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# Lapid's jibe at Kashmir Files draws fire, Israel says sorry

## Indonesian Min slams Israeli director's 'propaganda' remark

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

Israeli filmmaker and head of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI) jury Nadav Lapid's remarks against the film "The Kashmir Files" snowballed into a major controversy with Israel Ambassador to New Delhi Naor Gilon on Tuesday denouncing Lapid and apologising to the hosts.

Visiting Indonesian Minister for political, legal and security affairs Mohammed Mahfud also joined the ongoing controversy and backed the film, saying it definitely not "propaganda".

"I saw the film... it is definitely not propaganda. The voice of the people in Kashmir needs to be heard... We do not accept what was said..." he said.

Actor Anupam Kher, who played the lead role in the film, termed the criticism of the Kashmir Files "pre-planned" and charged Lapid of being insensitive towards the suffering of Kashmiri Pandits.

Director of the film Vivek Agnihotri too spoke about "truth" in a cryptic media post and said, "It is the most dangerous thing as it can make people lie. Who are these people who always stand against India?...I challenge all intellectuals of the world to prove if any scene, dialogue or event shown in the film is false, then I will quit film-making."

These sharp reactions

came a day after Lapid called the film a "propaganda" and "vulgar movie" at the closing ceremony of the IFFI in Goa. *The Kashmir Files* revolves around the exodus and killing of Kashmiri Pandits from the Kashmir Valley in 1990s.

The Israeli Ambassador apologised to India in an "open letter" on Twitter. An open letter to #NadavLapid following his criticism of #KashmirFiles. It's not in Hebrew because I wanted our Indian brothers and sisters to be able to understand. It is also relatively long so I'll give you the bottom line first. YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED. Here's why: pic.twitter.com/8YpSQGMXIR — Naor Gilon (@NaorGilon) November 29, 2022

Gilon said Lapid abused the Indian invitation to the judges' panel in the "worst way". "In Indian culture, they say a guest is like God. You have abused in the worst way the Indian invitation to chair the panel of judges at @IFFIGoa as well as the trust, respect, and warm hospitality they have bestowed on you," he added.

This terse message by the envoy was in response to Lapid saying the jurors at the film festival were "disturbed and shocked" by *The Kashmir Files*.

"That felt to us like a propaganda, vulgar movie, inappropriate for an artistic competitive section of such a prestigious film festival," he said.



Israeli filmmaker and IFFI jury chairperson Nadav Lapid, third left, being honoured at the closing ceremony of the International Film Festival of India in Goa on Monday

## BJP terms film dig Holocaust denial; Cong says hate gets called out finally

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

The row over the Israeli director and IFFI international jury chairperson Nadav Lapid controversial comments on the film "Kashmir files" reverberated across India's political landscape on Tuesday.

The BJP compared Lapid's condemnation of the movie to the denial of the Holocaust while the Congress called it as an "embarrassment" saying hate eventually gets called out.

BJP leader and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa

Sarma slammed criticism of The Kashmir Files at IFFI, saying, "Jury members aren't god. We found the film 'The Kashmir Files' to be nice and promoted it."

"We have seen ourselves what happened in Kashmir, what authority do they (jury members) have to slam the movie," news agency ANI quoted Sarma as saying on Tuesday. BJP's IT cell head Amit Malviya compared Lapid's condemnation of "The Kashmir Files" to the denial of the Holocaust.

"For the longest time, peo-

ple even denied the Holocaust and called Schindler's List a propaganda, just like some are doing to the Kashmir Files. Truth eventually triumphs, no matter what," he said.

His colleague, BJP's Goa spokesperson Savio Rodrigues, said Lapid's statement "is an insult to the horrors faced by Kashmir Hindus (in the past)".

"You can critique a film artistically but to term the truth about the brutality faced by the Kashmiri Pandits propaganda is shameful," he added.

## Gehlot, Pilot put up united face, address presser jointly

### After Rahul's assets remark following Gehlot 'traitor' barb, two greet each other at party meet

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

A day after former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said both Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and his former deputy Sachin Pilot were assets to the party, they presented a united face in public before attending a meeting with senior Congress leaders to review the preparations for Bharat Jodo Yatra which is set to enter the desert State this weekend.

Sources in the meeting said that Gehlot and Pilot exchanged pleasantries in the presence of members of the coordination committee, including AICC general secretary KC Venugopal and Rajasthan Congress chief Govind Singh Dotasra.

"This is the Rajasthan Congress," Venugopal said addressing the media jointly with Gehlot and Pilot. Venugopal recalled former party president Rahul Gandhi's remarks in Indore on Monday, when he said both leaders are assets to the party.

"Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot have assured that the Yatra will be the one of the most successful in the country. I am sure that Rajasthan will also be the number 1 State," Venugopal told reporters.

"When Rahul Gandhi has said that our leaders are assets then we are assets... Where is the dispute then," Gehlot said when asked about Rahul's observation.



Congress general secretary KC Venugopal raises his hands with Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and party leader Sachin Pilot during the State-level coordination committee meeting on 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' at party headquarters in Jaipur on Tuesday

PTI

Gehlot's remarks were in sharp contrast to his remarks calling Pilot a "traitor". Rahul in an interaction with the media had in Indore on Monday said that both leaders were assets to the party.

"Rahul Gandhi also meant that every party worker is an asset. This is the beauty of our party that after our top leader says anything, there is no scope (for further argument)," Gehlot added. He also reviewed the preparations for the Bharat Jodo Yatra route in the desert State that Rahul will lead into this weekend.

Gehlot stirred a controversy last week in an interview when he said that Pilot is a "gaddar" (traitor) who cannot replace him as he had revolted against the Congress in 2020, and tried to topple the State Government. In response, Pilot said such "mud-slinging" would not help.

Briefing the media, Gehlot also said the main issue before

the party is the 2023 Assembly election, and claimed the mood is in the favour of the Congress.

"We will win the Assembly elections. We have introduced several unique schemes and programmes which are benefitting people across the State. I get an overwhelming response from people when I go on visits. It means that the Government is going to be repeated," he said.

Targeting the BJP, Gehlot said that the party should both- er about itself instead of commenting on the Congress.

On reports of NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Suman Bery's concern over the revival of the Old Pension Scheme, the CM said the NITI Aayog or the Reserve Bank of India should first tell what concerns they had raised at the time of demon- etisation.

He said the old scheme for Government employees was revived in the state for social security.

## Feted director Lapid's run-in not one-off case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

He headed the international jury at IFFI, has been to India earlier and is a much awarded filmmaker. But it was not until his blunt criticism of "The Kashmir Files" that Israeli director Nadav Lapid hit the headlines, and had people scouring the net to find out more about him.

The Tel Aviv born and Paris-based filmmaker's comments describing the movie as vulgar and a propaganda during the closing ceremony of the 53rd International Film Festival of India in Goa on Monday propelled him straight into a raging row.

Lapid, who said he was disturbed and shocked at "The Kashmir Files" being chosen for the Indian Panorama sec-

tion, is clearly a man used to speaking his mind — and doesn't matter if he ruffles a few feathers in the bargain. Doesn't matter either if India's Minister and its top stars might be in the audience.

The 47-year-old director of "Policeman" and "The Kindergarten Teacher", chosen to head the international jury at IFFI 2022, had just a few days ago aired his views on the Indian national anthem being played at the opening ceremony of the festival.

"I completely admire the fierce patriotism, but that was an overwhelming experience for an artist at an international event," the writer-director told *The Peacock*, the flagship publication of the Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG), one of

the organisers of the event along with Information and Broadcasting ministry and National Film Development Corporation.

In the interview, published during the November 20-28 festival, he also said he is not participating as an ambassador of Israel but an artist willing to experience different cultures.

"If I wanted to represent Israel, I would have gotten into diplomacy," said the director often viewed as anti-establishment in his country.

Unusual for a man in showbiz, Lapid mostly stays away from social media platforms and shuns the media glare.

Based in France, Lapid is the son of writer Haim Lapid and film editor Era Lapid.

## Pandav Nagar murder: Hunt on for weapon

### Son seen walking with man's body parts in bag; Anjan was killed for lewd behaviour to stepdaughter, daughter-in-law

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police is yet to recover the weapons used by a woman and her son for killing and chopping the body of her husband into 10 pieces in Pandav Nagar area.

Sources in the Delhi Police said the weapons of murder are yet to be recovered and further investigation is underway. The duo is currently in the police custody. Sources said a team of Delhi Police is likely to visit Bihar to record the statements of Anjan's family and his children. The case bears eerie similarities with the murder of 26-year-old Shradha Walkar by Aftab in the national Capital.

The police have accessed CCTV footage that shows



Deepak walking with a bag in his hand late at night.

The police said this is one of his trips to throw away the body pieces. His mother Poonam is seen following him. Another clip shows them during the day, apparently to identify spots to dispose of the pieces. The trigger for the grisly crime was the fact that Anjan had alleged ill intentions towards her stepdaughter and Deepak's wife as well, and he

was also sending Poonam's earnings to his other wife and eight children in Bihar. Poonam worked as a domestic help in the area.

In April, Poonam hatched a conspiracy to eliminate Anjan with the help of her son Deepak, said the police, adding that the duo on May 30 served alcohol laced with sleeping pills to him.

The mother-son stabbed Anjan with a dagger and a knife over the neck, chest and abdomen, the police said, adding that after the murder, the body was kept in a room.

The blood got drained from the body by the next morning and they then started cutting it into 10 pieces and kept them in the fridge.

## Adani wins bid to redevelop largest slum Dharavi

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Adani Group has emerged as the highest bidder for the redevelopment of Dharavi, one of the world's largest slum.

The Adani group's bid of ₹5,069 crore for the 259-hectare Dharavi Redevelopment Project was much higher than second-placed DLF's quote of ₹2,025 crore, said chief executive officer of the project SVR Srinivas.

"We will now be sending the details to the Government, which will consider and give final approval," Srinivas told PTI, adding that the Eknath Shinde Government will approve it in a couple of weeks.

The bid is for the entire

₹20,000-crore project, and the total timeline for the project is seven years to rehabilitate the 6.5 lakh slum dwellers who are spread over a 2.5 sqkm area right now, he said. The project, which will help the winning bidder to book high revenues by selling lakhs of square feet of residential and commercial space in central Mumbai, has been in limbo for many years now because of its complexities.

Eight bidders, including entities from South Korea and the UAE, had attended a pre-bid meeting held in October and three of them actually bid for the project. Naman Group, a city-based developer, was the third whose bid did not qualify.

## Vistara to merge into AI; Singapore Airlines to buy 25.1% stake

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Tata group on Tuesday announced the merger of Vistara with Air India under a deal wherein Singapore Airlines will also acquire a 25.1 per cent stake in Air India, marking a major consolidation in India's fast-growing aviation space.

The deal, which will make Air India the country's largest international carrier and second-largest domestic carrier, is expected to be completed by March 2024, subject to regulatory approvals.

Currently, Tata Group owns a 51 per cent stake in Vistara and the rest is with

Singapore Airlines (SIA). Singapore Airlines (SIA) said it would be investing ₹2,058.5 crore in Air India as part of the merger transaction.

Vistara and Air India are the country's second and third largest domestic carriers, respectively. Together, their market share stood at 18.3 per cent in October.

Tata Group has not provided any details about the merged entity such as those pertaining to branding, uniforms and frequent flyer programmes, although it seems likely that Vistara as a brand name might not exist in the long run.

## World Cup turns Qatar into melting pot of world affairs

AP ■ LONDON

Soccer — or football, to most of the global billions watching the World Cup this month — is not human society itself, with all its thorny issues. But at times, the game is a reflection of the entire planet — of nations, their disputes, their aspirations and those of a multitude of minority communities.

In early November, just weeks before the most heavily scrutinized World Cup in the tournament's history kicked off in Qatar, top FIFA officials sent a letter urging teams to "let football take centre stage."

FIFA president Gianni Infantino followed this up on the eve of the opening match with a one-hour diatribe against all who had criticised the host nation's human rights

record, the conditions that led to thousands of migrant workers dying building the nation's glittering new stadiums and its stance on LGBTQ issues.

Fans from around the world have a different idea of what that "centre stage" should show. Many, but not all, Iranians attending matches in Qatar have wanted to express their support for protesters at home. And they've wanted the team to do the same.

Other political issues have been erupting fast and furious on a near-daily basis. And outside the World Cup bubble, the world itself has kept turning in some of its most fractious events, both unsurprising and surprising: Russia's war in Ukraine, mass shootings in the United States and the sudden eruption of protests in China.

Of the sporting spirit, George Orwell wrote: "I am always amazed when I hear people saying that sport creates goodwill between the nations, and that if only the common peoples of the world could meet one another at football or cricket, they would have no inclination to meet on the battlefield."

His point stands. Russia was banned from this World Cup after hosting the previous one in 2018, mirroring the isolation the country and its leaders face for the Ukraine invasion. Ukraine itself fell at the last hurdle for qualification, with fans at home likely more concerned about bombardment and survival amid electricity and water shortages than watching matches in Qatar.

Decades of enmity between

the United States and Iran have been seeping into the buildup before the two nations play a critical World Cup match Tuesday that could see one of the countries progress to the knockout stages. The U.S. Soccer Federation briefly displayed Iran's national flag on social media without the emblem of the Islamic Republic, saying the move supported protesters inside Iran. The Tehran government reacted by accusing America of removing the name of God from its national flag.

The century-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including Israel's occupation of lands Palestinians want for a future state, has also featured in Qatar, though neither national team is competing.

The Palestinian flag and pro-Palestinian fans have been

prominent, while Israeli media and fans have been less welcome in an Arab nation that has not normalized relations with Israel.

As Morocco completed a famous victory over the highly-ranked stars of Belgium Sunday, unrest broke out in Belgian cities and also in the Netherlands, where the immigrant North African community has long been marginalized.

"Those are not fans; they are rioters. Moroccan fans are there to celebrate," the mayor of Brussels said.

LGBTQ rights have been at the fore in Qatar as well, with the country under the microscope for its human rights record and laws criminalising homosexuality.

Germany's players covered their mouths for the team

photo before their opening match to protest against FIFA following the governing body's clampdown on the "One Love" armband. Sporting rainbow colors, a symbol of LGBTQ rights, has been a key contentious issue. Some European officials have brought those colors to the stands.

Qatari soccer fans responded to Germany's protest by holding pictures of former Germany playmaker Mesut Özil while covering their mouths. This referenced Özil, a German-born descendant of Turkish immigrants, quitting the national team after becoming a target of racist abuse and a scapegoat for Germany's early World Cup exit in 2018.

"I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose," Özil said at the time.



# Dattopant Thengadi did a wonderful job in organizing the society: CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that India is an ancient, wonderful and great nation. India has given the light of knowledge to the world. India's place has been at the forefront of civilization and culture. Today, under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's contribution to the global economy has reached 9.5 percent as compared to earlier times. Like the integral humanism of Deendayal Upadhyay, Dattopant Thengadi also did a wonderful job in the direction of organizing the society.

Chief Minister Chouhan was addressing the Dattopant Thengadi

Memorial National Lecture Series-2022 on the topic "India's economic potential in the global scenario of the 21st century" at Ravindra Bhavan, Bhopal. Union Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman took part as the keynote speaker. President of the Institute Ashok Kumar Pandey was also present.

Chief Minister Chouhan said that it is the duty of a person to be disciplined for the nation and the society. Dattopant ji had said, utilise nature, do not exploit it. His thoughts are relevant even today. India is once again marching its way to become a Vishwa Guru. The world is seeing the potential of India. India is sending food grain to many countries of the

world. Chief Minister Chouhan said that the scientists of our country are doing miracles. Today's India is becoming a glorious and prosperous India. Chief Minister Chouhan said that Madhya Pradesh is also moving fast. We have decided to build an Atmanirbhar Madhya Pradesh for an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that today it is my good fortune to participate in the lecture series in the memory of Rashtririshi Thengadi. Thengadi ji will always be remembered for building various institutions in India and for the welfare of various sections.

Sitharaman said that the work done by him even during the difficult times of

the British rule is commendable. He fought for the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh. The welfare of the country is only due to the welfare of the workers.

The Association for advocates is also his gift. The Union Finance Minister said that to make Atmanirbhar Bharat, self-confidence is needed first, its spirit comes from the inspiration of Rashtririshi Thengadi.

Dattopant ji did unprecedented work for economic reforms. She said that efforts are being made to follow the vision of Dattopant ji in the country. Dattopant ji's goal was to push all classes forward. Dattopant ji has played a role in ending communism and capitalism. Startups in India are growing rapidly in

the field of self-employment. The startup revolution belongs to the youth of India.

Director of the institute Mukesh Kumar Mishra said that the much revered Thengadi ji is a legend who can never be forgotten. He is considered the ruler of Shramik Jagat. He is known as a linguist, litterateur, thinker, philosopher and jurist. He was in favor of the development of the entire society. Secretary of the institute Deepak Sharma said that the country is changing due to the economic policies of the last decade. Sharma said that India is the solution to all the problems of the world. India will guide the world. The world is looking towards India.



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaks on 'Economic Potential of India in Global Scenario of the 21st Century' during a lecture organised by Dattopant Thengadi Research Institute, at Ravindra Bhawan on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

## Mubarik Khatri awarded with national award for excellence in Bagh Prints

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Haji Mubarik Khatri was awarded with the National Handicrafts Award for the year 2017 in Delhi on Monday.

One of the Renowned craftsmen of Bagh print is Haji Mubarik Khatri who has been continuously working in his traditional craft work for more than 35 years. Mubarik Khatri, the artist who gave new approach and style of the innovative Bagh print to the World. Mubarik Khatri is well known personality for his traditional folk art of Bagh Printing. One of the Prestigious award in India is the National Award given by the Government of India.

Union Textiles Minister Piyush Goyal honored him with a Tamra Patra (Momento), certificate as well as a cash prize of one lakh at the Special Ceremony for Award distribu-



tion held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi. This honor has been given to him for his significant contribution and excellence in craftsmanship.

Haji Mubarik is the only craftsman to get National Award in Bagh Prints of Madhya Pradesh for the year 2017. Mubarik Khatri has mastered this craft as they admire there traditional Craft which he

got in heritage from his Ancestors. It has always been creating many modern and Innovative patterns and engraved those designs on sarees and bed sheets.

He took Inspiration from Ancient paintings and sceneries from Bagh caves, and prepared wooden blocks which were then printed on the fabrics, which became very popular. In Respect of his Such Crafts development Practices, this National honor has been given to him. This traditional and ancestral printing art of Mubarik is known as Bagh print and is known over the world. This national award given to Khatri is the highest Award of India, which is given to the selected masters of the country for their contribution and extraordinary works in the art of craftsmanship. And among them there is Haji Mubarik Khatri Saheb of Bagh. His tireless efforts for

innovations and Craft development, the International Crafts Award was also given to him last month. This international honor was awarded to him in a special ceremony organized in Delhi.

Haji Mubarik has trained hundreds of people in this craft with his untiring efforts. In which his entire family i.e. his brother, his two sons Jialuhak Khatri and Moynuddin Khatri are also continuously working, who themselves are master craftsmans of this art. Mubarik Khatri has been working continuously for the last 35 years for the preservation and modernization of his ancestral craft since childhood and is working in efforts to bring the extinct ancient art to the new generation, shri Mubarik has trained many youths from scheduled castes and tribes in his workshop in Bagh and he is continuously Training and motivating them in this craft work.

## CM expresses grief over the death of journalists

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has expressed grief over the death of Vidisha Press Club President Rajesh Sharma, journalist Sunil Sharma and Narendra Dixit in a road accident. Chief Minister Chouhan said that in this hour of grief, we all are with the bereaved families. An assistance of Rs 4 lakh to each will be provided to the relatives of the deceased by the state government.

Chief Minister Chouhan has prayed to God to give peace to the departed souls and strength to the family members to bear this deep sorrow.

## 15-year-old girl killed, her elder sister escapes with minor injuries in a road accident

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

A 15-year-old girl was killed while her elder sister escaped with injuries after their scooter was hit by a truck at Bagesevania area in the state capital.

After they were hit they jumped and fell in which the younger sister was mowed down by the truck and she died on the spot.

Elder sister was also injured in the accident. Both were returning home after buying gifts from Raja Bhoj market.

Anushka Kanerjee (15) lives near Gitanjali School, used to study was class 10 student. On Monday, she along with elder sister Muskaan (16) were returning home after buying gifts from Raja Bhoj market on scooty and when

**After they were hit they jumped and fell in which the younger sister was mowed down by the truck**

they reached near the Ganesh temple in front of the Bank of India, a truck hit the scooter from behind.

TI Sanjeev Chokse said that he has talked to the owner of the truck and he had claimed that he has the permission of the administration to move the truck in no-entry. However, he has not given the documents yet.

Meanwhile Journalism student Sara Azam (22), who

was hit by a car in Kamla Nagar area, died during treatment, she was undergoing treatment in Hamidia.

According to the police, Shubhankar Singh (22), a resident of Danish Kunj Kolar Road, is studying engineering in LNCT. He told the police that it in the night of November 22 he was going to Kolar on a motorcycle with his friend Sara Azam and during which a stray dog chased them near Shabri Nagar Complex.

He decelerated and to avoid the dog Sara pulled her legs and lost control and fell and was hit by a vehicle which was moving behind. Sara was taken to Jaypee Hospital by 108 in critical condition and when her condition worsened he was referred to Hamidia where he died late on Monday night.



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with Congress State President Kamal Nath and senior leader Digvijay Singh during the Bharat Jodo Yatra in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

## Action on fertilizer hoarders; 1,000 bags of fertilisers seized in Berasia area

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

In major action against hoarders 1,000 bags of fertilisers were found in a godown located in the Berasia area and after the fertilisers were seized godown was sealed in the action.

On Tuesday a large number of farmers had reached here to get fertilizers, but they were told that there is no fertilizer. After this SDM Aditya Jain checked the godown and found that it had 1000 bags of fertilisers.

Complaints were being received for several days regarding fertilizers in Berasia area. Since, at this time farmers need fertilizers for Rabi crops. Due to which gathering outside the fertilizer shop or godowns from morning till late night is witnessed.

Despite this, they are not provided with fertilisers, due to this, the district administration was also alerted and checking was started. As soon as the complaint was received on Tuesday, SDM Jain reached the godown of Sai Traders and inspected it. During this, 1000 bags of fertilisers were found kept in the godown.

SDM Jain told that all the fertilizer distributors were informed about the caution

**A large number of farmers had reached here to get fertilizers, but they were told that there is no fertilizer**

distribution rules in the morning itself regarding the problem of fertilizers of the farmers.

Despite this, the farmers were told about the non-availability of fertilizers in the godown of Sai Traders and when he inspected the godown, 1000 bags of fertilisers were found in the godown. That is why the godown has been sealed after confiscating fertilisers. Action is being taken against the operators as per rules.

There are long queues of farmers daily outside the Government fertilizer sales center at Berasia mandi. Farmers reach here early in the morning and keep waiting till evening and when fertilizers are not available then they have to come the next day.

Farmers claimed that they are getting worried about fertilizers for many days. Despite this, they are not getting two bags of manure.

## Rare spine surgery conducted on 14-year-old girl

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Rare spine surgery was done at AIIMS Bhopal in the Department of Neurosurgery in a 14 years old female child, who was a resident of Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh). The procedure was done recently at AIIMS Bhopal.

The Lesion was extremely close the neuro vascular bundle.

A 14 years old female presented with recurrent abdominal pain in the Neurosurgery OPD and was admitted for complete evaluation. MRI and CT spine was done and there was a defect in the sacrum and a large cyst was found which was pushing the rectum. There is a very little space to operate, which makes it extremely challenging to operate. Intradepartmental meeting was held by Prof. Amit Agrawal, Dr. Adesh Shrivastava, Dr. Sumit Raj, Dr. Pradeep Chouksey and it was decided to operate as soon as possible. Sometime these cysts may become very large so that they present like pregnancy.

The surgery was done by Dr. Sumit Raj along with Dr. Adesh Shrivastava. Patient was taken up for surgery with taking all precautions. The

**The surgery was done by Dr Sumit Raj along with Dr Adesh Shrivastava. Patient was taken up for surgery with taking all precautions**

patient was operated and the cyst was ligated and dural repair was done. The posterior defect was closed with a titanium mesh and screws. At the end of the procedure patient was moving her limbs and the aim of surgery was achieved. She was mobilized the next very day and discharged on the third post operative day. Sutures were removed on the 10th day in the opd.

The case was done under Intraoperative Neuromonitoring (IONM) which was done by Dr. Ruchi Singh. Anesthesia team comprised of Dr. Sunaina and Dr. Rhea.

It is an extremely rare case. Such cases are done only in specialized centers. And patient did not have to pay anything extra as she was a Ayushman beneficiary.

What is anterior sacral

meningocoe?

An anterior sacral meningocele is a rare form of spinal dysraphism that is sometimes associated with syndromes such as Currarino and Marfan syndromes. These lesions rarely cause neurological complications, but meningitis, sepsis, obstetric problems, and bowel and bladder difficulties are common secondary conditions. The lesions can even be fatal. Because these lesions usually do not regress spontaneously, surgical treatment is the standard for symptomatic or growing masses. The dural defect can be repaired with a variety of anterior or posterior approaches.

Why rare? Surgery for ant sacral meningocele can be done both from anterior and posterior approaches. We chose posterior approach as it is direct and will cause a small scar.

The management of anterior sacral meningocele is challenging. Success depends on the coordination between Neurosurgeons, Neuro-anesthesiologist, and a Neurophysiologist. It is a highly meticulous surgery as there is very miniscule space to operate and even a small damage can lead to weakness of the limbs and bladder and bowel symptoms may be affected.

## Bank of Baroda organises Mega Kisan Mela 2022 in Jabalpur

PNS ■ JABALPUR

One of India's leading public sector bank Bank of Baroda, today announced that the Bank is organising a Mega Kisan Mela 2022 in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday as a part of the 5th Edition of the Baroda Kisan Pakhwada, an annual farmer outreach programme. During the two-week agri festival, the Bank's network of 271 semi-urban and rural branches in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh that predominantly serve the agri customer segment are actively participating in 'Baroda Kisan Pakhwada' and the Bank is aiming to connect with over 25,000 farmers in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

'Baroda Kisan Pakhwada'

has been designed to help the Bank boost engagement with the farming community and create awareness about various agri products, schemes & delivery channels offered by Bank of Baroda and initiatives taken by the Government for the benefit of farmers.

The Mega Kisan Mela in Jabalpur was inaugurated by Shri Rajesh Malhotra, Chief General Manager (Retail Assets, MSME and Rural & Agri Banking), Bank of Baroda and Girish Dalakoti, General Manager & Zonal Head (Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh), Bank of Baroda. The Mela is organized with participation of over 500 farmers from the districts of Jabalpur, Katni, Narsinghpur, and Panna.

In this year's Baroda Kisan Pakhwada, the Bank is

organising more than 760 events such as farmer meets, choupals, soil testing camps, animal health checkup camps and will reach out to over 25,000 farmers in Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. Till date, in this year's Baroda Kisan Pakhwada, the Bank has sanctioned over Rs 101.00 crore under various schemes.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Rajesh Malhotra, Chief General Manager - Retail Assets, MSME and Rural Banking & Agri Banking, Bank of Baroda said, "Agriculture is an important sector in Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh, generating employment and providing livelihoods to a large number of people. We at Bank of Baroda are pleased to organize this Mega Kisan Mela in Jabalpur. Through this

farmer meet, our aim is to reach out to the farming community and provide details and assistance on the various types of agri loans and banking services available as well as the various agri initiatives launched by the Government. This will enable our farmer customers to get the right assistance when required, helping them to grow their income."

In Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh, Bank of Baroda has 271 semi-urban/rural branches. Advances to the agriculture sector in Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh have grown to over Rs 5,600 crore as on September 30, 2022. Under Agriculture advances, the Baroda Kisan Credit Card and Lending to Self Help Groups (SHG) are the key growth sectors.



Participants take part in a street play competition 'Rang-e-Samvidhan' organised by an NGO Youngshala at State Museum in Bhopal on Tuesday. Pioneer photo

## BHEL receives max number of CII-EXIM Bank Awards

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Harat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) has achieved another major milestone in its journey of Business Excellence under its 'Quality First' movement with a record number of prestigious CII-EXIM Bank Awards for Business Excellence 2022.

BHEL is the recipient of CII-Exim Bank's first-ever 'Special Jury

Commendation for Adoption and Nurturance of Business Excellence'. The company's Trichy, Haridwar, Bhopal and Hyderabad units have received the Platinum recognition and Project Engineering Management, Electronics Division - Bengaluru, Power Sector - Northern Region and Ranipet divisions have been awarded the Gold Plus recognition.

The awards were

received by the divisions in the presence of Dr. Nalin Shinghal, Chairman & Managing Director at the 30th CII Excellence Summit in Bengaluru. These awards are based on the internationally recognized European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) excellence model. Notably, BHEL was the first PSU to get the CII-EXIM Bank award in the year 2006.



# Power broker Vishal Choudhary seeks two weeks' time from ED

PNS ■ Ranchi

Power broker Vishal Choudhary, who is said to have links with politicians and bureaucrats, has sought two weeks from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to appear for questioning. Earlier, the probe agency had called Choudhary for questioning on November 28 after he was stopped by immigration officials at the Delhi airport on November 24. Sources said that Choudhary was on his way to Thailand when the ED stopped him at Delhi International Airport. The Immigration officials caught him after the ED had issued a lookout notice anticipating Choudhary's plan to leave India. Sources said that ED is yet to take a final call on Choudhary seeking two week time as he may be issued a second summons soon, failing which action will be taken against him.

During the investigation of the MGNREGA scam, raids were conducted at Choudhary's Ranchi and Muzaffarpur locations. The raids were conducted at his locations in Damodarpur, Muzaf-



farpur. Apart from this, raids were also conducted at his residence in Ranchi's Ashok Nagar. Documents supporting his involvement were recovered from his possession. The ED had let him off after

preliminary questioning in this regard. Along with this, instructions were given to come later on being called. Earlier, Choudhary, was to reach the ED office on Monday, but he failed. According to the informa-

tion received from the sources, no information was given to the ED on behalf of Choudhary. Sources said that Choudhary is said to be the blue eyed boy of bureaucrats of Jharkhand. His reach can be gauged from the fact that

his choice is taken care of in transfer-posting of officers, they added. On May 24, the ED raided the hideout of Vishal Chaudhary, a resident of Ashok Nagar Road No. 6 of Argora police station area. During the raid, ED also found his iPhone and many important documents from the dustbin. It had details of senior officers of the state. Vishal Choudhary is originally from Muzaffarpur in Bihar. It won government tenders in Jharkhand by setting up several companies like Frontline Global in Ranchi. It is also working on many projects of Skill India. Vishal's house located on Road No. 6 of Ashok Nagar area looks normal, but according to the people around, the nights used to be colourful here. Many bureaucrats of the state used to mark attendance here. Vishal was also said to be fond of traveling abroad and expensive vehicles. Vishal Chaudhary, fond of traveling abroad, had visited many countries including Turkey, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Indonesia, UAE in the last two years.

## Delta Technology Day at Tata Steel

PNS ■ Jamshedpur



Delta, a global leader in power and thermal management solutions, recently hosted a technology day event on November 24 in Jamshedpur. The event witnessed participation from 140 attendees from Tata Group. This event serves as a showcase for Delta's vision, which encourages partnerships to tackle some of the most critical problems facing the planet and enables everyone to effect positive change. Sustainability is at the centre of everything Delta does. It was an occasion for celebrating accomplishments, fostering relationships, and planning for a sustainable future. Tata Steel is committed to reducing its emissions, with the ambition of achieving CO2 neutral steelmaking. In order to accomplish this, Tata Steel is engaged in a significant number of project store duce CO2 emissions. Further, "To provide innovative, clean, and energy-efficient solutions for a better tomorrow" has been Delta's corporate mission for the past 50 years. Delta has a

long history of meeting such challenges, and we believe passionately in steel's vital role in society's low-carbon future. Hence, to aid the Tata Group in its sustainability journey, Delta Electronics Technology Day event was held to provide a collaborative platform for Tata Group, while also showcasing the latest technological trends in the industry to better prepare for holistic, sustainable growth. Senior management from both Delta and Tata group graced the occasion with their presence. Commenting on the event, Niranjana Nayak, MD, Delta Electronics India, said, "We are all on the same mission to accelerate the path to net zero. I have no doubt that this is the start of a successful collaboration that aids our Indian partners in modernising their industries and advancing sustainability."

# Marandi cautions Soren over 'scam' in Excise Dept

PNS ■ Ranchi

BJP legislature party chief Babul Marandi launched an attack on the Chief Minister Hemant Soren questioning the excise department failure in revenue collection. The BJP leader also mocked the excise department for presenting false data. The BJP leader said, the Excise department, which has set a target of collecting Rs 2200 crore in revenue by selling liquor in the financial year 2022-23, could collect Rs 1085 crore. The department is expected to collect Rs 1600 crore by the end of November 2022 but it could collect Rs 1085 crore. The situation has become so worse that employees working in retail outlets of liquors are not getting paid. Marandi has warned CM Soren



against those government officials who are misleading the government in the formulation of excise policy and paving the path for the addition of the name of CM in another scam. Marandi alleged that in order to save face, the Excise Department has sued the government in the

High Court, out of the "favourite" companies selected before the contract and fined for not meeting the target. Liquor selling manpower supplies companies are saying that they are not getting supply of branded liquor/beer, so how to sell as per target? Whole seller of liquor says- Branded companies are not supplying customized liquor/beer and companies say that they are not getting payment for supply of goods, so how to supply further? Jharkhand's government revenue is suffering a huge loss in this game of cat and mouse and "looting". The former CM, cautioning CM Soren said, "Chief Minister, before you make a record of another scam by getting caught in this liquor scam also, wake up and without delay, take strict action against those officers who have made sure arrange-

ments to trap your neck in the liquor scam on the lines of Delhi." Marandi further said, "On May 1, 2022, when this Chhattisgarhi liquor policy and the companies selected before making the policy (which I had told by tweeting before the tender) came, the Excise Department held press conferences for the next two months to glorify them. The release claimed that the revenue has started coming in more than expected. An attempt has been made by you to prove the opponents who expressed apprehensions false." "What happened that the excise department, which published false figures of revenue collection in the newspaper, stopped speaking after two months? I want to ask you this question and you must ask the excise department," alleged Marandi.

## 300 students participate in the 18th Inter School Science Exhibition

RAHUL SHARMA ■ Bokaro



Atanu Bhowmick, Director In-Charge, Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) inaugurated the two day 18th Inter-School Science Exhibition-2022 organised at Ispat English Medium School, Sector-20 of RSP on 29th November. P K Satapathy, ED (P&A), A K Nayak, CGM (TA&CSR) and other senior officers of RSP, students and teachers from different schools as well as parents were present on the occasion. DIC Bhowmick went round the exhibition and took a keen interest in the exhibits, interacting with the students about their projects. The

theme for this year's exhibition is 'Science for Sustainable Living.' 24 schools of Rourkela are participating in the event. 300 students are presenting 150 Projects under three categories in the exhibition. It is noteworthy that participants are showcasing their scientific acumen through a number of innovative projects based on the themes like

Resource Management, Agriculture & Organic Farming, Health & Cleanliness, Transport & Communication, Digital & Technological Solutions, Waste Management and Mathematical Modelling and many more. The programme is slated to conclude with a formal valedictory function on 30th November.

## RD Secy holds meeting with ratification mission team



Secretary Rural Development Prashant Kumar, MGNREGA Commissioner Rajeshwari B along with others during a meeting in Ranchi on Tuesday.

PNS ■ Ranchi

Several development and welfare schemes of the Rural Development Department are going on across the state. Deputy Commissioners and Development Commissioners have an important role in putting all these schemes on the ground in the districts. You have to work with full responsibility in how people get the benefits of these schemes," Secretary, Rural Development Department, Prashant Kumar said these things in a review meeting with the members of the ratification mission team of the department today. He said that along with speeding up the development of the state, the schemes of the government should be taken to the people for whom these schemes have been

made. Kumar said that the State Rural Development Ratification Mission Team has been formed to provide ratification in the schemes run by the Rural Development Department in the State. The members of the ratification mission team are nominated and should continuously monitor the schemes by visiting the area. The secretary said that this campaign will continue not only till now but also in the future. The secretary said that in some areas different districts have made good achievements, while many districts are lagging behind. In such a situation, where the pace of development is slow, all concrete steps should be taken to speed it up. The secretary also said that there are many challenges before the dis-

tricts. They also have to take immediate decisions according to time and circumstances. In such a situation, you should take your decision in such a way that maximum residents of the state can benefit from it. The secretary also asked officials to build a model of dialogue between the government and the villagers. He said that there should be IEC activity for the schemes of the Rural Development Department in all the districts. All the members of the ratification mission team should regularly inspect the implementation and progress of various schemes by visiting the area. In the review meeting, the secretary directed the concerned officials that all the works under MGNREGA should be completed on time. He said that it should be our priority to make the welfare schemes run under MGNREGA successful. Further, he said that due to the better implementation of the schemes, expected improvement can be made in the lives of the common people. He directed that being sensitive, efforts should be made to connect people with welfare schemes. Along with this, while visiting the area continuously, he will ensure to speed up the completion of the scheme. In the meeting, MGNREGA Commissioner Rajeshwari B, Special Secretary, Rural Development Department Ram Kumar Sinha, Joint Secretary Shail Prabha Kujur, Joint Secretary Arun Kumar Singh, Deputy Secretary Pramod Kumar, Under Secretary Chandrabhushan, Under Secretary Arun Kumar Sinha Other officials were also present.

## Vendor Development Programme-22 concludes on high note



PNS ■ Ranchi

The two-day Vendor Development Programme 2022 which was jointly organized by Central Coalfields Limited (CCL) and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development Office, Ranchi at CCL HQ, Ranchi ended on a positive note. The two-day programme witnessed representatives of MSMEs, various PSUs and Government units come together and discuss various pertinent issues. Chairman cum Managing Director (CMD), CMPDI, Manoj Kumar was the Chief Guest during the closing ceremony. CCL Director (Personal), HN Mishra, CCL Director (Finance), PK Mishra along with

Ranchi MSME Joint Director, Indrajeet Yadav also graced the occasion. A large number of employees were also present on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, Kumar congratulated the organizers for successfully organizing the program. He further stated that MSME's play a vital role in the economic development of the Country. He added that the company has reached the requisite target of procurement from MSMEs and is committed to further increase it. Mishra stated that technological innovation is critical for economic development. He further added that CCL is committed to extending all the possible support to MSMEs. Director (Finance), PK Mishra said

that events like these are beneficial to all the stakeholders. Indrajeet Yadav said that the objective of the programme was to provide a common platform to various stakeholders and departments would continue to organize such programmes. He expressed his gratitude to CCL for successfully organizing the programme. An Industrial Exhibition was also organized on the occasion in which 60 enterprises participated. The vote of thanks was delivered by Surendra Sharma while Rajesh Jayswal anchored the entire program. GM (MM), CCL SN Mahto along with his team played an important role in the success of the program.

# State Cong leaders join Bharat Jodo Yatra in MP

PNS ■ Ranchi

Bharat Jodo Yatra started under the leadership of Senior Congress Leader, Rahul Gandhi from Sambor to Indore in Madhya Pradesh (MP) on Tuesday, in which Jharkhand Congress In-Charge, Avinash Pandey, the State Congress Chief, Rajesh Thakur, Congress Legislature Party Leader, Alamgir Alam, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) Minister, Mithlesh Thakur including Health Minister Banna Gupta, Agriculture Minister Badal, Bharat Jodo Yatra State Coordinator Subodh Kant Sahay participated. Pradesh Congress Committee Spokesman, Rakesh Sinha said that during the visit, Gandhi discussed the current political situation of the State and the development programs being carried out by the State Government and said that the State Government is working for the public interest and the work it is doing in the matter is commendable. "Gandhi said that the conspiracy being hatched by the BJP to defame the developing face of the Government. Fight



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with State JPCC President Rajesh Thakur, Ministers Alamgir Alam, Banna Gupta, Mithlesh Thakur, and former Union Minister Subodh Kant Sahay during the Bharat Jodo Yatra in Indore on Tuesday.

it strongly under the leadership of the State Congress," he added. The party Senior Leader said that the battle that the Congress is fighting on the issues like hateful atmosphere, inflation, falling economy of the Country is the result of the same battle that the BJP is restlessly trying to crush that voice through constitutional institutions and we will neither be afraid nor bow down, but by becoming the voice of the people, we will work together with the people to defeat this autocratic government. Sinha said that Rahul Gandhi thanked Chief Minister, Hemant Soren for the participation of the JMM in this visit. On the occasion Mithlesh Thakur said during the Bharat Jodo Yatra that it is worth considering why this Yatra was needed at present. "The British left the Country but BJP has imbibed their divide and rule policy. The situation in the Country is worse than British rule. BJP has poisoned the Country with hatred in the name of caste, creed and religion. Today, on the land of Ganga-Jamuni Tehzeeb, the poison of hatred is being mixed in the minds of the people," he added.

## INBRIEF

### 33 ticket brokers caught in special drive

In order to curb the illegal sale and purchase of tickets by the Railway Protection Force, a special campaign was launched against the black marketing of railway tickets and ticket brokers in all divisions so that passengers can easily get travel tickets by East Central Railway. In this series, on November 28, ticket brokers involved in black marketing of railway tickets. A special raid campaign was conducted against the agents and travel agencies. During this campaign, 33 ticket brokers were arrested and legal action was taken against them, registering a total of 34 cases of ticket toutting in one day. 47 travel tickets worth 76 thousand booked for different dates ahead of the arrested ticket brokers while 612 travel tickets worth about Rs 15. 83 lakh booked for earlier travel dates were seized. In this way, a total of 659 tickets worth about Rs 16.59 lakh were recovered.

### Digitalization initiative by SAIL R&D at Bhilai



Research & Development Centre for Iron & Steel (RDCIS), Ranchi of Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL) has taken a major initiative for introduction of Industry 4.0 based digitalization interventions in steel industries steered by Nirvik Banerjee, ED (RDCIS). As its latest endeavour, the Automation, Computer & IT team of RDCIS in association with Bhilai Steel Plant has implemented a Computerized Coil Yard Management system for its Wire Rod Mill. The system has been developed with an objective to enhance the reliability and efficacy of coil identification, storage and dispatch operations. This state of art IT system includes adoption of machine readable QR coded labels for coils, Wireless LAN in shipping area, handheld scanners for shipping operations and a customised coil yard management software at the core. Architecture also includes interfacing with existing MES and SAP systems of BSP for seamlessly integrating production plan, rolling information, loading plans and dispatch process. The system is an important stride in the direction of digitalization and paper less operations.

### Meeting of Materials Mgmt Depts begins



A two-day meeting of the Heads of the Materials Management Department of various plants of SAIL started in the conference hall of Bokaro Niwas on Tuesday. The meeting was attended by Executive Director (CMMG), SAIL Corporate Office SJ Ahmed, Executive Director (MM), BSL A. Srivastava, Heads of MM Department of various plants, Chief General Managers and other senior officers. On the first day of the meeting, various Steel plants officials, through a presentation, shared the best practices of the Materials Management Department in various units of SAIL. In the afternoon, the officials of the MM department of various plants visited the Central Stores Department of BSL and got acquainted with the functioning of the Central Store. The meeting of the Heads of Materials Management Department of various plants will continue till 30th November in which various topics related to Inventory, SAIL MSE Policy, Revision of SAIL Guide Lines will be discussed.



# Ulemas’ role vital in deradicalisation: Doval

Religion should be source of peace, not reason for discord, conflict, or violence, says NSA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With cross-border terrorism and ISIS-inspired terrorism posing a threat to peace and security, the Ulemas have a vital role to play in countering radicalisation and extremism by propagating progressive ideas and thought, National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval said here on Tuesday.

Underlining these points at a dialogue between the Indonesian and Indian delegation of Ulema, Islamic scholars and leaders of other faiths, Doval said the cooperation of the civil society is essential in countering the threat from ISIS-inspired individual terror cells and returnees from theatres like Syria and Afghanistan.

The Indonesian delegation of Ulema is accompanying Mohammad Mahfud MD, coordinating minister for political, legal and security affairs, who is on a visit to India on the



invitation of Doval who had attended the second India-Indonesia Security Dialogue on March 17 in Jakarta.

Emphasising the important role of Ulema in Islamic society, Doval said the aim of the discussion is to bring together Indian and Indonesian Ulema and scholars to promote tolerance, harmony and peaceful co-existence which will bolster the fight against violent extremism, terrorism and radicalisation.

Urging the need to develop a common narrative on

deradicalisation, Doval said in a democracy there is no place for hate speech, prejudice, propaganda, demonisation, violence, conflict and misuse of religion for narrow ends.

Drawing attention towards youths who are becoming the "primary target" of radicalisation, the NSA said if their energies are nurtured in the right direction, they can become "harbingers of change" and building blocks of progress in any society.He said we also need to counter disinformation and propaganda that can

"impede peaceful co-existence" among the followers of different faiths.

Doval said the essence lies in disseminating positive discourse far and wide, and not merely reacting to the agenda set by inimical forces.

While technology is a blessing for humanity, it is also being misused by anti-social elements to spread hatred and for disruptive purposes, he cautioned.

He said the Ulema must also be adept at using technology and utilizing various technological solutions to thwart propaganda and hate.

Doval said Islam had emerged as a rallying point for the disadvantaged and tolerant outlook. Fissures emerged among the caliphs after the death of the Prophet on the question of legitimate heir with each faction attempting to outdo each other by espousing a more radical interpretation of Hadiths, he said."It is here that the Ulema have a pivotal role to play.

They have a leading role in educating the people on the original tolerant and moderate principles of Islam and countering radicalisation and extremism with progressive ideas and thought," he said.

Mahfud said discussions such as this give us the opportunity to learn from each other and be inspired by the best practices in preserving a peaceful and harmonious society.

"Many a time we have witnessed people who use their religion as a doctrine of absolute truth and readily blame others. We have to go out of this and improve.

"Religion, I think should be a source of peace, not the reason for discord, conflict, or violence. Religion should be a unifying tool, not a divisive instrument," he said. He said world is facing difficult challenges, ranging from poverty, climate change, food insecurity, pandemic, corruption, unemployment, armed conflicts, income inequality, and human rights abuses to name a few.

## Modular terror a new challenge for NIA, security forces in J&K

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

Hybrid or modular terror model has emerged as a new challenge for the security forces in Jammu & Kashmir as the terrorists involved in attacks are not known to each other and tasks are assigned among many unconnected ultras over social media platforms like Telegram.

Such modular mechanism even adds to the woes of investigative agencies like NIA in cracking terror-related cases.

Recent trends in the Valley suggest terror groups are resorting to operations through modules comprising hybrid terrorists who are difficult to trace in the face of invisibility and involvement of multiple players. Such modules also recruit part time terrorists to execute a cer-

tain task the individual then carries on with his normal chores, officials in the security agencies said. Mushrooming of women over ground workers (OGWs) has also emerged as a discernible feature of the latest terror tactic, they said.

The other challenges include use of drones or unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for sending weapons, explosives, drugs and fake currency, issuance of online threat and hartal calls by the terror groups via Telegram channels, circulation of fake news and propaganda through Pakistani online portal Kashmir Fight.

The terror groups have also been hitting soft targets like labourers from other States and minorities especially Kashmiri Pandits The Pakistani handlers of the terror modules are using

Ankara for terrorism as many close combat weapons like pistols of Turkiye origin like Canik TP9 have been recovered in searches after encounters, they said.

In 2022 so far, as many as 29 civilians have been killed in Valley by terrorists including three Kashmiri Pandits, three other Hindus, 15 Muslims besides six outsider Hindus and two Muslims.

However, casualties of the security forces have shown a declining trend from a peak of 86 in 2018 to 77 in 2019, 58 in 2020, 29 in 2021 and 26 so far this year, according to official data.The civilian casualties have also recorded a declining trend from a high of 80 loss of lives in 2018 to 46 in 2019 followed by 37 in 2020, 35 in 2021 and 29 till so far this year.

# NIA raids organised criminal syndicates in 13 locations



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday conducted a third round of crackdown against organised criminal syndicates and networks besides top gangsters at 13 locations in Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Chandigarh and Delhi-NCR.

The districts covered in the search operation are Fazilka, Taran Taran, Ludhiana, Sangrur and Mohali districts of Punjab, Yamuna Nagar district

of Haryana, Sikar district of Rajasthan and Outer North District of Delhi/ NCR to dismantle and disrupt the emerging nexus between terrorists, gangsters and drug smugglers/traffickers based in India and abroad in connection with two cases registered in August.

"This 3rd round of raids and searches is part of the NIA crackdown against organised criminal syndicates and networks, top gangsters, their criminal and business associates based in Punjab, Haryana

and Rajasthan and arms suppliers based in Rajasthan and Delhi," the NIA said in a statement. Searches were conducted at the houses/premises of Kaushal Chaudhary of Gurugram (Haryana), Vishal Maan of Prahallpur (Delhi), Binny Gurjar of Sangroor (Punjab), Ravi Rajgarh of Ludhiana (Punjab) and their associates, it said.

During the searches, incriminating materials, including various types of contraband, have been seized,

along with ammunition. Investigations will continue to dismantle such terror networks as well as their funding and support infrastructure, it further said. Preliminary investigations have revealed that these gangs were carrying out targeted killings and were also raising funds to carry out such criminal activities through smuggling of drugs and weapons.

The recent sensational crimes and extortion calls by criminal syndicates and gang-

sters to businessmen, professionals, including doctors, had created a widespread scare among the people.

These gangs were using cyber-space to publicise these crimes to create terror among the public at large, according to the NIA FIRs.

"Investigations have also revealed that such criminal acts were not isolated local incidents but there was a deep rooted conspiracy amongst terrorists, gangsters and drug smuggling cartels and net-

works, which were operating from both within and outside the country," the agency said in its statement.

Most of these conspiracies were being hatched from inside jails of different States and were being executed by an organized network of operatives based abroad.

Many gang leaders and members had fled from India and were operating from foreign countries, including Pakistan, Canada, Malaysia and Australia, it added.

# ‘Moral duty of citizens to ensure welfare of soldiers’



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said here that it is the moral duty of every citizen to ensure the welfare of soldiers and their families and that industries and businesses can never flourish in a country where the national security is not strong.

In his address at the Armed Forces Flag Day Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Conclave, he also asserted that the "welfare of soldiers, who ensure our national security, should not be the responsibility of only the government but it should be the duty of all".

Rajnath emphasised that industries and businesses can never flourish in a country where national security is not strong. Appreciating the support of big corporate donors in the last few years which has led to a substantial increase in the fund, he exhorted the fraternity to contribute even more for the well-being of soldiers and the nation at large. The event

was organised by the department of ex-servicemen welfare, the Ministry of Defence.

The defence minister expressed gratitude to the retired as well as serving armed forces personnel whose valour and sacrifice safeguarded the sovereignty and integrity of the country. He made special mention of a soldier's message enshrined on the Kohima War Memorial in Nagaland, which reads: "When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today."

Reiterating the government's commitment towards the welfare of the soldiers, he said a number of initiatives were taken in this direction.

Rajnath urged the private sector to provide employment opportunities to about 60,000 soldiers who retire at a very young age every year, saying that these disciplined ex-servicemen are capable of understanding the most complex technology and using it proficiently.

The defence minister also launched a new website for the

Armed Forces Flag Day Fund. The portal is an interactive and user-friendly portal developed to promote online contribution

to the fund. He also released the anthem for this year's promotional campaign for the Armed Forces Flag Day.

## We cannot be agnostic about technology: EAM

**New Delhi:** India has to give due weightage to technology for its geopolitical positioning as it will play a crucial role in striking alliances in a multipolar world, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said here on Tuesday while stressing the point that the country cannot remain "agnostic" to developments in this sector.

Making this assertion at the Global Technology Summit, he said India would like to use its G-20 Presidency to reflect the interests and concerns of the global south that have been sidelined over the years. India will assume presidency on December one.

Elaborating upon the role of technology, Jaishankar said the rise of India was deeply linked with the rise of Indian technology. "We cannot be agnostic about technology. We have to stop thinking that there is something neutral about technology...more and more things are technology driven and we need to understand that there is a very strong political connotation in-built into technology," the minister said. He said the principle of econom-



ic strategic autonomy will hold the key to global rebalancing and big players will constantly strive to be more capable technologically.

"We, especially in India in the last two years, have woken up to the fact, where does our data reside? Who processes and harvests our data and what do they do with it? That is a very very key question," Jaishankar said.

He said it was important to look at the quality of partners and the sociology partners that India has in the arena of technological and strategic spheres.

Recounting his interaction with his counterparts in Africa and Latin America, Jaishankar said there has been a lot of interest in the digitally-enabled delivery platforms developed by India in the global south.



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday permitted the Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation Ltd to pursue its plea with the relevant authority for felling 84 trees at Mumbai's Aarey Colony for constructing train ramps at its car shed project.

This significant order would enable the MMRCCL to seek felling of 84 trees from the Tree Authority to start its construction work which has been stalled for quite some time now and, according to Mumbai Metro, the project cost has escalated from Rs 23,000 crore to Rs 37,000 crore.

The apex court observed that it cannot be "oblivious of serious dislocation" which may be caused in projects involving "large public funds". "The MMRCCL should be permitted to pursue its application before the tree authority for felling of 84 trees. Let the tree authority take a decision independently," a bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice PS Narasimha said. "Undoubtedly issues per-

taining to the environment are important. The State Government which had taken a decision in the first place to accept the technical committee report, later on changed its view while deciding upon realignment," said the court. The top court fixed the batch of petitions, including the suo motu (on its own) one, for final hearing and disposal in the first week of February next year.

The Court took note of the submissions of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the MMRCCL, that almost 95 per cent work on the project has been completed.

"It would not be possible for the court to stay the decision,

"Moreover, it must be noted that substantial no of trees have already been felled...As already noted earlier 2144 trees were fell in executing work for the car depot. What is now sought is a permission to apply to tree authorities for felling of trees for ramp. Without the ramp, work done would be of no use," the CJI said in its order.

The top law officer said the plea of the MMRCCL was pending with the Tree Authority which is not proceeding due to the pendency of the petitions here in the Supreme Court.

"The original total cost of the project was Rs 23,000 crore. The MMRCCL has already invested Rs 22000 crores. Because of the delay caused by the litigation, the cost has escalated to Rs 37000 crores,"

## SC transfers trial in murder of YSV Reddy to Hyd CBI court

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday transferred the trial in the murder case of YS Vivekananda Reddy - former Lok Sabha MP and uncle of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy - to a Special CBI Court in Hyderabad.

A Bench of Justices MR Shah and BV Nagarathna was hearing a plea filed by the daughter of Reddy seeking directions to the CBI to expedite the probe into the murder case and citing delays at trial court in Kadapa.

"It cannot be said that apprehension of the petitioner that there may not be fair trial or that there is larger conspiracy is imaginary. Petitioner has the fundamental right to get justice. This is a fit case to

Mehta said. He then listed out the benefits and the impact of the metro rail project saying the carbon emission, due to less vehicular traffic, would come down. Above 13 lakh passengers may travel through the metro and may lead to ease in traffic situation, fuel consumption and air pollution, he said, adding that every day, nine persons die in train accidents in Mumbai.

transfer to a State other than the State of Andhra Pradesh, as justice need not only be done but also seen to be done. Criminal trial, if biased, criminal justice will be at stake," said the apex court.

Reddy was stabbed to death at his residence in Kadapa in March 2019. In 2020, the Andhra Pradesh High Court had transferred the investigation into the murder to the CBI.

### IN SHORT

**CONG RAPS PM OVER AIMS SERVER HACKING**  
**New Delhi:** The Congress on Tuesday hit out at the Modi Government over the hacking of the AIMS server and said it raises "serious questions" about cyber security in the country. AICC general secretary, organisation, K C Venugopal asked about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's promise of a new cyber security policy which he announced two years ago. It is feared that data of around 3-4 crore patients could have been compromised due to breach detected on November 23.

**SENA SYMBOLS DISPUTE 1ST HEARING ON DEC 12**  
**New Delhi:** The first hearing of Shiv Sena symbols dispute case will be held on December 12 by Election Commission of India. The EC has also directed both parties to submit any further statements/documents by 5 PM on December 9.

**MEA TO HOLD LUSOPHONE FEST IN GOA ON DEC 3-6**  
**New Delhi:** The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in partnership with Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the Goa Government will organise the International Lusophone Festival in Goa from December 3-6.

**SC AXES PIL ON HIKE IN NUMBER OF HC JUDGES**  
**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to entertain a PIL that sought a direction to Centre and all States to double number of judges in subordinate judiciary and High Courts to effectively tackle pendency of cases, saying such "populist" and "simplistic" measures cannot be solution.

## New HIV infections in kids down 52% in 2010-21

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Due to Covid-induced disruptions, around 110,000 children and adolescents (0-19 years) died from AIDS-related causes during 2021 while another 310,000 were newly infected, bringing the total number of young people living with HIV to 2.7 million, according to the latest UNICEF global snapshot on children and HIV/AIDS, which was released recently.

These disruptions put the lives of newborn babies at increased risk. In 2021, more than 75,000 new child infections occurred because pregnant women were not diag-

nosed and initiated on treatment, as per the snapshot.

Taking serious note of the gloomy scenario, ahead of World Aids Day on December 1, UNICEF has warned that progress in HIV prevention and treatment for children, adolescents, and pregnant women has nearly flatlined over the past three years, with many regions still not at pre-Covid service coverage.

This stagnation comes on top of an existing and growing gap in treatment between children and adults. Unless the drivers of inequities are addressed, ending AIDS in children and adolescents will continue to be a distant dream, warned UNICEF.

"Though children have long lagged behind adults in the AIDS response, the stagnation seen in the last three years is unprecedented, putting too many young lives at risk of sickness and death," said Anurita Bains, Unicef associate chief of HIV/AIDS. "Children are falling through the cracks because we are collectively failing to find and test them and get them on life-saving treatment. Every day that goes by without progress, over 300 children and adolescents lose their fight against AIDS."

Despite accounting for only 7 per cent of overall people living with HIV, children and adolescents comprised 17 per cent of all AIDS-related

deaths and 21 per cent of new HIV infections in 2021. However, the snapshot shows that longer-term trends remain positive.

New HIV infections among younger children (0-14 years) dropped by 52 per cent from 2010 to 2021, and new infections among adolescents (15-19 years) also dropped by 40 per cent. Similarly, coverage of life-long antiretroviral treatment (ART) among pregnant women living with HIV increased from 46 per cent to 81 per cent in a single decade.

While the total number of children living with HIV is on the decline, the treatment gap between children and adults continues to grow.

# SC asks States to give details of undertrials to NALSA in 15 days

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI**

Days after the emotional speech of President Droupadi Murmu flagging the plight of poor tribals languishing in jails in petty offences despite bail, the Supreme Court on Tuesday directed State Governments across the country to provide details of such prisoners within 15 days to NALSA for formulating a national scheme for their release.

“NALSA (National Legal Services Authority) in collaboration with the Home Ministry will collect the data relating to number and status of pending applications of premature release filed by life convicts,” ordered the Bench of

Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Abhay S Oka, adding that the entire process to be finished in two months.

The Bench drected the jail authorities to submit the details of such prisoners to the respective State Governments which will forward the documents to the National Legal Service Authority within 15 days. The bench said the jail authorities will have to submit such details as the names of undertrial prisoners, charges against them, date of the bail order, what bail conditions were not met and how much time they have spent in jail after the bail order.

"At the inception, we flagged the issue of detainees/Undertrial prisoners, who continue to be in custody

despite being granted bail but could not fulfill the bail conditions. Each jail authority of the country has to convey to their state government the details which will be forwarded to NALSA for formulation of a national level scheme to provide assistance to such prisoners," it said in its order.

Advocate Devansh A Mohta, who is assisting the court as amicus curiae, said the Delhi State Legal Service Authority (DSLSA) has a scheme to assist such undertrial prisoners languishing in jail despite being granted bail. The bench said, "In Delhi, these kinds of cases may be less but could be more where financial means become a challenge." Judges asked advocate Gaurav Agrawal, appearing for NALSA,

to explore all possibilities for formulating a national scheme and suggest ways for dealing with this situation and execution of the bail orders.

The top court was hearing a plea by a life convict named Sonadhar, who has been in custody for 18 years and sought premature release. On September 15, the top court had said convicts who have completed 10 years of their life sentence and whose appeals would not be heard in the near future by the high courts should be enlarged on bail unless there exist cogent reasons to deny the relief.

The apex court said it needs to keep the objective of decongesting the jails in mind in the case of convicts whose appeals have been pending for

years against conviction and are not likely to be heard in the near future by the high courts due to pendency of cases. It had said its endeavour is two-fold --first, convicts having undergone more than 10 years imprisonment, unless there exist cogent reasons to deny them the relief, they should be enlarged on bail. Second, identification of cases where convicts have completed 14 years of custody, in which event, a case can be referred to the government for considering premature release within a fixed time period irrespective of pendency of their appeals.

The top court had said if a detainee has already served 14 years of sentence in a murder case, then there are norms prevalent in each state for

examination of such cases for premature release. "However, it appears that legal assistance to do so after expiry of 14 years has not been forthcoming in many cases, including the present one (of petitioner Sonadhar). We do feel that this aspect needs attention and the respondent State and for that matter other States must put their house in order in respect of this aspect," the bench had said and sought the assistance of NALSA.

The President Murmu had, in her maiden Constitution Day address on November 26 at the Supreme Court, highlighted the plight of poor tribals of her home state Odisha besides Jharkhand, saying they remain incarcerated despite getting bail for lack of money to



furnish the bail amount or arrange sureties. Departing from her written speech in English, Murmu had spoken in Hindi to urge the judiciary to do something for the poor tribals, noting those accused of serious offences walk out free but these poor inmates, who may have gone to jail for slapping someone, have to spend

years on end before they are released.

Justice Kaul was among those seated on the dais with Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, when the President narrated her experience of meeting several undertrial prisoners as an MLA in her native Odisha and later as the Governor of Jharkhand.

## Didi chides DM in public for ignoring ‘blanket order’

**SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA**

In a development that opposition parties promptly dismissed as "scripted and aimed at re-building an image, sullied by multiple exposes on state-sponsored corruption," Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday stalled a public programme for good 20 minutes and rebuked the District Magistrate and Block Development Officer in front of thousands of people for failing to comply with government orders.

The order thus being spoken of was on procurement and bringing on the stage 15,000 blankets, shawls and sweaters to be distributed by the Chief Minister among the public.

When she found out that only sweaters had been brought at the venue, a furious Chief Minister rebuked the DM with

the microphone on, asking why the blankets had not been brought on stage.

Banerjee told the DM, “Whenever there are any lapses by the police or any other department everyone blames me ... why will I have to take it every time ... where are the blankets for me to be distributed?”

When the DM informed that they had been kept at the BDO office she thundered: "I will take strong action against you." When requested to continue with her speech as there were other programmes too the Chief Minister said "I had come for distributing the blankets ... so there is no point continuing the meeting ... first bring the blankets then I will speak ... till then I am sitting here and so does the crowd."

The Chief Minister stalled the meeting for a good 20

minutes after which the blankets were rushed to the venue. Banerjee distributed 1,000 blankets from the Tuesday rally.

Hours later Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari called it a “model example of how the Mamata Banerjee Government functions ... the incident itself proves that there is no coordination in the administration ... the whole bureaucracy is demoralised in the face of government-sponsored corruption ... everyone is thinking of saving one’s job ... this demoralisation will further go up if the officers are rebuked in public in this manner.”

CPI(M) leadership said that the incident pointed at the poor condition of the State. “We wanted to bring industry so that the people can lead a better life but Mamata Banerjee



drove them away ... now she has to distribute blankets as the people don't even have that money," party State committee member Kaustav Chatterjee said adding the Tuesday's "histrionics" was a scripted before to give a lift to the Chief Minister's sagging image.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister on Tuesday announced the formation of a separate Sunderbans district. The district will be carved out of existing two districts of

North and South 24 Parganas.

The formation of the new district majorly comprising the Royal Bengal Tiger zone of the Sundrabans would help the administration to concentrate more on the development of the swampy area crisscrossed by scores of backwater rivers and many more creeks plagued by steady erosion and advancing sea. Several river islands have already disappeared into the sea since 1967 and many are on the verge of extinction.

## ‘Assam-Meghalaya border talks have become bit complicated after violence’

**PTI ■ GUWAHATI/ SHILLONG/ SILCHAR**

The process for the second round of talks between Assam and Meghalaya for resolving the border dispute has become "slightly complicated", following the killing of six people in the November 22 violence at Mukroh village, Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said on Tuesday. Assam and Meghalaya have identified 12 disputed areas along the interstate border. These two northeastern states, which started the first round of discussions in July 2021, signed an MoU in March this year to resolve differences in six areas.

"The situation (for border talks) is slightly complicated and we may not be able to go forward immediately. It could get delayed," Sangma said here. Sangma's remarks came on a day when Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Tuesday said that he does not approve of police firing on civilians, which should be resorted to only against terrorists and criminals.

The firing by the Assam police and state forest guards at Mukroh in a disputed area of the Assam-Meghalaya border which claimed six lives a week ago will, however, have no impact on the "broader landscape of relations" between the



two states, Sarma told a press conference here.

Negotiations are on between the two northeastern states and any boundary adjustment will happen through the Committee formed for the purpose by them, he said.

"Taking the life of civilians is not acceptable ... Police should use its weapons against terrorists and criminals and not against civilians. I do not approve of the firing," he said after presiding over a cabinet meeting. Meanwhile, The NHRC has taken cognisance of the violence in the disputed area on the Assam-Meghalaya border that claimed six lives earlier this month, the rights body said on Tuesday.

It said the incident was an outcome of the long-pending border dispute between the two states and could have been averted had the controversy been settled earlier.

The Commission observed

that whatever be the dispute police has to use restraint in such a situation.

"The National Human Rights Commission has taken cognizance of a memorandum by the chief minister of Meghalaya (Conrad K Sangma) that six persons, including one Assam forest official, had died in firing by the Assam Police and Assam Forest Guards at Mukroh village in West Jaintia Hills District of Meghalaya on 22nd November, 2022," NHRC said in a statement.

The violence at Mukroh village falling in the disputed Block-I area along the interstate boundary has resulted in clashes in the state's capital Shillong and six districts in the Khasi Jaintia Hills region.

The process for the second phase of talks to resolve differences in the remaining six disputed areas was initiated, and regional committees have also been set up.

## Massive row erupts as Kharge compares Modi to ‘Ravana’

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ AHMEDABAD/NEW DELHI**

In a stark reminder to the 'Maut Ka Saudagar' remarks against Narendra Modi by the then party chief Sonia Gandhi in 2007, a massive row erupted in poll bound Gujarat on Tuesday after the newly elected Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge compared the Prime Minister with 'Ravana' during a rally. Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel lost no time in claiming the remark reflects the opposition party's hatred for Gujaratis.

Elections for the 182-member Assembly in the BJP-ruled Gujarat are scheduled to be held in two phases on December 1 and 5.

Addressing people in Behrampur area under the Congress-held Danilimda seat on Monday night, Kharge said in every election, votes are sought in the name of Modi instead of local candidates or the performance of government.

"Modi asks people to ignore everything and vote (for BJP) by keeping his face in front of the eyes. I wonder on how many occasions we have to see your face? People have to see your face during municipal corporation polls, then in the Assembly polls and also during polls to elect MPs," he said.



"Everywhere you want us to see your face. Why? How many faces do like Ravan? Are you 100-headed like Ravan? I don't understand this," the Congress president said. He further said instead of doing his work as India's PM, Modi canvasses for various elections, be it local bodies or Assembly polls.

"The BJP believes in telling lies only. I recently said Modi is 'badshah' of telling lies, because he keeps on telling lies. What happened to two crore jobs every year? He used to say he will give Rs 15 lakh to each citizen after bringing black money from abroad," Kharge said.

Taking a strong exception to the remarks, CM Patel in a tweet said, "Bereft of any development agenda and support from the people, the Congress is out to abuse Gujarat and Gujaratis." The statement made by Kharge ji against PM Narendra Modiji is a testimony to their hate for Gujaratis. The people of Gujarat will reject them this time too for such behaviour," Patel added.

## Maurya takes dig at reunion of Akhilesh, Shivpal

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya on Tuesday hit out at the Samajwadi Party over Shivpal Yadav's reunion with his nephew Akhilesh Yadav ahead of the Mainpuri Lok Sabha bypoll, saying the Yadav family knows best how long the unity would last. The BJP leader claimed that people have made up their minds to end dynastic politics.

Batting for BJP candidate Raghuraj Singh Shakya, Maurya said people have sympathy for Mulayam Singh Yadav but they would not vote for the Samajwadi Party in the bypoll. The Samajwadi Party has fielded Dimple Yadav, the wife of party chief Akhilesh Yadav, for the December 5 Mainpuri Lok Sabha bypoll, necessitated following the death of Mulayam Singh Yadav.

To a question whether he felt that the Yadav family would remain united after the elections, Maurya said, "It is their matter. But, it's clear that the people of Mainpuri have made up their minds to set aside dynastic politics."

The uncle-nephew relations had gone sour in 2016 with the sacking of Shivpal, who was then a cabinet minister, by Akhilesh Yadav when he



was the CM. They parted ways in 2017 when Akhilesh became the SP president. Shivpal formed Pragatisheel Samajwadi Party (Lohiya) in 2018.

The duo joined hands before the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls. However, the relations went sour again as Shivpal alleged that he was neglected within the party.

Since Shivpal parted ways with the SP, there were rumours that he might be joining the BJP. Though he denied it every time, the allotment of a bungalow for his party by the BJP government fuelled speculations. After Mulayam Singh Yadav's younger daughter-in-law Aparna Yadav, considered close to the Shivpal Singh Yadav camp, joined BJP, speculations went rife about his closeness to the ruling party. Even after the Mainpuri bypoll was declared, some reports suggested that it was Shivpal who ensured a BJP ticket for his one-time close associate Raghuraj Singh Shakya.

## Dalit activist shot dead in Moradabad

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

In a sensational incident, a 30-year-old Dalit activist was shot dead allegedly on the instructions of a local history-sheeter who believed that the activist was a threat to his illegal activities in Thakurdwara area of Moradabad district.

SSP (Moradabad) Hemraj Meena, said: "Vishal Valmiki was shot by one Bilal on the instructions of Atul Sharma Pandit, a history-sheeter, and his aide Golu.

An FIR has been registered on the complaint of the victim's family. Five teams have been tasked with arresting the accused."

Atul Sharma, Bilal and Golu have been booked under IPC sections 302 (murder) and 120b (criminal conspiracy) along with the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

Vishal's father Mukesh Valmiki said: "My son had recently joined a right-wing outfit and his popularity was increasing among the youngsters of all communities. Sharma could not accept the fact that a Dalit was becoming popular."

Sanitation workers in the area decided to go on a strike from Tuesday itself in protest against the incident.

## My workers will provide security to me: Shivpal

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

A day after the security of Pragatisheel Samaj Party (Lohia) president Shivpal Yadav was downgraded by the Uttar Pradesh government, he said his workers would now provide him security.

Shivpal's security was downgraded on Monday from 'Z' to 'Y' category, days after he mended fences with nephew Akhilesh Yadav.

"This was expected of the BJP. Now, my workers and people will provide me security. Dimple Yadav's victory and BJP candidate's loss in Mainpuri will now be even bigger," Shivpal said.

Earlier, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav had termed the move "objectionable". He had also hit out at Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for likening his



uncle to a 'pendulum' and a 'football'.

In a tweet in Hindi, Akhilesh said: "It is objectionable to reduce the security cover of Shivpal Singh Yadav. It is also to be noted that a pendulum is a symbol of movement of time and indicates the change of time for everyone. It says that there is nothing stable on which one could be proud of."

## Kerala Ministers question propriety of Church leaders in spearheading agitation against port

**KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI**

Two ministers in the CPI(M)-led Kerala Government have described the agitation spearheaded by the Latin Catholic Archdiocese against the Vizhinjam International Sea Port as anti-national and an act of sedition.

V Abdul Rehman, Minister for Harbor, said at Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday that the Kerala Government has all details of the leaders behind the agitation against the Port which is being built by the Adani Group. "We have tackled serious agitations in the past and it is not difficult for us to take care of this anti-Port agitation. This is a movement against national interests," said Rehman while addressing a seminar on Vizhinjam Port.

The minister claimed that the Government has not forced out even a single resident under the pretext of land acquisition. "We will see to it that the Port works are completed as per schedule. This is a project of national importance and till now we were restrained in our approach to the agitation against the port. All demands made by the leaders of the agitation have been met but now they want the project to be scrapped altogether," said Abdul Rehman.

Meanwhile heavy posse of policemen have been deployed along coastal Kerala to nip in the bud any violence which is likely to occur in the coming days. Cops who were on leave have been directed to join for duty immediately in the backdrop of the rioting and vandalism at Vizhinjam that saw 40 cops getting injured and public property getting destroyed.

Education Minister V Sivankutty, the ideological face of the CPI(M), lashed out against the Church leaders for their role in spreading the agitation. "The police was restrained in their response to attacks carried out by the agitating fishermen. There were instances of the unruly crowd snatching the lathis from the policemen and throwing them into the sea. This is a serious offence and is an anti-national activity," said Sivankutty.

He said there is no chance of the police withdrawing the cases filed against the Archbishop, Auxiliary Bishop and the vicar of Vizhijnam for rioting and breakdown in law and order. "This is the worst kind of agitation and is a threat to the culture of Kerala. The cases were filed only after ascertaining the role of the Church leaders," said Sivankutty while interacting with media.



A labourer holds rice grain as he spreads it to dry, at a field on the outskirts of Jammu on Tuesday.

(PTI)





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Culture wars

Israel's Ambassador's comment can save bilateral ties but can't make *The Kashmir Files* look good

Israel's Ambassador to India Naor Gilon's comments on the movie *The Kashmir Files* must have come as a soothing balm to the filmmaker, the Government, and Bharatiya Janata Party leaders. The movie is part of the culture wars that the saffron establishment has launched. Written and directed by Vivek Agnihotri, its ostensible objective was to show the horrendous treatment meted out to and the ethnic cleansing of the Kashmiris Pandits; the real purpose, however, was to promote the BJP's agenda. Agnihotri was so busy with the propaganda that he didn't even bother to tell the real story: decades of Islamization of the populace in Kashmir, the process which prepared the ground for separatism, jihad, the atrocities on Pandits, leading to their exodus. Anyone watching the film gets the impression that Muslims were a deplorable role in the late 1980s and 1990s; the ones who were depicted were treacherous, cowardly, and cruel. This was the reason that the movie was widely condemned as tendentious, inflammatory, and misleading. This is also the reason that International Film Festival of India 2022 jury head Nadav Lapid said that *The Kashmir Files* was like a "propaganda, vulgar movie, inappropriate for an artistic competitive section" of a prestigious film festival. Jury member Sudipto Sen made it clear that Lapid's remark about *The Kashmir Files* "was completely his personal opinion." He went on to claim that jury members didn't mention anything about their likes or dislikes. Also, they "don't indulge in any kind of political comments."



These words may comfort Agnihotri and his fans, but the damage has been done. Envoy Gilon's intervention can certainly ring-fence the bilateral ties getting scalded from the controversy erupting from a bad film. In a tweet in English "because I wanted our Indian brothers and sisters to be able to understand," he exhorted Lapid, saying that "should be ashamed." In Indian culture, a guest is treated like God. You have abused in the worst way the Indian invitation to chair the panel of judges as well as the trust, respect, and warm hospitality they have bestowed on you, the envoy added. Not unexpectedly, the most misleading and ludicrous reaction came from the BJP's IT Cell boss Amit Malviya. "For the longest time, people even denied the Holocaust and called 'Schindler's List' propaganda, just like some are doing to Kashmir Files." There are some people in the West who deny the Holocaust, but they are in a microscopic minority. Besides, it is a crime against art to compare the classy *Schindler's List* with the crappy *The Kashmir Files*. At the heart of the issue is the Sangh Parivar's ardent desire to have a school of cinema that projects its ideas and ideals. The problem is that any cinema—or, for that matter, any form of art—can flower only if there is freedom of expression. This freedom, among others, the saffronites want to curtail. Hence the calamities like *Kashmir Files*.

### PICTALK



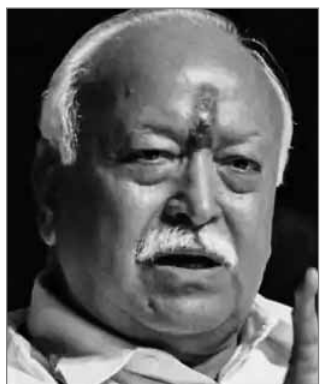
Two-wheeler riders cross on a bamboo bridge constructed over the River Brahmaputra, in Guwahati

PTI

## Who are Hindus?

Mohan Bhagwat's definition of a Hindu may not go down well with many

RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat has reiterated that all people living in India were by definition Hindus. He further added that anybody who agrees to sing Sanskrit verses in praise of Bharat Mata and is committed to the preservation of the culture of the land is a Hindu. Bhagwat said this while addressing RSS workers before concluding his four-day tour of Bihar. While his stand is welcome in that he sees Hindus in a larger context and does not limit his definition of a Hindu to a religious identity but on the other hand it is an unnecessary classification that is neither required nor warranted. True, Arabs gave this name to all people residing across Hindukush Mountain and it meant a geopolitical identity rather than a religious one but that time has long gone and now a Hindu is a religious identity, legally. Moreover, calling everyone Hindu without their consent is not a bright idea. Labeling anyone as per your convenience is fraught with dangers. Many religious groups would have reservations about being called Hindu. "Hindu" does not denote Indian and that is a fact. There is a difference between 'Hindu' and 'Hindustani', (of course the word Hindustani is now obsolete). And we are not even talking about 'Hindutva' which has political connotations.



Besides, even many Hindus would have objections to somebody branding them and giving them a certificate of being a Hindu. There must be millions of people who call themselves Hindus but cannot recite a single verse in Sanskrit so it is utterly insolent to test people for their identity on the basis of your own preconceived notions. Though his statement deserves merit when he says that identities have been made possible because of the Hindu ethos of acceptance. India has been an assimilating culture and its mighty diversity is living proof of it. Categorizing it and labeling it kills every nuance of Indian culture which made India that is Bharat what it is today - a bouquet of different identities, religions, languages, and creeds living as neighbours and working shoulder to shoulder to build a country that has seen some worst periods in history but with its resilience came over it. The contention that those whose ancestors happened to be Hindus is debatable. There may be people who had the same ancestors but now they have branched out as different groups and we should respect their divergences, no matter what.

# Jointness Mantra: CDS Chauhan, patience



ASHOK K MEHTA

There is an urgent need to have a Joint Procurement Agency without which synchronized capability building of armed forces is next to impossible

Almost 3 months after his appointment as CDS, Gen Anil Chauhan has maintained silence. He travelled to Def-Expo in Gujarat and along with three service Chiefs to NDA Khadakvasla, the cradle of jointness - symbolically a deft move. Initial briefings and scrutiny of feedback from Services on theatrisation are over. Integrated capability development requires a Joint Procurement Agency which was produced by Defence Planning Staff in 1988. The absence of institutional memory causes time and cost overruns.

CDS has become synonymous with integration and theatrisation, the task given originally to late Gen Rawat. Jointness was to be achieved in 3 years but no timeline was set for Integrated Theatre Commands. Not surprisingly, days after Gen Chauhan's appointment as CDS, Air Force Chief, Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, in the run-up to IAF Day on 8 October, admitted that inter-service differences had not been reconciled and a discussion was warranted to find a solution to take theatrisation forward. He reiterated the traditional objections of IAF: the paucity of resources, just 30 fighter squadrons today and best case of 35 to 36 squadrons by 2035; 24X7 AD cover required concentration of resources and separating the two (AD Command and Theatre Command) will affect joint strategy.

Gen Rawat, not averse to shooting from the hip, had stirred a hornet's nest by suggesting IAF was an extension of Artillery and essentially a combat support arm. ACM Chaudhari's recent comments included a 'future ready IAF to include space and cyber-space, abridged decision-making chain of command and need for a joint strategy' while each service had its own doctrine. As a precautionary, he added: "IAF is not opposed to integrated theatre commands (theatrisation)". He also advocated the need for an equivalent national security strategy. NSS is a vital document on integrating the whole of government effort that every



President in the US is mandated to produce once in his term. Biden issued an interim NSS in March 2022 and on 12 October, a final one. The Biden strategy talks of 'strategic competition with China, the US's 'most pressing challenge'. "We will effectively compete with PRC which is the only competitor with both the intent and increase the capability to reshape the international order while constraining a dangerous Russia".

On India, it says 'as it is, the world's largest democracy and a Major Defence Partner, the US, and India will work together bilaterally and multilaterally to support our shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific'. For a long time India used to define its military challenge as: while Pakistan is the immediate threat, China remains the long-term challenge. That was dramatically reversed by China's incursions in Ladakh. The 1986 Goldwater-Nichols DoD Reorganisation Act in the US brought about sweeping changes, especially on integration and jointness; almost simultaneously in the UK, the Heseltine reforms introduced the CDS legislation. India is allergic to the idea of a written document outlining national security objectives, their orientation,



GEN RAWAT, NOT AVERSE TO SHOOTING FROM THE HIP, HAD STIRRED A HORNET'S NEST BY SUGGESTING IAF WAS AN EXTENSION OF ARTILLERY AND ESSENTIALLY A COMBAT SUPPORT ARM

and their pursuit. No White Paper has seen the light of day even though India had a CDS for nearly three years. India is defiantly proud of its strategic autonomy and that it is among the world's leading economies with the third largest military.

India feels that not articulating NSS is a strategy, though there is one. The Raksha Mantri's Operational directive with 8 contingencies to three Service Chiefs is considered good enough. A Joint Services Doctrine 2017 on release was found with many loopholes. The Breaking News is that NSS is being scripted by NSA.

The current debate on theatrisation has turned into prioritising structures, strategies, and capability building. Movement on capabilities has been tardy due to insufficient funding and somewhat retarded by Atmanirbharta in absence of quality R&D and a developed military-industrial complex. The IAF is stuck at 30 squadrons for two decades and an RFP for 114 MRCA stagnates for 5 years. Legislation mandating conceptual and structural transformation through the CDS system instead of amendments to Service Acts must become the path to integration. NSA Ajit Doval who heads DPC is working on NSS from an integrated review of defence, for-

eign, and development -in other words, the Strategic and Technology Environment meshed with fiscal allocation.

Gen Chauhan is determined to press on with Eastern Land Command (China); Western Land Command (Pakistan); Air Defence Command; and Maritime Theatre Command. Northern Command dealing with LAC and LOC will be merged later with ELC and WLC. Air Space Command and Cyberspace Command commissioned in 2017 are likely to be operational shortly though there are teething problems with ASC. One other entity will also be operationalized shortly- the Special Operations Division consisting of Battalion Special Forces, Garud, and Marcos squadrons. This will later upgrade to Special Operations Command. Gen Chauhan must invite ACM Chaudhari for talks to smoothen wrinkles in establishing ITCs with as little difference as possible. Political oversight is essential to prevent irreconcilable differences. A periodic review will be useful.

(The writer, a retired Lt Gen, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, & founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff; views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CORONA SCARE IN CHINA

Sir — Even as the frightening Coronavirus appears to have hit China again, the country's headline Covid-19 lockdown measures are stoking public frustration, with many growing weary of snap lockdowns, lengthy quarantines, and mass testing campaigns. The anti-lockdown protests on a scale unseen for decades in China, appear to be posing a major challenge for President Xi Jinping, just over a month into his third term in power. ("Protests against Covid lockdowns intensify in China", Nov. 28). Political protests opposing the ruling Communist Party and its leadership are rare in China even as the country witnesses sporadic agitations over various other issues.

But this time around the protesters are braving harshest measures the Chinese government takes to crush such protests. Indeed it shows how jittery the people are of Chinese measures to curb the pandemic. The Chinese people suffered immensely during the pandemic, not only from the deadly virus but also at the hand of Chinese government draconian rules which made life miserable for an ordinary Chinese citizen. Nearly three years since the pandemic originated in China, the world's most populous country is still battling hard to stop transmission of the Coronavirus. Is China a curse upon the world to embrace the deadly virus?

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

### YOGA GURU APOLOGIZES

Sir — Yoga Guru Ramdev has expressed his regret and apologized for his reckless comment in poor taste on women. But the controversy shows no sign of abating with public outrage growing. Questions are also being asked why the National Commission of Women and the union minister for women and child welfare, Smriti Irani, usually quick to condemn transgressions when it suits them, have been quiet on Baba Ramdev.

Ramdev was last week addressing a large audience of mostly women at Thane with the wife of deputy chief

## PT USHA RIGHT CHOICE



It will be a proud moment for the Indian Olympic Association PT Usha is set to get IOA chief post then she will be the first woman occupant of

the top job. Usha, a top sprinter in her heyday, has also been elected as one of the eight Sportspersons of Outstanding Merit (SOM) by the Athletes Commission of the IOA, making her an Electoral College member. The legendary PT Usha is set to become the first woman president of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) as she emerged as the lone candidate for the top post for the December 10 elections.

The 58-year-old Usha, a multiple Asian Games gold medalist and a fourth-place finisher in the 1984 Olympics 400m hurdles final, filed her nomination papers for the top job along with her team for the various posts. Usha's school attracts young talents from across the country. Her contribution to Indian sports is immense.

CK Subramaniam | Chennai

minister Devendra Fadnavis sitting by his side on the stage. While he began by complimenting Amruta Fadnavis and women in general for being graceful and looking good in whatever attire they chose to wear, he crossed the line and added that women looked good even without clothes. His audience, among them the very young and the very old, did not seem to be amused. There were soon howls of protest and civil society in Maharashtra and elsewhere who felt the comment was inappropriate, sexist, and objectionable.

It is indeed unfortunate that a yoga guru who is regarded as epitome of virtue and held in high esteem by the people should have made such a sexist remark. It not only puts him in bad light but also gives a bad name to all the guru's and swami's for no fault of their's as people start doubting their credentials. Yoga guru Ramdev has created an economic empire by teaching yoga and popularising it. The people's trust has helped him make an economic empire which is ahead of many multi national companies. Now if he makes such comments it would not only make people question his credentials but also harm his Patanjali products

which are mostly bought by the people who have lot of reverence for Ramdev Baba. As they say with power comes responsibility and so the yoga guru must not shoot from the hip and be careful with what he says.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### FOB SLAB FALLS IN CHANDRAPUR

Sir — The faulty design and poor maintenance of foot-over bridges in Maharashtra saw a number of them collapsing and leading to fatalities and injuring many people. A FOB collapsed at Balharshah Junction railway station in Chandrapur causing casualties.

The station is in Ballarpur town, 150 km from Nagpur. The incident took place at around 5 pm causing many casualties. The FOB connected to platforms 1 and platform 2 at the station in Central Railway's Nagpur division. As usual compensation. A large number of passengers were using FOB to catch a Pune-bound train when a part of it caved in causing extensive damage.

CK Ramanathan | Ghaziabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUND BITE

I am going to make

a prediction in writing in front of you all...Note down the prediction that the AAP is going to form government in Gujarat. After 27 years of misgovernance, the citizens of Gujarat will get relief from these people (BJP).



Delhi CM — Arvind Kejriwal



US President — Joe Biden

We aren't having any conversations about whether I will run for reelection. We're celebrating!



ssActor — Chunky Pandey



The way he (Suryakumar Yadav) is playing right now, there was no need to have any conversation with him out in the middle as he was batting so good. But yes, It's great fun to bat alongside him.

Indian opener — Shubman Gill

All people living in India were by definition Hindus and diversity had flourished in the country because of the cultural ethos of the land.



RSS Chief — Mohan Bhagwat



FIRST COLUMN

PLASTIC PART OF LIFE BUT CAUTION NEEDED

Industries have to find viable alternatives to plastic



SAKSHI SETHI

Plastic remains one of the best inventions. However, human greed ended up in its excessive production, leaving piles of heaps, which need to be mended now. Plastic's reputation fell as anxiety about waste increased in the 1970s and 1980s. Plastic waste besides contaminating land, water and soil with harmful chemicals is also responsible for the death of thousands of animals on land, water and sea due to ingestion. Just as ivory is demonised, so is plastic pollution now harming wildlife.

The invention of plastic was initially praised for its ability to create multiple benefits but with time terms like 'cheap' became synonymous with 'replaceable' or 'throwaway', resulting in deterioration of the reputation of plastic.

Plastic pollutes every corner of the earth, causing a direct and deadly effect on wildlife. The larger the plastic items, say plastic bags and straws, can choke and starve marine life, while the smaller fragments can cause liver and gastrointestinal damage in animals which can ultimately affect the human life.

Today, we need supermarkets and grocery stores to stop using plastic bags, especially the ones that are to be disposed of as soon as the packet gets opened. It has become a target for activists looking to ban single use disposable plastics.



Paper on the other hand is easy to shape, while being lightweight, but is neither strong, nor does it last for long. It consumes a large amount of wood which is important for the environment. So, scientists started looking for various alternatives, which could be lightweight, strong, durable, inexpensive and something not entirely dependent upon natural resources.

The word 'plastic' originally meant pliable and easily shaped. In 1862, Alexander Parkes—the man behind the world's first ever man-made plastic, PARKESINE—at the London International Exhibition developed it as a synthetic substitute for shellac for waterproofing. Soon after the success, synthetic polymers, later known as 'plastics' were discovered and developed. Plastic was originally created as a solution to maintain the availability of natural resources on earth. Plastic is a versatile material which has afforded us with many benefits in regard to helping us live a clean, healthy, and efficient lifestyle. It has proven to be useful in many ways for being lighter, besides superior aesthetic appeal and excellent thermal and electrical insulation properties.

It has a unique ability to combine with other materials like adhesives, paper, aluminium foils, while also being used for food packaging, besides also having a lesser production cost. Moreover, the need for plastic exists in several fields such as health and medicare. Patients with severe neural conditions, or toddlers learning to train their motor skills, or elders with movement problems need a flexible, lightweight and a durable material in their daily life, which can only be fulfilled with plastic.

Recycling plastic means reduced quantum of plastic waste. This in turn reduces pollution and saves a lot of animal species crucial to the food chain. If the problem was created by the industry, it should also give the solution. Plastic industry offered recycling of plastic as a solution. In 1980, the plastic industry started with a drive wherein they encouraged the municipalities to collect and process recyclable materials as part of their waste management system. Also, with technical advancements in waste management for recycling plastic, the scenario started to improve gradually.

With intelligent design and thoughtful development, there is a chance to address the greedy mentality of take and make which fuels plastic pollution and implement a circular economy. Despite so much growing mistrust, plastic remains to be a critical part of modern life.

*(The author is a teacher at a reputed school in Delhi)*

Waste disposal needs all hands on deck



SUMET BHASIN

But AAP knows no governance, so municipal bodies have cut garbage hills without Delhi Govt's help

In between 2011 and 2021, Delhi added over 32 lakh people to its population, besides adding about eight lakh households. This is a projected figure for 2021, and official data is still awaited. Delhi has steadily been attracting migrant population, for lack of opportunities in some of the states such as Bihar for the youth.

Indore in Madhya Pradesh, a few years ago, was faced with eyesores of land-fill sites, rising like a mountain, as the city garbage gathered, while the population steadily grew on account of the thriving economy of the city and rise of the IT, pharmaceutical sectors following a benign policy regime of the state government. Within a short span of time, the municipal waste in Indore tested the administrative strength of the corporation.

But all changed with the Madhya Pradesh government taking the task to eliminate the garbage mountain eyesore. The municipal corporation was strongly backed by the state government with financial support to acquire men and machines for a turnaround. The state government liberally supported the Indore municipal corporation. The result was elimination of dhalao, segregation of waste at homes, processing of waste took place in several areas, stringent fines were imposed against littering, which included charges of even Rs 1 crore on hotels, hospital and restaurants, disciplined the stakeholders, and the landfill site mountain disappeared to give space for shopping centres and office complexes.


It has been wondered in several quarters why Delhi cannot replicate the Indore model and eliminate the garbage eyesores at Ghazipur, Okhla and Bhalswa. The answer is that Delhi is not blessed with a Madhya Pradesh administration, as the city government in the national capital works at cross purposes with the municipal corporations. The advertisement budget of the Delhi government alone could have helped the municipal corporations to substantially speed up elimination of the landfill sites. But the Delhi government since 2013 after the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) came to power with Arvind Kejriwal as Chief Minister has shown rank betrayal of the governance norms. The Delhi government has worked to financially starve the municipal corporations. Still, the civic bodies have been steadfast in their commitment to improve the life of the people, and worked within the constrained capacities to cut down legacy garbage dumped at the landfill sites.

Data speaks for themselves that the municipal corporations have been battling against all odds to cut down Garbage Mountains. Legacy waste at the three landfills at Ghazipur, Bhalswa and Okhla stood at 229.1 lakh tonnes in May, 2022

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THE NGT DIRECTED THE DELHI GOVERNMENT TO PAY RS 900 CRORE AS ENVIRONMENTAL COMPENSATION FOR IMPROPER MANAGEMENT OF SOLID MUNICIPAL WASTE IN 2022. IN AUGUST 2022, DELHI GOVERNMENT WITHHELD RS 900 CRORE OF PAYMENTS TO MCDs

*(The author is Director, Public Policy Research Centre)*



and has come down to 203 lakh tonnes in September, 2022. It implies that around 26.1 lakh tonnes have been disposed of in four months, at the rate of 6.52 lakh tonnes per month. The total legacy waste at the three sites of Ghazipur, Bhalswa and Okhla stood at 280 lakh tonnes in mid-2019. The processing of waste brought this down to 229.1 lakh tonnes in May 2022, which means that 50.9 lakh tonnes were disposed of in three years, at the rate of 1.41 lakh tonnes per month.

There are as many as 44 trommel machines which are processing 9,000 to 10,000 tonnes of waste daily at Bhalswa. They have processed 25 lakh tonnes till July, 2022. Besides, 26 trommel machines are working at Okhla landfill which processes 7,000 tonnes of waste every day. They have processed 17 lakh tonnes of legacy waste till July, 2022. Also, 10 trommel machines are working at Ghazipur landfill which process 4,000 tonnes of waste every day. Soon, 50 additional trommel machines are to be deployed for the processing of waste at Ghazipur, Narela and Okhla landfill sites.

It may also be known that 'Waste to Energy Plant' has a total capacity of processing 5,250 tonnes of waste, which generates 52 MW electricity. The Tehkhand Waste to Energy Plant became operational recently, which brings the total number of waste to energy plants in the national capital to four. After the inauguration of the Tehkhand plant, the capacity for disposal of garbage per day in Delhi has increased by 2,000 metric tonnes and this plant will also generate up to 25 MW of Green Energy.

Additionally, 12,300 MT Bio CNG Plant, three Bio Gas Plants of 200 MT per day capacity and eight Metal Recovery Facilities of 175 MT per day capacity are about to come up at Okhla landfill site. Construction of the 3,000 metric ton waste to energy plant at Narela is to be completed by August 2025.

The NGT directed the Delhi government to pay Rs 900 crore as environmental compensation for improper management of solid municipal waste in 2022. But, in August 2022, the Delhi government withheld Rs 900 crore of payments to MCDs. This shows that the Delhi government has been apathetic to the needs of people, while serving its own interests by costly advertisements.

This shows that the municipal corporations on its own have been at the forefront in finding sustainable solutions to the solid waste generated in the national capital. It is also to be underlined that the strictness of the Indore model could not be deployed in the national capital due to the multiplicity of authority and also because of the Delhi government working at cross purposes.

If all hands were on board, the task of the municipal corporations would have gained the necessary speed and scale to eliminate the garbage mountains at three of the sites. But the Delhi government in the last nine years has worked with the single agenda to shame the national capital by making the civic bodies beg for their rightful share of finances which are sent by the Central government. This has caused delays in acquiring men and machines to deal with the issue of solid waste management.

Still, the municipal corporations worked through their revenue models by creating tourism spots to beef up their earnings. The Wonder of the World Park is one such example which has been created from the waste and has become one of the key tourist destinations in the national capital. Similar attractions have come in all parts of the country. In contrast, the Delhi government, which has the tourism department, has not created a single asset which can attract the tourists to the national capital.

This calls for the people to weigh the political leadership in the national capital on the basis of the tangible outcomes on promises they make. Fifteen years of the governance models of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the municipal corporations and nine years of the AAP rule in the national capital are study in contrast.

It begs attention if even a fraction of the advertisement budget, which the AAP government splurges in states where the Kejriwal-led party contests elections, was spent in improving the civic amenities the national capital would have sported a brighter look. Why should the money of the people of Delhi be spent to promote AAP in Goa, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat? Why should that money not be spent in boosting the capacities of the municipal corporations to improve the quality of life of the people in the national capital. Delhi wants accountability, not laments of the work shirkers.

# Biden, Trump contest looms over 2024 Prez poll

If neither contests, the chances of a fresh face becoming the next tenant of the White House is possible in 2024

Will a potential Joe Biden versus onald Trump residential race happen in 2024 in the United States? It is the question after the two current and former presidents have thrown themselves in the presidential ring two years in advance.

Democrats and epublicans are already preparing for the 2024 presidential polls. Polls show that though Biden remains unpopular, he still enjoys more support than Trump. According to a recent Emerson College survey, the Democrats have held an edge of four percentage points. However, there are no cheers from the voters for a re-run of the Biden versus Trump match. According to recent polls, nearly 60 per cent of Americans do not want Trump



KALYANI SHANKAR

*(The author is a senior journalist)*

back in the White House. A Biden-Trump contest would also mean the chances of a woman president fading away.

Trump announced his candidature on November 15 in Florida. Facing several court cases and investigations, the former President is keen to take up the White House challenge to protect against legal challenges. He showed his intention of a re-run right from when Biden defeated him in 2020. "To make America great and glorious again, I am announcing tonight my candidacy for president of the United States," Trump said at his Florida headquarters. His announcement has dashed the hopes of GOP leaders to find a fresh face.

With his sustained sup-

port base and his "white supremacy" concept, Trump is confident of an easy path to the White House. The latest opinion polls indicate Trump remains the front-runner for the GOP nomination and other aspirants being in the single digits. The polls also showed that Trump received 55 per cent of Republican registered voters' support. In contrast, his potential Republican rival De Santis got just 25 per cent of the votes. De Santis won a second four-year term as governor this month with a solid political base and war chest behind him.

President Biden celebrated his 80th birthday quietly on November 20. He is buoyant after the unexpected Midterm poll results from

this month, where Democrats held onto the Senate. Not deterred by his age, Biden said, "I have not made that formal decision, but it's my intention – my intention to run again."

There are other hopefuls in both parties. Come 2023, more aspirants might emerge, more might withdraw, and the competition will be tough. Vice President Kamala Harris, aspiring to succeed Biden, is one of them. Biden might repeat his running mate, but Kamala has not revealed her plans.

Biden's Secretary of Transportation, Pete uttieg, is yet another probable. He has overseen the passage of significant infrastructure investments. He would be the first openly gay President

if elected. California Governor Gavin Newsom has a massive campaign war chest and the backing of major Democratic donors.

After emerging second to Hillary Clinton in the 2016 Democratic primary and second again to Joe Biden in 2020, Bernie Sanders has yet to rule out running again in 2024 if the field opens up. Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts has become a leading political voice on economic and human rights issues. She did well in her 2020 presidential campaign. Some speculate that if Biden were to withdraw from the race, she might reconsider.

Trump's Vice president, Mike Pence, could be a potential challenger to his one-time boss Trump. He changed his

loyalty after January 6, 2021, Capitol riots. Trump has clarified that Pence will not join him on the ticket again if he runs a third time.

The other probable face is Nikki Haley—US ambassador to the United Nations under President Trump. Though she called Trump her friend, following the January 6 Capitol riots, she delivered mixed messages on her support for Trump.

Republican Texas Governor Greg Abbott, 64, who won a third term this month, is another aspirant. He has pursued increasingly conservative policies, opposing COVID-19 vaccines and mask mandates during his second term. Representing Wyoming in the House of representatives since 2017, former Vice

President Dick Cheney's daughter Liz Cheney is also a potential aspirant.


Though it is customary in America that a potential presidential race begins two years in advance, the final picture emerges only after the primaries and the party conventions. With the election expenses increasing, candidates must sustain the momentum and build a massive war chest.


Biden can set the agenda on significant issues like gun control, the economy, abortion, immigration, and climate change, if he wins. A Trump win would only mean going back to Trumpism. If neither contests, the chances of a fresh face becoming the next tenant of the White House is possible in 2024.

## POINTCOUNTERPOINT

WE WANTED THE SIXTH BOWLER TO COME IN, SO SANJU SAMSON MISSED OUT AND HOODA CAME IN. AND CHA HAR WAS PICKED BECAUSE HE CAN SWING THE BALL REALLY WELL.

— INDIAN SKIPPER SHIKHAR DHAWAN





EVEN IF YOU SEE SANJU SAMSON, I WOULD HAVE PLAYED HOODA AHEAD OF SAMSON BECAUSE HE WAS PART OF THE WORLD CUP SQUAD AND SUDDENLY HE IS NOWHERE. SO IT'S DIFFICULT FOR HOODA AS WELL AS THAKUR.

— FORMER CRICKETER ASHISH NEHRA

# Torture charges mount post-Kherson occupation

AP ■ KHERSON (UKRAINE)

When a dozen Russian soldiers stormed into Dmytro Bilyi's home in August, the 24-year-old police officer said they gave him a chilling choice: Hand in his pistol or his mother and brother would disappear. Bilyi turned his gun over to the soldiers, who carried machine guns and had their faces concealed. But it didn't matter. They dragged him from his house in Ukraine's southern village of Chornobaivka to a prison in the nearby regional capital of Kherson, where he said he was locked in a cell and tortured for days, his genitals and ears shocked with electricity.

"It was like hell all over my body," Bilyi recalled. "It burns so bad it's like the blood is boiling ... I just wanted it to stop," he said.

More than two weeks after Russians retreated from the city, accounts such as his are helping to uncover sites where torture allegedly took place in Kherson, which Kremlin forces occupied for eight

months.

Five such rooms have been found in the city, along with at least four more in the wider Kherson region, where people allege that they were confined, beaten, shocked, interrogated and threatened with death, police said. Human rights experts warn that the accusations made so far are likely only the beginning.

"For months we've received information about torture and other kind of persecution of civilians," said Oleksandra Matviichuk, head of the Center for Civil Liberties, a local rights group. "I am afraid that horrible findings in Kherson still lie ahead."

The Associated Press spoke with five people who allege that they were tortured or arbitrarily detained by Russians in Kherson or knew of others who disappeared and endured abuse. Sometimes, they said, the Russians rounded up whoever they saw — priests, soldiers, teachers or doctors — with no specific reason. In other cases, Russians were allegedly tipped off by sympathizers who pro-



vided names of people believed to be helping the Ukrainian military.

Once detained, the people said they were locked in crowded cells, fed meagre portions of watery soup and bread and made to learn the Russian anthem while listening to screams from prisoners being tortured across the hall. Detainees were allegedly forced to give information about relatives or acquaintances with ties to the Ukrainian army, including names and locations disclosed in handwritten notes.

As a police officer with a father in the military, Bilyi remained under the radar for several months of Russia's occupation, until he said someone likely tipped them off. He spent four days in a cell with others,

being pulled out for questioning and electric shocks.

Investigators accused him of having a Kalashnikov rifle — not just a pistol — and pressured him to share his father's whereabouts. Then they shocked him for half an hour a day for two days before releasing him, he said.

Ukrainian national police allege that more than 460 war crimes have been committed by Russian soldiers in recently occupied areas of Kherson. The torture in the city occurred in two police stations, one police-run detention centre, a prison and a private medical facility, where rubber batons, baseball bats and a machine used for applying electrical shocks were found, said Andrii Kovanyi a press officer for the police in Kherson.

When Igor was detained in September from the call centre where he worked, he was brought into a room, ordered to remove his shirt and to place his palms on the metal door to increase the flow of electricity and the pain of being shocked with a stun gun, he said.

The Russian soldier said, "Are you ready? Now you're going to scream like a bitch ... You will not get out of here, and we will kill you," said Igor, who spoke on the condition that only his first name be used to protect his identity.

The 22-year-old, accused of providing Ukrainians with Russian military positions, said he was shocked by the gun along his back for 2 1/2 hours and then forced to stay awake in a chair all night.

Pictures on his phone, seen by the AP, show clusters of red circular marks lining the length of his back. He was freed after two days but not before writing a letter providing details about a relative of his uncle's who the Russians wanted information on. Documenting the crimes in Kherson will be challenging because no other city this large has been occupied by Russia for so long, said Brian Castner senior crisis adviser at Amnesty International.

"Evidence must be collected and preserved to maintain that chain of custody, so that when there is inter-

national justice, the evidence is lock-tight and perpetrators can be held to account," he said.

Police in Kherson are investigating and collecting testimony. But more and more people are arriving daily, and the justice system is overwhelmed, local rights experts said.

In March, Dmytro Plotnikov's friend was seized by Russians when he went to Kherson's central square to run errands shortly after the occupation began. Plotnikov knows of three other people who were captured and released by Russians, one of whom still had visible bruises on his body more than a month after being freed, he said.

But since the Russians left Kherson, what concerns him most are the Ukrainians who collaborated with them and remained.

In May, Plotnikov's neighbour posted a photo of his sister and her address on a Russian chat group, he said. His sister is outspokenly pro-Ukrainian, and the neighbour accused her of spreading hate about Russian people, he said.

## Biden, Macron ready to talk Ukraine, trade in State visit

AP ■ WASHINGTON

French President Emmanuel Macron is headed to Washington for the first state visit of Joe Biden's presidency — a revival of diplomatic pageantry that had been put on hold because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Biden-Macron relationship had a choppy start. Macron briefly recalled France's ambassador to the United States last year after the White House announced a deal to sell nuclear submarines to Australia, undermining a contract for France to sell diesel-powered submarines.

But the relationship has turned around with Macron emerging as one of Biden's most forward-facing European allies in the Western response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. This week's visit - it will include Oval Office talks, a glitzy dinner, a news conference and more - comes at a critical moment for both leaders.

The leaders have a long agenda for their Thursday meeting at the White House, including Iran's nuclear program, China's increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific and growing concerns about security and stability in Africa's Sahel region, according to U.S. And French officials. But front and center during their Oval Office meeting will be Russia's war in Ukraine, as both Biden and Macron work to maintain economic and military support for Kyiv as it tries to repel Russian forces.

In Washington, Republicans are set to take control of the House, where GOP leader Kevin McCarthy says Republicans will not write a "blank check" for Ukraine. Across the Atlantic,



Macron's efforts to keep Europe united will be tested by the mounting costs of supporting Ukraine in the nine-month war and as Europe battles rising energy prices that threaten to derail the post-pandemic economic recovery.

White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby on Monday described Macron as the "dynamic leader" of America's oldest ally while explaining Biden's decision to honor the French president with the first state visit of his presidency.

The U.S. Tradition of honoring foreign heads of state dates back to Ulysses S. Grant, who hosted King David Kalakaua of the Kingdom of Hawaii for a more than 20-course White House dinner, but the tradition has been on hold since 2019 because of COVID-19 concerns.

"If you look at what's going on in Ukraine, look at what's going on in the Indo Pacific and the tensions with China, France is really at the center of all those things," Kirby said. "And so the president felt that this was exact-

ly the right and the most appropriate country to start with for state visits."

Macron was also Republican Donald Trump's pick as the first foreign leader to be honored with a state visit during his term. The 2018 state visit included a jaunt by the two leaders to Mount Vernon, the Virginia estate of George Washington, America's founding president.

Macron was scheduled to arrive in Washington on Tuesday evening ahead of a packed day of meetings and appearances in and around Washington on Wednesday - including a visit to NASA headquarters with Vice President Kamala Harris and talks with Biden administration officials on nuclear energy.

On Thursday, Macron will have his private meeting with Biden followed by a joint news conference and visits to the State Department and Capitol Hill before Macron and his wife, Brigitte Macron, are feted at the state dinner. Grammy winner Jon Batiste is to provide the entertainment.

## Ukraine's 'Invincibility' centres offer refuge, resilience

AP ■ BUCHA (UKRAINE)

Retired Ukrainian construction worker Borys Markovnikov is on the move again: this time, just a few steps from his home in the town of Bucha, northwest of Kyiv, to seek shelter and warmth at a "Point of Invincibility" — a government-built help station that serves food, drinks, warmth and ultimately, resilience, in the face of Russia's military onslaught.

In recent weeks, Ukraine has rolled out hundreds of such help stations, christened with a name of defiance as places where residents facing outages of power, heating and water can warm up, charge their phones, enjoy snacks and hot drinks, and even be entertained.

Markovnikov, 78, has had to move a few times. He recalled how he was driven from his home in the eastern Donbas region after Russian-backed separatists seized territory there in 2014. Earlier this year, he fled his adopted town of Bucha — now infamous for massacres during a brief occupation by Russian



forces — on foot, across the front line, to Kyiv. Later he was able to return home, but home is not always an easy place to live.

"My neighbours told me there was a tent with electricity and a TV, and I came to have a look," said Markovnikov, ogling Monday's soccer World Cup match between Ghana and South Korea, adding he had no power at home. "We still believe. Without belief, you can't survive."

Ukraine's State Emergencies Service said Friday nearly 1,000 such centres have been erected

across the country since the programme was first launched on November 18. Its website features a handy online map to show beleaguered citizens where they are located.

As of Friday, over 67,000 people had gotten help in them — and more could pour in if, as many experts and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy have warned, more Russian strikes lie ahead.

Such centres — often consisting of small, insulated tents no larger than a classroom — were rolled out just in time as a

string of massive airstrikes by Russian forces deprived many Ukrainians of basics of life at home.

The centres are in essence a stopgap while utility crews scramble to fix cut power lines and put water mains back into operation, so basic services can be restored to homes and businesses.

Power company DTEK said controlled outages continued Monday in Kyiv as a necessary step to balance the hobbled power system and avoid other breakdowns, while ensuring electricity to hospitals and heat-pumping stations.

Only 42 per cent of power was available to household customers in the city, and "we do our best to provide light to each customer for 2 to 3 hours twice a day," the company said.

Outside the "Point of Invincibility" on an esplanade in front of a sports centre in Bucha, teens had a snowball fight and a guitarist strummed his instrument outside an inflatable tent.

Inside, kids crouched over games of Roblox on mobile

phones as young adults tapped away at laptops and elderly women sat quietly to while away the time. A young girl clutched her dog as staffers poured cups of hot tea and sweetened it with honey.

The "Points of Invincibility" offer a public-service — and free — alternative to the many coffee shops and restaurants that have become hubs for internet access and warmth of Ukrainians seeking refuge from the cold and dark in their own homes.

"When the electricity went out, I had to look for a place with a connection," said Bucha resident Mykola Pestikov, 26, crouched over his computer. "These can be cafes that take energy from other places, or I look for a point" — like now."

Yuri Mikhailovskiy, a firefighter who helps run the site, showed a ledger that indicated more than 1,000 people had come through the centre since it was first put up 10 days ago in Bucha, where electricity is spotty or nonexistent in most homes.

## Russia protests Pope comments as Vatican seeks to mediate

AP ■ ROME

Russia has lodged a formal protest with the Vatican over Pope Francis' latest condemnation of atrocities in Ukraine, in which the pontiff blamed most of the cruelty on Chechens and other minorities in an apparent effort to spare ethnic Russian troops from criticism.

The Kremlin's ambassador to the Holy See, Alexander Avdeev, told the RIA Novosti agency that he met Monday with a Vatican official to express his "indignation" about Francis' comments, which were contained in an interview with the Jesuit magazine America that was published Monday.

In his comments, Francis defended his usual reluctance to call out President Vladimir Putin by the name, saying it was clear Ukraine is the "martyred" victim in the war. But he also said that, while it was the Russian state that invaded Ukraine, "Generally, the cruelest are perhaps those who are of Russia but are not of the Russian tradition, such as the Chechens, the Buryats and so on."

The pope's apparent distinction between the mostly Muslim Chechens and Buddhist Buryats on the one hand, and ethnic Russian fighters on the other, irked Moscow.



## Uneasy calm grips Ukraine as West prepares winter aid

AP ■ KYIV

An uneasy calm hung over Kyiv on Tuesday as residents of the Ukrainian capital did what they could to prepare for anticipated Russian missile attacks aiming to take out more energy infrastructure as winter sets in.

To ease that pain, NATO allies were making plans to boost provisions of anything from blankets to generators to ensure the 43 million Ukrainians can maintain their resolve in the 10th month of fighting against Russia's invasion.

Ukraine's first lady implored the West to show the same kind of steadfastness that Ukrainians had shown against Russian President Vladimir Putin's military campaign.

"Ukrainians are very tired of this war, but we have no choice in the matter," said Olena Zelenska, the wife of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in a BBC interview during a visit to Britain.

"We do hope that the approaching season of Christmas doesn't make you forget about our tragedy and get used to our suffering," she said.

A two-day meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Bucharest, Romania, was likely to see the 30-nation alliance make fresh pledges of nonlethal sup-



port to Ukraine: fuel, generators, medical supplies and winter equipment, on top of new military support.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was to announce substantial US aid for Ukraine's energy grid, US officials said. Ukraine's grid has been battered countrywide since early October by targeted Russian strikes, in what Western officials call a Russian campaign to weaponise the coming winter cold.

Ukrainians are putting up defences — both for troops and for civilians. The government has rolled out hundreds of help stations, christened Points of Invincibility, where residents facing outages of power, heat-

ing and water can warm up, charge their phones, enjoy snacks and hot drinks, and even be entertained.

"I had no electricity for two days. Now there's only some electricity, and no gas," said Vanda Bronyslavavina, who took a breather inside one such help center in Kyiv's Obolon neighbourhood.

The 71-year-old lamented the uncertainty about whether Russia will simply resume its strikes after infrastructure gets fixed, in a frustrating cycle of destruction and repair.

It underscored how the war continues to cast a pall over every aspect of life, even if civilian casualties are relatively low at the moment.

## NATO commits to future Ukraine membership

**Bucharest:** NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg reaffirmed the military alliance's commitment to Ukraine on Tuesday, saying that the war-torn nation will one day become a member of the world's largest security organization.

AP

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
**Name of work and its location :** 30-Elect-57-T-2022-23-E3  
Electrical work in connection with strengthening of wiring cabling, earthing with other associated work in dispensaries/hospitals over Delhi division.  
**Approx cost of the works :** Rs. 56.26 lacs  
**Address of the office :** Sr. Divl Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.  
**Bid Security :** Rs. 1,12,500.00  
**Date & time of submission of tender :** 26.12.2022, 12.00 Hrs.  
**Opening of tender :** 26.12.2022, 12.00 Hrs.  
**Website & notice board :** [www.irggs.gov.in](http://www.irggs.gov.in) & Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.  
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RO No.: 869 **e-Tender Time Extension Notice** Date: 29-11-2022  
Due to some unavoidable reasons the submission and opening of Part-1 dates of e-tender of the office of Executive Engineer (Gen.), Chilla Power House are hereby extended as is given below:  
**Tender No.13/EE(G)/Chilla/2022-23**, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning works of 220volt, 400AH Plantie Battery Set and Battery Charger at Chilla Power House.  
Last date for submission of bids on website : 06.12.2022 up to 16:00 Hrs  
Date for opening of bids on website : 08.12.2022 at 12:00 PM  
For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal <http://uktenders.gov.in> Executive Engineer (Gen.), Chilla Power House  
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**ADMISSION NOTICE-MDS**  
**(2022-23)**  
Applications are invited for admission to Stray Vacancy Round for **MDS** course for the session **2022-23** in **MM College of Dental Sciences & Research**, a constituent Institute of **Maharishi Markandeshwar (Deemed to be University)**, **Mullana-Ambala** out of the list of candidates as per DGHS, Govt. of India. Only the applicants who have filled the choice for the College are eligible to apply. Application Form can be downloaded from University website ([www.mmmullana.org](http://www.mmmullana.org)). Last date of receiving duly filled up application with processing fees of Rs.2000/- in form of DD in name of **Maharishi Markandeshwar (Deemed to be University)**, **Mullana** is **30-11-2022 upto 4 P.M.** positively in University office. Physical counselling shall be held on **01.12.2022 at 9:00 A.M.** onwards in the University Campus.  
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**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, TLMD-VI(6),BEMINA, SRINAGAR**  
TeleNo:0194-2492429Fax:0194-2492429.  
Email: [tlcdistpdd@gmail.com](mailto:tlcdistpdd@gmail.com)  
**EXTENSION-I**  
**e-NIT No: TLMD-VI/11 of 2022-23**  
**Dated: 10/11/2022**  
**Name of the work:** Augmentation of Grid Station Kulgam by way of Replacement of 132/33KV, 50MVA Transformer by 132 / 33 kv, 80 MVA Transformer.  
**Corrigendum title:** Extension of bid submission dates for NIT due to poor response.  
*Bids not accompanied with CDR/DD shall not be entertained for techno-commercial evaluation.*  
**CRITICAL DATES AFTER CORRIGENDUM: -**  

1. e-Bid submission ( <b>end</b> ) date & time (Submission supporting documents in PDF formats).	10-12-2022( 3pm)
2. OnlineTechno-Commerciale-Bid opening date and time.	12-12-2022 (3pm)
3. Venue of opening of Techno-Commercial-Bids.	Office of the Executive Engineer, TLMD-VI, Bemina, Srinagar
4. Cost of Bid document (to be submitted in the form of DD /Online Payment Pledged to Executive Engineer, TLMD-VI, JKPTCL Bemina Srinagar.	Rs.8500/-
5. Cost of EMD( in the form of CDR/DD)	<b>Rs. 1305000/- pledged to Superintending Engineer O&amp;M-II (Transmission), Bemina Srinagar.</b>

All other terms and conditions shall remain same as per attached SBD, BOQ and other documents uploaded on site.

No: TLMD-VI/2915-17  
Dated:-26.11.2022  
-Sd/-  
**Executive Engineer**  
**TLMD-VI,Bemina Sgr.**  
**DIPK-NB-5270/22**

## Trial starts in Norway for Putin ally's son who flew drone

AP ■ COPENHAGEN



The son of a Russian businessman close to President Vladimir Putin denied any wrongdoing Tuesday at the start of his trial in northern Norway, where he is accused of violating a law that bars Russians from flying drones.

Andrey Yakunin who holds both a Russian and a British passport, was arrested in Hammerfest, in Arctic Norway, on October 17, after he had sailed around the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard and along the coast of Norway. The archipelago sits more than 800 kilometres (500 miles) north of the Norwegian mainland.

Police seized "drones and electronic devices" when raiding his sailing boat. The 47-year-old Yakunin had been filming with the drone while mountaineering, glacier walking and sailing, according to his lawyer John

Christian Elden, who has said that Yakunin should be considered a British citizen, rather than Russian.

Norwegian news agency NTB said that Yakunin is charged with flying drones several times on Svalbard, where he was between August 3 and September 6. Yakunin is the son of Russian businessman Vladimir Yakunin, a longtime acquaintance of Putin, who was placed on the US State Department's sanctions list of Russian officials and businessmen following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014.

Yakunin remains in custody. His trial is expected to run until Friday.

Numerous drone sightings have been reported near offshore oil and gas platforms belonging to NATO member Norway, a major oil and gas producer. Several Russian citizens have been detained for flying drones or taking photographs of sensitive sites in Norway. Also Tuesday, a 50-year-old Russian man who was stopped at Norway's border with Russia in the Arctic north carrying two drones and cameras and other media equipment was sentenced to 120 days in prison, Norwegian media reported.

No evidence was found by the Oslo District Court that the man was engaged in espionage, Norwegian broadcaster TV2 said.

But by flying his drone a total of 47 times from late August until early October he was found guilty by the court of violating drone regulations relating to Russian citizens.



# US rejects China objections to South China Sea mission

AP ■ BEIJING

The US Navy on Tuesday dismissed Beijing's protests over a "freedom of navigation operation" conducted near a Chinese-held island in the South China Sea, in the latest incident drawing new attention to one of the world's potential military flashpoints.

In an unusual move, the Navy's 7th Fleet issued a rebuttal to China's objections to Tuesday's mission, calling it "the latest in a long string of (Chinese) actions to misrepresent lawful U.S. Maritime operations and assert its excessive and illegitimate maritime claims" in the South China Sea. China claims the area virtually in its entirety.

The Navy said that China's sweeping maritime claims pose a serious threat to the freedom of navigation and overflight, free trade and unimpeded commerce, and freedom of economic opportunity for South China Sea littoral nations. "As long as some countries continue to claim and assert limits on rights that exceed their authority under international law, the United States will continue to defend the rights and freedoms of the sea guaranteed to all," it said.

The Navy said its guided



missile cruiser USS Chancellorsville on Tuesday "asserted navigational rights and freedoms in the South China Sea near the Spratly Islands, consistent with international law."

China called the action illegal and said it mobilized naval and air assets to issue warnings and drive off the ship.

"The U.S. Military's actions have seriously violated China's sovereignty and security, which is further ironclad evidence of its pursuit of navigational hegemony and militarisation of the South China Sea," spokesperson for the Southern Theater Command, Air Force Col. Tian Junli, was quoted as saying.

"China has indisputable sovereignty over the South China Sea islands and their

adjacent waters," Tian said.

The long-seething South China Sea territorial conflicts involving China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei have long been regarded as a delicate fault line in the U.S.-China rivalry in the region.

While the U.S. Lays no claims to the strategic waterway, where an estimated USD 5 trillion in global trade transits each year, it has said that freedom of navigation and overflight is in America's national interest. The sea is also home to rich fishing stocks and a potential wealth of energy and mineral resources.

In March, U.S. Indo-Pacific commander Adm. John C. Aquilino told The Associated Press that China has fully militarised at least three of sever-

al islands it built in the disputed waters with anti-ship and anti-aircraft missile systems, laser and jamming equipment. He described it as an increasingly aggressive move that threatens all nations operating nearby.

Then in July, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called on China to comply with a 2016 arbitration ruling that invalidated Beijing's vast claims on historical grounds in the South China Sea.

On a visit to the area earlier this month, U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris reaffirmed Washington's commitment to defend the Philippines under the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty. She also announced an additional aid of USD 7.5 million to Philippine maritime law enforcement agencies.

# Nepal elections: Half dozen PM aspirants emerge in Nepali Cong

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

About half a dozen leaders of the Nepali Congress, which has emerged as the single largest party in Nepal's parliamentary polls, have expressed their desire to become the country's next prime minister, amidst growing pressure on the party to transfer the leadership to the younger generation.

Even as the leaders of the ruling five-party alliance intensified efforts to form a new government, it will take a few more days before the final results of the House of Representatives and seven provincial assembly elections held on November 20 are announced.

Half a dozen leaders within the Nepali Congress (NC), which has so far won 53 seats under the direct voting system, have expressed their aspirations to become the next prime minister, My Republica newspaper reported.

So far results of 158 seats have been declared. The ruling alliance led by the NC is moving towards a clear majority, allowing them to form a new government. The counting of votes is almost complete, with the results of six seats yet to be announced.

A party needs at least 138 seats to form a majority government in the 275-member House of Representatives.

The five-party ruling



alliance, which includes the NC, CPN-Maoist Centre, CPN-Unified Socialist, Loktantrik Samajwadi Party and Rashtriya Janamorchha has a combined strength of 85 seats in the HoR under direct election, followed by the Opposition CPN-UML alliance with 57 seats.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, who is also the NC's president, discussed the issue of the government formation with Maoist Center Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" and Unified Socialist Chairman Madhav Kumar Nepal.

Following discussions with Prachanda and Nepal, Deuba agreed to continue the current alliance and move forward for the economic development and prosperity of the country by including other parties in the process.

Sources claim that the top leaders of the three parties concluded that the electoral

coordination was partially successful in the recently held elections. They also claimed that the leaders are unanimous that after the results of the election, they will discuss the formation of the government at the centre and provincial level as well as other issues and move forward by forging an agreement.

With the continuation of the current coalition, it is estimated that there is a strong possibility that 76-year-old Deuba can become the Prime Minister again and that he will be elected as the leader of the NC parliamentary party.

However, NC's Ram Chandra Paudel (78), Prakash Man Singh (66), Shashank Koirala (64), and 46-year-old General Secretary Gagan Kumar Thapa are likely to challenge Deuba's bid to become the Prime Minister for the sixth time.

# Census: Christians minority in England



AP ■ LONDON

Fewer than half the people in England and Wales consider themselves Christian, according to the most recent census — the first time the country's official religion has been followed by a minority of the population.

Britain has become less religious — and less white — in the decade since the last census, figures from the 2021 census released Tuesday by the Office for National Statistics revealed.

Some 46.2% of the population of England and Wales described themselves as Christian on the day of the 2021 census, down from 59.3% a decade earlier. The Muslim population grew from 4.9% to 6.5% of the population, while 1.7% identified as Hindu, up from 1.5%.

More than 1 in 3 people — 37% — said they had no religion, up from 25% in 2011.

The other parts of the UK, Scotland and Northern Ireland, report their census results separately.

# GOP prepares blitz of probes

AP ■ WASHINGTON

House Republicans are promising aggressive oversight of the Biden administration once they assume the majority next year, with a particular focus on the business dealings of presidential son Hunter Biden, illegal immigration at the US-Mexico border and the origins of COVID-19.

Republicans won't have enough votes to advance key legislative priorities if there is no Democratic buy-in, but their oversight of government agencies could put Democrats on the defensive and dampen support for the Biden administration going into the 2024 presidential elections.

Some of the lawmakers expected to lead those investigations once House Republicans select their new committee chairs:

## JUDICIARY'S BIG ROLE

Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, is expected to serve as the next chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. Jordan helped form and then lead the ultra-conservative House Freedom Caucus and voted on Jan. 6, 2021, to object to counting Pennsylvania's electoral vote.

President Donald Trump

thought so highly of Jordan that he presented the congressman with the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

The Judiciary Committee handles oversight of the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security and issues such as crime, immigration and protection of civil liberties.

It's typically one of the most partisan committees on Capitol Hill, yet Jordan's combative style stands out even there. The committee would be the place where any effort would begin to impeach a member of the Biden administration, as some Republicans have been proposing for Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

Jordan's inquiries to the administration in recent months make clear the committee will investigate the FBI's execution of a search warrant at Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence. He has also advocated for a wide-ranging look at the Biden administration's immigration policies and the origins of COVID-19.

"All those things need to be investigated just so you have the truth," Jordan told conservative activists last summer at a conference. "Plus that will frame up the 2024 race when I hope and



I think President Trump is going to run again and we need to make sure that he wins."

## OVERSIGHT'S LONG LIST

Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., is expected to serve as the next chairman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee and has made clear that investigating President Joe Biden's son Hunter will be one of his top priorities. The Republicans say their investigation of Hunter Biden's business dealings is to "determine whether these activities compromise U.S. National security and President Biden's ability to lead with impartiality."

Comer has also been laying the groundwork for investigating the situation on the U.S.

Mexico border. He sent a letter to Mayorkas seeking an array of documents and communications pertaining to the administration's border policy. "We cannot endure another year of the Biden Administration's failed border policies," the letter said.

But that's just a slice of the committee's focus.

"We're going to investigate between 40 and 50 different things," Comer said Sunday on NBC's "Meet The Press." "We have the capacity. We'll have 25 members on the committee, and we're going to have a staff close to 70. So we have the ability to investigate a lot of things."

The federal government's spending in response to COVID-19 will also be scruti-

nised.

"We believe that there have been hundreds of billions, if not trillions of dollars wasted over the past three years, so that spans two administrations, in the name of COVID."

"We want to have hearings on that. We want to try to determine what happened with the fraudulent unemployment insurance funds, the fraudulent PPP loan funds, some of this money that's being spent for state and local governments in the COVID stimulus money," Comer said.

## AFGHANISTAN IN FOCUS

Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, is expected to serve as the next chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee,

which will be investigating the U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan. McCaul reiterated a request in mid-October for various documents and directed the State Department to preserve all records related to the chaotic withdrawal, which included the loss of 13 U.S. Service members killed during a suicide bombing attack.

"The way it was done was such a disaster and such a disgrace to our veterans that served in Afghanistan. They deserve answers to the many questions we have," McCaul said on ABC's "This Week." He added: "Why wasn't there a plan to evacuate? How did it go so wrong?"

## SPOTLIGHT ON ENERGY AND TAXES

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Wash., is expected to serve as the next chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee, which has the broadest jurisdiction of any authorizing committee in Congress, from health care to environmental protection to national energy policy. Republicans on the committee have already spent months investigating the origins of COVID-19 and are expected to continue that work in the next Congress.

# 4 Palestinians killed by Israeli fire in occupied West Bank

AP ■ JERUSALEM

A Palestinian man on Tuesday rammed his car into an Israeli soldier, seriously injuring her, before he was shot dead by Israeli police in the occupied West Bank. He was the fourth Palestinian killed in a series of violent incidents throughout the day.

It was the latest bloodshed in a mounting surge of Israeli-Palestinian violence in the wake of a Jerusalem bombing last week that killed two Israelis. The violence began overnight near

the city of Hebron, where fighting erupted between Israeli forces and residents.

The Israeli army said clashes erupted after two army vehicles got stuck due to mechanical issues. It said soldiers opened fire after Palestinians hurled rocks and explosives. It said Palestinian gunmen also opened fire. The Palestinian Health Ministry said Mufid Khalil, 44, was killed and at least eight other people were wounded by Israeli fire.

In a separate incident, two brothers were killed by Israeli



fire during clashes with troops near the village of Kafr Ein, west of Ramallah in the northern West Bank early Tuesday. The Palestinian news agency Wafa identified them as Jawad and Dhafir Rimawi, 22 and 21.

The Israeli military said troops operating in the village



# China lockdown stir pauses as police flood city streets

AP ■ HONG KONG

With police out in force, there was no word of additional protests against strict government anti-pandemic measures Tuesday in Beijing, as temperatures fell well below freezing. Shanghai, Nanjing and other cities where online calls to gather had been issued were also reportedly quiet.

Rallies against China's unusually strict anti-virus measures spread to several cities over the weekend in the biggest show of opposition to the ruling Communist Party in decades. Authorities eased some regulations, apparently to try to quell public anger, but the government showed no sign of backing down on its larger coronavirus strategy, and analysts expect authorities to quickly silence the dissent.

In Hong Kong on Monday, about 50 students from mainland China sang at the Chinese University of Hong Kong and

some lit candles in a show of support for those in mainland cities who demonstrated against restrictions that have confined millions to their homes.

Hiding their faces to avoid official retaliation, the students chanted, "No PCR tests but freedom!" and "Oppose dictatorship, don't be slaves!"

The gathering and a similar one elsewhere in Hong Kong were the biggest protests there in more than a year under rules imposed to crush a pro-democracy movement in the territory, which is Chinese but has a separate legal system from the mainland.

"I've wanted to speak up for a long time, but I did not get the chance to," said James Cai, a 29-year-old from Shanghai who attended a Hong Kong protest and held up a piece of white paper, a symbol of defiance against the ruling party's pervasive censorship. "If people in the mainland can't tolerate it anymore, then I cannot as well."

# Ethiopia offers no date for end to blackout in Tigray region

AP ■ NAIROBI

There is "no timeline" for restoring internet access to Ethiopia's embattled Tigray region, a senior government official said Tuesday.

The restoration of Tigray's internet service will be carried alongside the resumption of its phone and electricity services, though no date has been set for those goals, Ethiopia's Minister for Innovation and Technology Belete Molla said.

He was speaking at the UN's annual Internet Governance Forum being held this



week in Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa.

"The government of Ethiopia is designing a package that is not only about internet resumption but the resumption of everything, because this is what we need as a people, as a government," Belete said of the

internet shutdown in Tigray. "There is no timeline."

Tigray, home to more than 5 million people, has been mostly without internet, telecommunications and banking since war broke out between federal government troops and forces led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front in November 2020.

A ceasefire deal signed between the warring sides in South Africa earlier this month commits the government to restoring Tigray's basic services, but the communications blackout has not yet been lifted.

# Houston lifts boil-water order affecting more than 2 million

AP ■ HOUSTON

Houston officials lifted an order Tuesday that had called for more than 2 million people in the nation's fourth-largest city to boil their tap water before drinking or using it. The boil order had been in effect since Sunday, when a power outage at a purification plant caused pressure to drop.

The order led to the closure of businesses and schools, including the Houston Independent School District, which cancelled classes Monday and Tuesday.



# Sensex, Nifty settle at fresh lifetime highs

## Maintain winning momentum for 6th day

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Sensex and Nifty ended at fresh lifetime peaks on Tuesday amid a largely firm trend in other Asian markets and continuous foreign fund inflows. The 30-share BSE Sensex gained 177.04 points or 0.28 per cent to settle at 62,681.84, its fresh record closing high. During the day, it jumped 382.6 points or 0.61 per cent to its lifetime intra-day peak of 62,887.40.

The broader NSE Nifty advanced 55.30 points or 0.30 per cent to end at 18,618.05, its fresh record closing high.

"While the winning streak continued and key benchmarks scaled new highs, investors traded with caution in a slightly volatile market. There are worries about growing protests in China over the imposition of strict lockdowns, which markets fear could hurt the already slowing global economy.

"If the situation doesn't



improve, this could impact the market. But since India is in a slightly better position compared to other major economies, investors are willing to bet big on us," Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd. Among the Sensex pack, Hindustan Unilever, Sun Pharma, Nestle, Dr Reddy's, Tata Steel, ICICI Bank, Titan and HCL Technologies were the major winners.

IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Maruti, Power Grid and Larsen & Toubro were among the major laggards.

"Indian markets opened on positive note following positive overall Asian markets... During the afternoon session the markets continued their positive trend with heavy buying in FMCG and consumer durables stocks.

"Sentiments remained optimistic as data showed that foreign portfolio investors have infused funds worth Rs 32,344 crore in the Indian stock markets so far in the month of November and became net buyers again," said Narendra Solanki - Head Fundamental Research-Investment Services, Anand Rathii Shares & Stock

Brokers. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.39 per cent and smallcap index dipped 0.29 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, FMCG jumped 1.73 per cent, metal (0.57 per cent), consumer durables (0.58 per cent) and healthcare (0.54 per cent).

Consumer discretionary, energy, industrials, telecommunication, auto, bankex and services were among the laggard. Elsewhere in Asia, markets in Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended higher, while Tokyo settled lower.

Equity exchanges in Europe were trading mostly lower in the afternoon trade. Wall Street had ended in the negative territory on Monday.

International oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 2.45 per cent higher at USD 85.23 per barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought shares worth Rs 935.88 crore on Monday, as per exchange data.

# India to see significant economic activity over next 10 yrs: Nilekani

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India will witness "significant economic activity" over the next decade on the back of open network for digital commerce (ONDC), record aggregating system and government measures like GST, FASTag and e-way bills, Infosys Technologies co-founder and chairman Nandan Nilekani said on Tuesday.

He made the remarks while speaking at the 7th edition of the Global Technology Summit organised by Carnegie India.

"...There are three big things coming today, which will over the next decade have more of an impact (on India). I believe in the next 10 years India is going to see significant economic activity which is broad based, inclusive and democratised," he said.

The first is, ONDC second is account aggregator framework and the transformation happening in the logistics sector due to government initiatives like GST, Fastag and the e-way bill, Nilekani said.

Nilekani said he expects the ONDC -- an initiative of the government to promote an

open platform for all aspects of the exchange of goods and services through electronic networks -- to begin soon.

ONDC will allow the commerce business to be disintegrated for millions of small suppliers to sell on the network, for millions of small retailers to participate as small sellers on the platform to really turbocharge hyper-local commerce making their businesses more inclusive.

Secondly, account aggregator network which again fundamentally is an idea that data should ultimately be used by people who generate the data and therefore individuals, small businesses can use the data to get access to multiple services like credit and so forth. This record aggregating system is also a business for India's data empowerment architecture. It has a unique installation called consent manager.

"A consent manager on your behalf gets your data from different providers and provides it further for different benefits. For example, a small business can use his consent manager get his GST details, get bank statement from the bank, get tax sta-



tus from the income tax system and give it in a secure manner to lender who can then take a decision to give credit. All this is fundamentally going to democratise lending and other financial services," the Chairman explained.

He said, there is transformation happening in the logistics sector due to government initiatives like GST, FASTag and e-way bill. All these have simplified the movement of goods and vehicles on the highways. The government has many plans to build multimodal parks, all this will help reduce logistics cost.

Further, a variety of start-up innovators, local delivery and intercity delivery are going to change that moment and delivery of goods, he said.

Nilekani also said that from about 600 million in 2014, today 1.3 billion Indians have Aadhaar IDs (identity).

"India has led the world in creating digital public goods where everyone in the country can be in the digital economy... With Aadhaar... I was the founding chairman of Unique Identification Authority of India which did this project. By the time I stepped down in 2014, 600 million Indians had digital ID, and subsequently under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi and his government today 1.3 billion Indians have digital IDs."

It is an online ID that can be used anywhere across India. It authenticates a person through biometrics and OTPs, he said.

# FinMin to meet heads of banks on Dec 5 to promote cross-border trade in rupee

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Finance Ministry has called a meeting of CEOs of banks, including top six private sector lenders, on December 5 to discuss ways to promote cross-border trade in the rupee instead of the US dollar.

Besides, sources said the meeting to be attended by other stakeholders, including senior officials of external affairs and commerce ministries, will review the progress made on this front so far.

Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi will be chairing the meeting and is also likely to see attendance from representatives of the Reserve Bank of India and Indian Banks' Association (IBA), sources said.

Following detailed guidelines from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on cross-border trade transactions in domestic currency in July, about nine special vostro accounts have



been opened with two Indian banks to facilitate overseas trade in the rupee.

Sberbank and VTB Bank - the largest and second-largest banks of Russia, respectively - are the first foreign lenders to receive the approval after the RBI announced the guidelines.

RBI as per the guidelines decided to put in place an additional arrangement for invoicing, payment, and settlement of exports/imports in INR.

Another Russian bank Gazprom, which does not have its bank in India, has also opened this account with Kolkata-based UCO Bank.

The move to open the spe-

cial vostro account clears the deck for settlement of payments in the rupee for trade between India and Russia, enabling cross-border trade in the Indian currency, which the RBI is keen to promote.

The RBI has allowed the special vostro accounts to invest the surplus balance in Indian government securities to help popularise the new arrangement.

UCO Bank already has a vostro account-based facility in Iran. Gazprombank, or GPB, is a privately-owned Russian lender and the third-largest bank in the country by assets.

"Indian importers undertaking imports through this mechanism shall make payment in INR, which shall be credited into the special vostro account of the correspondent bank of the partner country, against the invoices for the supply of goods or services from the overseas seller/supplier," RBI had said earlier.

# RBI to launch pilot of retail digital rupee on Dec 1

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Tuesday said it will launch the first pilot for retail digital rupee (e?-R) on December 1, 2022, in which four banks including SBI and ICICI Bank will initially participate.

On November 1, the RBI had launched the first pilot in the digital rupee - wholesale segment.

Announcing the operationalisation of Central Bank Digital Currency - Retail (e?-R) Pilot, the RBI said the pilot would cover select locations in closed user group (CUG) comprising participating customers and merchants.

"The e-R would be in the form of a digital token that represents legal tender. It would be issued in the same denominations that paper currency and coins are currently issued," it said.

It would be distributed through banks and users will be able to transact with e?-R



through a digital wallet offered by the participating banks and stored on mobile phones/devices.

Transactions can be both Person to Person (P2P) and Person to Merchant (P2M).

The RBI further said the e?-R would offer features of physical cash like trust, safety and settlement finality.

"As in the case of cash, it will not earn any interest and can be converted to other forms of money, like deposits with banks," the central bank said.

The pilot would initially cover four cities -- Mumbai, New Delhi, Bengaluru and Bhubaneswar.

# Most rated Indian firms can withstand weaker rupee, says Moody's

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Most rated companies in India can withstand a weaker rupee, although external factors like rising interest rates in developed economies and higher energy prices would increase currency volatility, Moody's Investors Service said on Tuesday.

In a commentary on non-financial companies in India, Moody's said on November 25, the Indian rupee touched 81.67 versus the US dollar, after depreciating almost 10 per cent since the beginning of the year.

A steady rise in interest rates in developed economies combined with higher energy prices has resulted in a widening current account deficit, pressuring the rupee. "Although these external factors increase currency volatility, most rated companies in India have buffers to with-

stand the rupee's depreciation," Moody's said.

The weakening rupee is credit negative for Indian companies that generate revenue in the domestic currency but depend on US dollar debt to fund their operations. A weaker rupee will also hurt companies with dollar-denominated costs but rupee-based revenues.

"However, we expect the negative credit implications for rated companies to be limited or temporary," it said.

Most rated companies have protections to limit the effect of currency fluctuations.

These include natural hedges, some US dollar revenue and financial hedges, or a combination of these factors, which help limit the adverse effects on cash flow and leverage, even under a more severe depreciation scenario.

# Rupee falls 3 paise to close at 81.71 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee slipped 3 paise to close at 81.71 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday as rising crude oil prices in the international market weighed on forex market sentiment.

However, a firm trend in domestic equities and a weak American currency overseas capped the losses in the local unit, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened strong at 81.58 but later slipped into the negative territory.

During the session, it touched an intra-day high of 81.57 and a low of 81.74 against the greenback.

The local unit finally settled at 81.71, registering a decline of 3 paise over its previous close of 81.68.

# States borrowing cost falls 7 bps to 7.61% as bond supplies dry up on Central payouts

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The weighted average yield on states' market borrowings declined by 7 basis points to 7.61 per cent at Tuesday's auction on lower issuance as a number of states stayed away from the market.

States have been given two installments of the central tax devolution on November 10 and an installment of Rs 17,000 crore of the Rs 35,300 crore pending GST compensation on November 24, reducing the borrowing requirement of the states.

The issuances fell also because the states were using the Reserve Bank's liquidity



windows -- the ways and means advances (WMA) and the overdraft facility (OD) -- which increased to 155 days and 57 days, respectively in September from 127 and 28 days, respectively in August.

At the latest auction of state government securities, only nine states went to the market raising Rs 12,700 crore, which is 56.4 per cent lower

than the indicated amount for this week, according to an analysis by Icrs Ratings. However, cumulatively, the overall issuance is down only 2 per cent on-year.

Overall, November saw Rs 57,200 crore of state bond issuance only, which is 42 per cent lower than the Rs 98,200 crore indicated for this month in the auction calendar. In absolute terms, the gap between the actual and indicated issuance of Rs 41,000 crore in November is the largest monthly gap in FY23 so far, the agency's chief economist Aditi Nayar said in a note.

Accordingly, the weighted average cut-off/yield declined

by 7 basis points (bps) to 7.61 per cent on Tuesday from 7.68 per cent in the last auction; the weighted average tenor also declined to 14 years from 17 years last week.

In fact, the yields have been falling across the debt market as is visible from the benchmark 10-year G-sec (government securities) yield, which inched down by 1 bps to 7.28 per cent. But the weighted average cut-off of 10-year state debt fell more sharply - to the tune of 8 bps -- to 7.61 per cent this week. Accordingly, the spread between the 10-year state bonds and G-sec yield narrowed sharply to 33 bps from 41 bps last week.

# CEA projects 9% jump in peak power demand to 235GW in April 2023

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Central Electricity Authority (CEA) on Tuesday said peak power demand may shoot up by nine per cent to 235 GW in April 2023 and called for proper planning to avoid recurrence of energy crisis. In April this year, the peak power demand was around 215GW.

The country had witnessed unprecedented coal demand from the power sector during the summer this year after COVID curbs were eased.

"If we are not careful, a similar crisis may come next year. As per our estimate, demand in April 2023 will be higher. The same (demand) this year was around 215 GW, which might go up to 230-235 GW," CEA chairperson Ghanshyam Prasad said at the 13th Energy Conclave 2022 organised by CII here.

Noting that the thermal power capacity of the country will go up till the transition period, he said the energy security for the country is the primary concern though India is committed to renewable sources.

"Although, there are talks of phasing down thermal power capacity, this, by 2030, is likely to go up to 248 GW in the best-case scenario. It could go up to 256 GW if there is low support from hydro and renewable energy," Prasad said on the sidelines of the event.

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India currently has close to 210 GW of thermal power capacity.

Despite the fact that the total coal-fired power capacity will rise, its share in the total energy mix will reduce to 50 per cent from 75 per cent now, and in terms of installed capacity, it will shrink to 30-35 per cent, he said.

Prasad stated that plans are afoot for plants with a total 30 GW capacity to be installed at coal mine pitheads amid logistics and cost concerns.

"CEA and the Power ministry together are working on a plan for 500 GW of renewable energy and 536 GW of transmission capacity for evacuation," he added.

# ONGC gas price to be capped at \$6.5 for 5 years, no change in Reliance-bp price

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A government-appointed gas price review panel, led by Kirit Parikh, is recommending a floor and ceiling price for natural gas produced from legacy fields of state-owned firms for five years to help moderate CNG and piped cooking gas rates.

State producers Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL) will be paid a minimum or floor price of USD 4 per million British thermal unit and a cap or ceiling price of USD 6.5 as against the current rate of USD 8.57, three sources with direct knowledge of the matter said.

The report, which calls for

not tinkering with the existing pricing formula for difficult fields such as KG-D6 of Reliance Industries and bp plc, is under finalisation and may lower the ceiling price for ONGC gas marginally.

The floor and ceiling price will be applicable for five years although the initial thought was to keep it for three years, they said adding the ceiling price will have an annual escalation clause.

The escalation being suggested is USD 0.5 per mmBtu annually with no change pricing for first two years or a USD 0.25 per mmBtu annual escalation for five years.

The escalation will be adjusted to the foreign exchange rate, they said.

The panel, which was



tasked with suggesting a "fair price to the end-consumer" while ensuring a "market-oriented, transparent and reliable pricing regime for India's long-term vision for ensuring a gas-based economy", has favoured two different pricing regimes, sources said.

For the legacy or old fields of ONGC and OIL -- where the cost has long been recov-

ered and which are currently governed by a formula that uses rates in gas-surplus nations such as the US, Canada and Russia -- the committee is recommending a floor or minimum base price and cap or ceiling rates.

This would ensure that prices do not fall below the cost of production, as they did last year, or do not spike to

record levels as currently.

Gas from legacy fields is sold to city gas distributors who had to raise rates of CNG and piped cooking gas by over 70 per cent after prices went up from USD 2.90 per million British thermal unit till March to USD 6.10 in April and further to USD 8.57 last month, reflecting a surge in global rates. This rise in rates, which narrowed the gap between CNG and polluting diesel, had prompted the review.

Sources said the city gas will get top priority in the allocation of the gas from legacy fields, called APM gas. The sector will be in the 'no-cut' category, meaning supplies to other consumers will be cut first in case of a decline in production.

# 'Govt needs to set up separate Ministry for pharma sector'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government needs to set up a separate ministry for the pharma sector to encourage domestic producers and decrease Chinese imports, opined CEOs while participating in a discussion on the challenges being faced by the sector.

In a CEO Roundtable at the 15th edition of CPHI & PMEC India held on Tuesday, the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of companies, including those from RPG Life Science and Fermenta Biotech, also discussed ways to shift the focus of the domestic industry from volume to value.

The leaders also pointed out the need to reduce dependency on China by using technology.



Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI) Director General Vivek Sehgal said that the industry needs to collaborate and co-work and unite for collective voice on IPR related issues.

The leaders also discussed having a single industry organ-

isation to put across the grievances of the pharma industry before the government.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the 15th edition of CPHI & PMEC India, Pharmexcil Director General Ravi Uday Bhaskar said the Indian pharmaceutical exports have recorded an impressive growth of around 5 per cent in the current financial year (April-Oct 2022).

"Despite having global challenges, we have exported over USD 25 billion in the biggest market, which means about 30 per cent of our exports are going to the US," he added.

Currently, the Indian pharma market is valued at around USD 50 billion, out of which almost USD 25 billion constitutes the export market.



The Swiss likely need only a draw at Stadium 974, and Shaqiri should be available to play after sitting out the match against Brazil with a muscle injury.



# THE SUN & PLAY: DESPERATE INDIA HOPE FOR FULL GAME IN FINAL ODI

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

Frustrated by the fickle weather, a desperate Indian team would pray for a rain-free final ODI against New Zealand in its bid to finish on an even keel in a series that neither had context nor any major take-aways.

There is forecast of scattered showers in Christchurch and nothing can be more irritating than playing a series where the Gen-Next of Indian cricket hardly got any game time to show their prowess.

Out of five white-ball games that also includes three-match T20I series, two matches (one T20I and one ODI) didn't yield any result and one game (T20I) was curtailed significantly and ended in a tie due to Duckworth-Lewis method.

With the series in line, Shikhar Dhawan and his men would aim to put up an impactful performance at the picturesque Hagley Oval ground, which has traditionally helped the seam bowlers and has an average score in the 230 range in the past few years.

The Indian batting in first Powerplay (first 10 overs) has been much talked about and even though skipper Dhawan has been a prolific ODI opener

over the years, even he understands that to secure his place for the next World Cup, his approach needs a sea change.

His young opening partner Shubman Gill, however, has shown more intent in shot selection with scores of 50 and 45 not out in the two games.

So has Indian cricket's current blue-eyed boy Suryakumar Yadav, whose three sixes in a short 12.5 overs of play at the Seddon Park, did send the Indian supporters into raptures.

But the bigger challenge for Indian batting line-up will be to put up an above par score against New Zealand on a ground where swing bowlers have ruled the roost in the past few ODI games.

And for that, not just the openers or Surya but the likes of Rishabh Pant also needs to step up and be counted.

Rishabh's ODI record is pretty impressive but currently, the runs have dried up since the tour of England (primarily in 20 over cricket) and he is one player, who needs to fire in order to ensure that Indian middle-order looks competitive against a quality Black Caps attack.

Rishabh's presence and lack of bowling options among the specialist batters also effectively mean that Sanju Samson has



to once again sit out, like the last game where Deepak Hooda, because of his all-round skills, was preferred over the immensely popular cricketer from Kerala.

Since the last match was a wash-out, it will be interesting if interim head coach VVS Laxman decides to shuffle with the playing XI, especially the

bowling attack where Kuldeep Yadav is yet to get an opportunity. But to leave out either Yuzvendra Chahal or Washington Sundar will be doing them a dis-

service.

Shardul Thakur looked pedestrian in the opening ODI in Auckland and, in all likelihood, Arshdeep Singh, Deepak Chahar and the fiery Umran Malik will continue to lead the pace attack.

For the New Zealand pacers Matt Henry, Tim Southee and Lockie Ferguson, there couldn't be a better venue to exploit the frailties in India's batting to the fullest. Similarly, the Indian bowling attack would get a conducive bowling track to ask some probing questions to the likes of Tom Latham and Kane Williamson, who have proved to be the thorn in flesh during the last game.

**TEAMS**

**India:** Shikhar Dhawan (captain), Shubman Gill, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Deepak Hooda, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Deepak Chahar, Arshdeep Singh, Shardul Thakur and Umran Malik. **New Zealand:** Kane Williamson (captain), Finn Allen, Devin Conway, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Michael Bracewell, Tim Southee, Matt Henry, Adam Milne, Jimmy Neesham, Mitchell Santner and Lockie Ferguson.



## Umran's speed helps me to deceive batters with lesser pace: Arshdeep

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

Their bowling styles are like chalk and cheese but Arshdeep Singh finds Umran Malik's frightening pace beneficial as the batters are always struggling to adjust due to the marked difference in their respective speed.

The Jammu pace sensation is one of the fastest bowlers in world cricket alongside South African Anrich Nortje, Englishman Mark Wood to name a few, who regularly hit 150 clicks.

Arshdeep is more of a swing bowler, who normally when in rhythm, hits around early 130 kmph mark.

Both the IPL performers made their ODI debut against New Zealand in the opening game in Auckland and the Punjab man wants the partnership to continue forever.

"It is always good to bowl alongside Umran and he is also fun-loving so the dressing room atmosphere remains nice," Arshdeep said ahead of the third and final ODI against New Zealand, here on Wednesday.

"As far as bowling is concerned, I get a lot of benefit from Umran's bowling as batters need to adjust heavily from 155 kmph to 135 kmph. And they get deceived by pace and we enjoy bowling with each other. I expect we are able to continue this partnership for longest time," he said. Having made a name in T20Is, Arshdeep doesn't want to change too much while playing the 50-over format.

"My way of bowling is attack at the start and defensive at the end in T20Is. Not very different in ODIs for me and wherever I get a chance, I will try to do well."

Fans have a right to criticise

Arshdeep in his short career has already seen the ugly side of fandom when he was mercilessly trolled on social media after India's loss to Pakistan in an Asia Cup game in Dubai. A drunk fan had also abused him while he was getting into the team bus.

But showing maturity beyond years, the 23-year-old said that he has learnt to take everything in his stride.

"If you do well, you get love and praise and when you don't, the fans have the right to criticise us. They also love the game and the team. You will get love and brickbats both along the way but key is to accept both with equal humility," Arshdeep said.

Recently in Australia, he got a lot of support and there were quite a number of devoted Arshdeep fans, who would have his photographs printed on their T-shirts.

"It feels great to see (people wearing T-shirt with his photo) and pen lyrics dedicated to him but focus is always on the game, good or bad, one needs to conduct one's self well," he said.

For him staying in the moment is the most important thing.

"When you play the game, you want to enjoy rather than think that I want to be the main bowler of the side. You want to stay in the moment rather than think where I will be one year down the line. If you stay in present, it helps you as a player," said Arshdeep, who has 33 wickets in 21 T20Is.

About the rain-affected series, he said that some things are beyond anyone's control.

"Weather is not in our control and even during breaks one needs to be mentally prepared. We need to follow the process and there should be no let up in preparation," he concluded.

# Unbeaten West Indies upbeat before 2-test Australian series

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The West Indies have had little success in the shortest form of cricket lately but veteran Jason Holder says that won't diminish the test team's ambitions for the two-match series against Australia beginning Wednesday.

The Caribbean side lost in the preliminary stage of the Twenty20 World Cup in late October in Australia, beaten by both Ireland and Scotland. Those losses meant the team which won the T20 World Cup in 2012 and 2016 didn't qualify for the main tournament.

Coach Phil Simmons has quit and the two tests in Australia — the second a day-night match beginning Dec 8 in Adelaide — will be his last in charge.

Holder says the test team is going in the opposite direction — unbeaten this year with series wins at home against Bangladesh and England.

"If you look at the nucleus of this test team it's been together for the last five or six years, which is really important," Holder told Australian Associated Press from Perth, Western Australia, site of the first test. "In comparison to the other (West Indies) sides, there is probably a little bit more chopping and changing.

"Our focus right now is test cricket. We put the Twenty20 World Cup behind us and we are just trying to focus on that."

Five players are in the test squad that played on the T20 team, including fast bowler Alzarri Joseph. As a 19-year-old, Joseph impressed Australian players during a 2016 net session in the Caribbean. Joseph will be



making his first test appearance in Australia — the Caribbean side hasn't play for the Frank Worrell Trophy for seven years Down Under.

"We saw him just bowling thunderbolts," Australia opener David Warner said of the 2016 net session. "On those wickets . . . It was a bit daunting. We just didn't know where he'd come from."

Joseph debuted for the West

Indies two months later and has since taken 62 wickets in 22 tests.

"He was young back then. It's good to see him evolve from then," Warner told AAP. "He's a fantastic bowler, he's got a good record. I faced him in the IPL when he first came in and took (six wickets) against us.

"That's what West Indies cricket needs, they need guys coming in bowling at high speeds . . . Back to what they

were in the '80s and '90s."

Both the new stadium in Perth and the Adelaide Oval are expected to favor fast bowlers.

Holder confirmed that Tagenarine Chanderpaul, son of West Indies legend Shivnarine, would debut for the visitors.

Meanwhile, Warner said he will reassess his future at the end of the test summer in Australia, with the opener likely to be the first of the current team to retire from red-ball cricket.

Warner indicated earlier this month he could retire from test cricket within a year and play on until the 2024 T20 World Cup. The 50-over World Cup is also scheduled for next year in India.

"They're the whispers," Warner said when asked if this might be his last test season in Australia. "I did make some comments but these legs are still fresh. I'm still scoring runs. I'll have to assess again at the end of the season and speak to the family."

## There are no cowards in Australian team: Cummins hits back at Langer

PTI ■ PERTH

Test captain Pat Cummins on Tuesday strongly hit back at former coach Justin Langer, saying there are "no cowards" in the Australian team and added that his unsavoury comments won't distract them ahead of their Test series against West Indies.

Last week, Langer had lashed out at the "cowards" in the national team, saying he "hated"

that some players were going behind his back and leaking details from inside the dressing room.

"There's no cowards in an Australian cricket team, not ever," Cummins told reporters on Tuesday ahead of their opening Test here.

"I'd probably never disclose private conversations. I think it's disappointing sometimes the focus gets drawn to off-field issues but it hasn't really affected our team."

Langer had stepped down as chief coach in February after he was not offered a long-term contract extension by Cricket Australia.

The 52-year-old had faced complaints about his "rigid" coaching style from senior players such as Aaron Finch, Pat Cummins and former Test captain Tim Paine.

However, Langer later retracted from his comments, saying "they're like my little brothers!"

## Focus on defence as Indian men's hockey team faces formidable Australia in 3rd Test

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

The Indian men's hockey team will look to address its defensive woes when it takes on world's number one side Australia in the third Test here on Wednesday, hoping to bounce back from back-to-back defeats in the five-match series here on Wednesday.

A series of defensive lapses saw world number five India go down in the first two Tests despite taking early lead and this will be area which the team will need to improve in the third match. India conceded a last-minute goal to lose the opening Test 4-5. In the second game, they were leading through skipper Harmanpreet Singh's third-minute goal but were blown away in the final quarter to go down 4-7.

This series is crucial for both the teams as it's a part of preparations for the World Cup in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela in Odisha, starting January 13. "We have gone through the



errors we have made in the first two matches. Australia is so quick in converting from the set plays even if they find the slightest of gaps, hence we must structure our defence better," Harmanpreet said.

Both matches were fiercely fought with India and Australia going full throttle in their attack. They have utilized speed to their advantage and have scored a total of 20 goals in just two matches. The two matches also saw many penalty corners being traded between both teams.

"When it is high-scoring matches and both teams are going full steam in their attack,

one too many penalty corners are created," Harmanpreet said. "While we have managed to create penalty corners and also score from it, we have given away quite a few PCs as well which need to be curtailed in the upcoming matches."

The series is the first meeting between the two teams after Australia thrashed India 7-0 in the CWG final in Birmingham.

Talking about the takeaways from the two games, Harmanpreet said, "Good interception and counter attacks continue to be our plus point. We have also been on par with Australia in terms of speed and fitness.

## All-round India A take opening-day honours against Bangladesh A

PTI ■ COX'S BAZAR (BANGLADESH)

The pace-spin combo of Navdeep Saini and Saurabh Kumar impressed the most as India A grabbed the opening-day honours after a commanding performance against Bangladesh A in the first unofficial Test here on Tuesday.

Opting to field after winning the toss, Saini (3/21), Saurabh (4/23) and Mukesh Kumar (2/25) helped India A bundle out their opponents for a paltry 112 in only 45 overs.

In reply, the visitors finished strongly at 120 for no loss to go ahead by eight runs by the time stumps were drawn. Yashasvi Jaiswal and India A skipper Abhimanyu Easwaran were looking good at 61 and 53, respectively, when play ended on the first day.

After Saini and Mukesh picked up five of the top six with just 63 runs on the board, the hosts recovered somewhat to cross three figures owing to Mosaddek Hossain's 63.

Hossain struck six fours and three sixes after Bangladesh were reeling at 26 for five one stage. However, the problem with the home team was that it's batters also struggled against spin, with left-arm spinner Saurabh running through the lower-order



to finish with excellent figures.

The 29-year-old Saurabh's performance assumes significance as he could be drafted into the Indian Test team for the upcoming two-match series in Bangladesh if star all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja is ruled out.

When their time to bat came, India A were served well by the duo of young Jaiswal and Easwaran as the pair not only added 120

runs but also scored them at a good rate. While Jaiswal struck eight fours in his 106-ball knock, Easwaran found the fence six times while facing 111 deliveries at the Sheikh Kamal International Cricket Stadium.

Even as veteran Easwaran led from the front, Jaiswal will resume his quest to bring up a sixth hundred in only his eighth first-class match and consolidate the visitors' position in the opener.

Earlier in the day, Delhi pacer Saini struck the first blow when he bowled Mahmudul Hasan Joy, who was beaten by late swing.

Mukesh had the other opener, Zakir Hasan caught behind before disturbing Mominul Haque's stumps. Saini then had Najmul Hossain Shanto caught at third slip, before skipper Mohammad Mithun went for a wide one to leave Bangladesh A tottering at 26 for five.

Mosaddek sought to revive the innings but there was no support at the other end.

However, the Indian openers quickly managed to get the measure of the Bangladesh bowling attack, as the likes of Khaled Ahmed, Rejaur Rahman Raja and Tajjul Islam failed to either get a break-through or contain.

## Lakshya regains career-best sixth spot, Gayatri-Treesa breaks into top 20 in BWF rankings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen on Tuesday jumped two spots to regain his career-best sixth position in the latest BWF World Rankings.

The 21-year-old from Almora, who had a stellar run this season, has 75,024 points from 23 tournaments.

Kidambi Srikanth and H S Prannoy remained static at world number 11 and 12 respectively. Women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand broke into the top 20 by jumping two places to world number 19. The pair, winner of bronze medal in Birmingham Commonwealth Games, has 46,020 points from 17 tournaments.

French Open and Commonwealth Games champions Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty remained in the seventh spot in men's doubles.