

## OPINION 6

PAKISTAN HITS A NEW  
LOW IN INDIA BASHING

## WORLD 9

PRACHANDA TO FACE VOTE OF  
CONFIDENCE ON JANUARY 10

## MONEY 10

INDIA'S MFG PMI 13-MONTH HIGH IN DEC  
ON RISE IN NEW ORDERS, STRONG DEMAND

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY JANUARY 3, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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INDIA TO FACE  
SRI LANKA IN  
1ST T20I TODAY  
12 SPORT

# NOTE BAN VALID: SC

DeMo notification  
does not suffer  
from any flaws in  
decision-making  
process: Court

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court's five-judge Constitution bench on Monday in a majority 4-1 judgment upheld the Central Government's decision of demonetisation of ₹1,000 and ₹500 notes in 2016.

Observing that the scope of judicial review in matters of economic policy is "narrower", the majority verdict said there has to be great restraint in matters of economic policy and the court will not interfere with any opinion formed by the Government if it is based on the relevant facts and circumstances or on expert advice.

On the issue of directing the RBI to accept the demonetised currency notes still in possession of individuals, the court said the RBI has no independent power to accept the demonetised notes beyond the specified period. The court directed the registry to place the matter before the CJI for placing the matter before the appropriate Bench.

The dissenting judge Justice BV Nagarathna said that the decision was vitiated and unlawful and the RBI did not apply its mind. The lone dissenting judge also said that such decisions should have come through legislation and not through notifications.

The majority decision pronounced by Justice BR Gavai, supported by the Bench headed by Justice S Abdul Nazeer and Justice AS Bopanna and Justice V Ramasubramanian said the decision-making process in demonetisation was not flawed merely because the procedure emanated from the Government.

The SC also noted that there was consultation of six months between Government and RBI and observed that enough time of 52 days was given to exchange the cancelled notes, as compared to the eight days given during the demonetisation of 1978.

"There was consultation between the Centre and the RBI for a period of six months. We hold that there was a reasonable nexus to bring such a measure, and we hold that demonetisation was not hit by doctrine of proportionality," the judgment said, adding, "It has been held that there has to be great deal of restraint before interfering in matters of economic significance... We cannot supplant such views with the judicial one."

Continued on Page 2



In this Nov 12, 2016 file photo, people exchange their old 500 and 1000 rupee notes at special camp organised by a public sector bank in Chennai

PTI

## Talking points

- ◆ There was consultation of six months between the Govt and the RBI, says court
- ◆ 52 days was given to exchange the cancelled notes, as compared to the eight days given during the demonetisation of 1978, observes the apex court
- ◆ The Central Government in consultation with RBI can bring in demonetisation under Section 26(2) of the RBI Act, says judgment
- ◆ RBI has no independent power to bring in demonetisation, says SC
- ◆ The SC rejected the contentions that there was a lack of quorum in the meeting of the RBI's Central Board dated November 8, 2016

## Court not expert to judge eco issues: SC



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

The majority verdict of the Supreme Court on Monday while upholding the Government's decision of demonetisation said the court must defer to legislative judgment in matters related to social and economic policies and must not interfere unless the exercise of Executive power appears to be palpably arbitrary.

"The court does not have necessary competence and expertise to adjudicate upon such economic issues. It is also not possible for the court to assess or evaluate what would be the impact of a particular action and it is best left to the wisdom of the experts."

"In such matters, it will not be possible for the court to assess or evaluate what would be the impact of the impugned action of demonetisation. The court does not possess the expertise to do so," it said.

Mere errors of judgment by the Government seen in retrospect are not subject to judicial review, it added.

On the issue of hardship suffered by citizens during demonetisation, the apex court said if the impugned notification had a nexus with the objectives to be achieved, then, merely because some citizens suffered hardship, it would not be a ground to hold the impugned notification to be bad in law.

"The decision-making

process is also sought to be attacked on the ground that the decision was taken in a hasty manner. We find that the 'hasty' argument would be destructive of the very purpose of demonetisation.

"Such measures undisputedly are required to be taken with utmost confidentiality and speed. If the news of such a measure is leaked out, it is difficult to imagine how disastrous the consequences would be... It can thus be seen that confidentiality and secrecy in such sort of measures is of paramount importance," the Bench said.

Contending that it is not the function of the court to sit in judgment over matters of economic policy, the top court said such issues must necessarily be left to the Government of the day to decide and the courts can certainly not be expected to decide them without even the aid of experts.

"In the present case also, the delegation is to the Central Government, i.e. the highest Executive body of the country. We have a Parliamentary system in which the Government is responsible to the Parliament."

"In case the Executive does not act reasonably while exercising its power of delegated legislation, it is responsible to Parliament who are elected representatives of the citizens for whom there exists a democratic method of bringing to book the elected representatives who act unreasonably in such matters," the Bench said.

## 'Vitiated, unlawful', says judge in dissent

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

In her dissenting verdict, Justice BV Nagarathna said the decision to implement demonetisation in November 2016 was vitiated and unlawful and the RBI could not have applied its mind on the proposal sent by the Central Government in 24 hours.

In her 122-page dissenting judgment against the majority judgment of four judges, she said such serious decisions concerning the citizens should have come through legislation and not through notifications.

"Looking at the records submitted by the RBI, it is noted that it says 'as recommended by the Central Government'. This shows there was no independent application of mind by the RBI. Such a proposal with serious economic ramifications must be placed before the Central Board of the Bank so that there is an application of mind by the experts," she said.

Nagarathna also compared the demonetisation process in many countries like the US, the UK, Venezuela, and Nigeria and said that such decisions must have come through legislature and not through notifications.

Observing that there was no independent application of mind by the RBI, she said the entire exercise was carried out in 24 hours.

Continued on Page 2

## 2 kids killed in terror blast day after 4 shot in Rajouri



Family members mourn near mortal remains of four civilians who were gunned down by terrorists on Sunday evening in Dhangri area of Rajouri, on Monday

PTI

## Terrorists verified identity of residents before killing them

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ DHANGRI (RAJOURI)

The New Year has begun on a bloody note for Jammu & Kashmir. After terrorists gunned down four civilians on Sunday, a powerful IED blast planted by them killed two children on Monday in the thickly-forested Dhangri village, located barely 8 kms from Rajouri district headquarters.

Four-year-old Vihan was declared dead by doctors at the

Government Medical College Hospital, Rajouri. The second child, identified as Samiksha, succumbed to her injuries after she was operated upon.

The IED, according to police, was planted by the terrorists in the same village late Sunday night where they had killed four civilians on day one of the New Year by pumping bullets from a close range.

One of the youngest civilians, identified as Deepak Kumar, was supposed to join the government service as he had been selected for the same.

The terrorists are believed to have selected a Hindu-dominated village to target the civilians in a bid to stoke up communal tension in the

region.

Local villagers claimed the terrorists reportedly verified the identity of the four civilians before killing them on Sunday.

The majority of residents in the village were cooking dinner at the time of the terror attack on Sunday. Half cooked vegetables, open dishes, and plates lay scattered on the floor of the kitchens when security personnel arrived there to track down the footprints of the terrorists.

One of the local residents, identified as Bala, managed to save several lives as he retaliated against the fire, forcing the terrorists to flee the area under the cover of darkness.

Continued on Page 2

## Recession to hit third of world this year, warns IMF

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A third of the global economy will be in recession this year, the IMF chief has said, and warned that 2023 will be "tougher" than last year as the US, EU and China will see their economies slow down.

Kristalina Georgieva, the chief of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) made these grim assertions on Sunday during a CBS news programme "Face the Nation."

It comes at a time when the ongoing conflict in Ukraine shows no signs of abating after more than 10 months, with spiralling inflation, higher interest rates and the surge in coronavirus infections in China fuelled by the Omicron variant.

"We expect one-third of the world economy to be in recession," Georgieva said on the news programme.

The year 2023 will be tougher than last year because the economies of the US, the EU and China will slow down, she said. "Even in countries that are not in recession, it would feel like a recession for hundreds of millions of people," she explained.

In October, the IMF trimmed its growth forecast for 2023. "Global growth is forecast to slow from 6 per cent in 2021 to 3.2 per cent in 2022 and 2.7 per cent in 2023. This is the weakest growth profile since 2001 except for the global financial crisis and the acute phase of the Covid-19," it said.

## CAPSULE

### BOMB NEAR PUNJAB, HARYANA CMs' HOUSES

**Chandigarh:** A bomb disposal squad was rushed to the spot after a live bomb was found a few hundred metres away from the helipad used by Punjab and Haryana Chief Ministers here on Monday, police said. The shell was found in the fields on the Nayagaon-Kansal road, which is about one kilometre away from the helipad and about two kilometres from the official residences of Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and his Haryana counterpart Manohar Lal Khattar, they said.

### UKRAINIAN ROCKETS KILL 63 RUSSIANS

**Kyiv:** Ukrainian forces fired rockets at a facility in the eastern Donetsk region where Russian soldiers were stationed, killing 63 of them, Russia's defense ministry said on Monday, in one of the deadliest attacks on the Kremlin's forces since the war began more than 10 months ago. Ukrainian forces fired six rockets from a HIMARS launch system.

## RT-PCR test must for flyers transiting via China, 5 nations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With no let-up in Covid cases in countries like China, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand and Japan, the Indian Government has now made a negative RT-PCR test mandatory for travellers even transiting through these nations, irrespective of their originating countries.

Earlier, RT-PCR was made mandatory for travellers from these six countries. As per the advisory issued by the Government on December 29, 2022, the RT-PCR test should be conducted 72 hours prior to undertaking the journey from January 1, 2023.

The precautionary measures come amid increasing Covid cases around the world.

Continued on Page 2

## HC rejects Purohit's plea for Malegaon blast discharge

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Monday rejected the plea of accused Lt Colonel Prasad Purohit, seeking his discharge from the 2008 Malegaon blasts case, after observing that he was not discharging his official duty when he was attending meetings of Abhinav Bharat where conspiracy for the blasts were hatched.

In a development that came exactly a month after two other accused withdrew their applications seeking discharge from the 2008 Malegaon blasts case, a HC bench of Justices AS Gadkari and PD Naik rejected Lt Col Purohit's discharge plea, challenging the lower court's order rejecting his discharge application on the ground that the Centre had not taken proper sanction to prosecute a serving Army officer.

"We have observed that he was not on duty. And that he was not assigned to attend meetings where conspiracy to cause bomb blast," the HC bench noted, while rejecting Lt Col Purohit's plea seeking discharge from the case.

Lt Col Purohit had sought to make a case on the twin grounds that he had been attending Abhinav Bharat's meetings after informing his superiors about the same, while the fact is he was not on duty then, and that since he was a serving officer, the prosecution agency had not sought proper sanction from the competent authorities.

In 2018, Sadhvi Pragya, Kulkarni and Purohit had moved the HC seeking discharge in the case after it was rejected by the special NIA court in 2017.

Continued on Page 2

## Accused confess to drinking before dragging woman 12 kms to death

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As Delhiites seethe with rage over the horrific death of a 20-year-old woman allegedly dragged by a car for around 12 km for an hour in the National Capital, the Delhi Police is awaiting the autopsy report to further probe any possibility of premeditated murder and sexual assault. The accused have confessed to be drunk and having borrowed the car two hours before the incident happened, according to the FIR.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has ordered a detailed enquiry into the incident and has entrusted Special Commissioner Shalini Singh with the probe.

Earlier, the autopsy was conducted at Maulana Azad



Combo picture shows five accused arrested by Delhi Police in a case related to the death of a woman, who was reportedly hit by a car and dragged for a few kilometres on Sunday, in the Sultanpuri area of Delhi, on Monday

PTI

Medical College under the supervision of a medical board set up on Monday to ascertain the cause of death even as a city court sent the five accused to a three-day police remand.

Addressing a press conference, Special Commissioner

of Police Sagar Preet Hooda said fresh charges could be added against the five arrested accused on the basis of the post-mortem report.

The AAP has demanded the resignation of Lieutenant Governor VS Saxena over the

law and order situation.

Sources in the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) on Monday claimed that they didn't find any blood stain inside the car or on its seats. "FSL team found traces of blood only on the tyre of the car," sources

added.

The Delhi LG instructed Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora to probe every angle and invoke the strictest possible sections of the IPC against the accused.

Continued on Page 2



# 2022 cleanest air in Capital in five years, best AQI barring 2020: CAQM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi in 2022 saw the lowest recorded daily average PM10 and PM2.5 concentration in five years, barring 2020 with lowest anthropogenic activities due to the pandemic-related restrictions, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) said on Monday. PM10 and PM2.5 concentrations in 2022, with all activities in full throttle in the Delhi-NCR region, were even lower than those recorded in 2021, it said in a statement.

The city logged average PM10 and PM2.5 concentrations of 211 microgram per cubic metre and 98 microgram per cubic metre. The values were the lowest after 2020

which saw average PM 10 and PM2.5 concentrations of 181 microgram per cubic metre and 95 microgram per cubic metre, respectively.

Delhi's PM2.5 levels remained in the severe category for 204 hours in 2022 compared to 628 hours in 2021. The average air quality index (AQI) was recorded below the 200-mark for 1,096 hours in 2022 as against 827 hours in 2021, the Centre's air quality panel said.

In 2022, Delhi also saw the lowest average AQI for the months of January (279), February (225) and December (319) and the second lowest for the months of July (87), October (210) and November (320).

The national capital also did not record any "severe plus" air quality day (AQI above 450) last year, unlike the previous three years. Delhi records an increase in pollution levels in the post-monsoon and winter months (October to



February) due to a cocktail of emissions from stubble burning, firecrackers bursting and local sources of pollution and

unfavourable meteorological conditions -- low temperatures and slow winds.

## Stage III curbs under GRAP to remain in force in Delhi-NCR, says commission

The Commission for Air Quality Management on Monday said curbs under Stage III of the Graded Response Action Plan in Delhi-NCR, including a ban on non-essential construction and demolition work, will remain in force as pollution levels are showing an upward trend. Delhi's 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 357 on Monday, worsening from 259 on Sunday.

**Form No. 3**  
**[See Regulation-15(1)(a)]/16(3)**  
**DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL**  
**CHANDIGARH (DRT2)**  
1st Floor SCO 33-34-35 Sector-17  
A, Chandigarh (Additional Space  
Allotted on 3rd & 4th Floor also)  
**Case No.: OA/891/2022**  
**Summons under sub-section**  
**(4) of section 19 of the Act,**  
**read with sub-rule (2A) of rule 5**  
**of the Debt Recovery Tribunal**  
**(Procedure) Rules, 1993**  
Exh. No.: 12279  
**ICICI BANK LIMITED**  
**VS.**  
**ASHWANI JOLLY**

To,  
(1) ASHWANI JOLLY  
D/W/S/O. RAM KUMAR  
ASHWANI JOLLY SON OF  
SHRI RAM KUMAR JOLLY,  
R/O. FLAT NO. 515-C, CENTRAL  
PARK, 2, SOHANA ROAD,  
GURUGRAM, HARYANA,  
122001. PAN NO. APIPJ1845F  
GURGAON, HARYANA

**Also At**  
ASHWANI JOLLY SON OF  
SHRI RAM KUMAR JOLLY  
R/O. HOUSE NO. 52, CHINNAR  
APARTMENT, SECTOR - 9,  
ROHINI, NEW DELHI - 110005.  
NEW DELHI, DELHI - 110005

**Also At**  
ASHWANI JOLLY SON OF SHRI  
RAM KUMAR JOLLY, C/O. TDI  
INFRASTRUCTURE LIMITED,  
VICE PRESIDENT HAVING ITS  
REGISTERED OFFICE AT 10,  
BHAGAT SINGH MARG,  
CONNAUGHT PLACE,  
NEW DELHI-110001

**Also At**  
21 AND 22 GROUND FLOOR  
VIPUL AGORA, MG ROAD,  
GURUGRAM GURGAON,  
HARYANA

**SUMMONS**  
**WHEREAS, OA/891/2022** was  
listed before Hon'ble Presiding  
Officer/Registrar on **20.08.2022**.  
**WHEREAS** this Hon'ble Tribunal is  
pleased to issue summons/ notice  
on the said Application under  
section 19(4) of the Act, (OA) filed  
against you for recovery of debts of  
**Rs.10959213/-** (application along  
with copies of documents etc.  
annexed).

In accordance with sub-section (4)  
of section 19 of the Act, you, the  
defendants are directed as under:  
(i) to show cause within thirty days  
of the service of summons as to  
why relief prayed for should not be  
granted;

(ii) to disclose particulars of  
properties or assets other than  
properties and assets specified by  
the applicant under serial number  
3A of the original application;

(iii) you are restrained from dealing  
with or disposing of secured assets  
or such other assets and  
properties disclosed under serial  
number 3A of the original  
application, pending hearing and  
disposal of the application for  
attachment of properties;

(iv) you shall not transfer by way of  
sale, lease or otherwise, except in  
the ordinary course of his business  
any of the assets over which  
security interest is created and/ or  
other assets and properties  
specified or disclosed under serial  
number 3A of the original  
application without the prior  
approval of the Tribunal;

(v) you shall be liable to account for  
the sale proceeds realised by sale  
of secured assets or other assets  
and properties in the ordinary  
course of business and deposit  
such sale proceeds in the account  
maintained with the bank or  
financial institutions holding  
security interest over such assets.  
You are also directed to file the  
written statement with a copy  
thereof furnished to the applicant  
and to appear before Registrar on  
**23/02/2023 at 10:30 A.M.** failing  
which the application shall be  
heard and decided in your  
absence.

**Given under my hand and the**  
**seal of this Tribunal on this date**  
**03/09/2022.**

**Signature of the Officer**  
**Authorised to issue summons**

## PM's PS PK Mishra condoles death of IAS batchmate & friend Manjula

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Manjula Subramaniam, a Gujarat cadre IAS officer of 1972 batch, passed away due to health complications at a hospital in Vadodara on January 1. She had the distinction of serving as Gujarat's first woman Chief Secretary under then Chief Minister Narendra Modi.

Condoling her death, PK Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, said the sad demise of his batchmate and close friend was an irreparable personal loss. "Dr Manjula was one of the brightest, most dedicated and highly conscientious officers," he said.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that our client, Mr. Rahul Chawla, the owner of residential flat bearing No. D-502, admeasuring 183.39 Sq. Mtrs. Approx. (1974 Sq. Ft.) super area on the Second Floor, of Block C, along with One Open/Covered Car Parking Space, in the residential scheme known as Parsvnath Green Ville situated in Village Fazilpur Jharsa (Sector-48), Sohna Road, Gurugram, Haryana, has lost or misplaced the Originals of the allotment letter, Flat Buyer agreement and the Letter of Possession, evidencing the purchase of said premises.

Any person finding and/or having custody of the said original documents is requested to return the same to us, on behalf of our client, at our address mentioned hereunder.

Dated this 3rd day of January, 2023.

**Malvi Ranchoddas & Co.**  
404, Raheja Chambers,  
Free Press Journal Marg,  
Nariman Point,  
Mumbai: 400 021



## New Okhla Industrial Development Authority

Main Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida, G.B. Nagar (U.P.)  
Website: [www.noidaauthorityonline.com](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.com)

### E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tender are invited from firms/contractors registered with UPLC Lucknow for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on NOIDA Authority's official website: [www.noidaauthorityonline.com](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.com) & <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/amendments & corrigendum etc.

S. No.	JOB NO	NAME OF WORK	AMOUNT
1	27/DGM(NTC)/SM (NTC)/2022-23	P/L Thermoplastic paint on 45 mtr. Wide road from Sector-82 Flyover to Bijlighar Sector-129 & between (Sector-127 & 128), (Sector-132, & 128), (Sector-132 & 129), Noida.	5565273.76
2	30/DGM(NTC)/SM (NTC)/2022-23	C/o U-Turn on Road Between Sector-79 & 116, Noida.	8662259.36

Which can be uploaded by date 09.01.2023 upto 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/ downloaded on date 10.01.2023 at 11.00 AM.

**Dy. General Manager**  
**Noida Traffic Cell**

**CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA**

## Delhi Government launches 'Mathematics Winter Camp'



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government launched a "Mathematics Winter Camp" for the city schools on Monday to bridge the learning gaps induced by the COVID-19 pandemic among students. The camp will be run till January 14.

The initiative is expected to supplement the classroom content, improve the learning level of the Class-9 students, act as a brief exam-focused revision and enable students to address foundational concepts.

The camp will be an opportunity to work on the challenges faced throughout the academic year and the

Class-9 students of the schools run by the city government will be provided with additional learning support to strengthen the foundational concepts, Delhi government Advisor Reena Gupta said. She said the camp was launched as a small-scale pilot project.

"Our students have immense capability and programmes such as the 'Mathematics Winter camp' will create a conducive environment to overcome the fear or phobia of mathematics, generate enthusiasm among students to work hard for their annual examination and be an opportunity to work on learning gaps faced throughout the academic year," Gupta said.

## NOTE...

From Page 1

Commenting on the procedure adopted by the Centre in the entire exercise, the apex court said all the relevant factors were placed for consideration before the Union Cabinet when it took the decision to demonetise.

"We are of the considered view that the contention that the decision-making process suffers from non-consideration of relevant factors and eschewing of the irrelevant factors, is without substance," the bench said while rejecting the submission of the petitioners.

It also junked the contention that there was lack of quorum in the meeting of the RBI's Central Board dated November 8, 2016.

## HC rejects Purohit's plea...

From Page 1

However, owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, the petitions of Sadvi Pragya and Kulkarni had not come up for hearing until now. However, in Purohit's, his lawyers had already argued his discharge plea and the order was reserved in the case.

On December 1, 2022, Sadhvi Pragya and Kulkarni withdrew their discharge pleas the HC wondered as to how their applications could be considered since the trial had already begun and more than 200 witnesses had been examined.

Purohit's lawyers had also told the court that since the sanctioning authority would be cross-examined by them in the trial court, it would not

## IAS officer S Panda takes charge as DDA Vice-Chairman

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 1997-batch IAS officer of the Himachal Pradesh cadre Subhashish Panda on Monday took charge as the vice chairman of the Delhi Development Authority.

Panda was holding the charge of principal secretary to the chief minister in the hill state before joining the DDA, an official statement said. In a career spanning over two decades, Panda has worked in various sectors like health, food and public distribution, petroleum and natural gas, urban development, tourism, planning, public works and information technology, the DDA said.

"He played a pivotal role as deputy director (administration) in the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)-Delhi during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure all essential facilities are provided to the patients in a time-bound manner," the statement said.

His model of a community-led total sanitation programme was adopted across



Himachal, which ultimately led to the state becoming "the first ODF (open defecation-free) state in the country," the DDA said in its statement.

Panda's experience will be beneficial at a time when important projects are being undertaken by the DDA, such as preparation of the Delhi Master Plan-2041, rejuvenation of river Yamuna plains, in situ slum rehabilitation scheme and PM-UDAY scheme, it said.

Panda holds an MPhil degree in environmental science from Jawaharlal Nehru University. He also has a master's degree in governance and development from the UK's Institute of Development Studies, the statement said. He succeeds IAS officer Manish Kumar Gupta as the DDA's vice chairman.

## RT-PCR...

From Page 1

With new measures in place and fresh guidelines issued for travellers from foreign countries, India is keeping itself prepared to tackle any situation in future.

Last year, India had reported four cases of the BE.7 Covid variant which has swept various parts of the country. According to the Ministry, all the four patients have recovered fully.

The step has been in order to minimise the risk of importation of variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus from high-risk countries. In view of the evolving trajectory of Covid-19 cases in some countries like China, Singapore and many others, the Ministry decided to revise and update the existing guidelines for international arrivals.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that our client, Mr. Rahul Chawla, the owner of residential flat bearing No. D-502, admeasuring 183.39 Sq. Mtrs. Approx. (1974 Sq. Ft.) super area on the Second Floor, of Block C, along with One Open/Covered Car Parking Space, in the residential scheme known as Parsvnath Green Ville situated in Village Fazilpur Jharsa (Sector-48), Sohna Road, Gurugram, Haryana, has lost or misplaced the Originals of the allotment letter, Flat Buyer agreement and the Letter of Possession, evidencing the purchase of said premises.

Any person finding and/or having custody of the said original documents is requested to return the same to us, on behalf of our client, at our address mentioned hereunder.

Dated this 3rd day of January, 2023.

**Malvi Ranchoddas & Co.**  
404, Raheja Chambers,  
Free Press Journal Marg,  
Nariman Point,  
Mumbai: 400 021

### PUBLIC NOTICE

General Notice is hereby given to the General Public that Mrs. Asha W/o. Late Mr. Piru Ram @ Meeru Ram is Owner of Property Bearing No. A-9, Land Measuring 50 sq. yards, Out of Kharsa No. 71/17, Situated in the Revenue Estate of Village Nangloi Jat, Colony Known as Nihal Vihar, Ambica Enclave, Block-A, Phase-2, Nangloi, New Delhi-110041, all persons are hereby informed that Mrs. Asha W/o. Late Mr. Piru Ram @ Meeru Ram has approached Satya Micro Housing Finance Private Ltd. to take a loan, if anybody has any charge/interest/title in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 7 days of the present.

**Mrs. Prasoon Lata, Advocate**  
**SG Associates (Law Firm)**  
Unit No. 7, Basement, Plot No. C 78  
Sector 2, Noida, UP 201301  
E-MAIL: [sgassociatespl@gmail.com](mailto:sgassociatespl@gmail.com)  
Ph: 7011172764, 8132000537

cations which included socio-economic hardships as well," said the dissenting Judge, adding that action of demonetisation by a November 8 gazette notification was unlawful.

"But status quo ante cannot be restored now since it was done in 2016," she said.

"Demonetisation at the behest of the Centre is a far more serious issue affecting citizens than when it is done by the banks. Therefore, in my view, powers of the Centre being vast, the same has to be by plenary legislation.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

To, be known to all that my client, SHRI SANJAY KUMAR S/O SHRI A.K. PRASAD R/O FLAT NO. 38-A, GROUND FLOOR, DDA JANITA FLATS, KATWARIA SARAI PHASE-II, NEW DELHI-110016, is the owner of DDA JANITA FLAT NO.38-A, GROUND FLOOR, SITUATED AT KATWARIA SARAI PHASE-II, NEW DELHI-110016, VIDE DDA FILE NO.F.16191177/HB/M, have applied for Conversion of leasehold from freehold of the aforesaid property in DDA. The original documents i.e. Original DEMAND LETTER and SITE POSSESSION SLIP of the above said property have been lost or misplaced by our client and is not traceable inspite of his best efforts. An F.I.R./NCR to this effect has been lodged in the Police Station, Crime Branch, Delhi (I.R.No.3722/2023) dated 02.01.2023.

Any person(s) claiming any rights, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No.97117334301 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director (Housing) or Director (Housing), Vikas Sadan, New Delhi.

**Naveen Aggarwal (Advocate)**  
Ch.No. M-7, Near 'SBI' Western Wing, Tis Hazari Court, Delhi-54

## Accused confess to drinking before...

From Page 1

Scores of protesters gathered outside the Sultanpuri Police Station on Monday and blocked traffic demanding punishment for those responsible for the woman's death. A video purportedly showing the woman's body without clothes and broken legs has also surfaced on social media.

The accused have been booked on charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder, causing death by negligence and criminal conspiracy, according to police.

"The accused will be taken to the scene of the crime to verify their version of events. The timeline of events will be established on the basis of CCTV footage and digital evidence," Hooda told reporters. "The forensic examination of the vehicle is also being done," he added.

The victim's family is being updated about the investigation and has been assured that the police will gather all evidence to ensure that the accused get the strictest punishment, the officer said.

"The FSL team also visited the crime scene where the body of the girl was found and collected samples from the spot. When the FSL team inspected the car, there was no blood inside or on the car's seats. They only found the

blood on the tyre," said the source.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal termed it the "rarest of rare crime" and demanded the strictest punishment for those behind the incident, while L-G VK Saxena said his head hung in shame over the "inhuman" crime. Later, in the day, Kejriwal said he spoke to Saxena about the incident.

"Spoke to Hon'ble LG on Kanjhawala incident. Requested him to take exemplary action against culprits, strictest sections of IPC should be slapped against them. No leniency should be shown even if they have high political connections. He assured that he will take strong action," he tweeted.

The incident led to a political slugfest between the AAP and the BJP. The AAP attacked the BJP alleging that one of the accused in the Sultanpuri car accident case — Manoj Mittal — is linked to it and also attacked the Delhi Lieutenant Governor for being "negligent" in the matter.

AAP MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj shared a video with media claiming that a hoarding outside the Sultanpuri Police Station, where the accused is currently lodged, bears the picture of Mittal. On the other hand, several other AAP leaders and workers gath-

ered outside Saxena's residence at Civil Lines and demanded his resignation.

The Delhi BJP's media cell head Harish Khurana, in his turn, said the police have already arrested the accused and the guilty should be given the strictest punishment regardless of the party they belong to.

Protesting at the protest in outer Delhi's Sultanpuri, an agitator said, "At the time of the incident, people were wearing five layers of clothes to beat the cold. Then what's the likelihood of her being found naked?"

According to police, the victim's leg got entangled in one of the wheels of the car and she was dragged for several kilometres.

"A case under IPC sections 279 (rash driving) and 304-A (causing death by negligence) has been registered against Deepak Khanna (26), Amit Khanna (25), Krishan (27), Mithun (26) and Manoj Mittal," he said.

The FIR said that a PCR call was received at about 3:24 am on January 1 at PS Kanjhawala (Rohini District). The caller claimed "Ek Baleno gaadi grey colour jo Qutubgarh ki side jaa rahi hai or usmei ek dead body bandhi hue hai jo niche latki hue hai (A grey Baleno car is travelling towards

Qutubgarh and there is dead body hanging off the lower part of the car)".

The caller also told the police about the registration number of the vehicle. The police alerted staff deployed at pickets and efforts were started to trace the vehicle.

Deepak Dahiya, who claims to be an eyewitness to the incident, said that when he spotted the car and the woman under it, he immediately called the police and chased it for several kilometres. "The body was visibly stuck under the car which made three rounds on the Kanjhawala Road taking U-turns after every few kilometres. Police just kept calling me and asking where I saw the body. I made a PCR call at 3:18 am, however, the first PCR call about the incident was made from Begumpur an hour before," Deepak said.

Another person, who works as a delivery boy for a food delivery aggregator, said the car took a U-turn after the driver saw police barricades on Kanjhawala Road. "I was completing an order when at Maharaja Agrasen Chowk a car running at high speed almost knocked me down. When the car took a U-turn upon noticing the barricades I saw the head of a girl at the rear end of the vehicle," he said.



# Kejriwal condemns death of woman, demands justice

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday condemned the killing of a 20-year-old woman who was hit by a car and dragged for nearly 10-12 kilometres in the Capital's Sultanpuri area.

The Chief Minister also spoke to Delhi Lt-Governor VK Saxena about the incident and demanded justice for the woman. "Spoke to Hon'ble LG on Kanjhawala incident. Requested him to take exemplary action against culprits, strictest Sections of IPC (Indian Penal Code) should be slapped against them. No leniency should be showed even if they have high political connections. He assured that he will take strong action," Kejriwal tweeted.

Earlier, Kejriwal called the incident of a woman's body being dragged for 10-12 kilometres by a car after hit her scooter a "rarest of rare" crime and demanded that the accused be given the strictest punishment.

"It is a rarest of rare crime. I don't know where society is heading. I have learnt that the postmortem is underway," he told reporters at a ceremony to flag off 50 electric buses. Earlier in the day, taking to Twitter, Kejriwal had demanded justice for the 20-year-old woman.

Calling it an "extremely shameful" incident, he said, "I appeal that the accused, despite whatever influence they might hold, be given strictest punishment."

"What happened to our sister in Kanjhawala is very shameful. I hope that the culprits will be punished severely," Kejriwal, who is also the national convenor of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), said in a tweet in Hindi.

Describing it as an "extremely shameful" incident, he said, "This comes under the category of rarest of rare crimes. Such people should be given capital punishment."

This can happen to anyone's sister, daughter or daughter-in-law. The accused in this case may be associated with highly-placed politicians, but all of us together should make an effort to ensure that they get the harshest punishment." Five men have been arrested in



AAP activists protest outside the Delhi L-G's residence demanding VK Saxena's resignation and swift justice for the woman who was killed after her scooter was hit by a car, in New Delhi on Monday

connection with the woman's death. The victim's two-wheeler was hit by a car in which they were travelling on Sunday, police said.

The Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) has issued a notice to the city police in connection with the incident. Delhi Commission for Women chief, Swati Maliwal, also took cognisance of the matter and issued notice to the Delhi Police.

"It is being told that some boys in an inebriated state hit her scooter with a car and dragged her for several kilometres. This matter is very dangerous, I am issuing appearance summons to Delhi Police. The whole truth should come out," she tweeted.

A new high-quality CCTV footage of the Kanjhawala incident has confirmed a witness' account, who claimed the car which hit the 20-year-old woman's scooter, dragged her body under it for nearly one and a half hours on Sunday.

The new footage shows the Maruti Baleno car making a U-turn on a road in Kanjhawala in West Delhi, where the eyewitness, Deepak Dahiya, runs a confectionary shop. Dahiya had said he saw

the car take a U-turn after hitting the scooter. The footage, recorded at 3.34 am, shows the car returning to the spot where the body was found.

The body can be clearly seen under the car. The witness said the car driver dragged the body of the girl, which got entangled in the undercarriage, for 18 to 20 kms, and drove that way for about one-and-a-half hour.

## Woman was sole breadwinner, supporting mom, 6 siblings

**New Delhi:** The 20-year-old woman who was dragged under a car for kilometres was the sole bread-earner of her family and supported an ailing mother and six siblings.

After her father died last year, she supported her family and paid for her mother's dialysis by working part-time at an event management company, which also meant that she had to work late nights.

One of her sisters is married. She was the only support to her two other sisters and two brothers who lived with her. Like every day, on Sunday too,



## Slugfest over political affiliation of one accused

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A political slugfest erupted on Monday over the death of a woman, whose body was dragged for nearly 12 kilometres under a car after it hit her scooter in outer Delhi, with the AAP and the Congress attacking the BJP over the political affiliation of one of the five arrested accused.

AAP leader staged a protest outside the residence of Lieutenant General VK Saxena and demanded his resignation over the incident of a woman's body being dragged for four

## L-G directs top cop to find if there was any lapse by police

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena on Monday directed the Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora to "strictly ensure" if there were any "lapses" on part of the police in the gruesome Kanjhawala incident in which a woman was killed after her scooter was hit by a car and she was dragged for 10-12 kilometres in outer part of the city. He instructed the city police chief to ensure that the accused were treated as per the law irrespective of their socio-economic position or political affiliation, LG office sources said.

Earlier, L-G has condemned an incident saying his head hung in shame over the "inhuman" crime. He also tweeted that all aspects of the case were being looked into.

According to the sources in Raj Niwas, the L-G took the stock of the developments in the unfortunate Kanjhawala incident in a meeting with the Police Commissioner at 11.00 in the morning. During the meeting, Saxena reiterated his direction to the Arora that

every angle and aspect of the case is looked into and the strictest possible sections/provisions of IPC be invoked against the accused, who are already in custody.

"The LG, who is keeping a tab on the situation on a 'Real Time Basis', has also asked the authorities to keep him abreast of the autopsy report and its corroboration with the findings of the Police investigation regarding the incident," they said.

Apart from this, the LG has instructed the Police Commissioner to strictly ensure that the accused are treated as per law, irrespective of their socio-economic standing or political affiliations, they said.

Taking the matter into cognizance, the L-G also asked Arora to ascertain whether there was any lapse on part of the Police and also directed that responsibility be fixed for any lapse or laxity, sources underlined.

The L-G has asked the officers in the morning to ascertain if anyone in the victim's family could be provided with a Government Employment as job on com-

passionate ground, they stated. "The LG also requested to the political parties to not politicize this tragic incident and refrain from insensitive and opportunistic scavenging," sources added.

Earlier in the morning, Lt Governor said he was shocked at the "monstrous insensitivity of the perpetrators." "My head hangs in shame over the inhuman crime in Kanjhawala-Sultanpuri today morning, and I am shocked at the monstrous insensitivity of the perpetrators."

Have been monitoring with the Commissioner of Police, Delhi and the accused have been apprehended. All aspects are being thoroughly looked into," Saxena tweeted.

The Lt Governor also mentioned in his tweet that every possible support for the family of the woman will be ensured. The LG further cautioned against opportunistic scavenging and urged people to work towards a more sensitive society. "Even as every possible support/help and beyond to the family of the victim will be ensured, I appeal to all to not resort to opportunistic scavenging," he said.

## Kejriwal flags off 50 e-buses at Raj Ghat

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday flagged off 50 electric buses at Raj Ghat Depot, saying 80 per cent of Delhi's bus fleet will run on electric by 2025.

He asserted that acquisition of e-buses will go a long way in reducing pollution in the national capital. Sharing a roadmap for procurement of electric buses, he said the government will be buying 1,500 such buses in 2023 and by 2025, 6,380 electric buses will be procured. Speaking on the occasion, Delhi CM said that after the addition of these 50 new e-buses, the fleet is now has a total of 300 e-buses.

Currently, around 7, 379 e-buses is plying on the roads of the national capital, which is the highest ever number in the state. "We are taking over 100 DMRC electric buses and will ply them on metro's feeder routes ourselves from now on.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot during the flagging off ceremony of 50 e-buses under Delhi Transport Corporation, in New Delhi on Monday,

First phase of induction completed with these 300 electric buses, now under phase two,

1500 more e-buses will be inducted by December 2023," he said. "Delhi will have a total

of 10,480 buses by 2025, of which 8,280 will be electric buses, which is 80 percent of

the total bus fleet. 56 bus depots are being electrified, three have been done, 17 depots will be electrified by June 2023 and 36 depots by December 2023," Kejriwal said. On this occasion, Delhi's Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said this is a great start to the year 2023.

With the induction of 50 new Low floor Electric buses today, Delhi has now completed the 1st phase of on boarding a total of 300 zero pollution Electric buses. Informing about the features of the new e-buses, a senior transport department official said that these buses are accessible- Fully differently abled- AC Low Floor Buses, affordable- Free ticket for women, passes, sustainable- CNG/Electric- Zero smoke, zero noise- fully BS VI Compliant, Smart- All buses GPS Enabled- Digital ticketing, Contactless ticketing, and Safe-features like CCTV, Panic Buttons and Hooters.

## Traffic snarls as both carriageways of Ashram flyover shut for last leg of work

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Both carriageways of the Ashram flyover on Delhi's Ring Road have been closed for the last leg of construction to link it with an extension around 50m away triggered snarls with bumper-to-bumper traffic.

According to a senior police official, some commuters took to Twitter to share photos of jams, while many travelling on the route, during the peak hours, claimed they spent around half an hour to cross the section. There is heavy traffic in the area, the officials said and added that several people called police to report jams.

A Public Works Department (PWD) official said the re-opened carriageway was closed at 12:30am. "Now



none of the carriageways are going to reopen for traffic because the digging work has started at the point where the two carriageways of the flyover end [near DTL colony]. The digging work is required to construct a new road to connect the Ashram flyover and the new DND flyover."

The official said the work

of connecting the two flyovers is likely to be completed in 45 days. The flyover is likely to remain shut for 45 days, the official added. The traffic police had earlier advised people to park only at designated places and plan their journeys, especially if they were going to hospitals, bus terminals, railway stations and airports, owing to the flyover's closure.

Traffic coming from the Outer Ring Road, both sides of the carriageways passing through the Ashram Chowk, DND flyover, Mathura road and Noida bore the brunt. "From January 1, both the carriageways of the Ashram flyover will be closed due to the construction of a connecting road between the Ashram flyover and new DND flyover," the traffic police had said in a statement.

## Traffic advisory issued as Bharat Jodo Yatra in Delhi to resume today

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi Police on Monday issued a traffic advisory following the Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra which will start from the central part of the national capital and enter Uttar Pradesh crossing the Loni border.

According to the advisory, the Congress Yatra will resume around 10 am on Tuesday from Marghat Wale Baba, Hanuman Mandir, near Red Fort and reach Loni Border around 12 pm.

The Yatra will travel via the Iron Bridge-Shastri Park Metro Station, Old GT Road, Furniture Market, Ansari Road, Maujpur, Babarpur, Wazirabad Road, and Gokulpuri Police Station to reach the Loni roundabout. A large number of pedestrians

and vehicles are expected to join the Yatra at various points along the route, police said.

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Marg, Netaji Subhash Marg, Ring Road/MGM Marg, the road from Hanuman Mandir to Old Iron Bridge, Geeta Colony/Pushta Road, Ansari Road, GT Road, Jafrabad main road, Wazirabad Road, and Loni Road will be affected due to the Yatra, it said.

Traffic is expected to remain heavy from Chhata Rail Chowk, Red Fort, SPM Marg, Old Iron Bridge, Pushta Road, Ansari Road, on GT Road from Yudhishtir Setu to Seelampur T-Point, from Shahdra Flyover to Loni Gol Chakkar on Wazirabad Road and Loni Road, it stated. SR

## Police deploy displaced vendors to manage traffic at Ashram

**NEW DELHI:** A group of around 25 people including those selling tea and paan beneath the Ashram flyover, shut since Sunday for the last leg of construction work to link it with DND Flyway, was deployed to manage vehicular

traffic as men and machines got to work. Vehicles were stuck at traffic signals near the Ashram flyover for interminable minutes as dust from construction work blotted out the sun. The team that helped the traffic police manage the

vehicular flow had a hard time during office hours. "Wait time at traffic signals ranged from three to five minutes at noon. The queues were longer in the morning as office goers struggled to cross the around 1.2-kilometre stretch," said Jitendar

Nagar, who stood upright wearing a neon jacket near the Ashram metro station. "I have been shouting at the top of my lungs but some people won't listen. A few would even block the left turn elongating the queue of vehicles," said the 25-

year-old from Greater Noida as he signalled a motorcyclist to stop behind the zebra crossing. Around 100 metres away, towards the DND Flyway, 33-year-old Arun Kumar Roy, with a handkerchief covering his face, directed pedestrians

towards a subway. Roy owned a tea stall beneath the flyover. With the construction work displacing him and other vendors, they have been absorbed into the team managing vehicular flow at traffic signals and U-turns. SR

## Tipplers consumed ₹560 cr liquor in December 2022 alone

SAURAV GUPTA ■ NEW DELHI

Tipplers consumed as many as 20,30,664 bottles of alcoholic beverage worth Rs 45.21 crore on a single day on New Year's eve on Saturday.

Official sources said liquor worth Rs 559.68 crore was sold in the national capital in December 2022 alone. Giving the details of the liquor sold from December 24 to 31 on day to day basis, they said that on



December 24, the booze lovers consumed 1,469,357 bottles

worth Rs 28.79 crore. "On December 25, Delhiites bought

14,66,459 bottles worth Rs 27.06 crore and 13,25,540 bottles worth Rs 23.78 crore on December 26," they stated.

"On December 27, 10,93,132 bottles worth Rs 19.29 were sold and the people of Delhi consumed a total of 13,45,298 bottles costing Rs 24.33 crore on December 28. On December 29, a total of 12,69,050 bottles were sold in the city valued at Rs 19.13 crore," the sources said. The

booze lovers consumed a total of 14,66,353 liquor bottles on December 30, while on December 31, Delhi sold 20,30,664 bottles worth Rs 45.21 crore, they said.

While Delhi also saw the highest liquor average sale per day at 1,377,949 bottles in December 2022 if compared to the figures for the past four years. "In December 2019, the liquor average sale per day stood at 12,55,820 bottles,

which rose to 12,95,368 bottles in 2020. On the other hand, Delhi sold 12,52,712 bottles per day in December 2021, and liquor average sale per day stood at 1,377,949 bottles during the month," they claimed.

However, the revenue earned after the sale of liquor was the highest in the month of September 2022 at Rs 789.34 crore and the lowest revenue was in October 2022 at Rs 534.46 crore.



# SC steered clear of if DeMo objectives were met at all: Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Maintaining that the Supreme Court verdict steered clear of whether the objectives of the demonetisation exercise were achieved at all, the Congress and the Left parties on Monday revived their attack on the Centre over its imposition and sought an apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi "for single handedly destroying the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises and the informal sector".

While the Congress said the Supreme Court verdict is "deeply disappointing" as the top court has failed to hold the BJP-led Union government accountable for its "monumental recklessness", the Left parties noted that the dissenting opinion of one of the judges of the Supreme Court has maintained that the RBI must recommend to the government to initiate demonetization and demanded a white paper on the exercise.

Former finance minister P Chidambaram said the majority verdict by the Supreme Court has steered clear of the question whether the objectives of the demonetisation exercise were achieved at all.

The Congress, which has been raising the issue of demonetization during its ongoing Bharat jodo Yatra stated the dissenting verdict is a "slap on the wrist" of the government as it has pointed out the "illegality and irregularities" in the decision.

"Once the Hon'ble



Supreme Court has declared the law, we are obliged to accept it. However, it is necessary to point out that the majority has not upheld the wisdom of the decision; nor has the majority concluded that the stated objectives were achieved.

In fact, the majority has steered clear of the question whether the objectives were achieved at all. We are happy that the minority judgement has pointed out the illegality and the irregularities in the demonetisation. It may be only a slap on the wrist of the government, but a welcome slap on the

wrist," he said in a series of tweets. The dissenting judgement will rank among the famous dissents recorded in the history of the Supreme Court, Chidambaram remarked.

The Congress which has been regularly attacking the Modi government on the economy policy particularly the fall of economy due to demonetization argued it was "misleading and wrong" to say the Supreme Court has upheld demonetisation, rather the majority court verdict deals with the limited issue of the process of decision-making not with its outcomes,

"The Supreme Court verdict is on the process of demonetisation and not on its outcomes. If anybody has to apologise, it has to be the Prime Minister, because the 'Tughlaki' decision taken by him on November 8, 2016 destroyed lakhs of MSMEs, the informal sector, and livelihood of lakhs of people, and we continue to face the negative impact it had on our economy," said Congress chief spokesman Jai Ram Ramesh at the AICC press briefing on the subject.

## Demonetisation was effective counter to terror funding: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Affirming that demonetisation was an "effective counter to terror funding", and the use of black money and fake currency in the country even as it also "facilitated" the high growth of digital economy, the BJP on Monday welcomed the Supreme Court verdict on the demonetisation process as "historic".

The ruling party questioned the Congress for selecting the "minority ruling" and not commenting on the "majority judgment" that ruled demonetization as fair and valid decision of the government. The party also wondered whether Congress leader Rahul Gandhi would apologise for launching a caustic campaign against the demonetisation and venomously targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing a press conference here after the apex court verdict, former law minister and senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad found it curious that the Congress was reading the minority ruling and not the majority judgment and condemned former Finance Minister P Chidambaram for calling it a "slap on the wrist of government".

Chidambaram's "uncharitable comment is condemnable", he said. Prasad said even the dissenting judge has also said the policy was "well-intentioned". The Supreme Court in a 4:1 majority verdict upheld the government's 2016 decision to demonetise Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 denomination notes, saying the decision-making process was not flawed.

Prasad asserted that the demonetisation done in 2016 proved to be the "biggest blow" to terrorism by curbing terror funding. It boosted income tax and cleansed the economy, he claimed. "It is a historic decision and is in the national interest. The Supreme Court has held a decision taken in the national interest valid. Will Rahul Gandhi now say sorry for his campaign against demonetisation? He spoke against it even abroad," he said at a press conference.

India has become a global leader in digital payment which was boosted after demonetisation, he told reporters, noting that the country notched up over 730 crore digital transactions worth over Rs 12 lakh crore in October this year alone. Prasad said it is a "very important" decision and added the whole exercise was under-

taken for valid causes, including removing fake currency and curbing terror funding and money laundering. The BJP leader said the court has noted that the government has a right to take a policy decision and rejected the argument that appropriate consultation with the Reserve Bank of India was not done.

In sum and substance, the apex court looked at the entire decision-making exercise and found the process fair and reasonable, he said, hitting out at the opposition party for raising a "big storm" against the demonetisation. Rahul understands an issue only after a Supreme Court verdict, Prasad said, in a swipe at the former Congress president.

The former Union minister said Rahul "abused" Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his campaign during the 2019 Lok Sabha polls against the alleged corruption in the Rafale deal and stopped after the apex court adjudicated on the matter and rejected the demand for a probe. Prasad said the demonetisation resulted in reducing the share of the informal economy from 52 per cent to 20 per cent, he said, alleging that the Congress promoted and protected informal elements of the economy.

## During notebandi, we are left alone to suffer: House help

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The father with money in the bank but none to pay vendors for his daughter's wedding, the retailer scrounging for funds to keep business going, the house help who didn't get a salary for two months.

On Monday, these and many other similar tales of hardship became alive again, when the Supreme Court upheld the Government's November 8, 2016 decision to demonetise Rs 1000 and Rs 500 denomination notes.

The decision, touted by the government to be a 'surgical attack' on black money, missed its mark by a great margin and became the bane of the daily-wage labourers and poor Indians, a section which relies almost exclusively on cash.

To 38-year-old house help Parvesh, even the mere mention of the word 'notebandi' sends a shiver down her spine. The single mother of a 20-year-old son said she was forced to work without a salary for almost two months and went empty stomach for days at a stretch. "It was the

worst time of my life. Worse than even Covid-19, because during the Covid there was at least some help from the government and society at large. But during demonetisation, we are left alone to suffer," said Parvesh.

"I mean how can I expect my employer to help me when he himself was struggling with money?" she said, having little to no idea about Monday's Supreme Court verdict.

The SC in its verdict said the decision-making process behind the 2016 demonetisation was "not flawed." In a five-judge bench, four judges voted in favour of upholding the note-ban decision-making whereas one judge dissented.

The pain was not limited to the poor, and the middle class too struggled to understand the withdrawal rules that cascaded with everyday regularity in the wake of demonetisation.

Nor was it any more injured to the agony of standing in the unending queues before the ATMs, which too often ran out of cash, and too early. Many small-scale businesses are still reeling from demonetisation.

## IN SHORT

### NDC COURSE BEGINS WITH TRIBUTE AT NWM

New Delhi: The 63rd National Defence College (NDC) Course commenced on Monday with Lieutenant General SS Dahiya, Commandant NDC and the course participants laying wreaths at the National War Memorial here, as a mark of respect to the fallen soldiers. The Course is focused on National Security and Strategy, along with strands of governance, technology, history, and economics.

### NCC CAMP 2023 BEGINS AT DELHI

New Delhi: The NCC Republic Day (RD) Camp 2023 commenced at Cariappa Parade Ground, Delhi Cantonment on Monday. A total of 2,155 cadets, including 710 girls, drawn from all 28 states and eight Union Territories, are participating in the nearly month-long camp, which will culminate with Prime Minister's rally on 28th January.

### SC STAYS ALLAHABAD HC ORDER ON ANSARI

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday ordered ad-interim stay on Allahabad High Court verdict convicting former Uttar Pradesh MLA Mukhtar Ansari of threatening a jailer with a pistol in hand and sentencing him to seven years in jail.

### SC TO HEAR UP GOVT PETITION ON JAN 4

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday agreed to hear on January 4 the Uttar Pradesh government's appeal challenging an Allahabad High Court order quashing its draft notification on urban local body elections and directing it to hold the polls without reservation for other backward classes.

### SC REJECTS BENGAL MINISTER'S PLEA

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a plea by West Bengal minister Birbaha Hansda challenging the Calcutta High Court order which banned registration of fresh FIRs against BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari without prior permission of the court.

### CRIMINAL CASE STAYED AGAINST KHURSHID

New Delhi: The Supreme Court stayed on Monday the criminal proceedings against senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid for allegedly trespassing into the office of the Delhi Public School Society in the national capital.

### SC SEEKS STATUS OF CONVERSION CASES

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday sought to know the status of cases pending before High Courts challenging controversial state laws regulating religious conversion due to interfaith marriages, and said if all cases are similar it may transfer them all to itself.

## LS Prawas program: Shah to visit 11 States to strengthen voter base

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, which is only 16 months away, in mind, senior BJP leader and Home Minister Amit Shah will visit 11 states this month as part of his party's 'Lok Sabha Prawas' programme, aimed at consolidating the voter base of the party across all the constituencies, particularly the weaker ones.

Shah is scheduled to be in Tripura on January 5 and Manipur and Nagaland on January 6. He will be travelling to Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand on January 7 and Andhra Pradesh on January 8. Thereafter, according to sources, the Home Minister will be in Uttar Pradesh on January 16, in West Bengal on January 17 and at Hubli in Karnataka on January 28.

He will be in the northern states of Haryana and Punjab on January 29, they said. The party had earlier identified 160 seats, most of which it had lost in 2019, where it believes it can be in a winning position by strengthening its organisation and social base. The BJP has been regularly holding strategy sessions of senior leaders from the states to strengthening the 'booth management' across the country.

After the assembly poll results in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh on December 8 with BJP winning a record 156 seats in Gujarat, BJP president J P Nadda had asked party's state leaders to learn from the strategy crafted by Gujarat



BJP chief C R Patil and "implement his model" to maximize results in the coming assembly polls as also in the Lok Sabha elections.

Recently, Shah and Nadda held a crucial meeting at the party office with the Union Ministers who are cluster-in-charge, in view of the upcoming 2024 general elections and discussed their ground zero report. The Union ministers have been bestowed the responsibility to stay in 160 seats where BJP is weak but are 'winnable'.

Each of the Union Ministers have been given the responsibility of two constituencies while some were given three constituencies the last time, in which they were asked to stay in a seat for three days each, and reach out to the locals.

On May 25, Shah and Nadda had launched the 'Lok Sabha Pravas' campaign with an objective to strengthen the party at the booth level in Lok Sabha seats across the country.

## When we Indians fight each other, enemies can take advantage: Rahul

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said that China is adopting the same principle with India as Russia is with Ukraine as it is threatening to alter India's boundaries. He also claimed that the India-China border conflict has a link with a weak economy, a confused nation without any vision, hatred, anger and the Chinese sitting in Indian territory.

"Essentially, what the Russians have done in Ukraine is that they have said we do not want Ukraine to have a strong relationship with the West and they have basically told the Ukrainians that if you will have a strong relationship with the West, we will alter your geography.

That is the exact same principle that can be applied to India. What the Chinese are saying to us is that be careful with what you are doing, because we will alter your



geography. We will enter Ladakh, we will enter Arunachal (Pradesh), and what I can see is them building a platform for that type of an approach," Rahul said in conversation with actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan in a YouTube talk show.

This is the second edition of the Congress's YouTube China specific video with the first episode being an interaction with the army veterans. Haasan had joined the Bharat Jodo yatra when it entered in the national Capital on December 24.

"Hey Ram', Khadi, Films and how only India, not the West, can take on China! My

conversation with Kamal Haasan on what shapes Indian politics and culture," Rahul said on Twitter while sharing the video. He said security has become a holistic thing in the 21st century as one has to have a global view of it, adding, "I think our government has completely miscalculated it."

He also said the definition of conflict has changed as earlier, one fought on the border while now, one has to fight everywhere.

"The point is not going to war, the point is going to a position where you cannot be attacked. And there is a link between a weak economy, a confused nation without vision, hatred and anger and the Chinese sitting in our territory," said Rahul, who has been regularly attacking the government over its dealing with China.

"Because they know we are dealing with internal matters, internal confusion and internal lack of harmony and so they can go in and do whatever

they want.

This is one end of the problem. So as an Indian person, I do not want to be somebody who is war mongering, but I would like our country to be aware that there are real problems at the border and those problems are connected to what is going on inside our country.

When Indians fight Indians, when the economy does not work, when there is joblessness, our external opponent can take advantage of this situation," Rahul said.

He said one of the things that the leaders of various political parties are constantly asking the government is to talk about it, if not to the media, then at least to the Opposition, as they understand these things. "We might be able to help you, advise you, bounce ideas. But they just do not listen. It is like the approach that we understand everything," he said. Rahul also said that the West cannot compete with China.

## PM to open 108th Indian Science Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will virtually inaugurate on Tuesday the five-day 108th Indian Science Congress being held at Nagpur with a focus on sustainable development with inclusive involvement of all sections of society including women.

The focal theme of this year's Science Congress has been very thoughtfully finalized as "Science & Technology for Sustainable Development with Women Empowerment" Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology &



Earth Sciences, Dr. Jitendra Singh told the media here. He said, the Conference will deliberate on holistic growth, reviewed economies and sustainable goals, while at the same time address the possible obstacles to the growth of women in science & technology. A unique hallmark of the

event would be "Children Science Congress" being organized to provide opportunity to children to use their scientific temperament and knowledge and to realize their creativity through scientific experiment while the mega expo "Pride of India" will display the strengths and achievements of Government, Corporate, PSUs, Academic and R&D Institutes, Innovators & Entrepreneurs from all across the country.

Prominent developments, major achievements and the significant contributions largely of Indian Science and Technology to the society will be showcased in the exhibition. Dr Singh also pointed out

ta "Tribal Science Congress" has been planned to showcase the empowerment of tribal women and also provide a platform for display of indigenous accent knowledge system and practice.

The Plenary Sessions, the Minister informed, will feature Nobel Laureates, leading Indian and foreign researchers, experts and technocrats from a wide variety of fields, including space, defense, IT and medical research while the technical sessions will showcase path-breaking and applied research in various sectors such as agriculture and forestry sciences, animal, veterinary and fishery sciences among many others.

## Hike tax on tobacco items to ensure better health for citizens: Economists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of Budget 2023-24, economists have called for a substantial hike in tax on all tobacco items and stronger laws as it will not only bring the best out of the human capital by ensuring better health of the citizens but also help achieve Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of a five trillion dollar economy by 2025.

Noting that healthcare burden due to tobacco in India is around 1.04% of the GDP, pushing many into poverty,



Prof Arvind Mohan, Professor and Head, Department of Economics, University of Lucknow said that increasing tax on these lethal items would

close the gap. Prof Mohan explained, "presently, health is a big challenge for human development as at least 70 per cent of the health expenditure

is being met by the public themselves while just 25-30% by the Government and global institutions.

"But if we manage to cut down this expenditure by imposing tax on tobacco products, we will be not only able to capitalize our human resources but GDP as well which will boost in multiple percentages. This will help achieve our dream of a USD 5 trillion economy too," he said.

Prof Mohan said, "In nearly most of the diseases, tobacco compromises the health system significantly and some

of the studies also suggest that if tobacco could be banned in India then this will contribute over 1 per cent annually to the GDP".

At a webinar organized by Tobacco Free India, a citizens group, Dr Pritam Datta, a fellow at National Institute of Public Finance and Policy (NIPFP), Delhi and Rijo M John Economist and public health policy analyst underlined that while major argument for introducing GST in 2017 was that it would contribute 2% cent of the GDP growth but, in actual this has

not happened. Almost nil tax increase on the sin products like tobacco is one of the major reasons, they opined.

The economists strongly suggested that increasing inflation, which has put the country's budget under pressure and urgent need of fresh cash can be met by levying taxes on demerit products like tobacco.

From a health point of view, their push for increased tobacco taxation was based on the fact that it will bring down health expenditure across the country, said Dr Datta while John too opined that taxation

on tobacco can be a very effective tool to generate revenue. John said that India is among 182 countries which signed the WHO framework convention on tobacco control which recommends at least 75% tax on retail price of all tobacco products.

However, in India, tax on cigarettes is 52.7%, bidis 22% and chewing tobacco 63.8%, he added. According to a World Bank report, increasing excise tax rates on tobacco will reduce its affordability and "as evidence shows, lower its consumption".



# India very deeply concerned by Ukraine-Russia conflict: EAM

PIONEER NEWS  
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■  
NEW DELHI/VIENNA

India has expressed "very deep concern" over the ongoing Ukraine conflict and urged Russia and Ukraine to resolve their differences by diplomacy and dialogue, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Monday in Vienna.

Underlining this message, he said, "My Prime Minister has been in contact with leaders of both nations, pressing our point of view in that regard. We're also anxious about effects of conflict on accessibility and affordability

of fuel, food and fertilizers. This is a growing concern for global south." The minister enunciated these views after holding bilateral meeting with his Austrian counterpart Alexander Schallenberg.

This was the first foreign minister-level visit from India to Austria in the last 27 years and takes place against the backdrop of 75 years of diplomatic relations in 2023. Schallenberg visited India in March 2022, and the two ministers have met thrice this year on the margins of international gatherings (Munich, Bratislava and New York).

Giving details of his talks, Jaishankar said India and

Austria also reviewed the security situation in the world in the backdrop of terrorism.

In an apparent reference to Pakistan, Jaishankar said, "We spoke on the threats to international peace and security that are posed by terrorism, including its cross-border practices, violent extremism, radicalization and fundamentalism. Their effects cannot be contained within a region.

"...especially so when they are deeply connected to narcotics and illegal weapons trade, and other forms of international crime. Since the epicentre is located so close to India, naturally our experiences and insights are useful

to others."

On economic relations, the minister noted at present India and Austria have a trade turnover of approximately \$2.5 billion. Over 150 Austrian companies are present in India. "We'd like those numbers to grow substantially. I'm glad to note that India's presence in Austrian economy has grown substantially," he said.

The two countries have currently trade turnover of approximately USD 2.5 billion. More than 150 Australian companies are present in India. "We would like those numbers also to grow," the minister said.

Flagging issues of national security during his address to the Indian diaspora on late Sunday in Vienna, Jaishankar said there are profound changes.

"Much of it is centred around the intense challenges we face on our northern border with China. We continue to have the problem of cross-border terrorism with Pakistan," he said.

This remark came in the backdrop of Indian and Chinese troops' recent clash along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh on December 9. It resulted in "minor injuries to a few per-

sonnel from both sides", according to the Indian Army.

Terming India's G20 Presidency a "very big deal" while interacting with the Indian diaspora, Jaishankar said the country has taken up the responsibility to host the meetings of the powerful grouping at a time when there is great economic stress on the global supply chains and strong political polarisation in the world. Jaishankar said India intends to use its presidency for the benefit of the international community.

He also said millets are far healthier than rice and wheat one eats daily and offer a completely different value



proposition at a time when there is a worry about a global food shortage.

The government announced on January 1 it has

lined up a series of millet-centric promotional activities across the country as the International Year of Millets (IYM) kicks in.

## Didi in clean up mode ahead of crucial polls

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Embarrassed by a series of scams --- that has seen a number of her senior Trinamool Congress colleagues including ministers and MLAs going to jail --- ahead of the crucial rural polls and the next year's general elections Bengal Chief Minister on Monday embarked upon a "pest" control exercise warning her party cadre to mend their ways or feel the consequence. "Pests of corruption has to be destroyed because if the pest attacks even one plant in the paddy field then it will destroy the entire crop ... so even if the pest attacks one plant then it should be eliminated immediately ... so we will have to destroy the pests and also ensure that there is no chance of their revival," Banerjee told

a gathering of about 3,500 party functionaries summoned to take part in a working committee meeting.

Outlining a guideline for the party men whereby they would have to reach out to 2 crore households and 10 crore people in the coming days Banerjee said "around 3.5 lakh party workers will reach out to 10 crore people of the State ... no one must be left out... because the TMC is a party of the people, by the people and for the people."

The new campaign has been christened Didir Suraksha Kabach (Didi's protective shield) with an apparent view to indicate to the rural populace that against every corruption they have the protective shield of the Chief Minister and that she would take care of their issues.

Once again in a bid to her own cult from the government and the party she runs Banerjee said "we must see to it that the people's work is done ... we have to keep eye on them ... it is not the panchayat to anything that has to answer to the people ... I have to answer to them."

Starting on January 11 the reach-out campaign would continue for 60 days, TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee said directing every MP and MLA to spend at least 10 nights each at the homes of common men.

Recent scams in school services recruitment and awaas yojna (housing schemes) that have hit the people directly the Mamata Banerjee Government has been facing massive protests in the countryside.

Not only this the party has



faced defeats at the hands of either BJP or the Left in a number of village cooperative elections.

Hence in order to replicate the massive victory of 2021 Assembly elections Banerjee and TMC has to arrest the growing alienation in the masses.

On ideological issues she said "ours is an ideological party which believes in a unit-

ed India ... so we will have to strengthen the belief in unity in diversity ... not like the opposition today that is playing a destructive politics... When we were in the opposition we were never so destructive."

The Left immediately hit back reminding her the vandalism that was committed in the Bengal Assembly under her leadership and during her presence.

## Bomma Govt seeing 'Vidya Niddhi' scheme as its election trump card

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Basavaraj Bommai government in Karnataka is looking at the flagship 'Vidya Niddhi scheme', providing scholarships to children of farmers, to be its winning election card for consolidating the BJP's rural base in the state.

Ahead of the coming assembly polls, the welfare scheme which has already covered over 10 lakh children of rural farmers with scholarship at a cost of Rs 464 crores, has now also been extended by the Chief minister to the children of landless farm labourers in the state.

According to the state government, a pilot project is



underway in Bagalkot, Haveri and Shivamogga to "identify" children of landless labourers as the 2011 Census does not provide details.

The BJP trusts that scheme which has been extended to farm labourers and weavers may "blunt" Congress and JD (S) bids to raise rural planks to counter

the BJP in the assembly polls and give it a wide edge in the electoral battle against the Congress and JD (S), the two rivals with good rural base.

According to BJP leaders, the scheme targeted at the 'poorest of poor' may sway voters to the party in large part of rural Karnataka cutting across their caste identities.

## Bharat Jodo Yatra to resume its second leg from Delhi today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

The Bharat Jodo Yatra led by former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi will resume its second leg of the journey from the national Capital on Tuesday and has been scheduled to wrap up in Srinagar on January 30.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, BSP supremo Mayawati, both former chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh, expressed their inability to join the padyatra when it crosses the State this week but both the leaders wished Rahul and Congress the best for the yatra.

Congress' new ally, Nitish Kumar's JD(U) will, however, represent itself through its UP unit while the Bhartiya Kisan Union said they will not participate in the Yatra.

Just like other political leaders all of them were invit-

ed by Rahul Gandhi to join the yatra. The BKU however mentioned that their workers are free to participate in the march but office bearers above the rank of district presidents will not take part in it.

The nationwide yatra will enter Uttar Pradesh from the Loni border in Ghaziabad on January 3 afternoon and will halt for the night in Mavikala village in Baghpat. It will pass through Shamli in UP on January 4 and enter Haryana through Sanauli in Panipat on January 5 evening.

The Yatra will continue from Delhi on January 3, walking through Uttar Pradesh from the same day to January 5, Haryana from January 6 to 10, Punjab from January 11 to 20 and spending one day in Himachal Pradesh on January 19. The Yatra will enter Jammu and Kashmir on the evening of January 20 and will end with a

flag hoisting on Srinagar on January 30.

Both, Akhilesh and Mayawati, thanked Rahul for inviting him to his 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' and wished it a success, even though they will not be attending it. SP chief spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary said Akhilesh will not participate in the yatra, nor will any other leader from the party.

In a letter addressed to Rahul, Akhilesh thanked for the invitation to the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' and wished for success of the 'Bharat Jodo' initiative. "India is a feeling which is beyond geographical expansion, where there is love, non-violence, emotions, co-operation and bonhomie -- the positive elements, which unite India. Hope that this yatra achieves its aim of conserving this inclusive culture," Akhilesh said.

Mayawati posted her message on social media, "Best wishes for the 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' and thanks to Rahul Gandhi for writing a letter to me to take part in the yatra."

AICC general secretary organisation K C Venugopal and AICC general secretary, communications Jairam Ramesh, said the Bharat Jodo Yatra has so far covered 3,122 km from Gandhi Mandapam in Kanyakumari to the Red Fort in Delhi. Venugopal added that he has already held a meeting with Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on security arrangements in their states and they have assured of their cooperation.

JD(U) spokesman K C Tyagi said the Uttar Pradesh unit president Anoop Singh Patel will participate in the yatra while Nitish Kumar has



expressed his support to the idea behind the exercise.

Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) Om Prakash Rajbhar too declined to be part of the yatra even though he claimed that senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid had personally requested him to participate in the Bharat Jodo yatra besides the personal invitation by Rahul Gandhi. Rajbhar though

questioned the purpose of the yatra and asked what was the need to integrate India, when it was never disintegrated in the first place.

Over the 108 days, the Yatra has covered 49 districts in nine states and one Union Territory -- Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi.

## UP JD(U) to join Cong yatra



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Janata Dal (United) will join the Uttar Pradesh leg of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Yatra, the ruling regional party of Bihar said on Monday.

The JD (U) Uttar Pradesh unit president Anoop Singh Patel will participate in the yatra once it enters the state on January 3.

He said party leader and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has expressed his support to the idea behind the exercise.

However, Kumar will not join the yatra. The Bihar chief minister, being projected by his party as a likely rallying point for the opposition unity against the Bhartiya Janata Party, is starting his own yatra in Bihar from January 5.

## SP, BSP chiefs wish Rahul well but mum on yatra participation

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav thanked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for inviting him to join the Bharat Jodo Yatra, which enters Uttar Pradesh on January 3.

In a letter in Hindi, Yadav wrote, "Best wishes for the success of the Bharat Jodo campaign. India is more than just a geographical expanse; it is united by love, non-violence, compassion, cooperation, and harmony. Hope this yatra achieves its goal of preserving this inclusive culture of our country."

The Congress, earlier in December, had extended an invitation to SP president Akhilesh Yadav, Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati and Rashtriya Lok Dal chief Jayant Chaudhary to join the yatra. Akhilesh Yadav had feigned ignorance of the letter, saying he had received no letter from the Congress about joining the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

"Our wishes are with the yatra, but we have not got any invitation. Our party's principles are different. Bhartiya Janata Party and Congress -- both are the same," he said.

Akhilesh's attack on the

Congress is not new. In March 2021 too, he had said, "... the ways being followed by the party are the same as the BJP."

The Uttar Pradesh leg of the Bharat Jodo Yatra will enter Ghaziabad's Loni area on January 3 and travel to Haryana via Kairana in Shamli. The next day, the yatra will reach Mavi Kalan in Baghpat and pass through Baghpat city and Sisana, Sarupur and Barot in the same district. On January 5, the yatra will reach Alam in Shamli district and pass through Kandhla, Uncha village, and Kairana.

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav on

December 27 had said that the Congress and the BJP were the "same" -- thereby putting a lid on all speculations about his participation in Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra. Akhilesh's statement also signalled that the SP was not keen on any alliance with the Congress in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Akhilesh Yadav is not inclined towards an alliance with the Congress ahead of the Lok Sabha polls due to the party's past experience in the 2017 state elections.

After Akhilesh's attack, the Congress went on the back foot and confirmed that the SP

chief would not participate in the Bharat Jodo Yatra despite invitation neither would his ally and Rashtriya Lok Dal leader Jayant Chaudhary. Congress zonal president Nakul Dubey said, "Akhilesh has expressed his inability to participate in the Yatra. Jayant Chaudhary has said he is ill."

Asked about Akhilesh's remark that he had not received an invitation, Dubey said: "Whether the invitation has reached or not becomes a disputed fact then. Invitations are going to all. Bharat Jodo Yatra has nothing to do with principles. Those who want to save

India from slavery should join us and those who don't, can refrain. There is nothing about principles here, it is only about uniting Bharat."

Meanwhile, former chief minister of UP and Bahujan Samaj Party national president Mayawati on Monday extended best wishes to Rahul Gandhi for the Bharat Jodo Yatra which will enter Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday.

She also thanked Gandhi for his letter inviting her to join the yatra.

"Best wishes for the Bharat Jodo Yatra and thanks to Rahul Gandhi for his letter inviting



me to join the yatra," Mayawati tweeted in Hindi.

However, the tweet was silent about whether Mayawati would participate in the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

The padyatra in UP will cover around 130 kilometres touching 11 assembly constituencies in which Congress performed worst in the 2022 assembly polls.

## NIA to visit Dangri village in Rajouri where IED killed child, injured 5 others

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) is likely to visit Upper Dangri village in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir where a suspected Improvised Explosive Device (IED) explosion early on Monday killed a child and injured five others.

A senior NIA official from the Jammu unit of the NIA is likely to visit the spot soon to get first hand information on the incident which could be handy if it subsequently takes over the probe into the case, sources said.

As per the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), the NIA team visits the blast site to collect all preliminary evidence with the local probe agency if the case is later handed over to the agency for the further probe, officials

said.

The NIA team along with the Jammu and Kashmir police officials will collect primary details relating to the incident, including the likely modus operandi of killings of civilians in two back to back terror attacks in the village. While the first incident occurred on Sunday evening, the second took place on Monday.

On Sunday, suspected terrorists opened fire on three houses in the area in Rajouri district killing four civilians and injuring six. In the Monday attack, a child was killed and five others injured after the explosion of a suspected IED.

"The (improvised explosive device) blast has taken place near the house of the first firing incident. Five people were injured. One child



succumbed to injuries and another is critical," reports said quoting Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Jammu, Mukesh Singh.

The injured have been taken to a hospital and another suspected IED has been spotted, he said.

The Monday incident occurred between 9 AM and 9.30 AM and a number of

people were close to the crime scene of Sunday's firing incident.

Taking to Twitter, Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said, "I strongly condemn the cowardly terror attack in Rajouri. I assure the people that those behind this despicable attack will not go unpunished. My thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved families."

## Rajouri residents demand that Army be brought back to plug gaps in security

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
JAMMU

The local residents in Dhangri village of Rajouri Monday demanded that the army personnel shifted from the area should be brought back to plug the security gaps and check the suspected movement of infiltrators in the region.

Besides, the local residents also raised the demand for equipping the members of the Village defence committees with modern weapons. J&K BJP Chief Ravinder Raina Monday patted the back of VDC member Balaji who according to him had



retaliated the fire forcing the terrorists to flee the Dhangri village after targeting the members of the three families.

Raina, while briefing LG Manoj Sinha during his visit to Rajouri, said one of our VDC members Balaji acted bravely and opened fire on terrorists and saved many

more innocent lives as terrorists ran away after they targeted the civilians in the area.

Local residents along with public representatives claimed the district Rajouri has once again come on the radar of the terrorist outfits and incidents of terror related violence have been happening on a regular basis.

To check the menace additional army troops should be deployed in the area to create a deterrence and instill a sense of security among the residents in the forested belt of Rajouri.

Dheeraj Sharma, Sarpanch of village Dhangri said, "there was a Village Defence Committee (VDC) in the area but police had taken away weapons of those VDC members who were above 60 and didn't replace them with others".

DGP Dilbagh Singh said no one would be forced to surrender their weapon. He added that in order to win the war against terrorism every individual has to play its part. Singh said, "we are going to further boost the VDCs by equipping them with weapons so that they also play a significant role in wiping out the terror ecosystem".



## Good verdict

The Supreme Court’s verdict has supported the 2016 demonetisation move in a majority judgment

The Government must have heaved a sigh of relief over the Supreme Court’s verdict supporting Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s 2016 demonetisation move. The 4-1 majority judgment said it was “not relevant” whether the objective of the ban was met. The apex court seems to have agreed with the Government’s position that it (the court) cannot decide on a case when no tangible relief can be granted. Its counsels maintained that demonetisation was a “well-considered” decision, aimed at checking fake money, terror funding, black money, and tax evasion. “There has to be great restraint in matters of economic policy. [The] court cannot supplant the wisdom of the executive with its wisdom,” Justice BR Gavai said, reading out the order. That’s a judicious remark, underlying the judiciary’s reluctance to tread on the jurisdiction of the executive. In general, it’s a good verdict, primarily because demonetisation—good, bad, or ugly—is something in the past. And the past cannot be rectified. But the Government ought to take the views of the dissenting judge, Justice BV Nagarathna, very seriously. She is critical of the note ban and the way the decision was arrived at. Her objections are very pertinent. Calling the demonetisation decision “an exercise of power contrary to law and unlawful,” she said that the entire exercise was carried out in 24 hours. She was also unhappy with the role of the Reserve Bank of India, wondering whether the central bank had even visualised problems associated with



the decision. The RBI used phrases like “as desired by the Central Government.” This, Justice Nagarathna said, suggests that there was “no independent application of mind by the RBI.”

She has hit the nail on the head, for the RBI looked at deer in the headlights at that time. It was clueless and feckless, having little idea about the monetisation that was urgently needed. The new notes were not getting printed fast enough; then there was a problem with their size, which was not compatible with that of the ATMs. For weeks there were long queues outside ATMs and banks; businesses were disrupted. The majority judgment of the Supreme Court may have come in support of the Government, but it is undeniable that this was not the best decision that it has taken in the last eight and a half years. As for the objectives of demonetisation, there has been a decline in the killings related to terrorism since 2014, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, but it is difficult to ascertain any causality between demonetisation and the decline. Similarly, it is difficult to say if the move did check black money or corruption. Its adverse effects on the economy, however, are well-known. The growth rate, for instance, declined for two years after the decision. The lesson that not just the Government but the entire political class must learn from demonetisation is that the best decisions are those that are made after wide consultation.



Tourists at Taj Mahal covered in a blanket of fog as the sun spreads its redness early morning, in Agra. -PTI

## Yatra an beyond

Bharat Jodo Yatra takes a break. It is time they think about the Yatra’s future course and beyond.

After walking for almost 3000 kilometers Rahul Gandhi and his entourage are resting in Delhi before they march again on January 3 towards their final destination in Kashmir. Rahul Gandhi has come a long way both physically as well as metaphorically. It has been a welcome transition from a shy boy eight years ago to a confident-looking gentleman who is daring to take on his opponents and braving all attacks on him. Indeed Bharat Jodo Yatra has been a game changer at least for him if not for his party. It would indeed be much more to revive the party at the hustings and win the elections. Winning hearts does not automatically translate into winning elections. A lot more goes into it like strategy, groundwork, ideology articulation, and of course an articulator. No doubt the party which was lying almost dormant is awake and even its workers look energetic and confident. The same party which took all the jibes without any fuss is now retorting to every criticism of Yatra and Rahul and succeeding in pushing the BJP back. What is more, this yatra has shown that the party’s organizing skills are intact and it can manage to mobilize its workers on the ground across the country. Another comeback has been in terms of coverage and media attention. Though the media is not friendly to him it has certainly taken note of it. It could not ignore him for the sheer consistency and magnitude.



The big question is what next. Now that the Yatra would resume on January 3, its organizers would have time to review its progress and what it lacks. Though the people’s participation in the rally has been phenomenal, opposition has remained cautious and skeptical and hasn’t come along. The party has done well to invite Akhilesh Yadav and other parties to walk along things might change. If the congress party wants to make a comeback it would have to think beyond Yatra and devise a strategy to reap the harvest and channelise the goodwill generated by the Yatra. Another drawback the congress party has and which is not going to wither away by yatra is internal bickering which is harming its prospects. Gehlot – Pilot feud is just the tip of the iceberg. There are many more disgruntled leaders in the party who have to be pacified. Last but not least Prime Minister Modi is still far ahead of Rahul Gandhi in popularity and as charmer and that would be the toughest challenge for Rahul Gandhi and his party to counter.

# Pakistan hits a new low in India bashing

Pakistan would do well to address its domestic problems rather than blame India for everything wrong with it. And it is not helping.

Pakistan recorded a new low even in its perennial hostility towards India on sixteenth of December when in an unbecoming and shameful manner its Foreign Affairs Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari made personal and uncivilised outburst against the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi. He was alluding to comments of External Affairs Minister of India Jai Shankar. After chairing a special meeting of the UN Security Council focused on ‘global counter terrorism approach’ Jai Shankar had told media that the world perceives Pakistan as epicentre of terrorism as it still shelters terrorist groups. Pakistan has been doing more than this.

Apart from maltreatment of its minorities, It glorifies Osama bin Laden as a martyr and shelters terrorists like Lakhvi, Hafiz Saeed, Masood Azhar, Sajid Mir and Dawood Ibrahim and 126 UN designated terrorists and 27 UN designated terrorist groups. Ever since it came into existence as a new country in August, 1947, Pakistan has maintained hostile attitude towards its immediate biggest neighbour India. This is despite the fact that the author of two nation theory and founder of new nation of Pakistan Mohammed Ali Jinnah had advised the leaders of Pakistan to maintain good neighbourly relations with India but it has been hardly ever so from the very beginning. Despite being culturally also equally close to India, Pakistan linked its hostility towards India to the fault line of the world based on religion.

Just to mention a few lows in its relations with and actions towards India, the first low occurred in 1947 when the princely ruler of Jammu and Kashmir Maharaja Hari Singh offered standstill agreement with both India and Pakistan to allow him time to decide about accession. While India called for talks, Pakistan accepted it in breach and finally sent in armed tribals on twenty second October, 1947 to force accession on the princely ruler. The Maharaja had no choice but to accede to India. At the same time, though born itself



out of two nation theory, Pakistan made all out efforts to effect political partition of princely states of India.

Pakistan also joined pacts created to encircle Soviet Communist block. Pakistan did all this in the name of fighting against communism but the actual motive was hostility towards India. In 1959 the then Pakistan President General Ayub Khan declared that arms received from USA are not meant to be wrapped in wool clearly indicating that these can be used against India. Later during 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, Pakistan actually used these weapons against India.

The worst low level of Pakistan’s conduct and bankruptcy of its policy was witnessed when after General elections in Pakistan in 1970, East Pakistan got majority but its leader Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was denied the opportunity to form government in Pakistan. To suppress the people of East Pakistan a reign of terror and genocidal crackdown was unleashed against ethnic Bengalis and Hindus there under orders of the then Pakistan military ruler General Yahaya Khan. The result was formation of Bangladesh.

Army Chief of Pakistan



APART FROM OTHER REPERCUSSIONS, ALL THESE LOW NEGATIVE ACTIONS OF PAKISTAN ALSO TURNED IT INTO A BASTION FOR INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

General Zia ul Haq seized power on 5.7.77. Zulhikar Ali Bhutto was subsequently hanged in 1979. Apart from encouraging hard core Islam, Zia-ul-Haq turned Pakistan into conduit for American arms and ammunition for Mujahideen fighting against Soviet forces in 1979. Some of these arms were diverted to perpetrate cross-border terrorism in Kashmir. Pakistan wanted to turn Afghanistan into its backyard and encouraged creation and rise of Taliban in Pakistan. In yet another low, in 1999 Pakistan army had occupied Kargil heights vacated by Indian army before onset of severe cold there which led to war and vacation of occupied area by Pakistan.

Apart from other repercussions, all these low negative actions of Pakistan also turned it into a bastion for international terrorism. After attack on World Trade Centre Pakistan too joined the USA and NATO led war to hunt down Osama bin Laden. When the then Army ruler of Pakistan General Pervez Musharraf was questioned for joining the war, his reply was that had he not done so America might have taken action against Pakistan too. All these low actions have also had a cumulative effect



JL KOULI JALALI

too and have brought Pakistan virtually on the brink of moral, intellectual and financial bankruptcy. Pakistan needs to introspect and change its course and attitude towards India. Holy Quran clearly ordains that one should have best relations with neighbours. Pakistan has to change and give up its support to cross-border terrorism to prepare ground for mutual dialogue. In the present day globalised world beset with problems of climate change, stockpiles of nuclear weapons, terrorism and so many other similar pressing problems coupled with requirements of continued and sustainable development, dialogue and diplomacy are the only way to settle mutual differences and problems. This alone can ensure security and even survival of mankind. It can also help evolution of human civilisation and establishment of global Parliament. Pakistan has also to realise that hard core ideologies based on religion are getting loosened and hostility has to yield ground to love and mutual respect. All religions and philosophies ultimately lead to the same goal.

(The writer is former IIS Officer and freelance journalist. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### BAN MEETS AT VULNERABLE PLACES

Sir — The death of 4 persons again at a political meeting the other day in Guntur organized by the TDP is unfortunate. It is really shocking to know that the organizers lured poor people to the meet addressed by the TDP Supremo, promising them money and gifts on the New Year eve. It is said that the meeting was planned to be held on a small ground of 4 acres but the organizers mobilized about 30 thousand people for the meeting. It clearly shows criminal negligence on the part of the organizers and a communication gap between the local police and the organizers.

Death is a tragedy for the common man, a trade for undertakers, but a mean game for politicians! Most of our politicians want to gain some political mileage out of every death, if possible. Politicians of all parties lost no time in trying to use these incidents in Nellore and Guntur to their advantage! In fact the TDP, the local police and the Government are to be held accountable for these tragedies. It is a shameful vogue with all political parties to hold propaganda meetings at places in downtown locations so that their meetings look ‘impressive with crowds’. It is time that the Government banned immediately all political parties from holding such meetings at vulnerable locations in future.

M Somasekhhar Prasad | Hyderabad

### TERROR ATTACK IN RAJOURI

Sir — The four people were killed and six others were injured in a terror attack in Rajouri, security forces have launched an operation to neutralize two terrorists who attacked three houses in Dangri area, Jammu and Kashmir on Monday. An incident of firing was reported in Dangri area of Rajouri on Sunday in which four people were killed and six injured. The firing was done by two terrorists at three houses separated at a distance of around 50 metres from each other at upper Dangri village. As per the information, two terrorists came and

## Pele “The Greatest” is no more



Although, the Brazilian storm has now subsided, the smoke and marks (goals) left on the field by this storm over the past four decades are as indelible as ever. It has to be said. From a small village in Brazil and from a poor family, Pele changed the definition of football with the power of his game. Pele, who

brought Brazil to the world championship three times, also made his country famous. Still invulnerable. A player’s greatness is felt by his mere existence. In 1969, Nigeria was going through a civil war.

At the same time, when Pele’s Santos team arrived there, the ongoing war in Biafra and Nigeria was halted for 48 hours. Such was the greatness of Pele. Pele would also use his dribbling skills to outrun his opponents. In Brazil, he was hailed as a national hero for his achievements in football and his outspoken support of policies that improved the social conditions of the poor. World-class players like Pele, who are not limited to Brazil, but four decades after retiring from the game of football, continue to be as popular as the ‘Black Pearl’. Intact. Awarded “The Greatest” by FIFA as a three-time World Cup winner, Pele’s career was ‘The Greatest Touch’.

Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai

targeted three houses in Upper Dangri area. Four casualties were reported. The search operation is on. Police, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and Army troops have cordoned off the area and try to neutralise the two terrorists soon,” said Mukesh Singh, Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Jammu Zone. With this the civilian are living under the fear and the situation is very serious and grave.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### BLIND EYE TO DIFFERENTLY ABLED

Sir — “Disability need not be an obstacle to success,” Stephen Hawking wrote in the first ever world disability report back in 2011. As one of the most influential scientists of modern times, the wheelchair-bound physicist is certainly proof of that. The media, considered to be the fourth pillar of the state, is the custodian of human rights of minorities and socially and economically backward and downtrodden people in society. Disability, now considered a type of social and economic backwardness,

has rarely been dealt with sensitively by the media in India.

It goes without saying that the mass media, including newspapers, magazines, television, radio, films and the Internet, play wide roles in forming and moulding public opinion on various issues. The media covers the disabled on notified dislike the International Day of Disabled Persons, but sadly, the issues pertaining to disability failed to get a major share in the media. Thus, disability is not an obstacle to success. It is time to recognise and encourage differently disabled to greater extent to make them get maximum importance in a civil society. It is time to take up the issue with great vigour and try our best to encourage in various platforms and thereby get the much needed satisfaction in reporting to the media the personal achievements and their exploits on and off the field.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## SOUND BITE

RSS didn’t contribute to the fight for Independence... we read about the remark ‘New father of the nation’...what has the ‘new father’ of ‘new India’ done for the nation?”



Bihar CM — Nitish Kumar



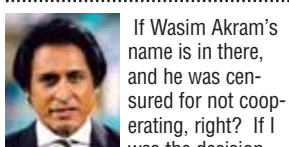
All this war that you are waging, you — Russia, it is not the war with NATO, as your propagandists lie... It’s for one person to remain in power until the end of his life.

Ukraine President — Volodymyr Zelensky

I really consider myself gifted and blessed. I’ve had my share of ups and downs, but at the end of the day I feel it’s the audience who’ve believed in me.



Actor — Trisha Krishnan



If Wasim Akram’s name is in there, and he was censured for not cooperating, right? If I was the decision maker at the time, I would’ve banned him forever.

Former PCB Chairman — Rameez Raja

The Opposition has to coordinate... go to the people with an alternative vision. There is a massive undercurrent against the BJP government,




Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi



FIRST COLUMN

GOD HELPS YOU WALK OUT OF TROUBLES

God is very considerate, he responds, have no doubts about it



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Walking is great, for it brings immense benefits. I am an avid walker. I try to reach my target of 60 minutes each day. At my age, this is very nice. The only concession I make is to regulate the speed according to my state at any particular time, because walking is important and not the speed.

The most obvious benefit of walking is that it strengthens body muscles and bones. Blood begins to flow well in the veins, besides lowering blood pressure, while also increasing metabolism, which in turn helps in conversion of food to energy. Increased metabolism also does wonders for our brains. They are not the only vital organs, which benefits greatly but our hearts become stronger; cardiovascular issues are reduced. Our immunity goes up, which leads to prevention of diseases. There are less sick days for those who walk regularly. Weight control becomes easier, and obesity is prevented.

The regular walkers have better mental health. They suffer less from anxiety and depression. One can even experience a boost in creativity, because better ideas pop-up during walks. God wants to encourage us to walk. That is why He has made walking such a beneficial activity.

Having promoted walking so strongly, I hate to point out its limitations, because walking is only one aspect of our lives, though a very important one. I am referring to the verse # 6.17 of the Bhagavad-Geeta in which Lord Krishna states, “One whose eating and recreation are appropriate; of one who strives appropriately in activities, of one who sleeps and stays awake as required reduces his sufferings.”



Not only walking regularly is essential but lots of other activities are as well, as mentioned in the quoted verse. Because we have been created in this fashion only. This is one challenge but the bigger challenge is what we have brought from our earlier lives. All major events like success in a big way are destined, as are painful ones like major illnesses. This is not all. Even our natures are programmed based on what all we did in our past lives.

I am sorry to point out that odds are stacked against us, about which we can hardly do anything unless we seek help from God. He and He alone has the power to make substantial changes in our destiny. We must take shelter from God. We have been given the right to act but what the result will be is determined by divine authorities only, who work under the superintendence of God. (9.10) Therefore, God has kept the decision making with Himself.

Fortunately for all of us, God is very merciful. He has asked us to take His shelter seriously. (18.62) In addition to this, God has given us lots of instructions about how to behave well, which will prevent bad results from coming. For example, God wishes that we should do all our duties well according to dharma. Then, we don't have to worry about violent backlashes in future, which includes future lives. In short, we have to please God, who is everything for all intents and purposes. (7.19)

God is very considerate; he responds and we will know that. Minor miracles begin happening in our lives. God even shows our future in order to assure us. That of course comes later.

What more can we ask for? We must realise that we cannot walk out of our troubles on our own, but we can surely come out of them in one piece with generous help from God. That is very reassuring.

*(The author is a spiritual teacher)*

# PMGKAY withdrawn but free food stays



UTTAM GUPTA

## Government should seriously ponder over giving subsidy directly to the beneficiary as the current system is defective

After much dilly-dallying, the Union Government has cleared the air on the fate of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY). On December 23, 2022, the Cabinet decided to terminate it from January 1, 2023. At the same time, it has decided to provide free ration to about 820 million poor in the country under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) for one year i.e. till December 31, 2023, in a bid “to shield the masses from shocks to the system at a time the economy was recovering in the aftermath of Covid crisis”.

Making these announcements, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister Piyush Goyal said that the Government was merging the free part of PMGKAY with the regular food security schemes under NFSA, which would previously provide subsidized ration to the poor. With these changes, the Centre's annual food subsidy bill is estimated to be Rs 200,000 crore.

In March 2020, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had announced PMGKAY to mitigate the hardship suffered by people due to a major disruption in economic activity and resultant loss of jobs and income in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic. Under it, the government would give five kg of rice or wheat per person per month for “free” to around 820 million people through the Public Distribution System (PDS) initially for a period of three months till June 30, 2020.

It would also give for “free” one kg of pulses per household. On June 30, 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced extension of the scheme for five months till November 30, 2020 with a slight change to provide one kg grams (instead of leaving the choice of pulse to the beneficiary) free to each family per month. The scheme was discontinued for five months during December 2020-April 2021. From May 2021, it was resurrected and got three extensions during the financial year (FY) 2021-22.

During FY 2022-23, it has got two extensions sixth (April – September 2022) and seventh (October–December 2022). Under the extensions given since May 2021, the provision for pulses was removed from the entitlement.

During FY 2020-21, economic activity had remained disrupted particularly during the first three quarters resulting in ‘negative’ growth in GDP by 6.6 per cent. So, the first two phases were perfectly justified.

However, its resurrection during FY 2021-22 when the economy rebounded with GDP registering growth of 8.9 per cent, raises many a hackles. During FY 2022-23 also, with the economy entering a phase of consolidation with an expected GDP growth of 6.8–7 per cent, one wonders whether its continuation was tenable.

Political considerations have been at work or else the government would not



SINCE MARCH 2020, THE GOVERNMENT HAS SPENT A TOTAL OF RS 390,000 CRORE ON RUNNING THE PMGKAY. A GOOD SLICE OF THIS EXPENDITURE COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED IF ITS ACTIONS HAD BEEN GUIDED PURELY BY ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

*(The author is a policy analyst)*



have run the scheme during these times when the economy was getting back to normal obviating the need for any extra support. Since March 2020, the government has spent a total of Rs 390,000 crore on running the scheme. A good slice of this expenditure could have been avoided if its actions had been guided purely by economic considerations.

Given a spate of state elections during 2023 followed by general elections in 2024, there was much speculation that the government might continue the PMGKAY. Yet, going strictly by economic rationale, it has discontinued the scheme. This will spare the national exchequer an outgo of around Rs 130,000 crore annually and help reining in fiscal deficit. But, by modifying the regular NFSA to provide for supply of ‘free’ food,

Modi has made way for populism to some extent. Under the NFSA, the Centre directs the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and other state agencies to procure food from the farmer at MSP (minimum support price) and organize its distribution to around 820 million people through a network of fair price shops (FPS) at the subsidized price (call it ‘issue price’) of Rs 2/3/1 per kg for wheat, rice, and coarse cereals respectively.

There are two types of beneficiaries. As part of the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), the poorest of the poor households get 35 kg of food grains per family (@ 7 kg per person in a family of five) each month. The number of families

under AAY being 24 million, the persons getting 7 kg cereals per month @ Rs 2/3/1 per kg are 120 million. The rest 700 million persons are eligible to receive five kg of cereals per month at the same price. In addition, the PMGKAY gave 5 kg to each of 820 million for free.

Even as the additional (read: PMGKAY) has been withdrawn, the Cabinet has added a sweetener to the regular NFSA by supplying to all 820 million beneficiaries their eligible monthly quota for ‘free’ instead of Rs 2/3/1 per kg they pay currently. Considering that already, the extant price was close to zero, this was unwarranted. It is hard to fathom that nearly 2/3rd of the population can't pay even a notional price of Rs 2/3/1 per kg.

The current issue price was specified in the NFSA legislation. The law enacted in 2013 had frozen these rates for three years. Since 2016 thus, there is no legal bar on increasing the price. An increase of Rs 1 per kg can yield savings of about Rs 5,200 crore annually; Rs 4,500 crore if hike is confined only to non-AAY beneficiaries. Instead, the government has made all sales ‘free’ which would entail an increase in subsidy by around Rs 13,000 crore annually.

Ridiculously, low price is only one major aspect of the food subsidy conundrum. There are others as well. Fundamentally, subsidized food is meant for the poor and their number is much less the present gargantuan 820 million - expected to increase to 920 million if one were

to go by the Supreme Court directive to take into account the population during 2021 instead of the present coverage being based on the 2011 Census estimates.

As per the recommendations of the Shanta Kumar Committee (2015), the people eligible for subsidized food under NFSA should not be more than 40 per cent of the population against the existing 67 per cent. Denying subsidy to 27 per cent or around 380 million will result in saving of about Rs 66,000 crore annually (29x5x380x12). This is based on a person taking all of her 5 kg monthly quota as wheat and subsidy @ Rs 29 per kg [(MSP: 21 + HDC: 10) – issue price: 2] where HDC stands for handling and distribution cost.

Of the remaining 440 million (820-380), the committee felt that only persons under AAY i.e. 120 million should be eligible to pay Rs 2/3/1 per kg. It wanted that others or 320 million (440-120) should pay 50 per cent of the MSP or Rs 10.5 per kg of wheat. This would yield an annual saving of about Rs 16,500 crore (8.5x5x320x12); 8.5 being the excess of Rs 10.5 over the current price Rs 2.

There is no reason why these beneficiaries (read: non-AAY) should not pay more say MSP. Asking them to pay MSP or Rs 21 per kg can yield savings of around Rs 36,500 crore.

Finally, the Government should seriously ponder over giving subsidy directly to the beneficiary as the current system is prone to high inefficiencies, leakages and misuse.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE JD(S) COMING TO POWER WOULD MAKE KARNATAKA THE ATM OF THE GOWDA FAMILY.  
— UNION HOME MINISTER  
AMIT SHAH



IF JD(S) FORMS THE GOVERNMENT, IT WILL BECOME THE ATM OF THE CRORES OF KANNADIGAS. IT WILL BECOME THE ATM OF FARMERS, LABORERS, AND THE OPPRESSED.  
— FORMER KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER  
H D KUMARASWAMY

# Need to address root-causes of domestic violence

## While the impact of domestic violence on the victim is worrisome, it can also have a traumatic effect on witnesses, especially kids

Devti Devi (name changed) has a difficult life. At the age of 15, she got married, and her ordeal of domestic violence began at that time. Her husband even tried to burn her alive, but she survived. Discussing her trauma, she said, “One day, he tried to smother me using a pillow.”

Devti is a resident of Ason village in Bageshwar district's Kapkot block in Uttarakhand. Lately, cases of domestic violence in Uttarakhand have been on a rise. According to a report published last year, everyday 60 women are reported to face domestic violence across the state. Besides, during Covid-19, in the 20 days of February 2021, out of total 2,041 complaints of harassment of women in the control room, 1,210 com-



DIYA ARYA

*(The author is a student of Class 10 from Kapkot, Bageshwar, Uttarakhand: Charkha Features)*

plaints were of domestic violence.

As per another report, in 2019, 727 domestic violence cases were reported to Legal Services Authorities and Uttarakhand accounted for 144 out of the 727, the highest in the country. Tired of domestic violence, Khasti Devi, (name changed) another woman from the same village tried to end her life. “I have not spent a single day without the fear of getting thrashed by my husband,” lamented Khasti.

In India, approximately 45,026 women died by suicide in 2021, nearly one in every nine minutes. Out of this, more than two-third were married women and over half of them, 23178, were housewives, stated the annual report

of the National Crime Records Bureau.

Women and girls residing in some of the most inaccessible hilly villages in Uttarakhand have difficulty accessing the legal and medical aid options made available by both the government and non-government organizations.

For the safety and security of women facing domestic and other forms of gender-based violence, in 2015, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme was formulated by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD), for establishing One Stop Centre (OSC) as a sub-scheme of National Mission for Empowerment of Women.

In 2022-23, the scheme was subsumed into the Sambal sub-scheme of Mission Shakti.

As on February 11, 2022, 733 OSCs have been approved for 730 districts across the country, out of which 704 OSCs have been operationalized in 35 States/ UTs, which have assisted over 4.50 lakh women.

In this case, the OSC is located in Bageshwar district. Anju Pandey, an advocate who works at the ‘One Stop Centre’ in Bageshwar, while informing the process of receiving cases of domestic violence from the women in villages, said, “Usually the survivors report to the Pradhan of the villages who support them to report the cases to the nearest police station. From the police station, the cases are then referred to our centre.”

The ‘definition’ of nearest police station needs some attention here as the distance

from the village might be 20 km or beyond without availability of transport and at times, a motorable road. The socio-economic status of these women also doesn't allow them to report the cases. Unless the Pradhan of their villages take some serious action, they continue to face the violence.

Social activist Neelam Grandy from Charson village in Garur block in Bageshwar, while shedding light on the situation said that although women have been facing some serious violence at the hands of their own partners, they back out from reporting it. “Women lack the support to file cases against the husbands. They fear the social stigma, for the ones who report it are often taunted by the

neighbours or family members, saying they have harmed the peace of the family,” said Neelam, adding, “The irony is that even the media is not bothered much. This is the reason that instead of making headlines, such cases get buried in a corner of the newspaper.”

While the impact of domestic violence on the primary victim is worrisome, it can also have a long-lasting traumatic effect on those who witness it, especially children. At times, they even face abuse. Akshita (name changed), a teenager from the same village, shared that every day, not only does her father fight with her mother, but also abuses and beats her.

“Their quarrel directly affects my mental status and

studies. Whenever I prepare myself to study, the flashes of my father thrashing my mother dominates my thoughts. It becomes difficult to focus and concentrate on studies or to have a positive outlook towards life,” said Akshita.

Although the local administrations have undoubtedly come up with redress mechanisms at their levels to address the increasing violence against women, accessibility should be equally focused on. For many women who do not understand the redress procedures or lack the support to take any action, should be reached out without any failure. For a long-term solution, there is a dire need to address the root-causes of such violence against women.



# Russia presses home Ukraine strategy, fires 40 drones at Kyiv

AP ■ KYIV

Russia deployed multiple exploding drones in another nighttime attack on Ukraine, officials said Monday, as the Kremlin signalled no letup in its strategy of using bombardments to target civilian infrastructure and wear down Ukrainian resistance to its invasion.

The barrage was the latest in a series of relentless year-end attacks, including one that killed three civilians on New Year's Eve.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said Monday that 40 drones "headed for Kyiv" overnight. All of them were destroyed, according to air defence forces.

Klitschko said 22 drones were destroyed over Kyiv, three in the outlying Kyiv region and 15 over neighbouring provinces.

Energy infrastructure facilities were damaged as the result of the attack and an explosion occurred in one city district, the mayor said.

It wasn't immediately clear whether that was caused by drones or other munitions. A wounded 19-year-old man was hospitalised, Klitschko added, and emergency power outages were underway in the capital.

In the outlying Kyiv region a "critical infrastructure object" and residential buildings were hit, Gov. Oleksiy Kuleba said.



Russia has carried out airstrikes on Ukrainian power and water supplies almost weekly since October.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has accused Russia of "energy terrorism" as the aerial bombardments have left many people without heat amid freezing temperatures.

Ukrainian officials say Moscow is "weaponising winter" in its effort to demoralise the Ukrainian resistance.

Ukraine is using sophisticated Western-supplied weapons to help shoot down Russia's missiles and drones, as well as send artillery fire into Russian-held areas of the country.

Moscow's full-scale invasion on Feb. 24 has gone awry, putting pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin as his ground forces struggle to hold ground and advance. He said in his New Year's address to the nation that 2022 was "a year of difficult, necessary decisions."

Putin insists he had no choice, but to send troops into Ukraine because it threatened Russia's security — an assertion condemned by the West, which says Moscow bears full responsibility for the invasion.

Russia is currently observing public holidays through Jan. 8.

Drones, missiles and

artillery shells launched by Russian forces also struck areas across Ukraine.

Five people were wounded in the Monday morning shelling of a Ukraine-controlled area of the southern Kherson region, its Ukrainian Gov. Yaroslav Yanushevich said on Telegram.

The Russian forces attacked the city of Beryslav, the official said, firing at a local market, likely from a tank. Three of the wounded are in serious condition and are being evacuated to Kherson, Yanushevich said.

Seven drones were shot down over the southern Mykolaiv region, according to Gov. Vitali Kim, and three more

were shot down in the south-eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, Gov. Valentyn Reznichenko said.

In the Dnipropetrovsk region, a missile was also destroyed, according to Reznichenko. He said that energy infrastructure in the region was being targeted. Ukraine's Air Force Command reported Monday that 39 Iranian-made exploding Shahed drones were shot down overnight, as well as two Russian-made Orlan drones and a X-59 missile. "We are staying strong," the Ukrainian defense ministry tweeted.

A blistering New Year's Eve assault killed at least four civilians across the country, Ukrainian authorities reported, and wounded dozens.

The fourth victim, a 46-year-old resident of Kyiv, died in a hospital on Monday morning, Klitschko said. Multiple blasts rocked the capital and other areas of Ukraine on Saturday and through the night.

The strikes came 36 hours after widespread missile attacks Russia launched Thursday to damage energy infrastructure facilities, and the unusually quick follow-up alarmed Ukrainian officials.

In Russia, a Ukrainian drone hit an energy facility in the Bryansk region that borders with Ukraine, Bryansk regional governor Alexander Bogomaz reported on Monday morning.

# Canada, Australia impose Covid rules on travellers from China



AP ■ BEIJING

Australia and Canada have joined a growing list of countries requiring travellers from China to take a COVID-19 test prior to boarding their flight, as China battles a nationwide outbreak of the coronavirus after abruptly easing restrictions that were in place for much of the pandemic.

Australian health authorities said Sunday that from January 5 all air travellers from mainland China, Hong Kong or Macao will need to show a negative COVID-19 test taken within two days of their departure.

Canadian authorities announced similar measures that will also come into effect January 5 in a statement dated Saturday — a move experts say isn't very effective.

Kerry Bowman, assistant professor at the University of Toronto's Temerty Faculty of Medicine, said the requirement is "not based on science at this point."

"This isn't the early days of the pandemic," he said. "It's pretty clear that point-of-entry screening is not very effective at all. Often people can test positive days and weeks later."

Dr. Isaac Bogoch, associate professor at University of Toronto's Temerty Faculty of Medicine, said it's not entirely clear what the policy's goals are, but such measures have not helped.

"We know from the past that very focused and targeted

travel measures such as this don't do much to prevent the spread of COVID, either by importing COVID to Canada, or by the threat of variants of concern in Canada," he said.

Australia and Canada join other countries including the US, UK, India, Japan and several European nations in imposing tougher COVID-19 measures on Chinese travellers amid concerns over a lack of data on infections in China and fears of the possibility that new variants may spread.

Research has shown how the virus spreads through human mobility, which means that the next variant of the virus may not even emerge from China, and even if it did, it could land in Canada from other indirect routes, Bowman said, adding that a more effective measure would be testing wastewater from airplanes and airports to check for the viral load and mutations.

Vancouver International Airport said Saturday it would expand its wastewater testing pilot programme.

China, which for most of the pandemic adopted a "zero-COVID" strategy that imposed harsh restrictions aimed at stamping out the virus, abruptly eased those measures in December. Chinese authorities previously said that from January 8, overseas travellers would no longer need to quarantine upon arriving in China, paving the way for Chinese residents to travel.

Hong Kong is also preparing for quarantine-free travel to China, with plans to resume operations of more border checkpoints as early as January 8, according to a Facebook post by Hong Kong Chief Secretary Eric Chan.

However, a quota will remain in place limiting the number of travellers between the two places.

"Depending on the first phase of the situation, we will gradually expand the scale for a complete reopening of the border," Chan said.

In China, eased restrictions meant that residents could celebrate New Year's in large-scale gatherings that were prohibited for much of the pandemic, even though the country is experiencing a massive outbreak of cases.

"There are still some worries, more or less," said Wu Yanxia, a 51-year-old Beijing resident who works at a logistic company. "I hope that next year everything will be normal, such as domestic travel."

Others hope that 2023 will bring better things after a difficult past year.

"We have experienced a very uneven year, particularly unforgettable, with many things out of our imagination," said Li Feng, a teacher in Beijing, adding that 2022 was a difficult year for both the people and the government.

"But I think we have come through and everything will be fine," Li said.



# New Israeli Govt vows to develop West Bank as tourism hub

AP ■ TEL AVIV

The tourism minister of Israel's new hardline government on Sunday promised to invest in developing the West Bank, calling the occupied area "our local Tuscany."

Haim Katz made the comments days after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new government took office, promising in its coalition guidelines to make West Bank settlement construction a top priority. His coalition includes far-right settler leaders in top posts.

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Mideast war and has built dozens of settlements that are now home to roughly 500,000 Israelis.

The Palestinians claim the entire area as part of a future independent state and consider the settlements illegal — a position that is widely shared by the international community. Israel's commitment to deepening its control of the West Bank has threatened to put it on a collision course with some of its closest allies.

At a ceremony Sunday, Katz said he would channel resources to promote tourism in the West

Bank. "We will invest in areas that may not have received sufficient support to date," he said. "For example, our local Tuscany in Judea and Samaria," he added, using the biblical term for the West Bank favored by religious and right-wing Israelis.

The West Bank settler community has developed a small tourism sector that includes hotels, bed and breakfasts and wineries. Israel considers these industries to be part of the country's broader tourism sector, while international human rights groups have said they deepen control of occupied territory.

Airbnb in 2018 said it would bar listings in the Israeli settlements, but it quickly backed down under heavy Israeli pressure. Last year, Booking.Com said it was adding warnings to its listings there.

On Friday, the U.N. General Assembly asked the U.N.'s highest judicial body to give its opinion on the legality of Israeli policies in the occupied West Bank. Netanyahu called the resolution "disgraceful" and said Israel is not obligated to cooperate with the International Court of Justice.

# Israeli missiles kill 2 soldiers, put Damascus airport out of service

AP ■ BEIRUT

Israel's military fired missiles toward the international airport of Syria's capital early Monday, putting it out of service and killing two soldiers and wounding two others, the Syrian army said. The attack, the second in seven months to put the Damascus International Airport out of service, caused material damage in a nearby area, the army said, without giving further details.

Israel has targeted airports and ports in government-held parts of Syria in an apparent attempt to prevent arms shipments from Iran to militant groups backed by Tehran, including Lebanon's Hezbollah.

An opposition war monitor reported the Israeli strikes hit the airport as well as an arms depot close to the facility south of Damascus. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said four people were killed in the strike. There was no comment from Israel.

On June 10, Israeli airstrikes that struck Damascus International Airport caused significant damage to infrastructure and runways. It reopened two weeks later after repairs.

In September, Israeli airstrikes hit the international airport of the northern city of Aleppo,



Syria's largest and once commercial center, also putting it out of service for days.

In late 2021, Israeli warplanes fired missiles that struck the port of Latakia hitting containers and igniting a huge fire. Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes on targets inside government-controlled parts of Syria in recent years, but rarely acknowledges or discusses such operations.

Israel has acknowledged, however, that it targets bases of Iran-allied militant groups, such as Lebanon's Hezbollah, which has sent thousands of fighters to support Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces. Thousands of Iran-backed fighters have joined Syria's 11-year civil war and helped tip the balance of power in Assad's favor. Israel says an Iranian presence on its northern frontier is a red line that justifies its strikes on facilities and weapons inside Syria.

# New York's first elected woman Guv Kathy Hochul sworn-in

AP ■ ALBANY

New York Governor Kathy Hochul was sworn in for her first elected term on Sunday, making history as the first woman elected to the position in the state.

The Democrat, launching her term as the 57th governor of New York, said her goals were to increase public safety and to make the state more affordable.

"Right now there are some fights we have to take on," Hochul said after taking the oath of office at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center in Albany. "First we must and will make our streets safer."

Hochul also called for making the state more affordable, citing the high cost of living. Also sworn in Sunday was Lt. Gov. Antonio Delgado.

A native of Buffalo, Hochul, 64, defeated Republican congressman Lee Zeldin, an ally of



Donald Trump, in November's election to win the office that she took over in 2021 when former Gov. Andrew Cuomo resigned.

A former congresswoman, she served as Cuomo's lieutenant governor before taking over in August 2021 and has tried to cast herself as a fresh start from Cuomo. He resigned amid sexual harassment allegations, which he denies.

New York Democratic U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer described her November victory as "breaking the glass ceiling."

During her time as governor, New York passed some of the strictest gun laws in the nation, some of which are experiencing court challenges.

Delgado, a former Democratic U.S. Representative who identifies as Afro-Latino, took over the position as lieutenant governor in May after Brian Benjamin resigned, and said he couldn't "wait to get down to business" of "transparent" and "accountable" government.

New York Attorney General Letitia A. James, 64, also took oath Sunday for her second elected term in the position. She made history in 2018 as the first woman elected as the state's attorney general and the first Black person to serve in the role.

"Four years ago I made a commitment to make this office a force of justice. I promise to fight for all New Yorkers, regardless of your political affiliation," James, of Brooklyn, said.

# South Asian black carbon aerosols increase glacial mass loss over Tibetan plateau: Study

PTI ■ BEIJING

Black carbon aerosols have indirectly affected the mass gain of the Tibetan Plateau glaciers by changing long-range water vapour transport from the South Asian monsoon region, a study has found.

The South Asia region adjacent to the Tibetan Plateau has among the highest levels of black carbon emission in the world, the researchers said.

Black carbon aerosols are produced by the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels and biomass, and are characterised by strong light absorption.

Many studies have emphasised black carbon aerosols from South Asia can be transported across the Himalayas to the inland region of the Tibetan Plateau.

Researchers noted that black carbon deposition in snow reduces the albedo of surfaces — a measure of how much of Sun's radiations are reflected — which may accelerate the melting of glaciers and snow cover, thus changing the hydrological process and water resources in the region.

The study, published in Nature Communications, found that since the 21st century, South Asian black carbon aerosols have indirectly affect-

ed the mass gain of the Tibetan Plateau glaciers by changing long-range water vapour transport from the South Asian monsoon region.

"Black carbon aerosols in South Asia heat up the middle and upper atmosphere, thus increasing the North-South temperature gradient," said Professor KANG Shichang from Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS).

"Accordingly, the convective activity in South Asia is enhanced, which causes convergence of water vapour in South Asia. Meanwhile, black carbon also increases the number of cloud condensation



nuclei in the atmosphere," Shichang said.

These changes in meteorological conditions caused by black carbon aerosols make more water vapour form precipitation in South Asia, and the northward transport to the Tibetan Plateau was weakened, the researchers said.

As a result, precipitation in the central and the southern Tibetan Plateau decreases during the monsoon, especially in the southern Tibetan Plateau, they said.

The decrease in precipitation further leads to a decrease of mass gain of glaciers. From 2007 to 2016, the

reduced mass gain by precipitation decrease accounted for 11 per cent of the average glacier mass loss on the Tibetan Plateau and 22.1 per cent in the Himalayas.

"The transboundary transport and deposition of black carbon aerosols from South Asia accelerate glacier ablation over the Tibetan Plateau."

"Meanwhile, the reduction of summer precipitation over the Tibetan Plateau will reduce the mass gain of plateau glaciers, which will increase the amount of glacier mass deficit," Shichang added.

# Brazil's Lula sworn in, vows accountability and rebuilding



AP ■ BRASILIA

Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was sworn in as president on Sunday, and in his first address expressed optimism about plans to rebuild while pledging that members of outgoing Jair Bolsonaro's administration will be held to account.

Lula is assuming office for the third time after thwarting far-right incumbent Bolsonaro's reelection bid. His return to power marks the culmination of a political comeback that is thrilling supporters and enraging opponents in a fiercely polarized nation.

"Our message to Brazil is one of hope and reconstruction," Lula said in a speech in Congress' Lower House after signing the document that formally instates him as president.

"The great edifice of rights, sovereignty and development that this nation built has been

systematically demolished in recent years. To re-erect this edifice, we are going to direct all our efforts."

Sunday afternoon in Brasilia's main esplanade, the party was on. Tens of thousands of supporters decked out in the red of Lula's Workers' Party cheered after his swearing in.

They celebrated when the president said he would send a report about the prior administration to all lawmakers and judicial authorities, revoke Bolsonaro's "criminal decrees" that loosened gun control, and hold the prior administration responsible for its denialism in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We do not carry any spirit of revenge against those who sought to subjugate the nation to their personal and ideological designs, but we are going to ensure the rule of law," Lula said, without mentioning Bolsonaro by name. "Those who erred will answer for their errors, with broad rights to their defense, within the due legal process."

Lula's presidency is unlikely to be like his previous two mandates, coming after the tightest presidential race in more than three decades in Brazil and resistance to his taking office by some of his opponents, political analysts say.



# 14 killed in attack on Mexican border prison

AP ■ MEXICO CITY

Ten guards and four inmates were killed early Sunday when gunmen in armoured vehicles attacked a state prison in Ciudad Juarez across the border from El Paso, Texas, according to state officials.

The Chihuahua state prosecutor's office said in a statement that around 7 a.m. Various armored vehicles arrived at the prison and gunmen opened fire on guards. In addition to those killed, 13 people were wounded and at least 24 inmates escaped.

Mexican soldiers and state police regained control of the prison later Sunday. The state prosecutor's office said its personnel were investigating.

In August, a riot inside the same state prison spread to the streets of Juarez in violence that left 11 people dead.

In that case, two inmates were killed inside the prison and then alleged gang members started shooting up the town, including killing four employees of a radio station who were doing a promotion at a restaurant.

Violence is frequent in Mexican prisons, including in some where authorities only maintain nominal control. Clashes regularly erupt among inmate of rival gangs, which in places like Juarez serve as proxies for drug cartels.

Shortly before Sunday's attack on the prison, municipal police were attacked and managed to capture four men after a pursuit, according to the state prosecutor's office statement.



# Nepal's PM 'Prachanda' to face vote of confidence on January 10

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's newly-appointed Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has decided to take the vote of confidence in the Parliament on January 10, an official said on Monday.

The 68-year-old CPN-Maoist Centre leader was sworn in as the Prime Minister for the third time on December 26 after he dramatically walked out of the pre-poll alliance led by the Nepali Congress and joined hands with opposition leader K P Sharma Oli.

Prachanda on Monday requested the parliament secretariat to arrange to table the agenda of the vote of confidence in parliament on January 10.

"The Prime Minister has sent a letter to include the subject of vote of confidence on the agenda of the Parliament on the 10th of January," said Roj Nath Pandey, the spokesperson of the Parliament Secretariat.

There is a constitutional provision that a person who has become the Prime Minister should take a vote of



confidence within one month of swearing into office.

President Bidhya Devi Bhandari called the first session of the new Parliament on January 9 after the country went to polls on November 20.

This will be the first Parliament session after the appointment of "Prachanda" as the new prime minister of the landlocked nation.

Prachanda was appointed as the country's new prime

minister after he submitted a letter to President Bhandari showing the support of 169 members in the 275-member House of Representatives.

He needs 138 votes for a clear majority in the House.

He has the support of seven parties, including Oli's Communist Party of Nepal- Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) and the newly-formed Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP).

# Floods in Philippines leave 51 dead, over a dozen missing

AP ■ MANILA

The death toll in the massive floods that devastated parts of the Philippines over the Christmas weekend has climbed to 51, with 19 others missing, the national disaster response agency said Monday, as affected residents struggle to get back on their feet.

Photos on social media showed residents in Misamis Occidental province in Northern Mindanao sweeping away thick mud from the floors of their homes. In the seaside village of Cabolanon, coconut trees were uprooted and huts made of light material were nearly flattened.

The Northern Mindanao region in the south bore the brunt of the disaster, reporting 25 deaths, according to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council. Most of the deaths



were from drowning and landslides, and among the missing were fishermen whose boats capsized.

Floods have subsided in most of the areas hit by bad weather that disrupted Christmas celebrations in the eastern, central and southern Philippines. But over 8,600 of the nearly 600,000 affected people remain in emergency shelters.

Over 4,500 houses were damaged by the floods, along with roads and bridges, and some areas still have disrupted power and water supply, the disaster management agency said. The government sent food and other essentials to flood-hit residents, deployed heavy equipment for clearing operations, and provided iron sheets and shelter repair kits, officials said.

Teams from the capital Manila were sent to assist communities with limited clean water in setting up water filtration systems.

At least 22 cities and municipalities have declared a state of calamity, the disaster management council said. The move will allow the release of emergency funds and hasten rehabilitation efforts.

A shear line — the point where warm and cold air meet — triggered heavy rains in parts of the country last week, causing the floods, the state weather bureau said.



# Thousands pay last respects to Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

AP ■ VATICAN CITY

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI's body is lying in state as thousands of people lined up hours before dawn on Monday to pay their respects.

The doors of St. Peter's Basilica opened for viewing by the public at just past 9 A.M.

(0800 GMT; 3 a.m. EST) when the first faithful entered. Public viewing lasts for 10 hours on Monday in St. Peter's Basilica. Twelve hours of viewing are scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday before Thursday morning's funeral, which will be led by Pope Francis, at St. Peter's Square.

The frail, 95-year-old Benedict died Saturday morning in the Vatican monastery where he had lived since his retirement in 2013, when he became the first pontiff to resign in 600 years.

Security officials expected at least 25,000 people to pass by the body on the first day of viewing.

# 77-year-old UN needs a 'refresh' says Jaishankar

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said a 77-year-old organisation like the United Nations needs a "refresh", asserting that pushing for a major overhaul in the top global body is an important part of New Delhi's foreign policy.

Jaishankar made these comments while addressing members of the Indian diaspora here in the Austrian capital on Sunday.

When asked how Jaishankar was planning to undertake the reforms in the UN, and if India would take the leadership in bringing about this change, the minister said: "The UN system was invented in 1945. Now, I tell people to show me something which is 77 years old and you feel doesn't need a refresh. People refresh themselves, institutions need to be refreshed by other people. We need change. Large parts of the world do not believe anymore that the UN system speaks fairly for them."

The United Nations (UN) officially came into existence in October 1945, after its Charter was ratified by China, France, the Soviet Union, the UK, the US and by a majority of other signatories.



India has been at the forefront of efforts at the UN to push for urgent long-pending reform of the Security Council, emphasising that it rightly deserves a place at the UN high table as a permanent member.

"The problem is those who are occupying positions of influence obviously don't want to dilute their influence. So how we persuade people to go along with that change when their more short-term calculations make them stick to the old system is a real problem," Jaishankar explained.

The minister said pushing for reforms in the UN is an integral part of India's foreign policy, noting that the change will not take place overnight.

"Having said that, it's something which we will per-

severe and it's a very important goal for us, and our foreign policy. It won't happen tomorrow but it will happen one day, trust me," he said.

The five permanent members are Russia, the UK, China, France and the United States and these countries can veto any substantive resolution.

There has been growing demand to increase the number of permanent members to reflect the contemporary global reality.

Jaishankar arrived in Austria from Cyprus, and is on the second leg of his two-nation tour.

This is the first EAM-level visit from India to Austria in the last 27 years, and it takes place against the backdrop of 75 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 2023.

# HC grants bail to Senator held for controversial tweets against Pak Army

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A top court here on Monday granted bail to Senator Azam Khan Swati, a close aide of ousted Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan, who had been in custody since November last year over his controversial tweets against the Army.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had booked and arrested Senator Swati in Islamabad over a "highly obnoxious campaign of intimidating tweets [...] against state institutions". Earlier this month, the senator who was loyal to former premier Khan had approached a special court in Islamabad for bail, which was rejected, following which he filed a post-arrest bail petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC).

The IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq approved Swati's bail against the submission of surety bonds worth Rs 2,00,000.

It was the second time that Swati was booked and arrested by the FIA over his tweets about senior Pakistan Army officials in

less than two months.

During his arrest after the first tweet in October 2022, he was allegedly subjected to torture and humiliation by officials of security agencies. He has also claimed that a video to embarrass his family was also sent by agencies to his wife.

As he demanded action against his alleged tormentors, he targeted a senior Army officer of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) on social media, leading to the new case and the subsequent arrest.

After his arrest in Islamabad, Swati was taken to Balochistan province in the first week of December and several cases were registered against him. However, the Balochistan High Court granted him bail and also barred the police from filing further cases against him.

The Senator was then taken to the Sindh province where again he was booked under various cases. However, the Sindh High Court (SHC) accepted his bail and he was brought back to Islamabad.

# Lanka's ousted prez Gotabaya Rajapaksa applies for US citizenship restoration

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's ousted president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled the country in July last year and then returned after nearly two months, has applied for restoration of his US citizenship after he failed to get asylum in any country, according to a media report.

However, the US government is yet to consider the request, The Sunday Times newspaper here reported.

In 2019, Rajapaksa renounced his US citizenship to contest the 2019 presidential polls. As per Sri Lankan Constitution, dual citizenship holders are barred from contesting elections.

"An appeal by his lawyers to the US government -- more pointedly the Department of State to restore his citizenship, which he renounced to contest the November 2019 presidential election, has still not been considered," the report said on Sunday. The former president and his immediate family are currently in Dubai on holiday.

Rajapaksa, 73, had made the appeal for the restoration of his US Citizenship after he failed to seek asylum in any country upon fleeing Sri Lanka during the anti-government protests.

# Public service in Sri Lanka is not an eight hour job: President Wickremesinghe

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Public service in Sri Lanka is not an eight-hour job, President Ranil Wickremesinghe said on Monday, as he urged public servants to work overtime to make the cash-strapped island a prosperous nation this year.

Sri Lanka was hit by an unprecedented financial crisis last year due to a severe paucity of foreign exchange reserves

that also sparked political turmoil in the island nation which led to the ouster of the all-powerful Rajapaksa family.

"Each person's duties (public servants) cannot be limited to 8 hours a day and 5 days a week. Let's all work with commitment. By the end of 2023, I hope to take this country forward with the support of all of you and restore normalcy," news portal newsfirst.lk reported, quoting Wickremesinghe as

saying during an event held at the President's Office here on Monday. The President said no public servant can shirk responsibility as 2023 was a crucial year for the country's economy.

Incidentally, Sri Lanka turns 75 as an independent nation later this year National Day, also known as Independence Day, is celebrated on February 4 to commemorate the country's political independence from British rule in 1948.

# Novel water filter removes 99.9% microplastics

PTI ■ SEOUL

Scientists have developed a new water purification system that can filter out small plastic particles, as well as other pollutants, very quickly and with high efficiency.

The porous material, described in the journal Advanced Materials, may be used as a high-efficiency adsorption material in the future as it has cost competitiveness based on raw materials and enables solar-based water purification process.

"The technology is an unrivaled with the world's highest purification efficiency, removing more than 99.9 per cent of phenolic microplastics and volatile organic compound (VOC) contaminants in water at ultra-high speeds," said Professor Park Chi-Young from



Daegu Gyeongbuk Institute of Science and Technology (DGIST) in Korea.

"We expect that it will be a universal technology with high economic efficiency that can purify contaminated water and supply drinking water even in areas where there is no power

supply," Chi-Young said in a statement.

Water pollution caused by the rapid development of the chemical industry is a big problem in environmental pollution.

Various water purification technologies and materials have been developed to solve this problem.

The researchers noted that carbon-based porous materials using existing adsorption mechanisms have limitations in that the adsorption rate is slow and high thermal energy is required for recycling.

Various materials have been developed to improve contaminant removal efficiency, but it has been difficult to develop materials that simultaneously satisfy excellent recyclability, high efficiency, economic efficiency of raw materials, and industrialisation potential.



**कार्यालय नगर निगम, हरिद्वार**  
पत्रांक:- 257 / सौसेन(नगनिहरी) / 2022-23 दिनांक:- 02.01.2023

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S. No.	Scheduled/Information	Date	Time
1	Date of Online publication	03.01.2023	10:00 AM
2	Document Download start Date	03.01.2023	10:00 AM
3	Online Bid submission Start Date	03.01.2023	10:00 AM
4	Online Bid submission End Date	10.01.2023	12:00 PM
5	Offline Submission of Hard/ Original copy of Document End date	10.01.2023	12:00 PM
6	Bid opening Date	10.01.2023	02:00 PM

उपरोक्त तिथियों में कोई भी संशोधन/परिवर्तन मात्र [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in) वेबसाइट पर ही Publish किया जायेगा।

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**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
TENDER NOTICE  
Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)

**N.I.T. No.** 39(A)-22-23-W-2 Dated 02.01.2023

1	Name of work with its location: A) Replacement of Steel girder bridges upto 6.10 mtr. With PSC slab in the section of ADEN/SMQL, ADEN/GZB & ADEN/MUT under Sr.DEN-II/DLI.	
2	Approx. Cost of work NIT-39(A)-22-23-W-2	As per IREPS Notice
3	Earnest Money NIT-39(A)-22-23-W-2	As per IREPS Notice
4	Completion period of Work NIT-39(A)-22-23-W-2	As per IREPS Notice
5	Cost of tender on cash/by post NIT-39(A)-22-23-W-2	As per IREPS Notice
6	Date and time for submission of tender and opening of tender	13.01.2023 to 27.01.2023 upto 15:00 hrs Opening of tender 27.01.2023 at 15:00 hrs. on
7	Similar nature of Work NIT-39(A)-22-23-W-2	As per IREPS Notice
8	Website particulars notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc.	Above tender available on IREPS site i.e. <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a>

No. NIT-39(A)-22-23-W-2 Dated. 02.01.2023 02/2023

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**OFFICE OF THE PROJECT MANAGER, CONSTRUCTION UNIT, UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL NIGAM**  
GHINGARIKHAL, RANIKHET, DISTT- ALMORA 263645

Letter No.: 01/Nivida/01 Date: 02-01-2023

**E-Tender Notice**

- Name of the work:** Construction of Proposed Labour Room for Govind Singh Mahara Government Hospital at Ranikhet.
- Estimated Cost:** Rs. 55.86 Lakh
- Period of Completion:-** 04 Month
- Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal:-** 02-01-2023 (12.00 hrs)
- Online Bid submission: End date :-** 16-01-2023 (17.00 hrs)
- Date & Time of Technical bid Opening :-** 17-01-2023 (16.30 hrs)
- Name and Address of the Officer inviting bid:-** Project Manager, Construction Unit, Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Ranikhet.
- Pre-bid meeting details (if required) Date & Place:-** 04-01-2023 (11.00 hrs) Project Manager, Construction Unit, Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Ranikhet.
- For further details, details of subsequent Amendment / correction documentation etc. may be obtained from the e-Procurement portal [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in)

**PROJECT MANAGER**



**UJJAIN SMART CITY LIMITED**  
Mela Office, Kothi Road, Ujjain (M.P.) 456001 Ph. 0734-2525856

**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

No. USCL/230 Tender ID: 2022\_UAD\_240893\_1 Date: 29.12.2022

Ujjain Smart City Limited invites Interested parties for "Selection of Agency to Operate and Manage Surface Parking near Triveni Museum under Ujjain Smart City, Madhya Pradesh" Interested bidders may purchase and submit their proposals online at [www.mptenders.gov.in](http://www.mptenders.gov.in).

Eanest Money Deposit	50,000/-
Cost of Document	5000/-
Probable Amount of Contract	NA
Purchase of Tender Start Date	29.12.2022
Last date for submission of Technical and Financial Bid (Online)	12.01.2023 up to 17:00 hrs

For more details, please visit <https://www.mptenders.gov.in>. Any Corrigendum or amendments shall be published on this website only.

For, Ujjain Smart City Limited



# 6 yrs after Demo: Cash is king, circulation up 83% over 2016

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Six years after the shock move to ban 86 per cent of the currency in circulation, cash is still the king with official data showing close to doubling of cash with the public. The value of the currency in circulation (or public holding of cash) stood at Rs 32.42 lakh crore as on December 23, 2022, according to Reserve Bank data.

This compares to Rs 17.74 lakh crore worth of notes in circulation (NiC) on November 4, 2016, days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced outlawing of old 1,000 and 500 rupee notes to target black money and fight corruption.

NiC fell to about Rs 9 lakh crore after demonetisation.

Compared with January 6, 2017, the cash in circulation has seen a more than 3-fold or 260 per cent jump, while from November 4, 2016, it has seen about 83 per cent rise.

After the shock announcement, the government gave a limited-time window for the public to return the banned



currency. According to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), almost the entire amount of currency withdrawn was turned in.

The total value of notes returned by the public was Rs 15.3 lakh crore or 99.3 per cent of the total of Rs 15.4 lakh crore of notes in circulation on November 8, 2016. This raised questions over the purpose of a shock move that triggered a sharp slowdown in the economy and put the public to hardship.

The outlawed currency notes were replaced by new 500 and 2,000 rupee notes. However, the 1,000 rupee note was not reintroduced.

The demonetisation was

challenged in the Supreme Court, which on Monday upheld the legality by a majority 4:1 verdict.

According to a written reply, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman furnished in the Lok Sabha on December 19, 2022, the value of NiC fell over 20 per cent at end of March 2017 to Rs 13.1 lakh crore but has been on the rise since.

It rose by 37.67 per cent to Rs 18.03 lakh crore on March 31, 2018. The value of NiC soared to Rs 21.10 lakh crore on March 31, 2019, Rs 24.20 lakh crore on March 31, 2020, Rs 28.26 lakh crore on March 31, 2021, and Rs 31.05 lakh crore on March 31, 2022.

## India's mfg PMI 13-month high in Dec on rise in new orders, strong demand



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's manufacturing sector activity rose to a 13-month high in December, supported by healthy inflows of new business and strong demand conditions, according to a monthly survey.

The seasonally adjusted S&P Global India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) stood at 57.8 in December, up from 55.7 in November, as business conditions improved to the greatest extent in over two years.

The December PMI data pointed to an improvement in overall operating conditions

for the 18th straight month. In PMI parlance, a print above 50 means expansion while a score below 50 indicates contraction.

"Following a promising start to 2022, the Indian manufacturing industry maintained a strong performance as time progressed, wrapping the year with the best expansion in production seen since November 2021," Pollyanna De Lima, Economics Associate Director at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said.

Hiring activity was stretched to December, while more inputs were acquired as firms sought to supplement production and add to their inventories.

## Indian economy likely to navigate rough global weather in 2023: Assocham

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's economy is expected to navigate rough global weather in 2023 due to resilient consumer demand, better corporate performance and abating of inflation, even as the year is likely to be full of challenges and opportunities, Assocham said on Monday.

"While the global outlook seems rather tough, the Indian economy is set to stay on steady ground, helped by strong domestic demand, a healthy financial sector and improved corporate balance sheets. Early signs of brighter prospects of Rabi crops point towards a robust performance of agriculture, leaving an improved second round effect for several connected industries like FMCG, tractors, two-wheelers, speciality chemicals and fertilisers," Assocham Secretary General Deepak Sood stated.

While there is an overwhelming consumer response to contact services like travel, hotels and transport, a positive domino effect is visible in transport, housing, power, electronics, discretionary con-



sumer goods and automobiles, he added.

"Our domestic demand is bound to offset the risk of global demand slowdown... However, we need to be watchful about international currency fluctuations, particularly in Emerging Economies," Sood said.

As per the recent assessment shared by the Reserve Bank of India, the global economy is projected to grow by a mere 2.7 per cent even as some of the key developed economies face recession, being exasperated by their central banks' policies of monetary tightening, he noted.

To an extent, the impact of

higher interest would be reflected in the balance sheets of Indian corporates as well.

However, the corporate sector is expected to continue with the policy of deleveraging, taking advantage of a resilient stock market and reversal in commodity prices, Sood observed.

"Despite global headwinds, including recession, looming large in several economies, unabated geo-political situation, inflation, India is set to register an economic expansion between 6.8-7 per cent in the financial year 2022-23. Going forward, FY-24 should hold steady," the Assocham Secretary General said.

## Unemployment rate surges to 8.3% in Dec: CMIE

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Unemployment rate in the country has zoomed to a high of 8.3 per cent in December, the highest in 2022, according to data from Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

The unemployment rate during November was at 8 per cent, while in September it was the lowest at 6.43 per cent and was at the second highest level during the year at 8.28 per cent in August, the CMIE data stated.

While the urban unemployment rate was at 10 per cent during the last month of 2022, rural joblessness stood at 7.5 per cent during December.

Among the states, unemployment continued to be the highest in Haryana at 37.4 per cent in December, followed by Rajasthan at 28.5 per cent, Delhi 20.8 per cent, Bihar 19.1 per cent and Jharkhand 18 per cent.

Analysing the data, TeamLease Services co-founder and executive vice president Rituparna Chakraborty said



CMIE Unemployment report at the face of it is an interesting bouquet of bad news and good news.

"One of the alarming possibilities for India given the leading indicators of birth rate and death rate and economic prosperity is the fact that our additions to the labour workforce are likely to slow down like it has happened in China or in Europe and other developed economies," she said.

The so-called demographic dividend could possibly reach the end of the dividend runaway in the near future and hence unemployment going up in the short-run on account of increased labour workforce participation can not be such a bad thing after all, Chakraborty noted.

## Markets dart up on first trading day of New Year; Tata Steel spurts 6%

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks began the New Year on a strong note, with the Sensex climbing 327 points and the Nifty finishing near the 18,200-mark on Monday as positive macro-economic data and a firm trend in European equities bolstered investor sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 327.05 points or 0.54 per cent to settle at 61,167.79. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty advanced 92.15 points or 0.51 per cent to 18,197.45.

Tata Steel was the biggest gainer in the Sensex pack, vaulting 5.86 per cent, followed by Tata Motors, ICICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Reliance Industries, Infosys, NTPC and Bharti Airtel.

However, Asian Paints, Titan, Tech Mahindra, Sun Pharma, Bajaj Finance and SBI were among the laggards, losing as much as 1.47 per cent.

The market breadth was firmly in favour of the bulls, with 22 advances and only 8 declines.

Robust GST collections last month indicate resilience of



the economy, said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

The collections from Goods and Services Tax (GST) grew 15 per cent to Rs 1.49 lakh crore in December 2022, indicating improved manufacturing output and consumption demand, besides better compliance.

India's manufacturing sector activity rose to a 13-month high in December, supported by healthy inflows of new business and strong demand conditions, according to a monthly survey.

"Markets welcomed 2023 on a high spirit in the absence of global cues. Strong macros and expectations of healthy corporate earnings provided

the support to domestic equities...

"Going forward, we expect market to remain steady with a positive bias ahead of the December quarterly results and run up to the crucial Union Budget in February.

This should drive sector specific action in the market," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge rose 0.84 per cent and midcap index advanced 0.57 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, metal jumped 2.83 per cent, telecommunication climbed 1.32 per cent, services (1.08 per cent), commodities (1.23 per cent), realty (0.99 per cent) and industrials (0.76 per cent).

## Betting on outcomes of games will not be allowed; rules expected in Feb : MoS IT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Online gaming companies will not be allowed to engage in betting on the outcome of games under the principle laid in draft rules, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Monday.

The minister said that as of now, all permissible online gaming will need to be registered with a self-regulatory organisation that will be accountable to the online gaming rules.

"As per the principles laid under the rule, wagering on the outcome of game will not be allowed. All online gaming companies will have to register with the self-regulatory body that will decide on the action required to be taken as per the rules," Chandrasekhar said.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT has published draft rules for online gaming companies and has invited comments on the same by January 17.

The government has proposed a self-regulatory mechanism, mandatory verification of players and physical Indian address for online gaming companies, according to the draft online gaming rules.

Online gaming companies will be covered under the new IT rules that were issued in 2021 for social media platforms.

Online gaming platforms are expected to comply with the laws of the land, including any such law that relates to gambling or betting.

"If you bet on an outcome of the game, it is prohibited. The self-regulatory organisations will develop filters and tests required to decide permissible gaming, be it a game of chance or game



of skills or anything else," Chandrasekhar said.

He said that the objective of the rule is to grow the online gaming sector and encourage innovation.

"We are not policing. Online gaming is USD 200 billion industry. India has a tremendous amount of potential in terms of startups and investments. Our goal is more and more investment comes in, startups in the gaming segment grow," Chandrasekhar said.

The draft rules prescribe additional due diligence for companies by displaying a registration mark on all online games registered by a self-regulatory organisation (SRO) and informing its users regarding its policy related to withdrawal or refund of the deposit, manner of determination and distribution of winnings, fees and other charges payable and KYC procedure for user account registration.

On the verification requirement of children, the minister said the finer details will evolve after the consultation is over.

## Rupee falls 14 paise to close at 82.75 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee started the New Year on a muted note, declining 14 paise to close at 82.75 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday as rising crude oil prices and sustained foreign fund outflows weighed on investor sentiment.

Forex traders said the support from firm domestic equities and weak American currency was negated by the gains in crude oil prices and sustained foreign fund outflows.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened lower at 82.66 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 82.56 and a low of 82.78.

It finally settled at 82.75, down 14 paise over its previous close.

On the last trading day of 2022, the rupee had settled at 82.61.

"The Indian rupee started the first trading day of the new



year with a small loss as many markets remained closed on account of the New year Holiday.

"The rupee was unable to hold the morning gains in absence of inflows. The thin trading volumes, stronger domestic equities and better-than-expected PMI readings were falling short to support the rupee," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

The near-term focus will remain on the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting minutes, scheduled

to be released on Wednesday.

"Spot USD-INR is still stuck in a three-week range of 82.50 to 82.95. We believe the said range could be resolved by the weekend as liquidity returns with traders coming back to their desks after the New Year holiday," Parmar added.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.30 per cent lower at 103.52.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose 2.94 per cent to USD 85.91 per barrel.

## Oil price spike brings back subsidies but India wins at crude diplomacy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A wild swing in international oil prices in 2022 brought back indirect fuel subsidies in India in a setback to reforms, but the nation won at crude diplomacy as it refused to succumb to western pressures and continued to buy oil from the cheapest available source.

International oil prices have been turbulent in the last couple of years. It dipped into the negative zone at the start of the pandemic in 2020 and swung wildly in 2022 -- climbing to a 14-year high of nearly USD 140 per barrel in March 2022 after Russia invaded Ukraine, before sliding on weaker demand from top importer China and worries of an economic contraction.

But for a nation that is 85 per cent dependent on imports, the spike meant adding to already firming inflation and derauling the economic recovery from the pandemic.

So, state-owned fuel retail-



ers Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) froze petrol and diesel prices for the longest duration in at least two decades. They stopped daily price revision in early November 2021 when rates across the country hit an all-time high, prompting the government to roll back a part of the excise duty hike it had effected during the pandemic to take advantage of low oil prices.

The freeze continued into 2022 but the war-led spike in

international oil prices prompted a Rs 10 a litre hike in petrol and diesel prices from mid-March before another round of excise duty cut rolled back all of the Rs 13 a litre and Rs 16 per litre increase in taxes on petrol and diesel effected during the pandemic.

That followed the current price freeze that began on April 6 and still continues. The result was while consumers were insulated, the three firms suffered a combined loss of Rs 21,000 crore in the first half of the 2022-23 fiscal year, and reforms took a backseat.

## IAMAI terms draft data protection bill as industry-friendly; seeks clarity on implementation timelines

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Industry body IAMAI on Monday termed the draft digital personal data protection (DPDP) bill as industry-friendly, lauding the more liberalised framework for cross-border data flows and the exclusion of non-personal data from the ambit of the proposed norms.

The Internet and Mobile Association of India, however, urged the government to clear-



ly indicate reasonable timelines by which the various provisions of the Bill will be

implemented.

"On behalf of its members, the association has requested the government to provide clarifications regarding the DPDP so that once it is passed into an Act, there is better compliance by IAMAI members," the association said in a statement.

In particular, it said, there are ambiguities over the timelines for implementing the various provisions of the Bill and mechanisms for obtaining

verifiable parental consent to process the personal data of children.

"As the inclusion of specific timelines will provide a roadmap for the industry to better comply with the Bill, IAMAI has requested the government to clearly indicate reasonable timelines by which the various provisions of the DPDP will be implemented and to adopt a graded approach to prescribing such timelines," IAMAI said.



# PSG SUFFER FIRST LOSS OF SEASON

AP ■ PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain, without World Cup winner Lionel Messi and Neymar, lost for the first time in any competition since March 20 last year when they were defeated 3-1 at Lens on Sunday.

"PSG deserved their win," said PSG coach Christophe Galtier.

Lois Openda scored one and set up another as Lens, who have only lost once in Ligue 1 this season, closed the gap on PSG at the top to four points after 17 rounds.

"We are happy to be four points behind," said Lens coach Franck Haise. "This victory proves that we can beat anyone in this championship."

PSG's last loss was more than nine months ago when they fell 3-0 at Monaco in Ligue 1, although that still left them 12 points clear at the top of the table.

On Sunday at Lens, PSG were without Messi and suspended Brazilian Neymar, but Kylian Mbappe, the Golden Boot winner in Qatar, received a rousing welcome from the Lens fans as he warmed up.

Galtier said he hoped French fans would give Messi a similar reception.

"He's going to join us on January 3, in 48 hours," said Galtier. "I hope Leo will be well



received. He won the most beautiful trophy by being very good. We know he's a great and decisive player so we hope he'll be well received obviously."

"Kylian worked hard," said Galtier. "He showed a very good attitude." "Leo and 'Ney' were not there but that is no excuse."

Lens took the lead after five minutes when PSG goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma blocked an effort from Massadio Haidara to Przemyslaw Frankowski who scored.

Hugo Ekitike replied three minutes later, swinging hard as

Brice Samba dived to gather a cross and driving the ball through the Lens goalkeeper's grasp.

Lens took control after 28 minutes. Seko Fofana won possession on the edge of his own box, drove through a couple of challenges then measured a pass between the PSG central defenders to Openda. The Belgian sprinted clear, and squeezed a shot under Donnarumma.

Lens pressed from the start of the second half and in the 48th minute won possession deep in the PSG half.

The ball reached Openda in the box, his backheel left the defence flat-footed and allowed Alexis Claude Maurice to take a touch and score from close range.

## 'CELEBRATION WEEK'

The French league normally takes the holiday season off but with matches to make up following the World Cup, it played one round immediately after Christmas and another on Sunday and Monday.

They have dubbed the games 'Celebration Week', in

English, as a nod to the English tradition of Boxing Day games, but many fans are suspicious or hostile. Among protest banners unfurled by fans in an almost empty stand at Nantes, where the home team beat Auxerre 1-0, was one that complained that the league and broadcasters were "killing" them.

In Monaco, Aleksandr Golovin smashed in the only goal from outside the penalty area as the home team did just enough to beat Brest 1-0 and tighten their grip on fourth place.

## Ronaldo set for grand unveiling after shock Saudi move

AP ■ RIYADH

Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo will be unveiled before thousands of fans at Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr club on Tuesday, a spokesman said, after sealing a shock move estimated at more than 200 million euros.

The 37-year-old great, a five-time winner of the Ballon d'Or, will arrive late on Monday with his family together with media and technical staff, club spokesman Al-Walid Al-Muhaidib said.

Ronaldo, who left Manchester United under a cloud after slamming the club in a TV interview, will appear at Al Nassr's 25,000-capacity Mrsool Park stadium in Riyadh at 7:00 pm (1600 GMT) on Tuesday, officials said.

The latest, and possibly final, chapter in an illustrious career comes weeks after Portugal's quarter-final exit from the World Cup in neighbouring Qatar, where his great rival Lionel Messi lifted the trophy with Argentina.

Ronaldo's signing until June 2025 is just the latest foray into top-level sports by oil-rich Saudi, which has moved into Formula One, boxing and golf and snapped up English club Newcastle United.

Critics have dubbed the strategy "sportswashing" -- an attempt by the conservative country to distract attention from its human rights record.

Al Nassr is expecting a full stadium for the unveiling, according to one official who did not want to be named



because he was not authorised to speak to media.

Ronaldo is by far the biggest star to play in Saudi Arabia, although other heavyweights including George Weah, Pep Guardiola and Xavi also had stints in the wealthy Gulf in the twilight of their careers.

Al Nassr, the nine-time Saudi league champions, have called Ronaldo's signing "more than history in the making", claiming he will inspire the rest of the league and even the country.

In a tweet, Saudi Sports Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal pledged to "support the rest of our clubs for quality deals with international stars soon".

United terminated Ronaldo's contract during the World Cup after an explosive interview where he said he felt "betrayed" by the club and had no respect for coach Erik ten Hag.

The Portuguese forward has long been one of the top-paid players in football, earning a reported salary of 31 million euros at Juventus before taking a pay-cut to rejoin United.

Ronaldo has won five Champions League titles (2008, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018), league titles in Italy (2019, 2020) with Juventus, in Spain (2012, 2017) with Real Madrid and in England (2007, 2008, 2009) with United.



## Auger-Aliassime, Rune stunned at Adelaide International

AP ■ ADELAIDE

Australian qualifier Alexei Poppyrin stunned second seed Felix Auger-Aliassime in the first round of the season-opening Adelaide International on Monday as Novak Djokovic was given a hero's welcome in a rare doubles appearance.

On a day of upsets, world number 11 Holger Rune also crashed out, as did women's third seed Daria Kasatkina.

Canada's Auger-Aliassime was in top form towards the end of 2022, winning three tournaments in October and November before leading

Canada to Davis Cup glory when they beat Australia in the final. He rose to number six in the world and said before the tournament he wanted to ride the wave of momentum into the 2023 season. But he came unstuck against Poppyrin, who dropped out of the top 100 last year, slumping 6-4, 7-6 (7/5).

The 23-year-old Australian attacked at every opportunity, hitting 32 winners, including 12 aces. Poppyrin now plays American Marcos Giron who beat French veteran Richard Gasquet 7-6 (7/5), 6-7 (6/8), 7-5 on Sunday.

Japan's Yoshihito Nishikori

downed fifth seed Rune -- the ATP Newcomer of the Year in 2022 after claiming three titles -- in three sets.

Rune, 19, won the first set comfortably but his serve went off the ball and Nishikori came back to win the next two and take the match 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.

Earlier, fans gave Djokovic a raucous welcome during his first match in Australia in almost two years.

Playing with Canada's Vasek Pospisil, they lost to doubles specialists Tomislav Brkic and Gonzalo Escobar 4-6, 6-3, 10/5 but enjoyed overwhelming crowd support.



AP ■ SYDNEY

Reigning Australian Open champion Rafael Nadal said he was "not too alarmed" on Monday after he lost a second straight singles match in the United Cup warm up event.

"Honestly, I'm not too alarmed or too negative about what happened. There was a real chance to lose these kinds of matches," said Nadal after falling to Alex de Minaur in Sydney.

"There is room to improve. I really believe I can do it."

Nadal dropped six consecutive games after leading a set and 1-0 against de Minaur as the Australian turned the match around for a 3-6, 6-1, 7-5 upset in Sydney.

Nadal also lost to Cameron Norrie in his country's first tie at the mixed-teams event as Spain were beaten by Great Britain at the weekend.

With his singles run over at the inaugural edition of the

## Struggling Zverev crushed by Fritz at United Cup

AP ■ SYDNEY

Struggling former world number two Alexander Zverev crashed to a second straight defeat of the season Monday at the United Cup, dismissed by American Taylor Fritz in just 64 minutes.

The German two-time ATP Finals champion slumped 6-1, 6-4 to the world number nine in Sydney as he continued his return from serious injury.

It followed a straight-sets loss to 81st-ranked Czech Jiri Lehecka on Saturday in his first competitive match since tearing three right ankle ligaments during his French Open semi-final against Rafael Nadal in June.

"I've just been practising, kind of dialling in some of the

things that didn't feel great for me in the first match," said Fritz, referring to his opening United Cup win, also against Lehecka. "I'm still working, practising and trying to improve."

"I love playing team competition, I've always performed in team events," he added. "It brings a different energy."

Fritz had a breakthrough year in 2022, beating Rafael Nadal in the final at Indian Wells to go with titles in Tokyo and Eastbourne.

The mixed team tournament features 18 countries playing in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

The winners of the two groups in each city advance to a City Final on Wednesday, with whoever comes through that making the final four.

competition, being played in three cities, 22-time Grand Slam winner Nadal is keen to get to Melbourne and train for his Open title defence starting in a fortnight.

"I have two weeks before the start," Nadal said. "I can't say the situation is ideal, but I can't say that it's very negative. "For moments I was play-

ing well, two matches are going to help. I arrived needing a little bit more time."

The veteran said he was outplayed by world number 24 De Minaur.

"He played better in the important moments. I had my chances but I made important mistakes at those moments that I can't do if I want to win."

## Dhamne exits from Tata Open but shows promise



PTI ■ PUNE

Manas Dhamne, all of 15, made an impression with his fearless approach before being overpowered by Michael Mmoh in the men's singles first round of the Tata Open Maharashtra here on Monday.

Given a wild card entry into the premier tennis tourna-

ment, Dhamne got a taste of high level tennis on the opening day of the ATP250 event, before exiting the tournament with a 2-6, 4-6 defeat against the world number 115.

Up against a physically stronger and technically superior opponent, Dhamne gave a glimpse of what he could bring to the table as he grows up and matures.

He did not have the legs to win those intense rallies and lacked power to trouble his rival consistently but showed a lot of heart for a fight and that vindicated his wild card entry.

"I was not expecting that (fight). He caught me by surprise. He has a bright future ahead," said 24-year-old Mmoh while praising the teenager.

Dhamne had the home fan interested in the fourth game of the opening set when he hit a stunning backhand passing winner and followed that up with a solid forehand which Mmoh netted to earn two break points.

The American though came out serving strong to hold and made it a one-way traffic after that.

Dhamne also used drop shots and backhand slice, showing presence of mind but lacked execution at times. His intermittent winners prevented the match from being bland.

## Final farewell for Pele, Brazil's football 'King'

AP ■ SANTOS

Brazilians bid a final farewell this week to football giant Pele, starting Monday with a 24-hour public wake at the stadium of his long-time team, Santos.

The oceanside home of the team nicknamed "Peixe" - "fish" in Portuguese -- is expecting a huge influx of fans looking to honor the "King" of football, who died aged 82 on Thursday after a long battle with cancer.

Stadium doors will open at 10:00 am local time (1300 GMT). The coffin bearing the remains of the only player to have won three World Cups will be displayed in the center of the field.

Known as Vila Belmiro after the neighborhood where it is located, the black-and-white stadium has a capacity of 16,000 people.

In the stands, three giant

flags could be seen Sunday, one with an image of Pele displaying the famous number 10 on his jersey.

Another bore the message "Long live the king"; the third said simply, "Pele 82 years."

Entry to the stadium will be allowed until 10:00 am Tuesday, officials said.

After that, a procession will be held through the streets of Santos, a port city about 75 kilometers (47 miles) from the state capital Sao Paulo.

The parade will pass the house of Pele's mother, 100-year-old Celeste Arantes, who is unaware that her world-famous son has died.

"She doesn't know," Pele's sister Maria Lucia do Nascimento told ESPN on Friday. "She is not conscious."

The procession will end at a cemetery in Santos, where Pele will be interred in a special mausoleum.

## TRIBUTES TO 'ETERNAL'

Born Edson Arantes do Nascimento, Pele is widely considered to have been the best player yet of the beautiful game.

His death sparked a global outpouring of tributes, with his native Brazil holding three days of national mourning.

He scored 1,283 goals in a career of 21 years, most of them played at Santos.

Wreaths of flowers left by his fans have brought a splash of color to Vila Belmiro, which houses a bust and a statue of the football great.

Silvio Neves Souza, an electrician on holiday from Sao Paulo, took a moment Sunday to visit the stadium since he will not be able to attend the official ceremony.

"I'm sure a lot of people will come to the wake, not just old people who saw him play, but also young people," the 54-year-old said.



Elsewhere in the city, banners with Pele's face decorate another monument erected in his likeness.

"I loved the world with the ball at my feet," read one sign.

At the headquarters of the Brazilian Football Confederation in Rio de Janeiro, a giant poster with Pele's image bears the word "eternal."

And at the inauguration on Sunday of Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, the ceremony began with a minute's silence in Pele's memory.



# INDIA PREPARE FOR LIFE WITHOUT ‘BIG THREE’

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**

Hardik Pandya will be expected to begin his full-time T20 captaincy tenure on a bold note as the Indian T20 team prepares to start its life beyond Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul with the three match series against Sri Lanka, beginning here on Tuesday. The followers of Indian cricket got more than glimpse of Hardik's vision for the team when led the team to victory in the rain-hit T20 series in New Zealand.

In an ODI World Cup year, the shortest format is not priority for the Indian team but the series will allow Hardik to start planning for the future, specifically the 2024 T20 World Cup.

India's famed top three — Rohit, Kohli and Rahul — are not part of the squad and irrespective of their T20 future, the team must prepare for life without them. The problem with the current Indian T20 team in recent past, has been distinct lack of intent and ability to play fearless cricket.

The idea of self preservation at the cost of impactful performance was hurting the team for

a long time and perhaps the poor show in the T20 World Cup became the last straw.

**THE COMBINATION**

Rishabh Pant, who suffered a horrific car crash last week, opened for the team in New Zealand alongside Ishan Kishan. Pant was anyway not picked for the Sri Lanka series, making Kishan and Ruturaj Gaikwad opening combination most likely for the first T20 at the high-scoring Wankhede Stadium.

Both Kishan and Gaikwad have been bonafide IPL stars for a past few years and this is their real chance to show their wares without worrying about their place in the side.

With next T20 World Cup at least 18 months away, the duo is expected to get a fair run although the number of T20 Internationals this year is less than 15 with ODI gaining more precedence.

Shubman Gill, who is yet to make his T20 debut, is another opening option for Hardik.

At number three, the skipper will rely on the brilliance of world's No. 1 batter Suryakumar Yadav. With Hardik keen to have six bowling options in the play-



ing eleven, Deepak Hooda could be a likely starter for Tuesday's game. The management will have to choose between Sanju Samson and uncapped Rahul Tripathi for the one spot in the middle order. Tripathi has been warming the bench for a while now and it could continue against Sri Lanka but Samson on account of experience should get a first go.

Though uncapped Shivam Mavi and Mukesh Kumar have been included in the squad, the likely pace bowling trio will be of Arshdeep Singh, Harshal Patel and Umran Malik.

India could also pack in more all-rounders in the team with the option of Washington Sundar and Axar Patel. Specialist spinner Yuzvendra Chahal is expected to play in the series opener.

Reigning Asia Cup champions Sri Lanka will be no pushovers for India even in their own conditions. Sri Lanka have rewarded the star performers of the Lanka Premier League — Avishka Fernando, Chamika Karunaratne and Sadeera Samarawickrama — by including them in the team for the India series.

Both Fernando and Karunaratne have made a comeback and will be looking to make an impactful contribution. Bhanuka Rajapaksa will be their key batter in the middle-order.

**SQUADS**

**India:** Hardik Pandya (captain), Ishan Kishan (wk), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shubman Gill, Suryakumar Yadav (VC), Deepak Hooda, Rahul Tripathi, Sanju Samson, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel, Arshdeep Singh, Harshal Patel, Umran Malik, Shivam Mavi, Mukesh Kumar.

**Sri Lanka:** Dasun Shanaka (C), Pathum Nissanka, Avishka Fernando, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Kusal Mendis (VC for ODIs), Bhanuka Rajapaksa (only for T20Is), Charith Asalanka, Dhananjaya de Silva, Wanindu Hasaranga (VC for T20Is), Ashen Bandara, Maheesh Theekshana, Jeffrey Vandersay (only for ODIs), Chamika Karunaratne, Dilshan Madushanka, Kasun Rajitha, Nuwanidu Fernando (only for ODIs), Dunith Wellalage, Pramod Madushan, Lahiru Kumara, Nuwan Thushara (only for T20Is).



## Hardik sends ‘love and prayers’ for injured Pant

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**

Rishabh Pant's absence from the national team would definitely have a huge impact on the side's balance but all that new T20 skipper Hardik Pandya can think of right now is "speedy recovery" of his teammate.

A game-changer like Pant, on Friday, encountered a horrifying accident when he lost control of his car while driving on NH-58 and is currently admitted in Max Dehradun with multiple injuries on head, back, knee and ankle. He was on Monday shifted from ICU to a private ward.

The injuries, especially the ones on knee and ankle, will keep him out of action for a minimum period of six months. When Hardik was asked about Pant, he was full of empathy even as he put things into perspective.

"What happened is very

unfortunate. No one had any control about it and as a team, we wish him (Pant) all the best. Our love and prayers are always with him and we wish he has a speedy recovery," Hardik said. Hardik then went on to underline the importance of a player of Pant's calibre in the Indian team's set-up.

"Obviously, he was very important but now everyone knows where the situation stands. If Rishabh would also have been there, it would have made a big difference, yes, because of the kind of player he is. But now that he is not there, it is something, we can't control," Hardik added.

The skipper wants all those who will be getting opportunities in the absence of Pant to use them to the fullest.

"There are a lot of people who can get opportunities. Let's see what future has kept for us and move forward with it," he stated.

## Milne pulls out of India, Pak tours



**PTI ■ WELLINGTON**

New Zealand pacer Adam Milne on Monday withdrew himself from the white-ball tours of Pakistan and India due to lack of preparation.

Milne finished the recent home series against India with a tight hamstring and subsequently had his return delayed for the Wellington Firebirds, missing two Ford Trophy matches in December.

Despite playing the first two games of the Dream11 Super Smash season for the Firebirds, the prospect of six ODIs in 16 days across Pakistan and India was considered too big of a risk. A decision was therefore made, by mutual agreement, to replace Milne with Central Stags pace bowler Blair Tickner, who is already in Pakistan with the Test team.

New Zealand selector Gavin Larsen said the decision wasn't

an easy one.

"Adam was very up front with us about his concerns around the lack of one-day bowling loading for the upcoming tours," Larsen said in a New Zealand Cricket statement.





"After chatting to him, we agreed his preparation leading into the tour wouldn't be sufficient for him to cope with the demands of back-to-back, three-game ODI series.

"We appreciate his honesty and his genuine desire not to let the team down."

Milne will continue to play for the Wellington Firebirds when available for the remainder of the home summer.

Larsen said Tickner, who has six ODIs to his name, was a ready-made replacement.


The ODI players depart New Zealand for Pakistan on January 4. The India series comprising three ODIs and as many T20s begins January 18.



**Ministry of Power  
Government of India**

## Shaping Future with Green Energy

Virtually Laying  
Foundation Stone  
of  
**1000 MW Bikaner Solar Power Project**  
by  
**Smt. Droupadi Murmu**  
Hon'ble President of India  
**in Jaipur, Rajasthan  
on Tuesday, 3rd January, 2023**



**August Presence**

**Sh. Kalraj Mishra**  
Hon'ble Governor of Rajasthan

**Sh. Ashok Gehlot**  
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Rajasthan

**Sh. R.K. Singh**  
Hon'ble Union Minister of Power & NRE

**Project Benefits**

- Contributing to achieve 500 GW Renewable Target of Govt. of India by 2030.
- Countering Climate Change with Carbon Emission Reduction of 27,85,077 tons.
- Committed towards Make in India drive.
- Fulfilling Millennium Development Goals through CSR initiatives.
- Creating Employment Opportunities with Green Jobs.
- Strengthening economy of the State & Nation.
- Fixed Maximum Usage Charges for providing cheaper electricity.
- Supplying Renewable Energy to the Grid for