant of ₹50,000 to 20 lakh farmers who repay their loans regularly-expected expenditure ₹10,000 crore, while he made a provision for Land Development Bank waiving loans to the tune of ₹964 crore for 34,788 farmers and ₹275.40 crore dues of bank employees.Among other things, the minister announced the setting up of level-1 Trauma Care Units of 50 beds at Nanded, Amravati, Jalna, Bhandara, Ahmednagar and Satara, setting up mechanical

washing plants at 50-bed hospitals and cleaning machines at 30-bed hospitals, setting up of 100-bed women’s hospitals at Hingoli, Yavatmal, Buldhana, Sangli, Satara, Kolhapur, Sindhudurg, Wardha, Bhandara, Jalgaon, Ahmednagar, Dhule, Solapur, Ratnagiri, Aurangabad and Raigad and a new 365-bed Regional Psychiatric Hospital at Jalna at a cost of ₹60 crore.

Pawar also announced the setting up of a post graduate institute St. George Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research in Mumbai, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences at University of Health Sciences at Nashik,. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Institute of Medical Education and Research at Nagpur.

₹100 crore will be provided in 2 years for strengthening food security system, a state-of-the-art ‘Indrayani Medicity’ to be set up near Pune city and an innovation Hub to be set up at a cost of ₹500 crore for creation of employable manpower.

Modi meets Guj BJP leaders as Assembly polls approach

PTI ■ GANDHINAGAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday addressed a gathering of Gujarat BJP leaders here as Assembly elections in the state draw near, and asked them to maintain a close contact with people.

“Met fellow @BJP4Gujarat leaders and Karyakartas at the state BJP HQ. Discussed how our Party organisation can serve the people even more effectively and contribute towards national development,” he tweeted after meeting.

More than 430 leaders and workers were present at meeting held at party’s state headquarters, said BJP spokesperson Yamal Vyas. “The prime minister was welcomed with a garland by women party workers. He provided guidance to those in attendance,” Vyas said, without disclosing details of prime minister’s speech. Sources said that Modi asked BJP leaders and workers in the state to maintain a close contact with people. He asked party workers to make people

aware of various mschemes and programs implemented by the government in the last ten years, sources added. Modi also asked state leaders to increase coordination with the cadres working on the ground, they said.

The prime minister’s focus was to extend outreach to the people in every sphere of society, sources said. The PM’s speech lasted for over 35 minutes.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, his predecessor Vijay Rupani and former deputy chief minister Nitin Patel were present, among others. Assembly elections are due in Gujarat in December 2022. Earlier in the day, arriving in Gujarat after the BJP’s impressive performance in elections in Uttar Pradesh and three other states, the prime minister conducted a roadshow in Ahmedabad.

In 2017, the BJP had managed to win 99 seats, only seven more than the majority mark of 92, in Gujarat, the prime minister’s home state.

Didi bats for Opp unity, gloats over Cong rout

From Page 1

Without naming Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Bengal Chief Minister said, “There are some people who are beating kettle drums --- in anticipation of a victory in 2024 --- after winning elections in a few States but for that, they must remember that 2024 is still quite far away and only drums do not make a good music ... for that you need harmony and soothing notes... the BJP should stop day-dreaming.”

The Prime Minister had on Thursday said that the BJP’s win in four States --- UP, Uttarakhand, Goa, and Manipur --- was indicative of the mood of the nation ahead of the 2024 general elections.

Rejecting the PM’s assertion, poll strategist Prashant Kishor on Friday asserted that the election results in these States will not have any impact in the next Lok sabha elections as “battle for India would be fought and decided in 2024 and not in any State elections.”

“Battle for India will be fought and decided in 2024 & not in any State #elections Saheb knows this! Hence this clever attempt to create a frenzy around the State results to establish a decisive psychological advantage over Opposition. Don’t fall or be part of this false narrative,” Kishore said in a tweet that has gone viral.

SC permits media baron Raghav Bahl, his wife to travel to UK for medical check-up

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday allowed media baron Raghav Bahl, who is facing money laundering charges, and his wife to go to London in connection with a medical condition, following a surgery that took place in 2021. A bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and Surya Kant said that petitioner and his spouse shall furnish an undertaking immediately upon confirmation of their appointment to effect that they shall return to India within two weeks from the date of departure.

Murmur in Cong...

From Page 1

He said Sonia’s sagacity and wisdom in an advisory role would make a significant difference for the party, but she should not involve her family. “At the end of the day, politics is a game of delivery. Indira Gandhi and Sonia delivered despite setbacks. Rahul and Priyanka had 20 long years to prove their mettle...The country is bigger than the party, and party is bigger than the individuals and families,” he said. The G-23 leaders in a letter addressed to Sonia in August 2020, observed that uncertainty over leadership and drift in party was weakening Congress and demoralised workers.

Mann to take oath at Bagath Singh’s village

From Page 1

As per the official release, Punjab Governor dissolved the 15th Punjab Vidhan Sabha “with effect from the afternoon of the 11th March, 2022, in pursuance of the powers conferred upon him by Sub-clause (b) of clause (2) of Article 174 of the Constitution of India”.

Mann is expected to meet the Governor on Saturday to stake a claim to form the government.

As per available information, AAP’s two-time MLAs would be among the first ones to be considered for the Cabinet posts, including the Leader of Opposition Harpal Singh Cheema (Dirba MLA), his deputy Sarabjit Kaur Manuke (Jagraon), Aman Arora (Sunam), Kultar Singh Sandhwan (Kotkapura), Prof Baljinder Kaur (Talwandi Sabo), and Budh Ram (Budhlada). The party had re-nominated its 10 sitting MLAs, and all have been re-elected.

Among the first-timers, the party may consider the names of Harjot Bains (Anandpur Sahib), Neena Mittal (Rajpura), Jeevanjyot Kaur (Amritsar East), Dr Charanjit Singh (Chamkaur Sahib), Narinder Kaur Bharaj (Sangrur), and Inderjit Kaur Mann (Nakodar). It has been learnt that the process of Cabinet formation will take place in a phased manner, with “a few” taking the oath, to begin with, along with the Chief Minister. The Cabinet would be expanded subsequently. The state cabinet has the strength of 18 Ministers, including the Chief Minister.

AAP on Friday held the first meeting of its legislative wing. During the meeting, Budhlada MLA Budh Ram proposed Mann’s name as the leader of the legislative group, which was unanimously accepted by all other 91 legislators. Addressing the meeting which was also attended by Punjab party affairs in-charge Jarnail Singh and co-in-charge Raghav Chadha, Mann urged AAP’s all elected representatives to work for the people “who have reposed so much faith in us”.

Asking all the legislators to shun arrogance, he asked them to take the government to the people’s doorstep instead of compelling them to visit offices to meet you in Chandigarh. “We have to reach out to the people who voted us to power...Go to villages along with your officers...hold meetings there, organize camps, drink tea with them, share their sorrows and problems...Don’t make the people visit you in Chandigarh...people are tired now, their shoes have worn out visiting tehsils, and kachehris (courts)” he said addressing the MLAs.

Reminding the MLAs how the people have voted out of power who failed to work for them, Mann asked them to do more than the guarantees the party gave to the people.

Out of AAP’s total 92 legislators, 82, including Bhagwant Mann, will enter Punjab Vidhan Sabha for the first time. Many of the elected representatives, who reached Mohali’s hotel for the meeting, were not even known to each other. In fact, the police personnel were seen asking for their identity before allowing them to enter the premises. It was jubilations, and smiles all around with the AAP leaders intermingling with each other, sharing joys, and congratulating one another for their historic success.

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MANN MEETS KEJRIWAL

A day after leading AAP’s Punjab unit to rout State’s traditional political outfits, the CM-designate on Friday visited New Delhi to meet party supreme and Kejriwal, Sisodia and other senior party leaders. Kejriwal welcomed Mann with open arms and gave him a tight bear hug.

It was all smiles. Mann also touched Kejriwal’s feet and invited him for the oath ceremony. Mann was accompanied by Punjab affairs co-in-charge Chadha. It has been learnt that the leaders also discussed the Cabinet probables, besides the ensuing Rajya Sabha elections for the five seats due to be held on March 31.

MANN, KEJRIWAL, MLAS TO HOLD ROADSHOW ON MAR 14 IN AMRITSAR

In the meeting, it was decided that Mann and Kejriwal will reach ‘Guru ki Nagri’ Amritsar on March 13 to pay their obeisance at Sri Harmandir Sahib, Durgiana Mandir, and Sri Ram Tirath Mandir and to thank Waheguru for this success. Mann will seek the blessings of God before taking his responsibility as the Chief Minister of Punjab. After that AAP national convener and Punjab president will conduct a roadshow in Amritsar to celebrate their victory among the people and to thank the voters.

NSE co-location scam: CBI opposes bail plea of former GOO; Delhi court reserves order

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Friday opposed before a Delhi Court the bail application by Anand Subramanian in National Stock Exchange (NSE) co-location scam case, saying that the former group operating officer (GOO) influenced the decision making of former managing director and chief executive officer Chitra Ramakrishna.

CBI counsel said that Subramanian, who impersonated as a “Himalayan Yogi” to influence Ramakrishna, remained evasive during interrogation and was a flight risk and should not be granted bail.

“You are (allegedly) the Himalayan Yogi, living in the high reaches of the Himalayas with divine powers. CBI was lying in hibernation for four years. They woke up now. I don’t know why,” Special Judge Sanjeev Aggarwal remarked. The judge reserved the verdict on the bail plea after hearing counsel for the agency as well as Subramanian, who is presently in judicial custody, and listed the order for pronouncement on March 24. The former GOO was arrested by the CBI on February 24 and was remanded for custodial

interrogation. He was sent to 14-day judicial custody on March 9. While the court observed the accused did not flee in the last four years, the CBI prosecutor VK Pathak stated that Subramanian thought that nobody would identify him.

Lawyer Arshdeep Singh, appearing for Subramanian, said that he was “not the Himalayan Yogi”. CBI counsel said that there were emails between Subramanian and Ramakrishna sharing sensitive information and that a probe has to be done on the aspect of financial gains to them.

“There are various mal-practices apart from the co-location...They visited tax haven countries. This aspect has to be looked into,” he said.

“He was the main advisor to the MD. He was advising each and everything. Chitra Ramakrishna took decisions under influence.

There was some financial gain, tours to foreign countries. We are looking into it,” it was further submitted. “You take a lot of time. You keep looking,” remarked the judge who also observed that life and liberty can’t be restricted based on presumptions and assumptions.

CBI counsel said that it

was in the process of analysing 832 GB data and the probe has been extended to several brokers and that the accused has been uncooperative and evasive. Subramanian’s lawyer sought his release on bail on the ground that he was not named in the FIR, he had no role in the NSE co-location facility while specifically denying the allegation that he was the “Himalayan Yogi” who allegedly influenced Chitra Ramakrishna’s decision making.

The lawyer said that Subramanian joined NSE only in April 2013 and the period of offence was 2010 to 2014.

He also argued that although the investigation can go beyond the FIR, there has not been reasonable nexus between the subject matter of the FIR and events being brought under its ambit and therefore the issue of his appointment cannot be a matter of the present investigation.

Singh further informed that SEBI has already exonerated him in the proceedings concerning the co-location facility. The court observed that Subramanian received an “unthinkable” hike in his remuneration when he joined NSE and asked what was so special.

India regrets accidental firing of missile into Pak, orders probe

From Page 1

Pakistan “strongly protests this flagrant violation and cautions against recurrence of any such incident in future”, he said. Pakistan Air Force officials said the object “was picked up at a high-altitude of 40,000 feet and was traveling at a speeding axis of Mach 2.5 and the total distance it travelled inside Pakistan was 124km and from the total flight time of 6 minute 46 seconds till it hit the ground, it was in Pakistani territory for 3 minutes and 44 seconds”. According to a 2005 agreement between India and Pakistan on pre-notification of flight testing of ballistic missiles, each country has to notify the other at least three days in advance of the flight test it wants to undertake whether surface-to-surface, land, or sea-launched missiles. It also stipulates the launch sites should not fall within 40 km from either the International Boundary or the Line of Control (LOC) and the planned impact area should not fall within 75 km.

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Letter no: 885/141C(E-Tender)/3/21-22 Date 16.02.2022
Online Tender Inviting Notice
1- On behalf of His Excellency the governor of Uttar Pradesh, under the Superintending engineer, Bareilly Circle, PWD, Bareilly, online E-Tenders have been invited from 15.03.2022 to 23.03.2022 Till 12.00 Noon, the technical bids will be proposed opened online on Date 24.03.2022 at 12:30 PM:-

Sl. No	Name of Work	Name of Division	Estimated cost (Rs.in Lacs)	Bid Security (Rs.in Lacs)	Tender Fee Stationary Charges+ GST (Rs.in Rs.)	Category
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Special Repair of CC Road and Drain Construction in Awadi Portion of Powayan Nahl Singhapur (ODR) Road in Distt. Shahjahanpur (F.Y.-2021-2022)	P.D. P.W.D. Shahjahanpur	92.00	6.60	2725.00	A & B (For Road Work Only)
2	Special Repair of NH-24 Km-330 to Paslyani Link Road Via BaadiGauin in Distt. Shahjahanpur (F.Y.-2021-2022)		49.00	4.45	2725.00	A, B & C (For Road Work Only)
3	Construction of small R.C.C. bridge, approach road and protection work in the middle of Bel Gauntia over Kaimua Nala to Km.28 of Puwayan-Nigohi-Dataganj Road (State Road No.-126) (Village Birasin) in Distt. Shahjahanpur.		360.00	20.00	2725.00	A (For Bridge Only)
4	Construction of link road from Akhtaryarpur Dhaukal Marg to Fagunihal Marg for construction of road up to the house of SHAHEED Shri Suraj Singh.		113.50	7.68	2725.00	A & B (For Road Work Only)
5	New Construction of Niwadi Kaped Katka Road up to Ghugavan Temple Link Road in Distt. Shahjahanpur.		57.00	4.85	2725.00	A, B & C (For Road Work Only)
6	New Construction of Niwadi Ghugavan Road up to Sardar Baldev Singh Jhala Road under missing Link in Distt. Shahjahanpur.		79.00	5.95	2725.00	A & B (For Road Work Only)
7	New Construction of Road from Sager Shah's House via Holl Sthal towards Imrambada Jama Masjid to Nahi Husain's House in Village Shahbajnagar under missing Link in Distt. Shahjahanpur.		64.50	5.23	2725.00	A, B & C (For Road Work Only)
8	New Construction of Road from Rajaram's House Holl wall Road to Dinesh Kotedar's House in Village Udiyapur under missing Link in Distt. Shahjahanpur.		57.00	4.85	2725.00	A, B & C (For Road Work Only)

2- All information and documents are available on website <http://etender.up.nic.in> (R.K.PITHAURIYA)
EXICUTIVE ENGINEER
PROVINCIAL DIVISION, PWD,
SHAHJAHANPUR
UP-174009 Dt. 11.3.22 विज्ञापन वेबसाइट www.upgov.nic.in पर उपलब्ध है।
(ABHINESH KUMAR)
SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER
BAREILLY CIRCLE, PWD, BAREILLY

MP POORV KSHETRA VIDYUT VITARAN CO. LTD.
BLOCK NO. 8, SHAKTI BHAWAN, RAMPUR, JABALPUR (M.P.)
Tel No 0761-2702473, Fax No 0761-2660048
CIN: U40109MP2002SGC01520

1912

No. CGM/PUR/EZ/GM-III/2758 Jabalpur, dtd- 10.03.2022

TENDER NOTICE

Online Tenders are invited for following item-

S. No	T S No DISCOM/EZ/PUR	NAME OF ITEMS	APPROX VALUE (IN RS. LAKH)	TENDER FEE (RS)	DUE DATE OF OPENING OF TENDER ONLINE FROM 12:00 HRS
1	1214 (E-Tender No. 2022_PKVVC_189584_1)	11KV & 33KV Current Transformers (Cts)	174.60	5,900.00	06.04.2022

For other details visit our website- www.mpez.co.in & mptenders.gov.in
SAVE ELECTRICITY बिजली संबंधी शिकायतों के निराकरण के लिए 1912 डायल करें **C.G.M. (PURCHASE)**

कार्यालय नगर निगम, भोपाल
विद्युत शाखा
प्रथम तल, आई.एस.बी.टी. भवन, होशंगाबाद रोड, हबीबगंज, भोपाल-462011

क्र. 934/वि.शा./2022

निविदा आमंत्रण घोषणा-पत्र

क्र. 934/वि.शा./2022

भोपाल दिनांक 09.03.2022

निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु दो लिफाफे पद्धति के अनुसार मोहरबंद निविदायें निर्धारित प्रपत्र पर ऑनलाईन आमंत्रित की जाती हैं।

क्र.	ऑनलाईन टेंडर नं.	कार्य स्थल का नाम	अनुमानित राशि	घरोहर राशि	निविदा प्रपत्र की कीमत	ठेकेदार की श्रेणी	कार्य हेतु निर्धारित एस.ओ.आर.	कार्य की अवधि
1.	2022_UAD_189356_1	Miscellaneous Electrical Work at Various Places Under Municipal Corporation, Bhopal. (On Empanelment Basis)	1,94,70,155/-	1,94,702/-	12,500/-	As per Tender Document	MPUADD electrical issr 2021+ SOR & NON SOR ITEM	12 Months

नियम व शर्तें :-
1. निविदा प्रपत्र की निर्धारित राशि एवं घरोहर राशि एवं अन्य आवश्यक दस्तावेज ऑनलाईन प्रस्तुत करने होंगे अन्य समस्त विस्तृत जानकारी www.mptenders.gov.in पर देखी जा सकती है।
2. किसी भी निविदा को स्वीकार अथवा अस्वीकार करने का अधिकार विभाग के पास सुरक्षित होगा।
कार्यपालन यंत्री (विद्युत)
नि.क्र.1283/021/022

PUBLIC NOTICE
Be it known to all that I, Kiran W/o Shri Narendar Kumar R/o Flat No. T-1, Ground Floor, Prasad Nagar, Phase-II, New Delhi, owner of Flat No. T-1, Ground Floor, Prasad Nagar, Phase-II, New Delhi, File No.M-84(235)/1979/HBM. The Original Possession Letter and NOC water and Electric of the above flat has been lost. An FIR / NCR to this effect has lodged in P.S. Crime Branch, Delhi vide Complaint. No.LR No.208550/2022 dated 11.03.2022. Any person/claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/ contact with above named person at above address or Phone No. 9810568924 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. Any person claiming any right, interest or having any objection with respect to this property can also personally inform/contact me. The Director (LAB) Housing, Delhi Development Authority, INA, Vikas Sadan, Delhi

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Mangal Singh S/O Shri Madan Singh R/o C-2/82, Block C-2, New Ashok Nagar, Vasundhara Enclave , East Delhi -110096 have Change My Name from Mangat Singh to Mangal Singh for all future purposes.
PD(9161)C

BJP in huddle to elect CMs in Goa, U'khand

From Page 1

In Goa, where the party is to form a Government for the third successive time, the choice of a new CM is less complicated for the BJP as Chief Minster Pramod Sawant seemingly carries the backing of the Modi-Shah. Sawant has expressed confidence that the Central leadership would “repose faith on him”.

Notwithstanding Sawant’s “confidence”, sources pointed out that while the local Goa BJP unit is backing Sawant, there is a likelihood that the BJP high command may consider State Minister Vishwajit Rane whose wife Divya too has won her Assembly seat as the CM candidate in the post-Parrikar phase in the coastal State. Sawant, 48, was a protégé of popular former Goa Chief Minister and Union Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar.

War over postponement of MCD elections

Deferring polls weakens democracy: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

After the Delhi State Election Commission asked legal experts if it can still hold polls for the three municipal corporations in the national Capital, the Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to let MCD elections take place in the city, saying postponing polls weakens the democratic system.

Kejriwal said the Centre writing to the Election Commission (EC) to defer elections and the EC succumbing to the Centre's pressure is not the right precedent for the Indian democratic system. "It must have been the first time in the last 75 years that the



Central Government has written to the EC, forcing it to defer elections. People are saying that the excuse of merging the three MCDs is a mere farce, and the real reason is that the BJP wants to postpone polls," said Kejriwal. "The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) knows that the Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP's)

wave is taking over the country and once the MCD elections take place, the BJP will drown in the same wave.

I appeal to the Prime Minister with folded hands to not cancel the elections since this will pose a huge threat to our democracy," said Kejriwal. "What is this pressure on the State Election Commissioner? What is this threat or greed that is bigger than the greater good of the country?," said Kejriwal adding that the State Election Commissioner should be aware that if he cancels the elections, there will be no significance to our democracy. "MCD elections were supposed to be announced on March 9. They were supposed to notify all dates related to nomination,

withdrawal and the guidelines in that regard. But, the Centre wrote a letter to EC asking them to defer polls because they apparently want to merge three MCDs," said Kejriwal. "The BJP has done this in anticipation of its defeat after seeing the wave of AAP. They're also asking what does election have to do with merger? Today, the 272 councillors of the three MCDs sit separately, after the merger they'll sit together.

Why does this have to be a reason to defer elections, the merger doesn't affect the democratic system at all? It is clear that their modus operandi was not merger but postponement of polls," said Kejriwal. "With folded hands, I appeal to Prime Minister to let go of such

antics. Dear Prime Minister, governments will come and go but the country, its constitution and its democracy are here to stay. Leaders like you and I are not important, political parties are not important," said Kejriwal.

He also appealed to State Election Commissioner and said, "I don't know what fear or pressure our State Election Commissioner was under that he took such a big step.

How was he pressured to take such a drastic step? Was he threatened by ED, CBI, Income Tax or did he face some bigger threat? He is supposed to retire in April. Was he lured with some post-retirement roles to be compromised in such a manner?,"

Man held for killing friend with hammer

Ghaziabad: A man has been arrested from Shalimar Garden area here for killing his friend with a hammer and hiding his body inside his house, police said on Friday. The deceased, a 35-year-old man Amit Kumar, worked as a domestic help, and was reported missing by his brother on March 5, they said. During its investigation, police was told by several persons that Kumar was last seen with one Mahendra at his house, said Sahibabad Police Station SHO Nagendra Chaubey. Mahendra was arrested and interrogated during which he confessed to having killed Kumar and hiding his body inside his house, Chaubey said. According to the police, on the day Kumar went missing, he drank liquor at Mahendra's place and got into a heated argument with him over some issue. **PTI**

Min visits divyangjan help camp at GTB Hospital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Social Welfare Minister, Rajendra Pal Gautam on Friday visited a Divyangjan help camp organised by Social Welfare Department at Delhi's Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital for differently-abled people.

Officials of Delhi Government, Central Government and many other social organisations also participated in camp. During the camp, the official provided the citizens with various types of services including disability certificate, UDID card, digital handicap certificate, Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) pass, Railway pass and loans,

on same day. "Around 1,000 people were assisted in UDID registration in this camp. Along with this, citizens were also made aware about welfare schemes run by Delhi Government," said an official.

"The concept of Disability Assistance Camp is that all facilities should be provided to specially-abled people under one roof so that their problems can be resolved quickly and they don't have to travel to different offices for their work," said official. Gautam said that Arvind Kejriwal-led Delhi Government is committed to providing all possible help till last person standing in line. "Soon Delhi Government will introduce new schemes for

‘AAP killing democracy by denying MCDs funds’

What tactics have you used to stop EC from holding civic polls, asks Manish Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday took umbrage at the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), National Convener Arvind Kejriwal's statements "attacking" the Election Commission (EC) and the electoral process over the delay in announcement of MCD poll dates, saying he is "killing democracy at the very grassroots by starving local bodies of funds."

Addressing the media at the BJP headquarters here along with the party's Delhi unit chief Aadesh Gupta, Union Minister Smriti Irani said the BJP is "amused" that a party (AAP) which got less than NOTA votes in Uttar Pradesh, lost deposits on 55 of the 70 seats in Uttarakhand and had a vote share of just six per cent in Goa claims that it had a decisive impact in the State elections results.

Irani said the Kejriwal dispensation has not paid ₹13,000 crore due to civic bodies in the national Capital. "Kejriwal is killing democracy at the very grassroots by starving local bodies of funds," she said.



Earlier in the day, Kejriwal had criticised the State Election Commission over the postponement of the announcement of the civil body poll schedule in Delhi, and said that forcing the "cancellation of elections" is unprecedented, unconstitutional and not good for democracy.

Hitting back at him, Irani said, "Today, the nation was amused to see a press interaction by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

As Indians, we should take umbrage at the fact that Kejriwal chose to attack the Election Commission and electoral processes that have been hailed across the world as transparent and fair. What amused the workers of the BJP was the fact that a leader who lost four State elections claimed that he was a harbinger of change."

Asking Kejriwal to release ₹13,000 crore "owed" by the Delhi Government to the civic

bodies in the national Capital, Irani said, "Kejriwal says eloquently that he is the saviour of democracy. I want to tell him that by starving municipal corporations of funds, he is killing democracy at the very grassroots."

She said that for the last seven years in Delhi, Kejriwal himself has "stopped" funds for the sanitation workers. Under his leadership, the funds for development activities in villages and other works by the municipal corporations have been stopped, she alleged.

Reacting to her statement, Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia slammed Union Minister Smriti Irani over her remarks saying that the allegations were baseless and the BJP deferred polls fearing defeat in municipal elections.

He said that the BJP should stop playing blame games and let the EC conduct elections. "In the upcoming civic body elections, the BJP will not able to win even 10 seats. The people of Delhi now want the Kejriwal Government in the MCD also," Sisodia said.

"We want to know what tactics have you used to stop the EC from conducting MCD elections. Have you threatened the EC with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) or given any kind of leverage to the EC," he added.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Right after taking charge of the Delhi Women and Child Development (WCD) Ministry, Kailash Gahlot, visited two Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) in the national Capital's Humayunpur and Nizamuddin areas to understand the grievances of the staff there.

"The entire Anganwadi staff has promised to continue working to ensure the smooth functioning of all centres. I've also assured them that the Delhi Government will do everything in its capacity to address and resolve the demands and grievances they face," said Gahlot.

"I appeal to all workers who have still not returned, to resume duties. We will all have to work together to ensure a safer future for our children. The department is strongly motivated and I am looking forward to the betterment of both the staff and public," said the WCD Minister. The operations at both Humayunpur and Nizamuddin Anganwadis have resumed normalcy and both AWCs are working at



full capacity. Gahlot also interacted with parents and children and enquired about the conditions of the centres, the quality of early childhood care and education offered at these centres.

During the day, Gahlot also chaired a meeting with all officials of the WCD including the Director, Joint Directors, Deputy Directors, District Officers Child Development Project Officers and Welfare Officers. He also urged the senior officials to conduct regular visits to all centres, to ensure efficient functioning, accountability and transparency within the department. The

department of WCD was added to the portfolio of Kailash Gahlot on March 9. Delhi has a network of 10,897 AWCs which are divided across 95 sanctioned projects and have 10,653 Anganwadi workers and 10,890 Anganwadi helpers.

The Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition (POSHAN) schemes delivered through this network of Anganwadis alone have benefitted 8.98 lakh beneficiaries in the month of January, 2022 which includes children in the age group 0-3 years, 3-6 years and pregnant and lactating mothers.

Iraqi national duped by 2 men posing as cops

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

An Iraqi national was duped by two men who posed as cops and stole \$3200 from his bag. The victim identified as Rain has been in city for medical treatment of his wife at a private hospital, police said. They both came to India earlier in March. According to police, the incident took place on Thursday when Rain was visiting a restaurant where a friend of his from Riyadh had invited him. He told the police that "I was standing outside the restaurant when I was accosted by two cops who had come in a car. They were in plain clothes but claimed they were cops. They

asked for my passport and ID. Unsuspecting, I handed out documents. And then they proceeded to check my bag and while checking it, they stole US \$3200".

He said he found the money missing when he checked his bag, but by that time 'fake cops' had fled in car. "We are scanning CCTV footage of nearby area to develop some clues. The investigation team is on the job and are trying to identify car and accused," said Station House Officer (SHO) of sadar police station. An FIR has been registered against two unknown persons under sections 379 (theft) and 420 (cheating) of Indian Penal Code (IPC), at Sadar police station.



Indian nationals and students from Sumy deboarding an IAF plane at Hindan in Ghaziabad after being evacuated from war-hit Ukraine on Friday.

Ranjan Dimri photo

Respond to plea by JNU student challenging sedition charge, HC tells Delhi Police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has been asked by the Delhi High Court on Friday to respond to a plea by Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) student Sharjeel Imam challenging the framing of a sedition charge against him in a case related to alleged inflammatory speeches made by him during protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) in 2019.

The notice was issued to police by bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Anoop Kumar Mendiratta and the matter has been further listed for hearing on May 26.

Special Public Prosecutor Amit Prasad, representing Delhi Police, sought time to place on record relevant documents. The court said it should be done within two weeks. Sharjeel, who was arrested in January 2020, in relation to the alleged inflammatory speeches, has challenged a trial court's January 24 order framing sedition charge against him. The

trial court had said, "Accused is directed to be charged for offences under sections 124A (sedition), 153A (promoting enmity on grounds of religion), 153B (assertions prejudicial to national integration), 505 (statements conducing to public mischief), of Indian Penal Code and section 13 (punishment for unlawful activities) of UAPA."

On the same day, the trial court had also dismissed Imam's bail plea in the case, which has already been challenged by him in the high court and the petition is pending.

As per the prosecution, Imam had allegedly made speeches at Jamia Millia Islamia on December 13, 2019, and at Aligarh Muslim University on December 16, 2019, where he threatened to cut off Assam and rest of Northeast from India. The prosecution has alleged that his speeches incited hatred, contempt, and disaffection towards Central Government and instigated the people which led to the violence in December

2019. "In garb of CAA, he (Imam) exhorted people of a particular community to block highways leading to major cities and resort to 'chakka jaam'. Also, in name of opposing CAA, he openly threatened to cut off Assam and other Northeastern states from rest of country," the Delhi Police's charge sheet has stated.

Imam is in judicial custody since January 2020. He is also one of the accused in the Delhi riots conspiracy case. In his defence, Imam had earlier told trial court that he was not a terrorist and his prosecution was a "whip of a monarch rather than a government established by law".

Whereas, the prosecution had claimed that violent riots took place pursuant to Imam's speech. Delhi Police filed a charge sheet against Imam in case, in which it alleged that he allegedly gave speeches inciting hatred, contempt, and disaffection towards Central Government and instigated the people which led to the violence in December 2019.

DDA to amend its housing norms to attract buyers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

To attract more buyers, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has approved amendment in its housing regulations to allow the public to participate in the housing schemes if they or their family members don't own a flat or a plot of area above 67sqm in the national Capital.

The decision was taken during a meeting via video-conferencing, held under the chairmanship of Delhi Lieutenant-Governor, Anil Bajjal, who is also the Chairman of the DDA. The DDA also gave nod to an amendment in the DDA (Management and Disposal of Housing Estate) Regulations, 1968.

According to officials, regulation seven prescribes that only those persons will be eligible for allotment of DDA flats who, or their family members, don't own a flat or plot of area above 67sqm in Delhi.

"It has been restricting the demand for DDA flat to a considerable extent. Besides, the number of waitlisted allottees will be equal to the number of flats offered under the scheme as against 25 per cent as per the existing Regulation.

The unsold flats of developing areas may be offered through 'first come first serve' basis and no condition in terms of ownership of flats shall apply to the applicants," said the official.

In other words, unsold flats can be purchased by an applicant even though he/she may be having a flat or plot in Delhi. Public entities will also be eligible for allotment of such unsold flats," said the official adding that the approval would be sent to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs for approval and notification of the proposed amendments.

Also, to further strengthen the healthcare facilities in the national Capital, the DDA has also approved a proposal to facilitate the redevelopment

of AIIMS, Delhi campus, over 79.73 hectares as a "world-class medical university".

The re-designation of the AIIMS campus as 'education & research university' as per Master Plan of Delhi 2021, and assigning other development controls norms to the campus, were also assented to by the highest decision-making body of the DDA, officials said.

A proposal on changing of land use for a plot (8.5 ha or 21 acres) for setting up an e-waste management (eco-park) system, was also approved by the DDA.

The proposal was to change it from 'Residential-RD' to 'Utility-U4' at Village Holambi Kalan, Zone P-I (Narela Sub-city), Delhi.

The Authority also approved change of land use for a plot measuring 0.6769 ha (6769.60 sqm) at Vasant Vihar from 'Residential' to 'Government (G2)' allotted for establishment of headquarters for National Disaster Response Force.

Police personnel found violating traffic norms to get double penalty: Police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has released an order stating that any personnel either in uniform or driving Government vehicles if found violating traffic norms in the national Capital will have to shell out double penalty.

According to order released on March 2 by Ajay Krishan Sharma, the Additional Commissioner of Police, Traffic, it has been observed that some police personnel don't wear seat belt either while driving government vehicle or occupying the front seat beside driver.

"All police personnel be sensitized towards this issue and briefed that as per amended Motor Vehicle Act, there is provision of double penalty for the traffic violation committed by police personnel. Hence, all officers posted under your command should be sensitized and directed to adhere traffic rules

and regulations strictly to avoid penalty as well as embarrassment to department," the order stated. It also directed Traffic Inspectors (TIs) to brief all prosecuting officers that violators should be dealt with according to provisions of MV Act and other relevant laws irrespective of their class and category.

"If any police personnel either in uniform or driving government vehicle is found violating traffic norms, he should be prosecuted under appropriate provisions of the law and provisions made under section 210B of MV Act," order stated.

According to contents of section 210B of amended MV Act-1988, "Penalty for offence committed by an enforcing authority—any authority that is empowered to enforce the provisions of this ACT shall, if such authority commits an offence under this Act.

NATIONAL FERTILIZERS LIMITED
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)
A-11, Sector-24, Noida-201 301
Phone No.-0120-2412294, 2412445, Fax No.-0120-2412218

Ref. No.: **NFL/ZO/ABD/WSF/2022-23/01** Date: **12.03.2022**

E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Bids are invited from the prospective bidders for procurement of Water Soluble Fertilizers for further marketing in various states. For details visit website: <https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app> (e-tendering) & www.nationalfertilizers.com (Homepage). **E-Tender No. 2022_NFL_108979_1**. Last Date of Bid Submission Date / Opening of Technical Bid document is **15:30 Hrs. on 23.03.2022 / 15:30 Hrs. on 24.03.2022**. Any Corrigendum(s) to this tender shall be published only on our websites.

Chief General Manager (Marketing)

[@NFL_Kisan](#) [@nationalfertilizers](#) [in National Fertilizers Limited](#)

EAST DELHI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
HORTICULTURE DEPARTMENT (HQ)

The Deputy Director (Hort.) HQ. on behalf of Commissioner EDMC invites NIT No. 09 dated 09.03.2022 The detail are as under-

Sr. No.1, Name of Work: Development of Park near Kala Niketan School, Gazipur through installation of Children Play Apparatus (CPA), Open Gyms & Sitting arrangement etc. in W.No-19E, Shah. (South) Zone, EDMC, **Tender Amt. 7479474, Earnest Money: 150000, Tender Cost: 500, Tender ID. 2022_EDMC_109150_1**

The tenders details can be obtained from O/o Deputy Director (Hort.) HQ or it can be downloaded from the website <https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app> or www.mcdonline.nic.in The last date of sale of tender will be 22.03.2022 at 3.00 PM. Other detail/information can be seen on website <https://etenders.gov.in/eprocure/app>

The press notice is also available on www.mcdonline.nic.in

Sd/-
R.O. No.65/DPV/EDMC/2021-22 **Dy. Director (Hort.)/HQ**
EDMC'S CITIZENS HELPLINE NO. 155303

HC asks Centre to clear stand on fully opening Nizamuddin Markaz

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday asked the Centre to come with a clear stand as to what objection it has in fully re-opening the Nizamuddin Markaz, where the Tablighi Jamaat congregation was held in March 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic and has remained shut since then. The court sought to know from the Centre why it was against reopening it fully daily when it was agreeable to open it during festivals.

Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri asked the counsel for the Centre to apprise the court as to what objection they have in re-opening all the floors of the building when the authorities are agreeable to open the first floor of the masjid for devotees to perform their prayers. The court was hearing an application by the Delhi Waqf Board seeking to open the mosque in view of Shab-e-Barat and Ramzan in March and April.

"If the first floor can be used for 'namaz' then other floors can also be used for it. You (Centre's counsel) please



take instructions as to in case there is no objection to the opening of the first floor, what objection may be there for the opening of the remaining portion, dehors your submission that you have no objection as far as festivals are concerned. Why can't it be opened every day," the court said.

Last year, the court had questioned the Centre as to how long it intended to keep the Nizamuddin Markaz locked, saying it can't be "kept forever". In its affidavit affirmed by the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Crime, the Centre has

told the court that it was "necessary and incumbent" to "preserve" the Markaz property as the investigation in the case registered for violation of the COVID19 protocols has "cross borders implications and involves nation's diplomatic relationship with other countries."

On April 15, 2021, the court had allowed 50 people to offer namaz five times a day at Nizamuddin Markaz during Ramzan, saying there is no direction in the DDMA notification to close down places of worship.



Justice Vipin Sanghi, the senior-most judge of the Delhi High Court, was on Friday appointed as its acting chief justice as incumbent Justice Dhirubhai Naranbhai Patel retires on Saturday. A notification issued by the Department of Justice in the Law Ministry said Justice Sanghi has been asked to perform the duties of the office of the chief justice of Delhi High Court with effect from March 13 consequent upon the retirement of Justice Patel. Justice Sanghi was appointed as an additional judge of the Delhi High Court on May 29, 2006 and was confirmed as a permanent judge on February 11, 2008.

Jaishankar hails Operation Ganga

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As India managed to evacuate most of its citizens from war torn Ukraine, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday lauded 'Operation Ganga' and thanked all those involved in the effort. He will make a statement in Parliament in the session beginning Monday regarding the situation in Ukraine and 'Operation Ganga'.

Jaishankar's appreciation came on a day when the last big group of more than 650 Indian students stranded in Sumy in eastern Ukraine returned late Thursday and early Friday by special IAF and Air India flights. In all, nearly 18,000 Indian citizens were brought out from Ukraine in 80 special flights since February 22.

"Students from Sumy are returning today to India. Their evacuation was particularly challenging. Operation Ganga, undertaken at the direction of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has delivered due to both leadership and commitment," Jaishankar said in a statement on Twitter.

The minister also thanked everyone who, he said, helped the mission meet its objectives. "Our particular gratitude to the



authorities in Ukraine and Russia as well as the Red Cross for the evacuation assistance," the note read.

He also expressed gratitude to Ukraine's neighbouring countries--Romania, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Moldova--for their 'exceptional' support to India in evacuating its citizens from the eastern European nation.

Jaishankar also underlined the role played by Union ministers Jyotiraditya Scindia, Kiren Rijiju, Hardeep Singh Puri and General VK Singh.

They were sent to coordinate the evacuation efforts, and whose presence, he noted, 'made a big difference.'

The minister appreciated the role of the Indian embassy in Ukraine and his colleagues in the external affairs ministry for their 'dedicated efforts in a difficult conflict situation.'

India sent three flights to Poland for its students--600 in all--who were evacuated from Sumy on Tuesday. While two were Air India flights, the third was an Indian Air Force (IAF) flight. All three flights returned

'Indians in Russia have no reason to leave'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian students studying in Russia were on Friday assured there was no reason for them to leave. In almost similar advisory by Russia and the Indian Embassy in Moscow, students were also informed that many universities there had switched over to the online teaching mode.

The advisory also said the banking services in Russia were affected and the direct flights between India and Russia were also disrupted. Given this situation, if any student wants to leave due to these disruptions they can do so.

on Friday; the first two arrived in Delhi, while the third landed at the IAF's Hindon air base in Ghaziabad in the neighbouring Uttar Pradesh.

"We are grateful to NGOs, individual volunteers, corporates, our airlines, and the Indian Air Force who worked so tirelessly in this exercise," the minister said.

CBSE announces schedule for 10th, 12th exams from April 26

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Friday announced that the term-II board exams for Class 10 and 12 will commence from April 26, as it released the schedule for the papers. The board said that it has kept a considerable gap between any two papers in the term-II exams owing to the prolonged school closure due to the pandemic.

Last year, the CBSE had

announced that board examinations for 2022 will be conducted in two terms. I exams have already been held, while term-II exams commence from April 26 for both classes. The term-II exams for Class 10 will end on May 24, while for Class 12 students, the papers will end on June 15.

While releasing the date sheets for term-II exams, the Board said that it has given a considerable gap between two papers in almost all the subjects in both the classes "as the

schools were closed due to pandemic which has led to learning losses". It also said that other competitive examinations including JEE-Main have been taken care of while preparing the date sheet.

"These date sheets have been prepared by avoiding nearly 35,000 subject combinations to ensure that no two subject examinations of a student fall on the same date," it said. The Board also said that the exams will commence at 10.30 AM.

India, China agree to sustain tempo of dialogue

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and China have agreed to sustain the tempo of dialogue to find ways to ensure peace at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Eastern Ladakh. Stand-offs are still on at some friction points for the last two years and the Corps Commanders of the armies met in Ladakh on Friday to find ways to disengage troops from these points.

The 15th round of military level talks began on the Indian side in Chushul at 10 am. The last round of talks on January 14 did not make any major breakthrough. Chief of Leh based 14 Corps Lt General Anindya Sengupta led the Indian delegation for the latest round.

The delegation included military and diplomatic officials, sources said here on Friday. They said the two sides agreed to continue the process of military and diplomatic level parleys for early resolution of the issue at the LAC.

India has all along insisted that status quo ante as prevailing prior to May 2020 has to be restored for normalising of bilateral ties between the two countries. Trouble erupted at the LAC in May 2020 and snowballed into a bloody drawl in June in the Galwan valley.

At present, more than 50,000 troops each from both the sides are facing each other at the LAC at three friction points leading to tension in the region. Announcing the date for the 15th round of talks, sources had said three days back "India and China have mutually decided to hold the 15th round of Corps Commander level talks at the Indian side of Chushul Moldo Meeting Point on 11 March 2022."

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Use NCRB data for preparing annual crime control strategy: Shah to States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday asked all the States to use the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data for preparing their annual crime control strategy.

The NCRB data should help reduce the crime rate in the country by 20 per cent in next five years if it is made available to the right people at the right time, is kept in proper format and if a system is adopted for its proper analysis and management, Shah said.

"The NCRB data should be used by all states for preparing their annual strategy for crime control. It should be used in a multi-dimensional and multi-purpose way in crime control," he said, addressing the 37th foundation day of the NCRB here.

The analysis of the NCRB data should be made in all States, at DGP headquarters, district SP offices, police stations, the Home Minister said.

The data should not be limited only to the IPS officers. Unless, the NCRB data reach the police station level, it is not going to help anyone, he said.

"Only data can have no results. There should be awareness about the data, analysis of the data and its utilisation. The NCRB director should have meetings with DGPs of all states, analyse the data and work on how to implement them (the result of the analysis)."

Then only there will be 100 per cent usefulness of the data," he said.

Shah, however, said the NCRB data is classified only under various sections of the

Indian Penal Code and not on the basis of social issues.

"Apart from looking through the IPC sections, there should be social angles too. Why crimes increased in drought hit areas or why many farmers engaged in disputes, leading to injuries and even deaths in some cases."

"If we see the data only through the lens of IPC sections, there can be no solutions to the problems of crimes. There should be proper analysis of the data patterns by the NCRB and BPR&D (Bureau of Police Research and Development) so that these analyses can be utilised by the states by intervening on societal issues," he said.

Shah said it is very important to have all crime data together, its proper analysis and dissemination to control crimes.

PMLA court sends engineer to ED custody

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A PMLA court in Haryana on Friday sent a software engineer to ED custody for five days after the agency arrested him in a money laundering case linked to Ponzi schemes through which he allegedly generated 'proceeds of crime' worth Rs 50 crore.

Pranjil Batra was taken into custody by the Enforcement Directorate late on Thursday as part of its investigation against a Hissar-based company styled as Future Makers Life Care Private Limited, the agency said in a statement. Batra, who looked after the software of the com-

pany, "siphoned off" funds worth over Rs 50 crore from the accounts of Future Makers Group by creating fake IDs and using the bank accounts of his family members, close associates and shell companies, the ED alleged. "He (Batra) used these funds, which are proceeds of crime, for purchase of properties, jewellery and shares of high net worth shell companies. He sold some of the immovable properties acquired from the proceeds of crime to the entities controlled by him," it said. Batra was "non-cooperative and resorted to withholding relevant information and misleading the

investigation" during questioning, it alleged.

A special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court sent him to five days of ED custody after he was produced before it on Friday, it said. The money laundering case was filed by the ED on the basis of multiple FIRs filed against the group by Haryana and Telangana police.

"Ponzi schemes run by the group were based on pyramidal structure where the persons at the top of the pyramid gained at the behest of the loss borne by the persons at base of the pyramid," the agency added.

CBI arrests absconder in wildlife crime cases

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has arrested an absconding accused, Balya Bawaria alias Ram Chander Bawaria, resident of Dausa (Rajasthan), for evading law enforcement agencies since 2008 in connection with two wildlife crime cases. The CBI had registered two cases on June 30, 2005 on the request of Rajasthan Government and further notification from the Centre. Subsequently, the CBI took over the investigation of these cases, earlier registered by the Forest Department, Sariska (Rajasthan).

The first case was registered on the allegations that in 2004, the accused killed a tigress in the forest of Kali Ghati near 'Kala Kund' beat Ghanka, Sariska (Rajasthan) by using gun and iron traps. The accused allegedly took out the skin of tigress and sold it for Rs 50,000.

The second case was registered on the allegations that the accused in 2003, killed a male panther at Kali Ka Dhaba, Jungle of Bighauta, Alwar (Rajasthan) by using firearm, iron trap and its skin was sold for Rs. 1800. Two accused were

evading their presence before the Court of ACJM at Jaipur. The accused were declared as Proclaimed Offender and non-bailable warrants (NBWs) were issued against them in 2008. One of the accused was arrested and convicted in 2019. The second accused was evading arrest.

"Due to sustained & continuous efforts, the said accused was traced and arrested," the agency said. The arrested accused was produced before the Court of ACJM, Jaipur and sent to Judicial Custody.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Airlines have increased their domestic services by 10.1 per cent to 25,309 flights per week to/from 112 airports in the upcoming summer schedule as compared to 22,980 last season. The summer schedule begins on March 27 and ends on October 29. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said the summer schedule of Indian carriers has been finalised after a virtual meeting held last month on airport slots. Of these 112 airports, Gondia (Maharashtra), Ziro (Arunachal Pradesh) and Pondicherry are new airports proposed by scheduled airlines.

According to DGCA, IndiGo has increased its domestic flights by 10.4 per cent to 11,130 weekly services for summer 2022 as compared

to 10,084 weekly services in the corresponding period last year.

The COVID-19-induced travel restrictions have badly affected the aviation sector in the last 24 months. However, with COVID-19 infections decreasing, air travel has been picking up in the last couple of weeks.

The DGCA said, "It has been observed that 25,309 departures per week have been finalised to and from 112 airports. Out of these 112 airports, Gondia, Ziro and Puducherry are the new airports proposed by the scheduled airlines."

The Centre-owned Alliance Air will be operating 17.6 per cent more weekly domestic flights (982 flights) in summer this year as compared to 835 services in the corresponding period last year, the regulator noted.

The Tata Group-run AirAsia India will operate 1,601 weekly domestic services -- a 16 per cent jump -- in summer 2022, it mentioned. It said SpiceJet will be operating 14.2 per cent more weekly domestic services in summer 2022 as compared to the same period in 2021, it mentioned.

Air India, which was sold last year to the Tata Group, has increased its weekly domestic services for summer this year by 10 per cent to 2,456, it noted.

Vistara and Go First will be increasing its weekly domestic services by just 6.7 per cent and 1.9 per cent in summer 2022 as compared to summer 2021, it mentioned. Regional carrier FlyBig will operate 158 weekly domestic flights in summer 2022 as compared to 54 weekly services in summer 2021, it noted.

SC agrees to hear plea challenging bail of Ashish Mishra in Lakhimpur Kheri case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to list for hearing on March 15 a plea challenging the grant of bail by the Allahabad High Court to Ashish Mishra, son of Union Minister Ajay Mishra, in connection with the Lakhimpur Kheri violence. A bench headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana was told by lawyer Prashant Bhushan that the plea, which was to be listed Friday, has not been in the list of business, and meanwhile, there was an attack on one of the prime witnesses of the case on Thursday night.

"There has been a mistake. They (Registry officials) are listing it on Tuesday. We will take it up on next Tuesday," said the bench which also comprised Justices A S Bopanna and Hima Kohli. The matter

was mentioned for urgent listing by Bhushan on March 4 and the court had agreed to hear it on March 11. Bhushan had submitted that the other accused in the case were moving courts for grant of bail citing the relief granted to Ashish Mishra.

The bench had asked the lawyer to intimate the High Court that the top court is hearing the plea for cancellation of bail. A single-judge bench of the High Court, on February 10, had granted bail to Mishra who had spent four months in custody. Three family members of farmers, who were killed in the violence, have sought a stay on the February 10 bail order of the high court, saying the verdict was "unsustainable in the eyes of law as there has been no meaningful and effective assistance by the state to the court in the matter".

Temperature rise may increase burden on hospitals: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A temperature rise of 2 degrees Celsius would increase the burden on hospitals from hyponatremia -- a condition when the body has critically low sodium levels in the blood -- by almost 14 per cent, according to a recent study that highlights how climate change-induced extreme wave conditions threaten the well-being of the people.

"Heat stress would leave them hospitalized due to critically low sodium levels in the blood which causes nausea, dizziness, muscle cramps, seizures and even coma," according to the findings published in The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism.

The study comes close on the heels of the IPCC report which recently projected that



global warming will intensify the health effects of heat waves. "Heat waves are periods of unusually hot weather, typically lasting for 2 or more days, outside the historical averages for a given area. Heat waves have happened in the past, but climate change is making heat waves longer, more extreme, and more frequent," said the report. It identifies India as among the most vulnerable in

terms of agriculture, health impact with climate change making its presence felt everywhere, be it in the form of heat waves or floods.

In the current study, the researchers linked data on Sweden's entire adult population to information on 24-hour mean temperatures over a nine-year period. In that time, more than 11,000 were hospitalized with a principal diag-

nosis of hyponatremia, most of whom were women with a median age of 76. Average daily temperatures ranged from -10 to 26 degrees Celsius. When people consume more water during heat waves to cool themselves down, they subsequently increase their odds of diluting the sodium in their bodies, said the latest study. "The body needs sodium to maintain normal blood pressure, support the function of nerves and muscles and regulate the fluid balance in and around our cells," said the study. The researchers found an almost tenfold increased risk for hospitalization due to hyponatremia on the hottest days compared with the coolest periods. Women and elderly carried the greatest risk, with individuals 80 years or older 15 times more likely to be hospitalized for hyponatremia during heat waves. The

incidence of hyponatremia was largely stable from -10 to 10 degrees Celsius but increased rapidly at temperatures above 15.

When the researchers applied the data to a prognostic model forecasting global warming of 1 or 2 degrees Celsius, in line with IPCC climate projections for 2050, they found that hospital admissions due to hyponatremia could be expected to increase by 6.3 per cent and 13.9 percent, respectively.

"We believe these estimates are quite conservative seeing as we didn't account for secondary diagnoses of hyponatremia, extreme weather events or an aging population," said Jonatan Lindh, associate professor at the Department of Laboratory Medicine, Karolinska Institutet, and co-last author of the study.

Centre slams The Lancet's report over Covid death figures

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday dismissed as "speculative and misinformed" a new study published in The Lancet that claimed India's estimated cumulative excess Covid deaths between January 2020 and December 2021 was around eight times higher than reported. The Lancet reported on Thursday that although excess mortality rates due to Covid among Indian states are not the highest in the world, because of India's large population, the country accounted for around 22.3 per cent of global excess deaths as of December 31, 2021.

The documented deaths due to COVID-19 in India over that period was around

489,000, the Lancet said in its paper entitled 'Estimating excess mortality due to the COVID-19 pandemic: a systematic analysis of Covid-19-related mortality, 2020-21'.

It said India's estimated cumulative excess deaths due to Covid-19 between the period were the highest in the world at 4.07 million.

The Union Health Ministry reacted strongly to the study and termed it "speculative and misinformed".

In a statement, it said the study provided estimates of all causes of excess mortality for a number of countries based on a mathematical modelling exercise. The study concluded that although reported Covid-19 deaths between January 1, 2020, and December 31, 2021,

totalled 5.94 million worldwide, an estimated 18.2 million people died worldwide because of the Covid-19 pandemic (as measured by excess mortality) over that period, it said.

"This is yet another estimate on excess mortality due to Covid-19 by another set of researchers. Mathematical modelling techniques are essentially the process of creating a mathematical representation of a real-world scenario to make a prediction."

"Such predictions are founded on a certain set of inputs either based on real world scenarios, or approximations of those (which may vary in accuracy according to the technique used) inputs that are not available," the Ministry said.

81% of sitting BJP MLAs emerge victorious in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The gamble of fielding sitting MLAs by the BJP and its allies paid dividends as over 81 per cent of such candidates romped home in the just concluded Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, clocking a total of 273 seats.

While the BJP won 250 seats, its ally Apna Dal returned 12 and Nishad Party won 11 seats. In the last elections the BJP-led NDA alliance had won 326 seats in the 403 member UP Assembly.

Before the State elections speculations were rife that the ruling coalition could carry out a massive reshuffle and change anything between 150-170 candidates. But it actually changed 104 candidates.

"The BJP would have

changed more but after Swamy Prasad Maurya and two other senior ministers left the BJP and joined the SP there was fear of an exodus of sitting MLAs which could sully the image of the and this forced the party brass to go slow on change of candidates," a senior BJP leader said.

"There were complaints against several sitting legislators that they had not worked as per the wishes of the party brass. Some legislators' seats were changed but 104 candidates were denied tickets," he said. Out of the 214 sitting MLAs who contested elections, 170 were declared victorious.

Among the legislators who lost elections were nine Ministers and senior leaders like Sangeet Som. In 104 seats where candidates were changed



and new faces contested the election, 80 won with a strike rate of 70 per cent. Among the seats which the NDA lost in 2017, the BJP repeated candidates in 16 seats and four of them won while in 69 of those

seats the party had fielded new candidates of which 19 won.

Among its allies, Apna Dal fielded 17 candidates of which 12 won while Nishad Party fielded 15 candidates and 11 of them emerged winners.

Formation of new UP Govt begins

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The ball has been set rolling for the formation of a new government as Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath met Governor Anandiben Patel and tendered his resignation as Chief Minister in Lucknow on Friday evening. The Governor has asked him to continue till the new incumbent takes charge.

Though it is clear that Yogi Adityanath will continue as Chief Minister, it is a legal formality for a Chief Minister to resign once the tenure of his government comes to an end.

The BJP and its allies swept the elections by winning 273 of the 403-member Assembly.

"A BJP legislature meeting will be held recently in which the leader of the party would be selected. This would be just a formality as it is clear that Yogi Adityanath will be the leader of BJP Legislature Party and would be sworn in as next Chief Minister," State BJP vice-president Vijay Bahadur Pathak said.



Before his meeting with the Governor, Yogi held a meeting with his Cabinet Ministers which was also attended by two Deputy Chief Ministers, Keshav Prasad Maurya and Dr Dinesh Sharma.

Incidentally, Maurya lost the election from Sirathu to SP's Pallavi Patel but sources claimed that the party would either induct him in the Union Cabinet or give him a position in the State Cabinet.

Sources also said that the swearing in ceremony of the new Chief Minister is likely to

be held after Holi. The BJP brass has to take a call on this and after getting the nod a date will be finalised. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh are likely to attend the swearing-in function in Lucknow. Yogi also thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his leadership and guidance, the spokesperson said.

During the meeting, the Cabinet passed a resolution stressing that the people of the state have not only expressed confidence in the policies of the BJP but also paved the way for it to form the Government once again by giving it a sweeping mandate, he said.

The Samajwadi Party won 111 seats and its alliance partners Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party and Rashtriya Lok Dal got six and eight seats, respectively. The Congress and the Jansatta Dal got two seats each and the Bahujan Samaj Party bagged one.

Uttar Pradesh Cabinet

Ministers thanked the people of the State for their support that led the Bharatiya Janata Party to a resounding victory in the just-concluded State polls.

In a resolution passed in the meeting, Ministers said people of the State have not only expressed their faith in the policies of the BJP but have also sent out the message to other parties that the Government which delivers them could return to power. "There is no place for hollow slogans, casteism and dynastic politics for the party which comes to power as its only family is people," the resolution said.

"Yogi came to power on March 19, 2017. By adopting the basic mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' in the last five years, the Yogi Government provided a better environment and extended facilities like electricity, drinking water, sanitation, housing, education, health and ration to all beneficiaries without any discrimination," Ministers said in the resolution.

Mayawati blames media, BJP for UP poll rout

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A day after the results of the 2022 UP Assembly elections were announced and Bahujan Samaj Party came up with its worst-ever poll performance with a solitary seat, party chief Mayawati blamed the ruling BJP and even the media charging the two of misleading the public through negative campaigning.

The BSP could muster only one seat out of the total 403 seats that went to polls. The BSP chief alleged that the 'casteist media' drove away Muslims from her party and that the fear of a 'jungle raj' in case the Samajwadi Party returned to power made the rest of the supporters shift to the BJP.

Addressing media persons in Lucknow on Friday morning, Mayawati stressed, "Negative campaigns succeed in misleading the party's core voters that the BSP was BJP's B-team, while the truth is opposite. The BJP vs BSP war was not only political but principled and electoral as well."

The BSP chief further said



that one of the primary reasons why the BJP won the election was because people were scared that 'jungle raj' would return if the Samajwadi Party came to power. "BSP supporters, who are primarily upper caste Hindus and from several OBC communities, had a fear that if the SP came back to power, the state would be thrown back to 'jungle raj' and 'goonda raj' of the past. Hence, they voted for the BJP," she said.

Claiming that Muslims voters had also caused her party's downfall, Mayawati said that in order to defeat the BJP, Muslims trusted the SP. "We have learnt a harsh lesson from trusting Muslims. If the votes of

Muslims and Dalits had combined, we could have repeated what the TMC did in West Bengal last year. If there was a triangular fight in the state, the BSP would have performed much better. The result was opposed to the BSP's expectations," she opined.

Mayawati also urged party workers to not feel discouraged and promised a comeback in future elections. She said that the party was going through a tough phase, just like the BJP had undergone earlier. "We should not be discouraged by it. Instead, we should learn from it, introspect and carry forward our party movement, and come back to power strongly," she said.

"Before 2017, the BJP did not have a good stake in Uttar Pradesh. Likewise, today, the Congress is also undergoing the same phase as BJP. UP election result is a lesson for us to continue putting in efforts," Mayawati added. In 2017, the BSP had a vote share of more than 22 percent and 19 seats which has now dipped by 10 percent with just one seat.

Party's poor poll show due to conspiracy, loyalists sidelined: Cong workers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Unhappy with the functioning of Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee, party workers and dissident leaders from across the State will march to Congress headquarters in Delhi on Monday and meet party president Sonia Gandhi, former chief Rahul Gandhi and general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

The Congressmen want to apprise these leaders that the party's poor poll show in Uttar Pradesh was due to the conspiracy of 'betrayers who sold tickets and were busy sidelining party loyalists'.

"We want to tell our leaders that all was not lost and if the right people were asked to lead the UP unit of Congress. We have hopes for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Priyankaji has been misled by a coterie that does not have the Congress DNA and has been there for vested interests," said expelled Congress leader Konark Dixit, who is leading the campaign against Priyanka's personal staff.

Dixit said that Congress workers who are committed to the ideology, are worried that the party has forfeited deposits on 385 of the 403 seats in the recent state elections. "If we want to resurrect the party before the 2024 general elections, we need to change the system of working. We are not rising in revolt but we need to discuss certain issues with the party leadership," said Dixit, who has been running a WhatsApp group along with other Congress leaders to raise their voice against UP chief Ajay Kumar Lallu.

They feel that Lallu was acting at the behest of one of the paid staff of Priyanka Gandhi. The Congress workers are also demanding the resignation of Lallu, who was not only defeated in the state polls from Tumkahi Raj (Kushianagr) but also forfeited his deposit.

Another dissident in the party tweeted on Friday on how the 380 of 400 Congress contestants had lost their deposits in this election.

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Instead of introspecting the party's pathetic performance of bagging two seats in the Assembly poll, UP Congress on Friday expelled a leader who had blamed a 'paid' team of general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra responsible.

On Friday, former MLA, Shyam Kishore Shukla, in-charge of the party's Disciplinary Committee, expelled Zeeshan Haider for six years for his statement after the poll defeat.

Shukla termed Haider's statement as 'derogatory' and against the party while issuing the expulsion order. Even as Haider had resigned as media convener of Electronic and Urdu media of UP Congress Media Team, Shukla stripped him of his former responsibility, again.

A day before, on Thursday, Haider blamed one of the staff of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and termed him as her 'servant' for being responsible for the poll

debacle.

Though Haider did not mention any one, party sources claimed that he referred to Priyanka's personal secretary, Sandeep Singh who has been meddling in party affairs.

Earlier, in his resignation letter to UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu, Haider mentioned that he was unable to perform hundred per cent, and he was hence resigning from his post.

Though he made personal ground in his resignation, sources said that Haider felt neglected especially during the entire elections.

One condition of anonymity, a Congress spokesmen disclosed that Haider was convener of Electronic and Urdu Media but those heading the UPCC media team never discussed representation of party leaders in electronic media, or poll advertisements in newspapers or to electronic media.

"It was better for Haider to quit than to face regular humiliation at the hands of newbies," he said.

5 Indian students still stuck in Ukraine, claims Raj activist

PTI ■ KOTA

Five Indian students are still stuck in the south Ukrainian city of Kherson and have urged the Centre to evacuate them, according to an activist based in Rajasthan's Bundi.

Charmesh Sharma claimed that the students, who have taken refuge inside a building amid a fierce Russian military offensive, got in touch with him via WhatsApp and narrated their plight.

Sharma has written to the office of the president, prime minister and Union minister of External Affairs, urging them immediately take steps to airlift the five stranded Indian students.

The five Indian students who are trapped in the Ukrainian city are Vadi Vivek and Milan Domadiya, both from Jamnagar in Gujarat, Tannu and Simran Kaur from Haryana's Rohtak and Arokia Raj from Tamil Nadu.

During the call, the students said they were not in a position to venture out of their building due to heavy shelling, Sharma claimed.

Over 40L died due to Covid in India: Lancet report

Govt terms Lancet analysis speculative, misinformed

PTI ■ LONDON/NEW DELHI

India's estimated cumulative excess deaths due to Covid-19 between January 2020 and December 2021 were the highest in the world at 4.07 million, around eight times higher than reported, according to a new analysis in the Lancet.

Responding to the findings, the Union Health ministry on Friday termed the analysis "speculative and misinformed" and said the authors had themselves admitted to several methodology flaws and inconsistencies. The study takes into account different methodologies for different countries, the ministry said in a statement. For India, for example, data sources used by the study appear to have been taken from newspaper reports and non-peer reviewed studies, it said.

"This model uses data of all

cause excess mortality (created by another non-peer reviewed model) as an input and this raises serious concerns about the accuracy of the results of this statistical exercise," the ministry said. The Lancet reported on Thursday that excess mortality rates due to Covid among Indian states are not the highest in the world, because of India's large population, but the country accounted for around 22.3 per cent of global excess deaths as of December 31, 2021.

The paper estimates excess mortality from the COVID-19 pandemic in 191 countries and territories from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2021.

Although reported COVID-19 deaths in that period totalled 5.94 million worldwide, the Lancet paper estimates that 18.2 million people died worldwide because of the COVID-19 pandemic, as mea-

sured by excess mortality, over that period. This is around three times higher than previously estimated.

The documented deaths due to Covid in India over that period stood at around 4.89,000, the journal says in the paper "Estimating excess mortality due to the COVID-19 pandemic: a systematic analysis of COVID-19-related mortality, 2020-21".

Excess mortality measures the additional deaths in a given time period compared to the number usually expected and is not dependent on how COVID-19 deaths are recorded. "For India, empirical assessment of excess mortality for 12 states used data from the civil registration system. For different months during the first and second waves of the COVID-19 epidemic in the 12 states in India, total numbers of deaths for those states during the corresponding months were made available," the peer-reviewed paper reports.

"Using the mean reported deaths during the same periods in years 2018 and 2019, we were able to generate excess



mortality rates for those Indian states after accounting for under-registration of mortality by the civil registration system at the state level," it notes. "At the country level, the highest numbers of cumulative excess deaths due to COVID-19 were estimated in India (4.07 million [3.71-4.36])," the paper says. After India, the highest numbers of cumulative excess deaths due to COVID-19 were estimated in the US (1.13 million), Russia (1.07 million), Mexico (798,000), Brazil (792,000), Indonesia (736,000) and Pakistan (664,000). "These seven countries accounted for more than half of the global excess deaths due to COVID-19 over the 24-month period," according to

the report.

"The full impact of the pandemic has been much greater than what is indicated by reported deaths due to COVID-19 alone," the paper, part-funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, notes in its interpretation of the latest findings.

"Strengthening death registration systems around the world, long understood to be crucial to global public health strategy, is necessary for improved monitoring of this pandemic and future pandemics. In addition, further research is warranted to help distinguish the proportion of excess mortality that was directly caused by SARS-CoV-2 [COVID-19] infection and

the changes in causes of death as an indirect consequence of the pandemic," it states.

According to the Health Ministry, the methodology adopts data from newspapers at varied intervals to extrapolate (without any scientific basis) for the total period under study. "The pandemic had multiple surges during the period and varied trajectories across different states (sub state level also) at any point of time. Hence the methodology used by this study is less than robust," it said.

Quoting issues as sensitive as death, that too during an ongoing global public health crisis like pandemic COVID-19, should be dealt with facts and with required sensitivity, the ministry added.

"This type of speculative reporting has potential to create panic in the community, can misguide people and should be avoided," it said. Last month, too, India dismissed previous reports of alleged under-reporting of COVID-19 deaths in the country, with the Health Ministry asserting that it has a robust mechanism in place.

Centre thrusting its regressive views in education syllabus causing concern, says TN CM

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Friday expressed concern over education continuing to remain in the concurrent list and alleged that the Central government exercised its powers to "push its regressive views in syllabus."

Bringing education back to the state list will serve as the best solution for this, he said without elaborating.

"It's a concern that the Centre is exercising its powers

to use education to thrust its regressive views. Bringing education back to the state list will be the best solution to stop this," the Chief Minister said addressing the south zone vice-chancellors' meet at Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, virtually from here.

The vice-chancellors, the Chief Minister said, played a crucial role in shaping the functioning and quality of education. They should strive to foster scientific temper among the students.

Reminding that the vice-chancellors have a big responsibility to impart education that will equip the students for jobs, Stalin emphasised on imparting skill-based education and training in the curriculum. "This is the reason why I had launched the Naan Mudhalvan (skill development scheme)," he said.

The Chief Minister took pride in saying Tamil Nadu's gross enrolment ratio in higher education stood at 51.4 per cent, which is far above the national average of 27.1 per

cent.

"This is Tamil Nadu's unique achievement. The GER is almost double the national average and in the state, we have a student-teacher ratio of 17:1," he said.

The Chief Minister pointed out that there were 1,553 colleges spread across the state.

About 52 government and private universities have been ranked among the top 100 varsities in the National Institutional Ranking Framework 2020-21.

Decision on menstrual leave for Arunachal women to be taken after talks with stakeholders: Minister

PTI ■ ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh women and child development minister Alo Libang on Friday told the Assembly on Friday that a decision on granting a one-day menstrual leave to women would be taken in the state after a discussion in the matter was held with stakeholders.

Responding to a private member resolution moved in the Assembly by Congress legislator Ninong Ering, Libang said her department, in coordination with the health and education officials, would discuss the matter with the Arunachal Pradesh State Commission for Women (APSCW) and other organisations.

He also said that women legislators would also be consulted before a decision was arrived at.

Ering, on his part, pointed out that countries such as Italy and Japan and the Indian states of Kerala and Bihar have made such provisions for women.

"It could be very annoying

for women to work and girls during menstruation, especially on the first day. If they are granted a one-day leave, they can discharge their duties with more dedication," Ering pointed out.

Referring to the assembly poll victory of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur, Ering stated that women empowerment initiatives played a major role in ensuring the party's win in these states.

In response, the minister said that the Arunachal gov-

ernment too, provided various facilities to the womenfolk of the state.

"Views could be divergent among women on the issue of menstruation,

Many may not want to disclose it. We will discuss the issue elaborately with the stakeholders," Libang said, further requesting Ering to withdraw the resolution.

The Congress MLA, in keeping with the request, withdrew the resolution before the House was adjourned for the day.

Double trouble

Nato and the EU are not overly excited about granting membership to Ukraine

Volodymyr Zelenskiy, fighting to save Ukraine's sovereignty with his back to the wall against the Russian invasion, has realised a fundamental truth. The United States may have only hastened President Vladimir Putin's attack by its unceasing provocation and followed it up with economic and social sanctions against Russia, but the Nato leadership that it influences is unwilling to allow entry to Ukraine. Zelenskiy did not hide his disappointment: "I have cooled down regarding this question a long time ago after we understood that ... Nato isn't prepared to accept Ukraine. The alliance is afraid of controversial things, and confrontation with Russia." That more or less puts paid to his dreams of being the most eastern representative of the military organisation. He has another disappointment in store for him. The European Union, too, is not exactly excited to fast-track membership for Ukraine. He is, thus, cut from any short-term relief in terms of formally associating his country with either of the two groupings. The minimum he can now expect from Fortress Europe is subsidised arms and food and carefully monitored entry of Ukrainian refugees. Zelenskiy should now watch how Nato assuages established European countries like Sweden and Finland which, worked up over blatant Russian aggression, are indicating they want to join Nato. Finland has bad memories of the erstwhile Soviet Union. It has an 800-mile border with Russia that makes it always worry about its sovereignty. Immediately after the Russian invasion, they dropped their longstanding military neutrality by extending military aid to Ukraine.



They, like Ukraine, are among Nato's Enhanced Opportunity Partners — the next best thing to being members. While Ukraine is cold-shouldered by Europe for shallow action to fight corruption, Finland and Sweden are considered sophisticated economies with stable political systems. How Nato deals with the three admission requests will determine how effective, or partial, Europe is in countering pressure from Russia. A double whammy for Zelenskiy is western European leaders rejecting Ukraine's appeal to fast-track its European Union membership. The EU says in one voice that it has sympathy for Ukraine but that in the face of opposition from France, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands, it cannot process the membership right away. Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland impressed upon the EU in Ukraine's favour, but in vain. Though EU is sitting on the application since 2008, it now argues that it cannot "open an accession procedure with a country at war". They worry that Ukraine, with its alleged corruption and precarious economic situation, if admitted to EU, may follow Poland and Hungary, which are charged with being democracy-deficit, or Bulgaria and Romania, accused of lingering corruption. The EU, which fast-tracked memberships of Bulgaria and Romania earlier, does not want to be hasty again. That is why it has also kept pending applications of six Balkan states — Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania and North Macedonia. Of course, in Ukraine's case, Russia's unpredictability is the real reason.



On firm footing

So far, so good. But the AAP must now work harder and be ready for greater responsibility

The AAP's broom has swept the Punjab Assembly election and registered a modest performance in Goa. It already is the ruling party in Delhi. But a lot more important than what it has achieved is what it aspires for — it's solidly on course to having a much wider national footprint. This year alone, the hitherto fledgling party has plans to test electoral waters in six States — Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Uttarakhand and Punjab. The Punjab super-victory, especially, is super-sweet for the party as it proved to be a giant killer and felled stalwarts like former Chief Ministers Parkash Singh Badal and Capt Amarinder Singh, sitting CM Charanjit Singh Channi and Punjab PCC president Navjot Singh Sidhu along the way. The Punjab win has brought it on a par with the Congress in terms of leading State Governments. The Congress is now left in power only in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh on its own and is a junior player in the coalition Governments in Maharashtra and Jharkhand. The Congress' existential crisis has deepened since the AAP is emerging as a viable option for the Opposition camp and is on the cusp of being recognised as a national party.

However, Arvind Kejriwal must remember that with great power comes great responsibility. The Punjab result has shown that people are looking for a change and for an Opposition party which can talk on governance issues, which means that the AAP's star is on course to touch its zenith. In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, it won four seats — all in Punjab. In 2019, it could bag just one, again in Punjab. But just see the spread of its influence just three years later — 92 seats in the 117-member House. So far, Kejriwal's main grouse has been that Delhi is the National Capital Territory and not a full State, which means that it lacks control over police, public order and land in the city. With Punjab in its kitty as a full-fledged State, this argument will not stand anymore. Another peculiar challenge any Government in Punjab faces is that it is a border State and, therefore, has a distinctive set of problems. However, it's making the right noises so far. Chief Minister-elect Bhagwant Mann said in his victory speech that he would take oath in the ancestral village of freedom fighter Bhagat Singh instead of the Raj Bhavan, and that Government offices would no longer house pictures of the Chief Minister.

The Mizoram way to bettering democracy

Distinct from the poll malpractices seen elsewhere in the country, this tiny State is a shining example of electoral reforms for others to emulate

Perhaps the most influential statement about democracy in modern times was made by former US President Abraham Lincoln on November 19, 1863, when he said democracy is a 'Government of the people, by the people and for the people'. A robust, zero-error, all-encompassing electoral mechanism is mandatory for electing a Government competent and committed to practising this very essence of democracy in a true sense. Lincoln's statement also implies that any citizen from any socio-economic spectrum, "having skills and mindset", has the right to become a public representative. Unfortunately, this is unthinkable today. In fact, the existing political ecosystem demotivates and eventually debars a common man from becoming people's representative. Two contributing factors to this situation that retrograde democracy are the soaring cost of elections and the yardsticks used for candidate selection.

These days, it is beyond the reach of common man to think of contesting even panchayat or municipal elections on ever-soaring cost considerations. Additionally, the selection of candidates is purely on the basis of caste and community considerations which demean and devalue the essence of democracy. A very dangerous trend has emerged where only a leader from a particular community is believed to articulate and represent the aspirations of that community and is perceived *bona fide* to become the leader of that community. In contrast, democracy demands, especially in a diverse demographic setup like ours, that any sincere person skilled enough to represent people from across communities and faiths can become their leader. The current situation, instead of aggregating, is polarising communities and is contrary to the civilisation traits of an enlightened society. Moreover, such practices create caste- and community-based leadership (politicians) rather than statesmen.

Of course, democracy should facilitate leadership from all



communities, but they should be the leader 'of' and 'for' all communities. The existing trend is detrimental to the survival of a healthy democracy because politicians think only for the next election, whereas statesmen think for the next generation. Thus, there is an urgent need to democratise the prevailing practices of democracy.

The initiatives made by the people of Mizoram, a tiny State in the North-east sandwiched between Myanmar and Bangladesh, in this context are exemplary, laudable and of far-reaching consequences. The Mizo is a close-knit, casteless tribal society having immense fellow-feeling and cooperation. Let us not wonder as to how a small State with nearly 14 lakh population can offer a solution to this cause since our civilisational discourse teaches us 'Let wisdom come from anywhere'. In fact, Mizoram was the first State in the country to practice an even-and-odd number cab system in the 1990s, which was copied by the Delhi Government much later.

Worried about the unhealthy and corrupt practices prevailing in the political landscape of the State during electioneering, the churches of Mizoram and NGOs, namely the Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizo Hmeichhia Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP,



THE KEY FEATURES OF THESE REFORMS ARE THAT THE MPF MEMBERS ACCOMPANY PARTY WORKERS AND CANDIDATES DOOR TO DOOR TO PREVENT THE PURCHASE OF VOTES. ONLY ABOUT 4-10 PEOPLE ARE ALLOWED DURING THE DOOR-TO-DOOR CAMPAIGN

an association of women) and Mizo Upa Pawl (MUP, an association of senior citizens) entered into a dialogue in 2005 and, after several rounds of threadbare discussions, resolved to reform and make it more democratic. It gave birth to the Mizoram People's Forum (MPF) in 2006 for conceptualising and implementing public-driven electoral reforms. The key features of these reforms are that the MPF members accompany candidates and party workers door to door to prevent the purchase of votes and distribution of largesse. Only about 4-10 people are allowed during the door-to-door campaign, and candidates and parties are not allowed to organise feasts during elections to lure voters. The MPF provides a common platform in all localities to all candidates for sharing their manifesto, and the local public listens to them and can even question them during open sessions. Volunteers of the MPF fix posters and flexes of the candidates and parties, about four big ones and 20 small ones, in each locality to avoid excessive use of election material.

The MPF volunteers, and not party workers, help voters to locate their rolls in the voter list to avoid campaigns in the neighbourhood of polling booths and to ensure peaceful elections by avoiding alter-



RAGHAVENDRA P TIWARI

cations. The MPF volunteers take rounds of the localities, especially at night during elections, to ensure that candidates and parties strictly adhere to these norms. The names of candidates and political parties found wanting in respect of these norms are made public through the common announcement system owned by the YMA with a view to defaming them and damaging their electoral prospects. Even written complaints are launched with the State Election Commission against the defaulters.

These measures keep a tab on the expenditure and keep elections within the reach of common man. This system has been religiously practised since 2006 during all parliamentary, Assembly and local body elections. Kudos to MPF volunteers for extending selfless service to strengthen democratic practices in the State. Can this experiment be replicated, scaled up and strengthened by NGOs and social organisations in other parts of the country for practising healthy democratic norms? After all, democracy is an organic system that can only evolve and prosper by reinventing it time and again. (The author is the Vice-Chancellor of the Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OPPN MUST RISE TO THE OCCASION

Sir — Abraham Lincoln said that democracy means "Government of the people, by the people and for the people". The Punjab poll results proved this concept true when the AAP got a thumping majority. India is the biggest democracy and the US is the oldest, and there is no need for an Election Commission in the US as people follow self-discipline. Moreover, the ingredients of a matured democracy include no place for caste, creed, religion, favouritism, nepotism, corruption, and so on. Here national issues such as employment, inflation, health care and education take the centre-stage.

In Punjab and UP, the margins of victory are substantial and both the Governments can easily implement their policies, which is a happy development in a democratic country. The results, however, are cause of concern for the SP in Uttar Pradesh and Akali Dal in Punjab. Finally, the common man is getting to realise the importance of his/her vote. These elections will have a direct impact on the parliamentary elections in 2024. It is in the interest of Opposition parties to frame a strategy for putting up a tough fight against the BJP so that there is no TINA (there is no alternative) factor then. **Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar**

MOST INDIAN STUDENTS SAFELY BACK

Sir — Thousands of Indian students, who were stuck in Ukrainian cities following the Russian invasion there, have safely returned home. By March 8, almost all stranded Indians had been evacuated from Ukraine. The last batch of the Indians stuck in Ukraine, from Sumy, has also been evacuated to safety in neighbouring Poland, Romania and Hungary. The return was made possible by the timely support of the Russian and Ukrainian Governments and we, as a nation, are thankful to them. More than 18,000 Indians have been brought back by special flights as of March 9.

The number of Indians airlifted by 75 special flights totalled 15,521 while wide-bodied IAF jets flew 12 missions

TMC an alternative to BJP?



Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee has averred that the BJP exists at the Centre because there is no alternative to it. She has even said the TMC is the only alternative to BJP, and the UPA no longer exists. But TMC's presence is limited only to West Bengal, though her statement about the non-existent UPA is closer to the truth. Going by her "no alternative" logic, the same applies to States where non-BJP Governments are in power. The same logic also applies when a non-BJP

Government exists at the Centre. Mamata is under the illusion that she has won the whole of India by staging a comeback to power consecutively for three terms.

Disintegration of the Janata Party gave rise to the birth of regional parties. Barring the BJP, all other constituents of the erstwhile Janata Party still remain regional parties. The regional parties lack national interest as their paramount concerns hover round their States. Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, all regional parties come under one umbrella and try to cobble up a majority to form the Government. If they fail in their endeavour, they go back to their States. But the BJP has evolved a national stature as it has pursued both national and State interests. The Congress is virtually facing extinction. If Mamata thinks that the TMC is an alternative to BJP, she is living an illusion. **KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru**

to bring back 2,467 passengers. Two Indians, Naveen from Karnataka and Chandran Jindal of Punjab, died in the course of the war. While Naveen was a victim of the shelling by the Russian military, Jindal died due to physical strain after suffering a stroke. Now, however, the student returnees stare at an uncertain future regarding their career in India as the majority of them cannot afford the education fee which runs into more than ₹1 crore compared to the few lakhs in Ukraine. **Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai**

NATO MUST SAVE RUSSIA'S NEIGHBOURS

Sir — After the dissolution of the erstwhile Soviet Union, 15 new independent nations emerged after 1990. One of them was Ukraine. All these 15 countries were never traditionally part of Soviet Russia. Rather, after the Russian Revolution between 1920 and 1945, they were forcibly annexed to the Union's territory. That is, these countries were never Russian by heart. The result was that as

soon as even a small wave of openness started flowing across Russia, the so-called 'perestroika' and 'glasnost' policies became immensely popular under Mikhail Gorbachev. These 15 provinces thus became independent.

President Putin wants to see them back into the Russian fold; that is why Ukraine has been made the first target. If it succeeds, the next target will be Moldova. But Russia can never attack three of these countries: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania because all three took Nato membership in 2004 itself. Therefore, Nato should without delay grant the group's membership to the rest of the countries, except Belarus, so that they can be saved from the evil eyes of Russia and their freedom and democracy can be protected. If that does not happen, the dictatorial Putin will take over all of them one by one. **Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur**

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

This Budget stands for continuity, to provide a tax predictable regime.

Finance Minister — Nirmala Sitharaman

The leadership President Zelenskiy has shown is remarkable... incredibly brave Ukrainian people.

US Secretary of State — Antony Blinken

After seven years of war, people in Yemen need protection and peace.

Actor — Angelina Jolie

Nothing's final yet...but I hope either Deepika Padukone or Alia Bhatt portray me in my biopic.

Olympic medallist — Mirabai Chanu


Our Government will complete the process of delimitation of wards.

Maharashtra Minister — Chhagan Bhujbal

FIRST COLUMN

TOWARDS A COMPOSITE
TECH EVOLUTION

Technology impacts life anywhere
and everywhere



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

Throughout the recorded history of mankind there are several references to technological marvels and breakthroughs. They have come in the form of building constructions, weapons of warfare and handling of water flows and other sectors. The evidences are available from the Andesregion, river valleys such as Tigris/Euphrates or Indus/Ganga, Yangtze area in China and more. Be it the Inca civilization, the Egyptian pyramids or Indian temples, there are many technological marvels. Some of them are yet waiting to be fully deciphered and replicated. The unique thing about all these experiences is that most of them could not replicate themselves. There was no continuum, and it came to an abrupt break, illustratively, some of the features of the temple architecture of peninsular India are still fully to be explained. How pyramids came up without any current evidence of cranes remains a marvel. How these powerful intellectual traditions came to an end is not known. But come to an end they did. The unique feature of the present 'industrial revolution' is not only that it has a technological base, but that revolution is a continuing one and has gradually spread to more areas. It is not only continuous and continuing but the spread is widening and deepening. That is what makes the technological dimension of this industrial revolution a unique one in human history. Having said that, the current technological revolution needs to be understood still more thoroughly. It has often meant faster, diversified and constant upgradation. It has given rise to a whole new technological expertise. An expertise which is required not only at the operational end where more and more people are covered but at other levels also. The other levels include an almost continuous upgradation of technology. Of this the mobile phone is a good example. Ever so frequently the technology reaches a new threshold and the commands become more complex or simple. Whichever way one looks at it, they keep changing. This simply means a technology is impacting every day lives on a continuous basis almost everywhere.

It's not possible to ignore this process because even in one of its manifestations, let us say digitalization - it has been adopted as a governance instrument almost universally. This leaves the technologically uneducated individual not just in the backwaters, but in wilderness. The person can attract clauses of legislation in areas where they may not simply have the ability or opportunity to adopt or even upgrade. It may need access to resources, of purchasing an instrument for which he may not even have the capacity. When daily living is itself a matter of doubt because of deficiency of resources available at an individual level, what can be the hope of looking at technological literacy let alone technological upgradation? Concerns like the one outlined above need to be flagged as important policy concerns which need to be built into the larger civil society debate. Excessive admiration and observation of technological compulsions may create divisions in the society which will ultimately need a response. However, it is much better to anticipate them. The above narrative amongst other things, intends to focus on an urgent need of policy realignment and refocussing of the protocols of progress. This has become more evident during the pandemic experience. There are several country cases from South Sudan to Singapore which needed to be understood to ensure that the evolutionary growth of the human race continues to be more uniform and manageable. The way to do it would be by creating a holistic vision of a composite technological future.

(The writer is a management consultant. The views expressed are personal.)

Modi magic & silent voters of U'khand

The voters were silent but they changed the political scenario by voting for Narendra Modi's developmental agenda

Elections in Uttarakhand have always been a subject of intense debate, speculation and surprises. The defeat of the chief minister's face of the two national parties Pushkar Singh Dhami of BJP and Harish Rawat of Congress is not only shocking but also indicates that besides their over confidence and working style there was a general rejection of the voters.

If one compares this election with the fourth assembly election the difference was that the fifth election was not fought by BJP on any face but Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the only face that allowed a landslide victory which no exit poll could predict.

The 2017 election was unusual in the history of Uttarakhand's elections as till then BJP or Congress could hardly manage to form the government without the support of other parties because they lacked majority votes. Moreover, before the fourth election the margin of winning and losing between BJP and Congress always used to be less than 2 per cent which drastically increased as the BJP with a vote share of 46.5 per cent meant a clear-cut edge over Congress whose vote share remained 33.5 per cent only.

Interestingly, in 2012 when Congress secured 33.79 per cent vote it could capture only 32 seats and formed the government with the help of PDF. In 2007 BJP formed the Government with a vote share of 29.59 per cent and Congress was left behind at 26.91 per cent. It clearly shows that up to 2012 the difference of 2 to 3 per cent allowed BJP or Congress to form the government and this left scope for political bargains with independents or other smaller regional parties. But the fourth election put an end to this instability by giving a huge margin of votes for BJP. The voters were silent but they changed the political scenario by voting for Modi's developmental agenda highlighted through Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas.

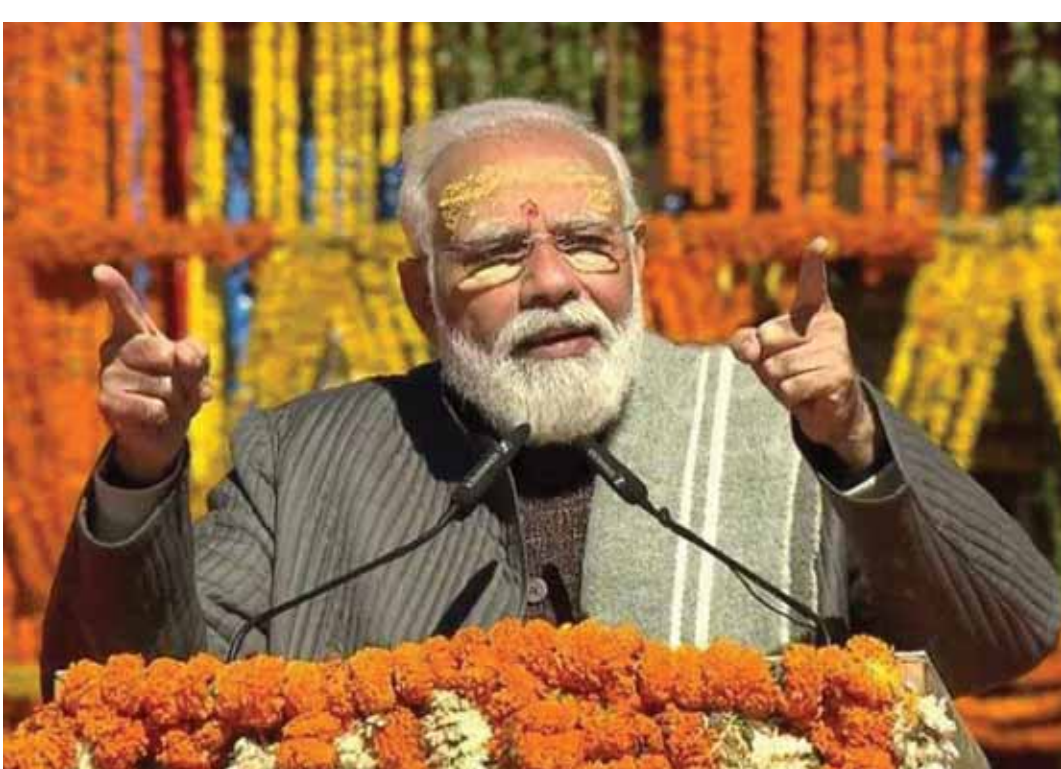
This time BJP's impressive win in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand clearly indicates that Modi's magic has not vanished and it still has great appeal to people throughout India. Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas and Sabka Viswas and Sankalp Say Siddhi Tak acted as a magic pill for the voters. In UP and Uttarakhand historically, the governments always changed every five years due to anti-incumbency factor but in 2022 the repetition of the BJP Governments in both the states is unprecedented. It indicates that there was no anti-incumbency but pro-incumbency. In UP the magic of Modi and Yogi both have lured the voters. However, despite this, Pushkar Singh Dhami failed to bloom.. Besides, Dhami did not get time to prove his worth as he was inducted very recently as chief minister and his time and energy was wasted more in appeasing the rebels rather than converting promises into actions.

In Uttarakhand's fifth assembly elec-



THE VOTERS PROVED WRONG EXIT POLL PREDICTIONS THAT IT WOULD BE A TIE BETWEEN THE BJP AND CONGRESS. FORMER CONGRESS CHIEF MINISTER HARISH RAWAT LOST BY A BIG MARGIN OF VOTES AND THIS DEFEAT HAS PUT AN END NOT ONLY TO HIS POLITICAL AMBITIONS AND CAREER BUT ALSO ON THE FUTURE OF CONGRESS IN THE STATE

(The writer is Vice-Chancellor, HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar, Garhwal, Uttarakhand. The views expressed are personal.)



tions, the voters were silent and less votes were also polled. In the fourth assembly election the vote percentage was 65.56 and in fifth election it came down to 62.5. The voting percentage of women was 68.72 but in fifth assembly election it came down slightly to 67.2. For men it was 61.11 per cent in 2017 and in 2022 it increased to 62.6 per cent. But it is also clear that the women voted in large number for BJP in the hills as most of the seats went to the BJP. The win of BJP's Shailla Rani Rawat from Kedarnath was also exceptional as she won this seat despite several odds. Most of the candidates of BJP in hills and plain areas could retain their seats second time due to Modi magic. In Dehradun and Pauri district BJP won all the assembly seats.

Contrary to the exit poll predictions that it would be a tie between BJP and Congress and the independents will have a role in government-making, the mood of the voters proved them wrong. The Congress candidate Harish Rawat lost with a big margin of votes and this defeat has put an end not only to his political ambitions and career but also on the future of Congress. However, his daughter Anupama Rawat won from Haridwar seat.

The voting trend in 2022 is indicative of the fact that though the BJP won the majority votes it also lost almost nine seats which shows annoyance of the voters towards the individual candidates. The failure of the BJP to maintain stability despite the huge mandate of fifty-seven seats reflected that the political culture of induction of mid-terms chief ministers (three chief ministers in a span of four and half years) has not changed which was not appreciated and its margin of victory came down from fifty-seven seats to forty-eight seats. The internal strife, unrest and struggle for power in the BJP which allowed leaders like Dr. Harak Singh Rawat, Yashpal Arya and others to join Congress was also not cherished by the voters. As these and others leaders have been changing their loyalties very frequently therefore, the voters not only rejected some of them but also their manipulative tactics. In this election BJP captured almost all the seats in Garhwal Hills and only limited seats were won by Congress. UKD associated with Uttarakhand's creation since the 1970s could not open its account, the BSP just got only one seat and Nirdalayee which included rebels from BJP also got 2 seats. The Yamunotri seat went to the BJP rebel. BJP leaders like Chandan Ram Das registered a win from Bageshwar for the fourth time. The rebel leaders of BJP who joined Congress could not retain their seats or the seats of their wards like Anukirti Gusian, the daughter-in-law of the rebel leader Dr. Harak Singh Rawat, lost from



ANNPURNA NAUTIYAL

POINT COUNTER POINT



INDIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA IS GOING THROUGH A DIFFICULT PHASE AFTER BEIJING VIOLATED CERTAIN BORDER AGREEMENTS. — EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER S JAISHANKAR




OUR DIFFERENCES OVER DISPUTED BOUNDARY AND THE RECENT SETBACKS IN TIES SHOULD NOT IMPACT OVERALL SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS. —CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER WANG YI

Punjab win catapults AAP to the national level

The spectacular win in Punjab could make Arvind Kejriwal shift his focus to Gujarat, which is going to polls later this year

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has done a Delhi in Punjab. It swept the Delhi Assembly elections in 2015 winning 67 seats of the 70 seats. Cut to 2022, it won more than 90 of 117 seats in Punjab. In the process, it ended the two-party (SAD and Congress) dominance in the northern State by emerging as the third alternative. AAP convenor and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal announced to go national, buoyed also by two seats with 6.67 per cent vote share in Goa. It has made an entry into Gujarat and trying to get a foothold in Uttarakhand and UP. AAP's big win in Punjab is also an indication of India's changing political landscape.

With Congress having weakened significantly, it is the regional parties like AAP,



RAJESH KUMAR

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

TMC and DMK that are halting the BJP juggernaut. Led by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, the 10-year-old party is already bringing significant change, and later this year, it would be interesting to keep an eye on its vote share in Gujarat, the home state of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The main challenger for the BJP is now AAP.

Promise of better public services, good quality schools and hospitals, which got the AAP two consecutive terms in Delhi, remained the consistent campaign theme for Kejriwal's party in Punjab. Caught in a multi-cornered contest along with Congress and the Shiromani Akali Dal, Kejriwal had unveiled a 10-point 'Punjab Model', drawn from its model of governance in Delhi,



and assured the voters of creating a new-age, prosperous, and forward-looking Punjab.

The emergence of AAP in Punjab is an indication that the people there are fed up with the binary of the Akali Dal and Congress that has dominated its politics for decades, ever

since the state was formed. It wants to give the AAP a chance to tackle its many woes. It does not want the elderly, do-nothing, Captain Amarinder Singh in another configuration. It rejects the noisy, Pakistan/Khalistan-loving Navjot Sidhu, and the sudden emergence of Christian-Sikh Charanjit Singh Channi. It would not countenance the corrupt Badals yet again.

The AAP victory has brought it closer to attain the coveted status of a 'national party'. The criteria to become a national party includes bagging at least 6 per cent of valid vote share in any four or more states in Lok Sabha or state assembly elections. Kejriwal's party got 54 per cent vote share in the last Delhi assembly elections. It currently has 42.01 per cent vote share in Punjab and 6.677 per cent vote share in Goa. In Uttarakhand, AAP so far has 3.32 per cent vote share and just 0.34 per cent in Uttar Pradesh. It did not contest in Manipur. Apart from BJP and Congress, Trinamool Congress, CPI(M), CPI, Bahujan Samaj Party and Nationalist Congress Party are the other 'recognised' political parties in India.

AAP has had a roller coaster ride with a meteoric rise in the 2014 parliamentary polls but nosedived in the 2017 assembly elections. It won 20 seats with a vote share of 23.7 per cent in the last assembly elections, but didn't announce a chief ministerial candidate. The silence sparked speculations that Arvind Kejriwal wanted to become the Punjab

chief minister. However, this time around, the party did not repeat the mistake. It declared its Sangrur MP, Bhagwant Singh Mann, a popular Sikh face in the Malwa region, as its chief ministerial candidate.

AAP learned from its previous mistakes in Punjab when it was hesitant to put faith in local leaders. In 2016, it removed its State president Sucha Singh Chhotepur over corruption allegations. The party's attempt to remote-control the state from New Delhi failed in 2017, where it was restricted to 20 MLAs in the 117-State assembly. AAP has come a long way since.

The party's splendid performance is going to create ripples that could lead to realignments at the national level too. Political observers see it as an

endorsement of Kejriwal as a prospective national leader against Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The spectacular win in Punjab could make Kejriwal shift his focus to Gujarat which is going for polls later this year. AAP has already made considerable gains in the civic elections in Gandhi Nagar and Surat last year.

AAP, ruling in Delhi for the past seven years, has come with a model of governance (Delhi Model) that encompasses its policies and programmes including free power and water supply, free bus travel for women and fighting corruption. Political experts feel that AAP will make its presence in some more states on free water, free power and free bus travel in the coming elections.

Russian strikes hit western Ukraine as offensive widens

AP ■ LVIV (UKRAINE)

Russia widened its military offensive in Ukraine on Friday, striking near airports in the west of the country for the first time, as observers and satellite photos indicated that its troops, long stalled in a convoy outside the capital Kyiv, were trying to maneuver to encircle the city.

With the invasion now in its third week, the U.S. And its allies prepared to step up their efforts to isolate and sanction Russia by revoking its most favoured trading status. The move comes amid mounting outrage after a deadly airstrike hit a maternity hospital in the key Ukrainian port city of Mariupol, under an increasingly constricting 10-day-old siege.

The new airstrikes in western Ukraine were likely a message from Russia that no area was safe, Western and Ukrainian officials say. Russian forces have struggled in the face of heavier-than-expected resistance and supply and morale problems. So far, they have made the most advances on cities in the south and east while stalling in the north and around Kyiv.

Strikes on the western Lutsk airfield killed two Ukrainian servicemen and wounded six people, according to the head of the surrounding Volyn region, Yuriy Pohulyayko. In Ivano-Frankivsk, residents were ordered to shelters after an air raid alert, Mayor Ruslan Martinkiv said.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov



said Russia used high-precision long-range weapons Friday to put military airfields in Lutsk and Ivano-Frankivsk "out of action." He did not provide details.

New satellite photos, meanwhile, appeared to show a massive Russian convoy outside the Ukrainian capital had fanned out into towns and forests near Kyiv, with artillery pieces raised for firing in another potentially ominous movement.

The 40-mile (64-kilometer) line of vehicles, tanks and artillery had massed outside the city early last week, but its advance appeared to stall as reports of food and fuel shortages circulated. U.S. Officials said Ukrainian troops also targeted the convoy with anti-tank missiles.

The satellite imagery, from

Maxar Technologies, showed the 40-mile (64-kilometer) line of vehicles, tanks and artillery outside Kyiv had been redeployed, the company said. Armored units were seen in towns near the Antonov Airport north of the city. Some vehicles moved into forests, Maxar reported, with towed howitzers nearby in position to open fire.

It appeared the convoy forces were moving west around the city, trying to encircle it to the south, according to Jack Watling, a research fellow at a British defense think-tank, the Royal United Services Institute. "They're about halfway around now, to be able to close off on the south," he told BBC radio.

He said they were likely preparing for a "siege rather than assault" on Kyiv because

of continuing low morale and logistical problems.

The British Ministry of Defense said that after making "limited progress" because of logistical mishaps and Ukrainian resistance, Russian forces were trying to "re-set and re-posture" their troops, gearing up for operations against Kyiv. Moscow also gave new indications that it plans to bring fighters from Syria into the conflict.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Russia knew of "more than 16,000 applications" from countries in the Middle East, many of them from people who he said had helped Russia against the Islamic State group, according to a Kremlin transcript.

Shoigu did not specify Syria and his numbers could not be confirmed. But since 2015, Russian forces have backed Syrian President Assad against various groups opposed to his rule, including Islamic State.

Responding to Shoigu, President Vladimir Putin approved bringing in "volunteer" fighters and told his defense minister to help them "move to the combat zone."

Increasing the pressure on Moscow, the U.S. And other nations were poised later Friday to announce the revocation of Russia's "most favored nation" trade status, which would allow higher tariffs to be imposed on some Russian imports. Western sanctions have already dealt a severe blow to Russia, causing the ruble to plunge, foreign businesses to flee and prices to rise sharply.

Russian airstrikes also targeted for the first time the eastern city of Dnipro, a major industrial hub and Ukraine's fourth-largest city in a strategic position on the Dnieper River. Three strikes hit early Friday, killing at least one person, according to Ukrainian Interior Ministry adviser Anton Heraschenko.

The head of the Kyiv Region administration, Oleksiy Kuleba, said a missile hit the town of Baryshivka, about 20 kilometers east of Kyiv's main international Boryspil Airport. He reported significant damage to residences but no immediate casualty toll.

In Syria, Russia backed the government in imposing long,

Agencies say 2.5 million people flee Ukraine

AP ■ GENEVA

The International Organization for Migration says 2.5 million people have fled Ukraine since Russia invaded more than two weeks ago.

IOM spokesman Paul Dillon said in a text message that the figures, taken from national governments, were up to date through Friday morning.

He said that more than 1.5 million refugees have gone to neighbouring Poland and that some 116,000 of the refugees are "third-country nationals," not Ukrainians.

The U.N. High commissioner for refugees, Filippo Grandi, also gave the 2.5 million total for refugees and said his agency estimates that about two million people are displaced inside Ukraine as well.

Single

brutal sieges on opposition-held cities, wreaking heavy destruction on residential area and causing widespread civilian casualties.

That history — along with the ongoing siege of the Azov Sea port of Mariupol — has

Putin approves 'volunteer fighters' to Ukraine

AP ■ NEW YORK

Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered that so-called volunteer fighters should be brought into Ukraine.

Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said Russia knew of "more than 16,000 applications" from countries in the Middle East, many of them from people who he said helped Russia against the Islamic State group, according to a Kremlin transcript.

They want "to take part in what they consider a liberation movement," Shoigu said, on the side of Russia-backed separatist regions in eastern Ukraine. Since 2015, Russian forces have backed Syrian President Bashar al-Assad against various groups opposed to his rule, including Islamic State.

Putin told Shoigu that Russia should help would-be volunteers to "move to the combat zone" and contrasted them with what he called foreign "mercenaries" fighting for Ukraine.

raised fears of similar bloodshed in Ukraine.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said Russian-backed fighters have advanced up to 800 meters of Mariupol from the east, north and west, further

OP senators urge Biden to send Polish warplanes to Ukraine

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Republican US senators are imploring the Biden administration to reverse course and allow the transfer of Poland's MiG fighter jets to the Ukrainians to fight the Russian invasion, a sign the Defense Department's rejection of the offer may be running into steep resistance on Capitol Hill.

Forty GOP senators signed onto a letter from Sens. Joni Ernst of Iowa and Mitt Romney of Utah urging President Joe Biden to answer the plea from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who told lawmakers over the weekend that if the US could not help with a no-fly zone over his skies, it could at least send more planes for his people to defend against the attack from Russia.

Enough talk. People are dying," Romney said at a press conference on Capitol Hill. "Send them the planes they need."

squeezing the city which has the Azov Sea to its south. Konashenkov said the advance was being conducted by fighters from the separatist-held Donetsk region, the standard Russian line for fighting in the east.

Premier Li offers China's help for 'grave' Ukraine situation

AP ■ BEIJING

China's premier on Friday called the situation in Ukraine "grave" and offered Beijing's help in playing a "positive role" for peace while continuing to refuse to criticise Russia.

Li Keqiang told reporters at an annual news conference that "we support and encourage all efforts that are conducive to a peaceful settlement of the crisis."

"The pressing task now is to prevent tension from escalating or even getting out of

Li Keqiang told reporters at an annual news conference that "we support and encourage all efforts that are conducive to a peaceful settlement of the crisis."

control," Li said.

China has largely sided with Russia in the conflict, which it has refused to refer to as a war or invasion. The US accuses Beijing of helping spread false news and disinformation coming out of Moscow.

NH lawmakers firmly reject seceding from United States

AP ■ CONCORD (US)

The New Hampshire House overwhelmingly rejected a proposal Thursday that called for the state to secede from the United States, although 13 lawmakers supported it.

Under the secession proposal, voters would have been asked to amend the state constitution to add that New Hampshire "peaceably declares independence from the United States and immediately proceeds as a sovereign nation. All other references to the United States in this constitution, state statutes and regulations are nullified."

Changing the New Hampshire constitution requires the support of three-fifths of the Legislature to put the question to voters, who then must approve amendments by at least a two-thirds majority.

More than 300 lawmakers voted against secession. But supporters of the measure like Matthew Santonastaso, a Republican from Rindge, argued it was just a matter of time before the union collapses.

"National divorce is going to happen. It's inevitable, and we have an opportunity to get ahead of this," he said.

Rep. Timothy Smith, D-Manchester, referred to the large portraits looming over lawmakers in the House chamber as he argued against the bill. Voting for it, he said, would amount to treason.

"We stand in the shadow, literally, of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington, and we are considering legislation to take a star off of that flag," he said. "We have legislation now seeking to destroy the constitution of the United States. That is beyond shameful. It is beyond disgraceful and it is a stain on the proud history of this state that we even have to entertain this."

Saudi oil refinery attacked by drone, sparking small fire

AP ■ RIYADH

A drone attack on an oil refinery in Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh, started a small fire that did not cause injuries or affect supplies, the kingdom's Energy Ministry said early Friday. The statement did not specify where the drone strike was launched from. Later Friday, Yemen's rebel Houthis who have been battling a Saudi-led coalition in their country since 2015 claimed responsibility for the drone strike. In a video statement, the rebels' military spokesman, Brig. Gen. Yehia Sarie, said Houthi forces had targeted an Aramco facility in Riyadh in a multiple drone attack.

AP calls for release of Ethiopian journalist in detention

AP ■ NEW YORK

Amir Aman Kiyaro, a freelance journalist accredited to The Associated Press, marked 100 days in detention without charge in Ethiopia this week, prompting the news organisation and press freedom advocates to reiterate their calls to free him immediately.

"Kiyaro has not been charged with any crime and is being held unjustly," AP Executive Editor Julie Pace said in a statement Thursday. The video journalist was detained Nov. 28 in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, under the country's war-related state of emergency powers.

The state of emergency was lifted last month, with the government citing changing conditions in the deadly conflict between Ethiopian forces and those of the northern

Tigray region.

"As we have said, Kiyaro is an independent journalist who has done important work in Ethiopia on all sides of the conflict. It is clear he is being targeted for his journalism," Pace said.

Kiyaro's last court appearance was Monday, when a judge denied him bail. The judge granted more time for the police to investigate his case and set March 18 as the next court date.

Officials with the Ethiopian Media Authority, the prime minister's office, the foreign ministry and other government offices have not responded to repeated requests from the AP for information about Kiyaro.

State media, citing federal police, have said he is accused of "serving the purposes" of what they called a terrorist

group by interviewing its officials. Local journalist Thomas Engida was arrested at the same time and is facing similar charges.

"They arrested my son for doing his job, he hasn't committed any crimes," Amir's mother, Foziya Teweldebirhan, said.

Federal police inspector Tesfaye Olani has told state media that the journalists violated the state of emergency law and Ethiopia's anti-terrorism law, and the violations could lead to sentences of seven to 15 years behind bars.

That alarms Kiyaro's wife, Sisay Tadele, who married him last year and is eight months pregnant.

"Because of Amir's arrest, both the family and Amir himself are going through tremendous physical, emotional and psychological pain," she said.

"And as a pregnant woman, I myself am put through a horrible situation. I say and also believe my husband shouldn't have been in jail in the first place, let alone spend more than 100 days away from his family, and ask the Ethiopian prime minister and government for the immediate release of my husband."

After three months of arbitrary detention, "it cannot be any clearer that authorities have no case against Amir Amar Kiyaro and Thomas Engida," Muthoki Mumo, sub-Saharan Africa representative with the Committee to Protect Journalists, said.

Terara Network editor Temerat Negara also remains behind bars in Ethiopia's Oromia region and faces allegations that include incitement and defamation of officials, Mumo said.

N Korea may fire big missile to put spy satellite in space

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea has tested parts of its biggest intercontinental ballistic missile in two recent launches, the US and South Korean militaries said, a suggestion it is likely to fire that weapon soon to put a spy satellite into orbit in what would be its most significant provocation in years.

North Korea's neighbours detected two ballistic launches last week. North Korea later said it was testing cameras and other systems to be installed on a spy satellite but didn't disclose what missiles or rockets it used.

After analysing the launches, the US and South Korean militaries said they concluded they involved an ICBM system under development that North Korea first unveiled during a

military parade in October 2020.

"The purpose of these tests, which did not demonstrate ICBM range, was likely to evaluate this new system before conducting a test at full range in the future, potentially disguised as a space launch," Pentagon press secretary John Kirby said in a statement Thursday. South Korea's Defense Ministry released a similar assessment and said North Korea must immediately stop any act that raises tensions and regional security concerns.

That ICBM cited in the US and the South Korean statements is the Hwasong-17, North Korea's biggest missile, which could potentially fly up to 15,000 kilometers, far enough to strike anywhere in the US and beyond.

The 25-meter (82-foot)

missile, which was shown again at a defense exhibition in North Korea's capital, Pyongyang, last year, has yet to be test-launched.

North Korea has already demonstrated the potential to reach the US mainland with flight tests of other ICBMs, the Hwasong-14 and Hwasong-15, in 2017.

Some analysts say developing a larger missile could mean the country is trying to arm its long-range weapons with multiple warheads to overcome missile defense systems.

North Korea's two missile launches were the latest in a string of tests in recent months, an apparent attempt to modernize its arsenal and apply pressure on the Biden administration as nuclear disarmament talks remain stalled.

Japan marks 11 years since quake, tsunami, nuclear disaster

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan on Friday paid tribute to the victims and renewed searches for those still missing from a massive earthquake and tsunami 11 years ago that also triggered a nuclear disaster in Fukushima where tens of thousands still cannot return home. Some residents in the tsunami-hit northern prefectures of Iwate and Miyagi walked down to the coast or their memorable places to pray for their loved ones who were killed or washed away.

At 2:46 p.m., the moment a magnitude 9.0 quake struck on March 11, 2011, triggering a massive tsunami, the people observed a moment of silence.

The earthquake and subsequent tsunami that slammed into the coastal Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant destroyed its power and cooling func-

tions, triggering meltdowns in three of its six reactors.

At a ceremony held by the Fukushima prefecture, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida offered his prayer for the tsunami and quake victims and renewed his pledge to support the ongoing reconstruction efforts in Fukushima. "Recovery from the nuclear disaster requires long-term response," he said, pledging that the government will provide support to improve the living environment for returning residents and to revitalise local industries. Kishida traveled to Fukushima despite the government's discontinuation of the state ceremony after the 10th anniversary last year.

In Natori, in the Miyagi prefecture, residents released colorful balloons carrying messages for their lost loved ones after the 2:46 p.m. Moment of silence.

Industrial growth at 1.3% in Jan: Govt data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Industrial production expanded by 1.3 per cent in January on an annual basis, mainly on account of improved performance of mining and manufacturing sectors, official data showed on Friday.

The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) had contracted by 0.6 per cent in January 2021. As per the data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the growth in the mining sector was 2.8 per cent against a contraction of 2.4 per cent in January 2021.

The manufacturing sector expanded by 1.1 per cent in January, compared to a contraction of 0.9 per cent in the year-ago month.

However, growth in power generation decelerated to 0.9 per cent as against an expansion of 5.5 per cent in January 2021.



In the April-January period of the current fiscal, the IIP growth stood at 13.7 per cent as against a contraction of 12 per cent in the corresponding period of 2020-21.

Women homeownership rises in last 2-3 years: Kotak

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Homeownership by working women has gone up over the last 2-3 years and their number as primary loan applicants are rising, even as the overall percentage is still very low, a top Kotak Mahindra Bank official has said. This trend will strengthen their financial independence and decision making, the official added.

Women empowerment is one of the top priorities of the bank and it has been offering a unique savings account - Kotak Silk - to cater to the specific needs of the women account holders, Shanti Ekambaram President-Consumer Banking, Kotak Mahindra Bank (Kotak) said.

"Today working women are buying houses. We are seeing an increasing number of working women buying homes, and they can keep their husbands or father as co-applicants, as per their choice. I think this has gone up significantly over the last 2 to 3 years.

"They are the primary applicant for the loan. Overall, it is still a small percentage, but

it is not just happening in metro cities, it is happening across the country," Ekambaram said.

Working women wanting to own homes and rise in the application is a very welcome sign, she added.

Talking about Kotak Silk, the official said the bank initiated the programme in 2012.

"I think, women empowerment at work has come a long way. At organisations, diversity has become a very big theme. Silk is designed to keep women in mind. For example, she does shopping for the family - for groceries and other things as top of the list items. So, we have our whole debit card and credit card products around that, discounts, offers and other benefits," Ekambaram said.

She said the bank's whole theme around Silk is financial literacy, financial independence and financial empowerment of women. It is part of the bank's ESG goals, as more and more companies are adopting diversity under the ESG (environmental, social and governance) mandate.

"Lot more women are coming into the workstream and even the women who work, all of them are not very comfortable with finance. And we want to spread the message of financial literacy, which comes with financial independence. Women must understand what to do with their money, invest their money, save their money," the official noted.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Applicant Brij Kishor Goel S/o Shrinivasa Goel and Sarla Devi Alias Sarla Goel W/o Shrinivasa Goel/R/o Rajnagar, Ghaziabad have lost their land chain registry papers somewhere in Raj Nagar, Ghaziabad. **Registry Serial No 16590 dated 12/12/1978 and Page no 22 of Registry Serial no 11896 dated 28/11/2011.** This property is free from any dispute. Brij Kishor Goel S/o Shrinivasa Goel and Sarla Devi Alias Sarla Goel W/o Shrinivasa Goel R/o Rajnagar, Ghaziabad

PUBLIC NOTICE
We, (1) Mr. Virendra Narola son of Late Sh. Jeshth Anand Narola, and (2) Mrs. Promila Narola wife of Mr. Virendra Narola both resident of C-109, Shivalki, Malviya Nagar, New Delhi, both presently residing at Hamdan Street, Al Ain Tower, Apt 1705, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, have lost the following Original documents with respect to our residential Villa No. 10, on Road No. T-16, DLF City, Phase-III, Gurugram-122002 (Haryana):
A) Original Allotment Letter, B) Payment Receipts, (C) Original Sale Deed Vaska No. 23967 dated 22-01-2008, D) Original Possession Letter, E) File Containing other relevant documents
Incuse found may please forwarded to our GPA Mrs. Manju Mehta daughter of Sh. Gautam Dev Raihan resident of W-5-D/5, Western Avenue, Sanik Farm, New Delhi-110062

PUBLIC NOTICE
FORM No. URC-2
Advertisement giving notice about registration under part I of Chapter XXI of the Act (Pursuant to section 374 (b) of The Companies Act 2013 and rule 4 (1) of the Companies (Authorized to register) rules 2014).
1. Notice is hereby given that in pursuant of Sub Section (2) of section 366 of the Companies Act, 2013, an application is proposed to be made after fifteen days hereof but before the expiry of thirty days hereinafter to the Registrar at New Delhi that BHARATEQ SOLUTIONS PRIVATE LIMITED, may be registered under Part I of chapter XXI of Companies Act 2013, as a company limited by shares.
2. The Principal Object of the company are as: To carry on the business of providing consultancy services in the field of engineering, process designing, infrastructure, civil contracting, mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) contracting, project management and allied fields and to engage in providing business consultancy.
3. A copy of the draft Memorandum and Articles of Association of the proposed company may be inspected at the office at Flat No. 402, Plot No. 22, Vedanta, Sector-2, Faridabad, Haryana-121004.
4. Notice is hereby given that any person objecting to this application may communicate their objection in writing to the Registrar at Central Registration Centre (CRC), Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA), Plot 6, 7 & 8 Sector-5, IIT Manesar Gurgaon-122050 within Twenty-one days from the date of publication of this notice, with a copy to the company at its registered office.
1. ANSHUL DHAMANI (DESIGNATED PARTNER)
2. SWATTEE DHIMAN (DESIGNATED PARTNER)

In the Court of Sh. Shirish Aggarwal: Administrative Civil Judge-cum-ARC(Central) Delhi-110054.
SC.No. 39/2022 N.D.O.H 15.03.2022
Mr. Mahesh Garg Vs. The State & Ors.
To,
Sh. Mahesh Garg S/o Late Sh. O.P. Garg, R/o C-47, Kharsa No. 13 and 14, Block-C, Gali No. 6, Opposite Bake Bihari Mandir, Majlis Park, Adarsh Nagar, North West Delhi, Delhi-110033
FOR SUCCESSION CERTIFICATE UNDER INDIAN SUCCESSION ACT, 1925
To,
All Concerned
Whereas in the above noted petition the applicant/petitioner has applied for Succession Certificate to the Hon'ble Court Under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act, 1925 in respect of the debt and securities amount of Rs xxx, As per record to be standing in the name of **Late Sh. Om Prakash Garg and Late Smt. Phoolwati** deceased.
Whereas the 15.03.2022 at 10' o'clock in the forenoon has been fixed for hearing or the application notice is hereby given to this concerned.
Given under my hand and the seal of the court on this 10.03.2022
Sd/- (Shirish Aggarwal)
ACJ/ARC. (Central) Delhi

सार्वजनिक सूचना
नगर निगम मुख्यालय के पब्लिक रिकार्ड में यूनिट आर्इओओनो 234C333U341X पत्ता 144, Block A, Greenwoods City, Sector 45, Gurugram, Tehsil & District Gurugram, Sale Deed bearing Vaska No. 10346 dated 01.12.1988 अनुसार उक्त यूनिट के मालिक Shri Devendra Nath Verma and Miss Madhvi Verma daughter of Mr. devendra Nath Verma है। अब श्री देवेन्द्र नाथ वर्मा की मृत्यु दिनांक 15.04.2013 में Miss Madhvi Verma की मृत्यु दिनांक 31.12.2021 के उपरान्त Ms. Ayesha Sethi D/o Shri Pradeep Sethi ने Will which is duly stamped on 25.12.2021 vide no. 1078621 by Consulate General/India, New York, USA और Affidavit for Legal Heir दिनांक 14.02.2022 प्रस्तुत कर याचना की कि उक्त यूनिट की कानूनी मालिक Ms. Ayesha Sethi D/o Shri Pradeep Sethi है। अतः उक्त यूनिट की मालिकता प्रार्थी के नाम दर्ज की जाये।
यदि इस मालिकी/भजन/यूनिट 234C333U341X पत्ता 144, Block A, Greenwoods City, Sector 45, Gurugram, Tehsil & District Gurugram के नाम दर्ज करने हेतु किसी भी व्यक्ति को कोई एवरज है तो वह समाचार पत्र में प्रकाशित होने की 30 दिन (तीस दिन) के अन्दर-अन्दर अपना एवरज अवेकलरशी कार्यालय में दे सकता है। समाचारित समाप्त होने के उपरान्त भजन कर रिकार्ड में प्रार्थी का नाम स्वामन्तरण कर दिया जाएगा। विरुद्ध किए गए निगम उत्तरवर्ती नहीं होगा। सूचित होये।
विषय कार्यालय अधिकांश-IV नगर निगम मुख्यालय।
पूरा प्रमाणिक: MC6/ZTO-ND/2022/32134 दिनांक: 10.3.22

INDIAN RAILWAYS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(RAILWAY BOARD)
E-TENDER No. 2022RSI8741TC
Director, Railways Stores (W), Ministry of Railways, Railway Board, Government of India invites e-tender for procurement of 7,73,274 Nos. Grooved Seal to RD50 Specification No. WD-50-Misc-2007 of Oct 2007 or latest amendments, if any for AAR Standard Class 'E' (6" x 11") bearings used on CASNUB bogies of freight stock.
2.0 The interested tenderers are advised to visit the website <http://reps.gov.in> for details of the tender and submission of their e-bids.
3.0 No manual offers will be accepted against e-tender.
4.0 Tender will be closed at 15:00 hours on 26.04.2022.
Director, Railway Stores (W), Ministry of Railways, Railway Board, New Delhi, for and on behalf of the President of India. 540/2022
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

उत्तराखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग
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पिन कोड:- 249404
संख्या:- 89(1) / 21 / गोपन-2 / महाकाकाएणपीएसओ(प्रो) / 2021-22, दिनांक: 11 मार्च, 2022
विज्ञापित
उत्तराखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग द्वारा दिनांक 30 जनवरी, 2022 को आयोजित महाधिक्रवा कार्यालय (अधिष्ठान) में अपर निजी सचिव परीक्षा-2021 के प्रारम्भिक परीक्षा का परिणाम दिनांक 11 मार्च, 2022 को घोषित कर दिया गया है। परीक्षा परिणाम उत्तराखण्ड लोक सेवा आयोग की वेबसाइट www.ukpsc.gov.in पर उपलब्ध है। अस्थितियों के प्रार्ताक एवं कट ऑफ मार्क्स से सम्बन्धित विवरण अंतिम चयन परिणाम घोषित किये जाने के साथ ही आयोग की वेबसाइट पर प्रसारित की जाएगी।
(कर्मन्त्र सिंह) सचिव

Sale Notice
The under mentioned Assets will be sold through auction on **"AS IS WHERE IS BASIS"** and **"AS IS WHAT IS BASIS"** for recovery of dues as per court orders, in the following cases:-

Case Details	Asset Details
ICICI BANK LTD Vs. AMAR DEEP, SUIT No.6207/19/ 2016	Vehicle No- UP14BZ3674, Make & Model- MARUTI UDYOG LTD SWIFT VDI, Manu. Year- 2013
ICICI BANK LTD Vs. PAWAN SINGH, SUIT (COMM) No.15/19 (ID No.109/ 19)	Vehicle No- DL3CCM7604, Make & Model- MARUTI UDYOG LTD SWIFT VDI, Manu. Year- 2017
ICICI BANK LTD VS SURENDER DUTT, CS No. 506/ 18	Vehicle No- HR51BE3856, Make & Model- CHEVEROLET BEAT Diesel, Manu Year- 2014,
ICICI BANK LTD VS MUKESH SINGH, CS SCJ 1466/19	Vehicle No- DL1ZA5440, Make & Model- CHEVEROLET SAIL , Manu Year- 2016,
ICICI Bank Ltd. Vs. SATISH KUMAR SINGH, SUIT No.44/18 (ID No. 469/ 18)	Vehicle No- HR38V2764, Make & Model- HONDA AMAZE SMT, Manu. Year- 2016

Auction Date: 22-March-2022 From 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.
Place of Auction: Godara Yard, Khewat No. 166/1, Near Auti Kataria Chowk, Behind Gyan Devi, School, Sec- 17, Sukhrali, Gurugram- 122022
Contact Person- Rajeev Ranjan (8584874809)/ Jitendra Kumar (7304914763)
And

ICICI BANK LTD Vs SUNIL PAL, CS (COMM) No. 1609/21	Vehicle No- UP14DW1376, Make & Model - Volkswagen Ameo, Manu. Year- 2018
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Auction Date: 22-March-2022 From 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.
Place of Auction: MFC Ghaziabad Mahakal Parking Yard, Kharsa no 527, Village Banthla, Near Indane Gas Plant, Ghaziabad
Contact Person - Rajeev Ranjan (8584874809)/Jitendra Kumar (7304914763)
Terms of Sale
The particulars of the said asset specified herein above have been stated to the best of the information and knowledge of the undersigned, who shall however not be responsible for any error, misstatement or omission in the said particulars. The interested participant/s are therefore requested, in their own interest, to satisfy himself / themselves / itself with regard to the said asset and other relevant details pertaining to it before submitting the bids. All bidders are required to come at auction site with original KYC documents to participate in the auction.
Successfully bidder shall have to deposit sale amount within 5 days from the auction date by the way of pay order/demand draft RTGS/NEFT.
The intending bidders may visit at ICICI Bank Ltd, 1st Floor, SD Tower, Community Center, Plot No-7, Rohini Sector-8 New Delhi- 110085 for details and inspection of the said hypotheacted vehicles.

Markets extend gains for fourth day

Amid mixed global cues; pharma stocks shine

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Rising for the fourth straight day, benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty eked out modest gains after a choppy session on Friday amid a mixed trend in global equities and uncertainties on the geopolitical front. A strengthening rupee lent further support, though persistent foreign fund outflows capped the gains. Overcoming bouts of volatility, the 30-share BSE Sensex settled 85.91 points or 0.15 per cent higher at 55,550.30. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty gained 35.55 points or 0.21 per cent to close at 16,630.45. Pharma counters led the Sensex gainers' chart, with Sun Pharma spurring 3.82 per cent and Dr Reddy's 2.07 per cent.

Other winners included ITC, PowerGrid, Titan, Asian Paints, Bajaj Finance and Bajaj

Finserv. In contrast, Nestle, Maruti Suzuki, NTPC, Axis Bank, TCS and Tata Steel were among the laggards, shedding as much as 1.56 per cent.

"After the strong recovery during the week, the domestic market trend turned cautious on Friday, as focus shifted to next week's upcoming issues like inflation, BoE and US Fed policy. US CPI inflation recorded a 40-year high due to high gasoline, food and housing cost, adding doubts to global trend.

"Inflation levels in India and abroad are poised to rise even higher in March, though on a temporary basis, considering the impact of the Russia-Ukraine issue," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

On a weekly basis, the Sensex jumped 1,216.49 points or 2.23 per cent, while the Nifty advanced 385.10 or 2.37 per cent. "Equity markets gave positive returns this week even though uncertainties with respect to the Russia-Ukraine conflict continues. Equity market gained despite FIIs remaining net sellers of Indian equities.

"Post correction in recent

times, market rally this week was broad based as large cap, mid-cap and small index posted gains," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd. In the broader market, the BSE smallcap index gained 0.90 per cent and the midcap gauge went higher by 0.45 per cent in Friday's session. Among BSE sectoral indices, healthcare emerged as the biggest gainer, jumping 2.07 per cent, followed by oil & gas, basic materials and metal. A total of 2,076 stocks advanced, while 1,263 declined and 119 remained unchanged.

On the global front, Wall Street retreated in the overnight session after US consumer inflation soared to a 40-year high of 7.9 per cent in February, raising prospects of more aggressive monetary policy tightening by the Federal Reserve. Talks between the foreign ministers of Russia and Ukraine failed to make headway, which also affected market sentiment.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong and Tokyo settled lower, while Shanghai was marginally higher.


Rupee pares initial gains, settles 18 paise lower at 76.61 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee pared its initial gains and settled 18 paise lower at 76.61 (provisional) against the US currency on Friday amid dollar demand from oil importers and state-run power companies. Persistent foreign fund outflows and geopolitical worries sapped risk appetite in the market, pushing investors towards safe-haven assets.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened weak at 76.34 against the American dollar and fell further during the session as investors moved away from riskier assets. The domestic unit oscillated between a high of 76.27 and a low of 76.72 during the session. The rupee finally settled at 76.61 against the dollar, down 18 paise from the previous close. On Thursday, the rupee had appreciated by 19 paise to close at 76.43.

"Rupee snapped gains amid dollar demand from oil importers and state-run power companies. Dollar strengthening against major currencies following stronger US economic data also weighed on the local unit," said Dilip Parmar.

SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE				
		Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005		
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.	Rajeev Bahuguna/ Ipsita Bahuguna/ LBNOD00003418712/ LBNOD000003433687	Flat No- 1204, 12th Floor, Tower- L, Prateek Wisteria, Plot No- GH 01, Sector 77 Gautam Buddha Nagar Noida/ March 07, 2022	July 06, 2021 Rs. 28,10,154/-	Delhi/ NCR
2.	Pushpendra Kumar/ Somlata/ LBDEL000019770508/ LBDEL00002979300	Flat No- B54- 01, Ground Floor, Aasra Type-2, Upavp, Ghaziabad/ March 07, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 7,89,512/-	Delhi/ NCR
3.	Mumtaj./ Mohammad Shahru/ LBDEL00003930226/ LBDEL00003877758	Flat No-1612, 16th Floor, Galaxy Royale-block, Gokul Plot No- GC-03J Gh-03, Sector-16C, Greater Noida, Noida, Uttar Pradesh/ March 07, 2022	June 25, 2021 Rs. 32,40,164/-	Delhi/ NCR
4.	Prem Kumar Bhardwaj/ Neetu Kumari/ LBNOD00001864253	House No-629, 1 st Floor, Shakti Khand-3, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad/ March 07, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 2,95,768/-	Delhi/ NCR
5.	Sushma Kumari/ Ankush./ LBNOD000005079316	Flat No-110, First Floor, Tower-B 5th Venue, Plot No-GH-01 Gaur City-1, Sector-04, Greater Noida, Noida/ March 07, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 1,49,050/-	Delhi/ NCR
6.	Rishi Kumar Saluja/ Brinda Mudgil/ LBNOD00004935649/ LBNOD00004935537	Flat No- E 1405, 14th Floor, Apex Golf Avenue, Tower- E Adjoining Tech Z C Greater Noida, Noida/ March 07, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 2,46,951/-	Delhi/ NCR
7.	Sanjeev Khosla/ Kanayalal Khosla/ LBDEL00000389406/ LBDEL00000563624	Flat No- T-2, Plot No- 179, SF (RR Side) Block-C, Ramprastha, Ghaziabad/ March 07, 2022	June 25, 2021 Rs. 2,92,842/-	Delhi/ NCR
8.	Ashwani Kumar/ Gunjan Kumar/ LBNOD00001078776/ LBNOD00001078774	G-1, Plot No 43, Block C Sec-7, T.H.A. Residential Colony Surya Nagar, Ghaziabad, Ghaziabad/ March 07, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 11,85,139/-	Delhi/ NCR
9.	Suresh Kumar/ Sunita/ Manoj Kumar Arya/ LBDEL00000990720	Flat No- Gf- 4 First Floor, Nitikhand- 1/ 46, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad/ March 08, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 4,07,407/-	Delhi/ NCR
10.	Tanu Agarwal/ Omak Construction Ltd/ Palash Ranjan Agarwal/ LBDEL00001202747	FF- 3, 1st Floor, Plot No- 6/121, Sector- 6 Vaishali Ghaziabad/ March 08, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 2,32,879/-	Delhi/ NCR
11.	Deblina Gupta/ Abhijeet Gupta/ LBGHZ00004776053	Flat No-14074, 14th Floor, Block- E2, Tower-5, Crossing Republik Dunderha Nh 24, Plot No Gh 7, Ghaziabad/ March 07, 2022	July 06, 2021 Rs. 30,20,690/-	Delhi/ NCR
12.	Deepanshu Dua/ Devender Kumar/ Kamal/ LBDEL000004162664	Flat No-1703, 17th Floor Tower- L , Grand Ajnara Heritage Plot No Gh- 01/B Sector-74 Gautam Buddha Nagar, Noida/ March 07, 2022	September 27, 2021 Rs. 31,60,971/-	Delhi/ NCR
13.	Upendra Singh Marwaria/ LBDEL00004797942/ LBDEL00004797936	Unit No H 204, 2nd Floor Skytech Matroft Plot No Gh 01/D Sector 76 Noida Gautam Buddha Nagar, Noida/ March 07, 2022	July 06, 2021 Rs. 27,21,390/-	Delhi/ NCR
14.	Ankit Mathur/ Ayush Mathur/ Renu Mathur/ LBGHZ00003876233	Flat No- 1103, 11th Floor Block Sun 2, Migsun Roof Khas, Group Housing Plot No. Kharsa No. 4, 5&1, Rajnagar Extension, Village Makrammat, Sikroa, Jalaibad, Ghaziabad/ March 07, 2022	Jan 19, 2021 Rs. 15,92,797/-	Delhi/ NCR
15.	Rahul Singh/ Devyani Rajani/ R S Construction/ LBGHZ00001490694	Flat No- 1405,14th Floor, Mahagun Mansion, 1/4, Vaibhav Khand, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad/ March 07, 2022	July 06, 2021 Rs. 17,96,393/-	Delhi/ NCR
16.	Neeraj Jaiswal/ Mulchand Jayaswal/ LBGHZ00003603575	Flat No 1008, 10th Floor, Moti Residency Tower D, Kharsa No. 238, Village Morta, Paragna Jalabad, Ghaziabad/ March 07, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 15,21,267/-	Delhi/ NCR
17.	Amrit Pal Singh/ Priyanka Rana/ Yash Pal Kaur/ LBGHZ00003568721	Flat No- GF-1 (H.I.G.), Ground Floor, Without Roof Rights, (Front Side) Plot No-185, Shakti Khand-II, Indrapuram Ghaziabad, Tehsil & Distt Ghaziabad (U.P.) / March 07, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 25,57,280/-	Delhi/ NCR
18.	Prashant Kumar/ Amit Malik / LBDEL00002222810	Property No 3/616, Ground Floor, Without Roof Rights, Sector- 3, Vasundhara Ghaziabad/ March 07, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 26,25,842/-	Delhi/ NCR
19.	Priyanaka Priya/ Sanjay Ghosh/ LBNOD00002238606	Flat No C4-2405 23rd Floor, Tower-C4, Prateek Greenvista, Phase 2, Samrat 5, NH 24, Nayay Khand 1, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad/ March 07, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 22,63,496/-	Delhi/ NCR
20.	Anju Srivastav/ Dhananjay Kumar/ LBNOD00002841393	Flat No C-103, 1st Floor, French Apartments, Plot No Gh-07B, Sector-16b Greater Noida (West), Noida/ March 07, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 26,34,754/-	Delhi/ NCR
21.	Vandana Tripathi/ Gyaneshwar Mani Tripathi/ LBNOD00003090405	Flat No A-6/1202 12th Floor, Tower-A6 Casa Greens-1, Plot No Gh-04A, Sector-16 Greater Noida Noida/ March 07, 2022	July 06, 2021 Rs. 26,81,326/-	Delhi/ NCR
22.	Sameer Nath Jha/ Tanuja Jha/ LBNOD00001966041/ LBNOD00001967391	Flat No 1521, 14th Floor, Block D, Gaur Greenvista, Phase 2, Samrat 5, NH 24, Nayay Khand 1, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad/ March 07, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 42,99,323/-	Delhi/ NCR
23.	Sameer Nath Jha/ Tanuja Jha/ LBNOD00001974008	Flat No 1521, 14th Floor, Block D, Gaur Greenvista, Phase 2, Samrat 5, NH 24, Nayay Khand 1, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad/ March 07, 2022	July 06, 2021 Rs. 2,13,902/-	Delhi/ NCR
24.	Rajesh Kumar Saini/ Vaishali/ LBGHZ00002859772	Flat No D-0205, 2nd Floor, Tower-D, Fusion Homes, Plot No GH-05A, Sector- Techzone-4, Greater Noida (West), Noida/ March 07, 2022	October 16, 2021 Rs. 23,92,438/-	Delhi/ NCR
25.	Poonam Tomar/ Kushal Pal Singh/ LBGHZ00002666046	Flat No E107, E-Block Paramount Golfcourse, Plot No Bgh-A, Sec- Surajpur Site-C, (Extension) Phase-1 Distt Gautambudh Nagar, Greater Noida, Up, Noida/ March 07, 2022	June 19, 2021 Rs. 22,38,629/-	Delhi/ NCR
26.	Shailesh Kumar/ Seema Srivastava/ LBGUR00003041118	Flat No F3, 1st Floor Mig, Plot No- 4/296, Sec-4 Vaishali Ghaziabad/ March 08, 2022	July 06, 2021 Rs. 23,14,466/-	Delhi/ NCR
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 : Delhi 11, 2022			Authorized Officer	
Place: Delhi/ NCR			ICICI Bank Limited	

Walmart not keen to open retail stores in India

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Focus on Flipkart, PhonePe

American retail giant Walmart is not keen on opening direct-to-consumer physical stores in India, but will focus on growing its acquisitions - online marketplace Flipkart and payments major PhonePe, a top official said on Friday.

It can be noted that the company acquired Flipkart and PhonePe in a USD 16 billion deal a few years back.

"We've got an omnichannel strategy that includes both of those components.

And when you have both components, the customer experience can be more seamless, and there are advantages to being able to go to a store if you wanted to.

But, we're not focused on that at the moment.

"What we're focused on is supporting Flipkart and PhonePe to be successful," Walmart chief executive Doug McMillon said at the Global Business Summit.

The retailer is focused on ensuring that it is seen as a "good partner" for the country and has attempted to demonstrate its culture to the government.

Ultimately, the focus of the leaders is also to strengthen the country and his company would like to contribute towards the same goal, McMillon said.

He expressed satisfaction with the way the Flipkart investment has turned out for Walmart.

pany's plan to take Flipkart public, McMillon said an initial public offering (IPO) will be the ultimate aim, but declined to specify the timeline or other details.

"From the beginning, have felt like an IPO would be an appropriate step at some point. But, we want to build

CHELSEA, VILLA WIN

In the 14th minute, Havertz teed up Mount in the Norwich area and the midfielder smashed a superb strike into the top corner

AP ■ LONDON

Chelsea showed they can cope amid the Roman Abramovich turmoil as they won 3-1 against Norwich just hours after their Russian owner was sanctioned by the British Government, while Leeds plunged deeper into relegation trouble on Thursday.

Thomas Tuchel's side arrived at Carrow Road rocked by the revelation that Abramovich is one of seven oligarchs hit by sanctions following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

All seven are described as part of Russian President Vladimir Putin's inner circle, with Abramovich's UK assets frozen and tough restrictions placed on Chelsea, who are currently unable to sign new players, renew contracts or sell match tickets.

But if Chelsea's future is clouded in uncertainty, they remain a formidable force on the pitch and goals from Trevoh Chalobah, Mason Mount and Kai Havertz lifted the mood on the 117th anniversary of the club's formation.

Third placed Chelsea have won nine of their last 10 games in all competitions and sit nine points clear of fifth placed Manchester United in the race to qualify for the Champions League via a top four finish.

Chelsea's main shirt sponsor, mobile phone company Three, had responded to the sanctions by temporarily suspending their deal and



asking for their logo to be removed from the team's shirts.

But Chelsea took to the pitch still wearing their blue home kit featuring the Three branding.

Despite the damage caused by their owner's alleged links to Putin, Chelsea's travelling fans were quick to salute Abramovich as they loudly chanted his name before the Blues took a third minute lead.

Mount's corner reached Chalobah and the defender headed into the bottom corner. Chelsea could not have hand-picked a better opponent than



Jesse Marsch's maiden home game in charge was another letdown after defeat at Leicester last weekend in his first game since replacing Marcelo Bielsa.

Leeds have lost six successive league games and lie only two points above the relegation zone, having played two more matches than third bottom Burnley.

Villa went ahead in the 22nd minute as Philippe Coutinho scored his fourth goal since joining on loan from Barcelona.

Matty Cash struck in the 65th minute and Calum Chambers wrapped up the points eight minutes later.

Newcastle moved another step closer to survival with a 2-1 win at Southampton that extended their unbeaten league run to nine games.

Southampton went in front through Stuart Armstrong in the 25th minute.

New Zealand striker Chris Wood headed Newcastle's equaliser in the 32nd minute with his first goal since signing from Burnley in January.

Newcastle midfielder Bruno Guimarães marked his first start since his move from Lyon with a sumptuous back-heeled finish in the 52nd minute, lifting Eddie Howe's side eight points clear of the relegation zone.

Wolves crushed second bottom Watford 4-0 with goals from Raul Jimenez, Daniel Podence and Ruben Neves, as well as a Cucho Hernandez own goal.

Bruno Lage's side ended a run of three successive defeats to leave Watford three points from safety after a fifth loss in their last seven matches.

Barcelona held at home, Rangers roar to victory

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona stumbled to a goalless draw with Galatasaray in their Europa League last-16 first leg at the Camp Nou on Thursday, while Rangers cruised into a 3-0 lead in their tie against Red Star Belgrade.

Xavi Hernandez's Barca, playing in Europe's second-tier competition for the first time since 2004, dominated for long periods.

But it was their Turkish visitors who almost grabbed a lead ahead of the return game in Istanbul next week, with Bafetimbi Gomis only denied a winner by a VAR review for offside.

Memphis Depay, making his first start since December, forced Galatasaray goalkeeper Inaki Pena into two good first-half saves.

Jordi Alba, Ousmane Dembele, and Frenkie de Jong all went close in the second period for Barcelona, but the hosts could not find a breakthrough.

Xavi's side are still unbeaten in 90 minutes since defeat by Bayern Munich in their final Champions League group game last year.

But the Catalan giants will likely have to find a victory next Thursday to extend their bid to win this competition for the first time.

Rangers took a big step towards reaching the quarter-finals for the first time since losing the 2008 UEFA Cup final to Zenit Saint Petersburg.

Giovanni van Bronckhorst's men backed up their stunning win over Borussia Dortmund in the play-off round with another dominant first-leg perfor-



mance against Red Star at Ibrox.

James Tavernier's penalty and Alfredo Morelos' 28th career goal in the tournament put the home side in command.

Visiting midfielder Aleksandar Katai, who had earlier seen two goals disallowed, then had a penalty saved by Rangers goalkeeper Allan McGregor.

The Scottish champions took full advantage, with Leon Balogun adding a third six minutes after the break to put the Glasgow giants in total control heading into the second leg.

Atalanta will take a lead to Germany next week after Luis Muriel scored twice in a 3-2 win over Bayer Leverkusen in Bergamo.

Leverkusen winger Moussa Diaby's 63rd-minute strike, his eighth goal in seven games, kept the tie on a knife-edge.

Elsewhere, Abel Ruiz scored in the first minute as Braga beat Monaco 2-0 in Portugal, while Munir El

Haddadi gave Sevilla a 1-0 home win over West Ham in the early kick-off.

There were goals galore in the third-tier Europa Conference League, with PSV Eindhoven and FC Copenhagen playing out a remarkable 4-4 draw.

The Danish visitors led 3-1 and 4-3 at the Philips Stadion, but Eran Zahavi grabbed an equaliser with five minutes remaining for PSV after Cody Gakpo had scored twice and missed a spot-kick.

Leicester saw off French side Rennes 2-0 at the King Power Stadium as Kelechi Iheanacho's injury-time effort added to Marc Albrighton's opener on the half-hour mark.

Jose Mourinho's Roma claimed a 1-0 win at Vitesse Arnhem and Marseille conceded a late goal in a 2-1 success against FC Basel at the Stade Velodrome.

Feyenoord romped to a 5-2 thrashing of Partizan Belgrade in Serbia in a bad night for the country's capital clubs, and Slavia Prague saw off LASK Linz 4-1.

Osaka outlasts Stephens in 3 sets in return to Indian Wells



AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Naomi Osaka made a winning return to the BNP Paribas Open, rallying to beat Sloane Stephens 3-6, 6-1, 6-2 in a first-round meeting of former major champions.

Trailing 2-0 in the third set, Osaka fought off three break points to hold and begin a run of six straight games to close out the match in just under two hours. She broke Stephens three times in the set, including at love in the sixth game. "That was a really good test for me," Osaka

said. Cold winds blowing from 20 to 30 mph sent debris swirling around the court.

"I felt like I was fighting for my life. I was fighting against her, I was fighting against the wind. It was crazy," Osaka said.

"I'm really proud with how I handled it."

Osaka, the 2018 winner at Indian Wells, is back in the desert for the first time since 2019. The Japanese star hasn't played a tournament since January when she lost in the round of 32 at the Australian Open. Only having played a

handful of events last year, her ranking has dropped to 78th in the world.

"I keep taking these long breaks," she said.

"I do need to play a lot more matches and I do need to give myself the opportunity to get more into the swing of things."

Osaka has said she has faced bouts of depression since winning the U.S. Open in 2018. The four-time major champion withdrew from the French Open last year to preserve her mental health.

Stephens, the 2017 U.S. Open winner, lost for the first time in three career meetings with Osaka. The American's ranking has dropped to 38th, although she was coming off a win in the tournament at Guadalajara, Mexico, last month. Other first-round winners were Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan, Daria Saville and Tereza Martincova.

In men's first-round matches, Americans Mackenzie McDonald, Jenson Brooksby, Jack Sock and J.J. Wolf all won.

Christopher Eubanks saved three match points in outlasting Maxime Cressy 5-7, 7-6 (8), 6-4 in an all-American matchup. Nick Kyrgios, who received a wild card, beat Sebastian Baez 6-4, 6-0.

PSG will 'remain united and determined'

AP ■ PARIS

French striker Kylian Mbappe insisted Paris Saint-Germain players would "remain united and determined until the final match of the season" despite another disappointing Champions League elimination.

For the fourth time in six seasons PSG crashed out in the last 16, self-destructing to 13-time European champions Real Madrid on Wednesday in Spain.

PSG were cruising at 2-0 up on aggregate after Mbappe's 39th-minute strike, the World Cup-winner having also scored the only goal in the first leg.

For an hour the Paris club looked assured of a last-eight berth, but Karim Benzema turned the tie on its head with three goals in 17 minutes as Real swept to a 3-1 win and 3-2 aggregate triumph.



"Difficult time. The Champions League was a big goal for us, but we failed," wrote the 23-year-old Mbappe on Instagram.

The Champions League has been the main objective coveted by the club's Qatari owners since buying the club in 2011.

And this season, yet another failure in the elite European competition follows those in the Champions Trophy and the French Cup.

The club have now only Ligue 1 to play for, and their 13-point lead on second-placed Nice makes them almost impossible to catch.

"The season is not over and whatever happens we will remain united and determined until the last match of the season," added Mbappe.

"Thank you to the fans who support us and who made the trip."

Lakshya Sen enters semifinals of German Open

PTI ■ MUELHEIM AN DER RUHR (GERMANY)

World Championships bronze medalist Lakshya Sen progressed to the semifinals but fellow Indian Kidambi Srikanth suffered a straight-game loss to Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen to bow out of the German Open Super 300 tournament here on Friday.

The 20-year-old Sen, who had claimed his maiden Super 500 title at the India Open in January, continued his rich vein of form as he saw off former top 10 player HS Prannoy 21-15 21-16 in an all-Indian quarterfinals that lasted 39 minutes. The world number 14 had defeat-

ed Prannoy, currently ranked 24th, at the quarterfinals of India Open as well. Sen will now face top seed and former world champion Viktor Axelsen of Denmark in the semifinals on Saturday.

World number 1 Axelsen proved a tough customer for Srikanth as he went down 10-21 21-23 in 35 minutes.

It was the Indian's sixth defeat on the trot to Axelsen, whom he had beaten thrice in the past, including en route to his 2017 Denmark Open title in Odense. Srikanth, who was playing his first event since recovering from COVID-19 that forced him out of the India Open, looked clueless against Axelsen in the initial moments of the match as the



Dane galloped to a 17-4 lead. Srikanth reeled off four points on the trot, before reaching double figures with two more

points but it was not enough to stop a marauding Axelsen to pocket the opening game.

Srikanth produced a better display after the change of sides, opening up a 3-0 lead but in a jiffy it was 4-4.

The duo continued to fight it out, moving to 12-12. Srikanth then grabbed a three-point advantage only to squander it as Axelsen nosed ahead at the final moments. India's hopes now rests on the young shoulders of Sen, who had stunned fourth seeded Indonesian Anthony Sinisuka Ginting 21-7 21-9 in a second-round match on Thursday and carried his momentum in the quarterfinals against Prannoy.

Indian women look to return to winning ways

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian women's hockey team would look to return to winning ways against a higher-ranked but out-of-touch Germany in the two-legged tie of the FIH Pro League, starting with the first match here on Saturday.

Playing their debut season in the Pro League, the Indian women made a fine start to their campaign, beating China 7-1 and 2-1 in their opening two games in Muscat.

The Indians, ranked ninth in the world, then defeated world number 6 Spain 2-1 at home before slumping to a 3-4 defeat in the return leg last month.

But despite the loss, the Indian women are well placed in the FIH Pro League standings as they are currently at the third position with nine points from four games, which includes three wins and a loss. And come Saturday, India skipper Savita, who is leading the side in place of an injured Rani Rampal, would be hoping for an improved show from her team at the Kalinga Stadium.

Having registered three consecutive



wins, the Indian women were on course to continue their unbeaten run before they conceded a late goal to lose to Spain in their last FIH Pro League match.

Going by momentum, India will have an edge over world number 5 Germany on Saturday.

Savita said it's important to enter the

match against Germany with a positive mindset.

"Since we have started playing against stronger teams, we have learned the importance of mental strength. It is a skill as important as your skills with a hockey stick. How we adapt to pressure situations can determine the results," she said

in a virtual press conference.

"We are happy to be given opportunities to face off against a strong team such as Germany and we hope we can showcase the strengths that we have worked on in the training."

Savita conceded that India made a few mistakes in the second match against Spain which the hosts lost 3-4.

"We have worked on those errors. We know Germany have a very strong defence, so we have planned how we can create attacking opportunities. Our strength has always been attacking hockey -- so we worked a lot on taking penalty corners and defending penalty corners," Savita said.

Vice-captain Deep Grace Ekka said the Indian players are as fit as any opponent in the world.

The Germans will be a bit rusty coming into the tie against India after making a return to the FIH Pro League after October last year.

Germany have played only two games in the competition so far but lost both the contests against Belgium 0-1 and 1-3.

Toor, Sreeshankar, Dutee to compete in World Athletics Indoor C'ships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India will field shot putter Tajinderpal Singh Toor, long jumper M Sreeshankar and sprinter Dutee Chand in the World Athletics Indoor Championships to be held in Belgrade, Serbia from March 18 to 20. Athletics Federation of India President Adille Sumariwalla said Toor and Sreeshankar got entries on the basis of their rankings, while Dutee was extended an invitation by World Athletics to run in the women's 60m event.

"Sreeshankar is ranked 14th and Tajinderpal Singh Toor 18th on the Road to Belgrade 2022 lists," said Sumariwalla, who is also the jury member of the championships. "We have seen them both show good early season form in the National Open



Jumps and National Open Throws Competitions respectively and are looking forward to them giving off their best in the World Indoor Championships. Dutee Chand has been invited by World Athletics to participate in the 60m event," he said.

All the three Indian athletes will be seen in action on March 18. Dutee will be the first one in action in 60m heats. Later that day, Sreeshankar will be among the competitors in the long jump final.

Toor will be in action in the shot put final late on March 19 evening.

Pink ball in ‘Garden City’

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Chasing an elusive international hundred for 28 months now, Virat Kohli would hope for a turnaround at his 'spiritual home' when India take on an under-prepared and injury-hit Sri Lanka in the second Test, with the action unfolding under flood lights, here from Saturday.

Interestingly, the last time Kohli reached a three-figure mark, it was a 'Pink Ball' game in which India thrashed Bangladesh by an innings and 46 runs in Kolkata, back in November 2019. He had scored 136 back then.

The former India skipper has taken strike in 28 innings since then but a Test hundred has remained elusive. The 33-year-old has got a 50-plus score only six times with highest being a knock of 79 against South Africa in Cape Town in January this year.

Now he is returning to the M Chinnaswamy stadium, a venue which he knows like the back of his palm as he has led his IPL side Royal Challengers Bangalore here (RCB) for a decade. That comforting familiarity with the conditions may also help.

KOHLI VS TOUGH TIMES

A colossus that has developed into in world cricket, expectations are always high from the star Indian cricketer, who is perhaps enduring the most challenging phase of his career and not just in pure cricketing terms.

Kohli's run-in with the establishment and the subsequent removal from the leadership role in ODIs may have added pressure but he can breath easy since in Sri Lanka



he faces a bowling attack, which hardly has the wherewithal to trouble the Indian batters in their own den.

Kohli had got a start even in the Mohali Test but could not make full use of that. It's not that he is not batting well. He is still striking the ball with ease and that trademark fluency is also there but lapse of concentration at times is becoming his undoing.

Fatigue that creeps in with a punishing schedule and age could be factors and the lack of confidence due to noise surrounding him outside the cricket grounds is also something which is perhaps affecting his batting.

Batting against a below-average Sri Lankan attack in a comparatively small ground is actually a perfect opportunity to come out of the lean patch in front of capacity crowd that has

always egged him on.

TEAM COMBINATION

Since it is a pink ball contest, either a fit-again spin all-rounder Axar Patel or pacer Mohammed Siraj could replace Jayant Yadav in the playing XI because both have the ability to cause more damage in a Day/Night game.

Jayant did not do anything special in Mohali. Even when the Sri Lankans were struggling, he went wicket-less in his 17 overs across the two innings.

Axar, in his last Pink ball Test, had wreaked havoc with his under cutters in Ahmedabad against England, taking 11 wickets in that contest.

He even opened the attack in the second England innings.

However, if grass is left on the pitch then Siraj would be a better option for skipper Rohit

Sharma.

Any more change to the playing XI is unlikely even though it will be interesting to see if Hanuma Vihari is given another chance to bat at number three. Rohit had said that it is not certain that the slot would remain with Vihari.

SRI LANKA'S STRUGGLE

Their resources already not good enough to challenge the talent in the Indian squad, Sri Lankans will be without pacer Lahiru Kumara, who has been ruled out due to a hamstring injury.

But since pacer Dushmantha Chameera



has also been ruled out due to an ankle injury, Chamika Karunaratne will replace him in the visiting playing XI.

Dinesh Chandimal is also likely to play as Pathum Nissanka, who was a better performer last game, is also out due to an injury.

Skipper Karunaratne will have to lead from the front and produce something out of the ordinary to ensure that they do not meet the same fate as that in the series-opener. He had got starts in both innings but could not convert.

Also, veterans like Angelo Mathews have to show a bit more stomach for fight.

While the batters, at least found runs, intermittently, the Lankan bowlers cut a sorry figure.

Pacer Suranga Lakmal, playing his last series, was the only one among the six bowlers, who managed an economy of under-4 runs. Others were pretty expensive with every Indian batter going after them, especially Rishabh Pant (96) and Ravindra Jadeja (175).

LAST HOME TEST IN 2022

It will be the last Test match on home soil for team India in 2022. There are seven more Tests in the current WTC cycle after the Lankan series. The team will travel to Bangladesh for a two-match series and then Australia will arrive for a four-Test rubber in 2023.

The one Test of the last year's England tour is still to be played away. India need to win all these matches, if the team has to qualify for the WTC final.

For both Sri Lanka and India, it will be their fourth Day-Night Test and both share similar record of two wins and a defeat each.

Indian batters need to raise their game against WI

PTI ■ HAMILTON

India's under-performing top-order will be keen to display way more intent to bring the team's campaign back on track when it squares off against a dangerous West Indies in the third league game of the ICC Women's World Cup here on Saturday.

Currently placed fifth after a demoralising 62-run loss to New Zealand, India would like to get back to winning ways as back-to-back defeat can cause loss in momentum, especially when they are playing one game after another on the bounce.

The likes of Smriti Mandhana, Mithali Raj, the young Yastika Bhatia and all-rounder Deepti Sharma were all criticised for not getting a move-on against New Zealand in India's chase of 261 and despite Harmanpreet Kaur's 62-ball-71, the team ended up being outplayed by 62 runs.



It is understood that Shafali Verma, despite her 'blow hot, blow cold' form, will be back in the playing eleven, and would be expected to lend pace to

innings, something which Yastika Bhatia failed to do in the previous game. The Indian batters played out an inexplicable 162 dot balls, equivalent to

27 overs, in the last game against White Ferns and the match was as good as over when they scored only 50 off the first 20 overs.

Head coach Ramesh Powar was very blunt and critical of the team's show on the eve of the game against the likes of Stafanie Taylor, Deandra Dottin, and Anisa Mohammed.

"I think it was one of those days where things didn't go our way and honestly I was also surprised with the way we batted for 20 overs. (But) if you look back (at the) last six games, which we have played against New Zealand, we were executing our plans well," Powar told reporters ahead of their game.

Mithali, playing her last tournament, has been in very poor form and even Mandhana has looked scratchy putting a lot of pressure on the likes of Pooja Vastrakar and Sneha Rana.

No wonder, coach Powar made it

clear that he want the seniors to accept more responsibility.

"I think it is the pressure, I think of the World Cup but I don't want to give any excuses. This is the right time to put your hand up and put up the performances, because we have been training for last six months," Powar was very curt. "We have been to England, Australia, we have been to New Zealand early, so we have got every practice opportunity which was needed, so it is time as a group to stand up and deliver," one could gauge the irritation in his voice. One of the poor call by Neetu David-led selection committee has been non-inclusion of opening batter S Meghana, who showed a lot of spark in her comeback ODI series against New Zealand.

She was middling the ball well and unfortunately didn't make the cut in the World Cup squad, which was picked much earlier.

Cummins announces playing XI for 2nd Test

PTI ■ KARACHI

Australia captain Pat Cummins announced the playing XI for the second Test, and also confirmed that leg-spinner Mitchell Swepson will make his long-awaited Test debut against Pakistan on Saturday.

Swepson first toured with Australia's Test team five years ago, now he has been included to partner Nathan Lyon on a pitch that is expected to aid spinners.

Swepson will replace seamer Josh Hazlewood, who has been left out of the team after playing just one Test into his comeback from his strained Ashes campaign.

Speaking on Swepson's inclusion captain Cummins said that the leg-spinner is "pumped" to be part of the playing XI in the second Test against Pakistan and he is absolutely ready.

"He's pumped and to be honest, we're all pumped for Swepo," said Pat Cummins as stated by ICC.

"It's been a long time running drinks over the last couple of years, but he is absolutely ready. He has been a huge part of the squad, even though he hasn't been playing. So we're really excited to see him get a chance," he added.

The first Test ended in a draw with both the teams getting four points each in the ICC World Test Championship table.

Australia XI: David Warner, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Travis Head, Cameron Green, Alex Carey, Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins (c), Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Swepson.



Bonner century anchors West Indies to 62-run lead

AP ■ ST. JOHN'S (ANTIGUA)

Late-bloomer Nkrumah Bonner's career-best century anchored West Indies to a 62-run lead against England on an attritional third day of the first test at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium.

The home side batted all day to overturn a 109-run deficit, and Bonner almost endured, too. He was out just two overs from stumps for 123 after almost 10 hours at the crease.

The West Indies, in reply to England's 311, resumed on 202-4 and reached stumps at 373-9. On a sluggish pitch on which it was hard to bowl and

bat, the West Indies eked out only 171 runs from the day's 90.1 overs.

Bonner made his test debut just over a year ago, but at 33 has been making up for lost time.

He absorbed England's pressure with ease and rode considerable luck. During the day, he was dropped on 73, survived umpire's calls on 102 and 112, and got an out overturned on review on 121.

His overnight stand with Jason Holder finished early on 79, but Bonner found regular partnerships with the tail to frustrate England. Bonner shared 73 with Joshua Da Silva, 44 with Kemar



Roach, and 46 with Veerasammy Permaul. Holder added only two to his overnight score before trying to leave

Ben Stokes but edging behind on 45. Stokes, who barely bowled in the Ashes because of injury, finished the day committing 28 overs, his most in an innings in six years.

Holder's wicket was the only one West Indies conceded in the morning, despite England taking the new ball instantly.

Worrying for England, seamer Mark Wood bowled one over and left without bowling again because of an elbow injury.

Da Silva was out after lunch, lbw to spinner Jack Leach after two hours, 88 balls and one boundary.

Alzarri Joseph was dismissed for 2 by Craig Overton and England's hopes were up.

But just as in the first session, early wickets were followed by incredibly sustained defense from the West Indies.

Bonner and Roach scored at practically one run per over until Roach hit a couple of fours off England captain Joe Root.

They passed England's total in the meantime and Bonner went to tea on 98. He earned his second test century in his 10th test straight after tea with a sweep to the boundary off Leach. He jumped into Roach's arms.

Taylor to play 2 matches for NZ XI against Netherlands

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

Veteran batter Ross Taylor will turn out for the New Zealand XI against Netherlands in Napier next week to get some game-time before he bids farewell to international cricket in his final ODI series later this month.

Paul Wiseman will lead the coaching staff and will be supported by Auckland pace bowling coach Azhar Abbas and former BLACKCAPS wicket-keeper BJ Watling.

Watling has been working in the ND coaching network for the past couple of seasons and was head coach for ND A this season.



Taylor was ruled out of the Plunket Shield match on Friday for the Central Stags for being a COVID-19 'household contact'. The 38-year-old will turn out against the touring Dutch at McLean Park in the second one-day warm-up match on March 19 as well as the one off T20 on March 21.

"I'm looking forward to getting down to Napier and playing on one of my favourite grounds in McLean Park," Taylor said.

"It's a great opportunity to get some time in the middle after missing the latest round of the Plunket Shield and it will also be useful to have a look at the touring team ahead of the ODI series.

"I'm looking forward to sharing the dressing room with some new and younger faces who I hope I can help by passing on some knowledge," he added.

The New Zealand XI face Netherlands behind closed doors in two one-day matches at Napier on March 17 and 19 followed by a one-off T20 on March 21.

The BLACKCAPS then take on the Netherlands in a T20I on March 25 at McLean Park followed by three ODIs, at Mount Maunganui's Bay Oval on March 29 and Hamilton's Seddon Park on April 2 and 4.

"The Netherlands are an ever improving side and they'll be relishing the chance to take on a Test playing nation," Taylor said.

"They have a few familiar players from the New Zealand domestic scene who I'm sure will be valuable to them in terms of understanding the conditions. We know they'll play with plenty of pride and expect them to be a good challenge," he added.

Malinga joins Rajasthan Royals as fast bowling coach

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Rajasthan Royals have Rannounced two additions to their coaching staff ahead of the much anticipated IPL 2022 season. The franchise has welcomed Sri Lankan legend Lasith Malinga as their new fast bowling coach and has also onboarded Paddy Upton in a new role of Team Catalyst.

The 38-year-old T20 World Cup-winning captain Malinga, who led his country to the 2014 ICC T20 World Cup trophy, will be working during the upcoming season with the talented group of pacers present within the Royals' set-up. Renowned as one of the best limited overs bowlers ever, Malinga will oversee the preparation of bowling strategies in the build-up and during the season, while also accelerating the development of the young bowlers by imparting his



knowledge and expertise of T20 cricket.

During a career that spanned over 17 years, the right-arm fast bowler represented Sri Lanka in 340 matches across the three formats and picked up 546 wickets. In the Indian Premier League, he only represented one team - Mumbai Indians - for whom he grabbed 170 scalps in 122 matches.



No set parameters for kind of adjustments required in 'Pink Ball' Tests: Bumrah

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India vice-captain Jasprit Bumrah feels that cricketers need to make a few 'mental adjustments' going into a 'Pink Ball' Test but defining one set parameter for that is not possible since all three day-night games they have played in the past were in varied conditions.

India are gearing up for their fourth day-night Test against Sri Lanka, having played against Bangladesh on a seaming Eden Gardens track, versus Australia on a bouncy Adelaide Oval surface and with England on a Motera rank turner.

Bumrah said they are still learning how to approach pink ball games.

"As professional cricketers, we need to adjust as quickly as possible. The pink ball looks different while fielding. It comes earlier (travels faster) than what you perceive. In a Test match, ball swings more in the morning session.

"But in the afternoon session, the ball may not swing much. And then in the evening, it can swing more, all these small points (are being discussed)," Bumrah said during the pre-match virtual media interaction.

"We have not played many pink ball matches and whatever we have played, they were all in different conditions, so no parameter can be set (on adjustments required).

"So whatever little experience we have gathered and the feedback we have taken, we are trying to work on those things," the fast bowler added.

Bumrah also revealed that they had an optional practice session with pink ball even during the Mohali Test.

In India's previous pink-ball games, the pitches on offer were of different variety. "We are not used to fielding, bowling and batting with the pink ball. You don't play pink ball cricket. When you field under lights, what adjustments you have to make. We are still new in this format."

"He has not been dropped. He was in bubble for long and has not been home. Since his chance to play this game was minimal, he has ben rested so that he can spend time with his family before the IPL.

"Players well-being is important since staying in bubble is not easy, keeping that in mind, in that aspect, he has been rested. Whenever he gets opportunity, he will do well."

Bumrah also laughed off queries about Ravindra Jadeja's workload in Mohali Test where he scored 175 not out and snared nine wickets.

Can he (Jadeja) be rested? "I don't see any player to sit out after such a good game. He would want to replicate that performance and contribute more."