

OPINION 6

FREEBIE CULTURE IN
INDIAN POLITICS

WORLD 8

PHONE USE ALLOWED UKRAINE
TO TARGET TROOPS, SAYS RUSSIA

MONEY 10

SENSEX SNAPS 2-DAY RALLY,
SLIDES 637 PTS

NEW DELHI, THURSDAY JANUARY 5, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3

the pioneer

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INDIA TO FACE
SL IN SECOND
T20I TODAY
11 SPORTDelhi gets colder than
Nainital as temp dipsNational Capital
shivers as mercury
falls to 4.4 degrees C;
central India too in
grip of icy cold

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As frosty winds from the Himalayas swept through the Indo-Gangetic plains, the cold wave intensified its grip on much of north and Central India. Delhi witnessed one of its coldest days of the season on Wednesday as the minimum temperature settled at 4.4 degrees Celsius, making the city colder than Dharamsala, Nainital and Dehradun. There will not be any let up in the cold wave for the next three to four days. Dense fog and low visibility has affected road, rail and air traffic across north India. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) shared satellite images that showed a thick layer of fog over the Indo-Gangetic plains and adjoining central and eastern parts of the country. The IMD predicted dense to very dense fog in the night/morning across Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Bihar for the next three days.

"Dense fog layer persists over Indo-Gangetic plains. It is likely to persist for the next



Blanket vendors at a market during a cold winter morning, in New Delhi on Wednesday.

PTI

two-three days and gradually reduce thereafter," it said.

A giant layer of fog also enveloped north India and adjoining areas on Wednesday morning. The IMD also issued an advisory saying the dense fog conditions may affect some airports, highways and railway routes in the areas of these met-sub-divisions, difficult driving conditions with slower journey times and some road traffic col-

lisions were also predicted. In the power sector, there are chances of tripping of power lines in the very dense fog routes.

The weather condition is expected to aggravate health issues like lung-related problems. "Dense fog contains particulate matter and other pollutants and in case of exposure to the fog it gets lodged in the lungs, clogging them and

decreasing their functional capacity which increases episodes of wheezing, coughing and shortness of breath," it said.

Taking note of the cold wave conditions, the UP Government has extended the winter vacation for primary schools while it changed the school timings with educational institutes slated to hold classes from 10 AM to 2 PM.

*Continued on Page 2*Big relief for Yogi on
quota in local pollsTop court stays
HC order asking
UP Govt to hold
elections sans
OBC reservation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a big relief for Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed the Allahabad High Court (HC) order directing the Uttar Pradesh (UP) Government to hold pending urban local body polls without any reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

The apex court permitted the State Government to appoint administrators to run the affairs of the local bodies after the expiry of tenure of elected representatives. The Bench of Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and Justice PS Narasimha said holding elections without reservation for OBCs would not be correct, even as a constitutional vacuum in terms of vacant seats cannot be allowed.

The top court's order will help Yogi Adityanath to silence his political critics who have been accusing him of not representing the case properly in the HC and hatching a conspiracy to end the OBC reservation. The Bench took note of the submissions of Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the UP Government



and directed that a panel appointed by the Government will have to decide the OBC quota related issues for the local bodies' poll by March 31, 2023. The Bench also said that holding elections without reservation for OBCs would not be correct, even as a constitutional vacuum in terms of vacant seats cannot be allowed. The Court directed that the administrators will not be empowered to take major policy decisions.

"Pending further orders, such direction shall remain stayed. To ensure that administration of local bodies is not hampered, the Government will be at liberty to issue delegation and financial powers. This is subject to the caveat that no major policy decision shall be taken by the administrator," the top court ordered.

The Judges while passing orders asked Mehta, how much time the panel would take to decide the OBC quota related issues.

"But can there be a constitutional vacuum for three

months? Again, holding polls without OBCs will not be correct since a large part will go unrepresented. Cannot the commission form a preliminary report?," asked the CJ.

The Lucknow Bench of the HC, comprising Justices Saurabh Lavania and DK Upadhyaya had, on December 27, directed the State Election Commission (SEC) to conduct elections on an immediate basis without OBC reservation, since the concerned State notification failed to fulfill the triple test formula laid down by the Supreme Court. The Judges had, however, directed the authorities to include reservation for women as per the Constitution.

The HC had quashed a Government notification dated December 5, issued by the Department of Urban Development, noting that the Government intended to conduct local body elections after reserving four Mayor seats in the State for OBCs.

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

PANT SHIFTED TO
MUMBAI HOSPITAL

Dehradun: Star cricketer Rishabh Pant was on Wednesday shifted out of a private hospital here for further treatment in Mumbai, sources said. A plastic surgery had been done here on his forehead for the cuts he suffered in the accident. There was pain in his right leg due to a ligament injury suffered in the accident, sources said. Doctors were waiting for the pain in his leg to subside for conducting an MRI scan, they added. Pant will undergo surgery and subsequent procedures for ligament tears the BCCI said.

SONIA ADMITTED TO
GANGA RAM HOSPITAL

New Delhi: Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi was admitted to Ganga Ram Hospital here on Wednesday for routine check-up, sources said. Sonia Gandhi is suffering from respiratory issues and was unwell since Tuesday evening. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra accompanied her.

NCLAT TELLS GOOGLE TO
PAY 10% OF ₹1K CR FINE

New Delhi: The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal on Wednesday directed Google to pay 10 per cent of the Rs 1,337.76-crore penalty imposed on the tech giant by fair trade regulator CCI.

JUDGE RECUSES HERSELF
FROM BILKIS BANO CASE

New Delhi: Supreme Court judge Justice B Trivedi recused herself from hearing a batch of pleas challenging the remission of sentence of 11 convicts in the Bilkis Bano case in which she was gang-raped.

FIR against man who
misbehaved on AI flight2 months after drunk
urinated on woman
passenger, airline
bans him for 30 days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After public outrage, Air India has banned for 30 days an inebriated male passenger who urinated over a senior citizen woman passenger seated in the business class section on a flight from John F Kennedy International Airport in New York to Delhi.

Shockingly, the said passenger walked scot-free after the flight landed in Delhi despite his obnoxious behaviour and the crew made no efforts to rope in the police to have him detained.

Now, two months after the shocking incident, the Delhi

Police has registered a case on a complaint by Air India. The National Commission for Women (NCW) has asked the Chairman, Air India to intervene in the matter and sought a detailed action taken report in the next seven days.

The incident happened on Air India flight AI-102 from New York to Delhi two month back on November 26. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has sought a report of the incident from the airline in the matter.

After banning the passenger in question for 30 days, the airline has constituted an internal committee to probe lapses on part of its crew and "address the deficiencies that delayed quick redressal of the situation."

According to police, based on the complaint of the victim given to Air India, a case has been registered against the man. *Detailed story on P4*

5K Haldwani families await
SC verdict on evictions todayHC had ordered
removal of squatters
from 29 acres of
Railway land in
Banbhoolpura

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Facing the grim prospect of eviction in the biting cold, nearly 5,000 families of Haldwani in Uttarakhand will anxiously await the outcome of the Supreme Court's proceedings on Thursday to know their fate.

The top court will hear their plea challenging the Uttarakhand High Court's (HC) plea directing the removal of encroachments



Residents of Haldwani protest against the Uttarakhand High Court's eviction order. (File photo)

from 29 acres of Railway land in Haldwani on Thursday.

A Bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices SA Nazeer and PS Narasimha posted the matter for hearing after advocate Prashant Bhushan mentioned the matter. Bhushan submitted that the case — of more than

5,000 houses in Haldwani being demolished — is similar to the matter scheduled to be heard on Thursday.

The apex court agreed to tag the matter and posted the matter for hearing on Thursday.

The Uttarakhand HC on December 20 ordered the

removal of encroachments from 29 acres of Railway land in the town's Banbhoolpura area after giving a week's advance notice to encroachers to vacate it.

Thousands of residents of Banbhoolpura had protested the removal of encroachments, saying it would render them homeless and jeopardise the future of their schoolgoing children. The move will affect a large number of women, children and the elderly.

The HC had issued a directive in this matter saying that the Railway authorities in coordination with the District Administration, and if need be, with any other paramilitary forces, shall immediately, after giving a week's notice to the occupants over the Railways' land, ask them to vacate the land within the aforesaid period. *Continued on Page 2*

CRPF to ramp up
troop strength in J&K
after six terror killings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) will send 18 more companies (1,800 personnel) to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) following the recent back-to-back killings of six people in Rajouri district in Jammu division. The additional 18 companies will be deployed mainly in Poonch and Rajouri districts. While eight companies will be deployed by pooling in personnel from nearby locations of deployment in J&K, another 10 CRPF companies will be rushed from Delhi, officials said.

The move comes amid Intelligence inputs about a likely terror attack in Jammu region. This prompted the Union Home Ministry to issue an order for mobilisation of

more forces for deployment in Jammu. Six people, including two children, were killed and many others injured in two separate terror attacks in Upper Dangri Village in Rajouri district on Sunday evening and early on Monday morning.

In Monday's attack, two minors were killed and several others injured after a suspected IED exploded in the village and another suspected IED was spotted in the area near the village which is about eight km from Rajouri town. The explosion took place near the house where four civilians were killed and many more were injured by terrorists in a targeted shooting incident on Sunday evening. About 12 were injured in the two attacks. The injured victims are undergoing treatment in Jammu hospital.

Anjali was not inebriated,
autopsy belies Nidhi claimVictim's family
says girl should
be charged
with murder

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Nidhi, the so-called "friend" of Anjali Singh, the 20-year-old hit and drag victim, was in the spotlight on Wednesday. The family doctor of the victim denied she was under any influence of alcohol at the time of her tragic accident and cited that the post mortem report, too, had no mention of it, contradicting Nidhi's claims in this regard a day earlier.

While the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) chief Swati Maliwal called for a probe against the "friend", the victim's family said Nidhi was lying and should be charged with murder.



Family members of the 20-year-old woman Anjali Singh who was killed after being hit and dragged by a car, mourn her loss at their residence, at Sultanpuri in New Delhi, on Wednesday.

PTI

The family also demanded a CBI inquiry into Anjali's death. Anjali's family said they had never seen or heard of the "friend" who was with the 20-year-old killed when she was dragged under the car. Anjali's mother told reporters that her

daughter has never had alcohol in her life. "I never seen or heard of Nidhi. She never visited our home. She is lying. My daughter never consumed alcohol. She never came home drunk. Nidhi is lying," Rekha Devi said. *Contd on Page 2*

Maha airport hits
FAC roadblock
for being in
tiger corridor

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Maharashtra Government's ambitious Greenfield airport proposal for Chandrapur has been put on hold after The Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) red-flagged it on the ground that the project fell within the tiger corridor. The green panel said the diversion of nearly 63.540 hectares of forest land would threaten the free movement of the Big Cats in the region. The FAC, under the Union Environment Ministry also said if given go ahead, the airport will further lead to infrastructural development like roads, hotels and other residential/commercial areas in and around the proposed site.

"This may have an adverse impact on tiger movement in the project area which falls within the Tiger Corridors of Eastern Vidharbha Landscape," said panel members. *Continued on Page 2*

Farmers bring four quintal
flowers to greet Rahul's yatra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/BAGHPAT

The Rahul Gandhi-led 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' of the Congress party resumed its Hindi heartland journey on Wednesday from Baghpat in western Uttar Pradesh amidst a rousing welcome by farmers and political party workers including those from the RLD and the Samajwadi Party.

The foot march started in biting cold as scheduled at 6 AM with a fireworks display. Later farmers, who conducted a year-long protest against the controversial farm laws, welcomed the former Congress president with tractors filled with four quintal of flowers.

Addressing a public event at Baraut in Baghpat, Rahul said the purpose of the yatra is to remove fear from the people's minds and highlight issues like price rise and unemployment.

Amid raging talks about his wearing T-shirt in the winter during the yatra, Rahul



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with actress Kamya Panjabi during the party's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', in Baghpat on Wednesday.

PTI

Gandhi said the media is highlighting his attire but "taking no notice of the poor farmers and

labourers walking along with me in torn clothes".

*Continued on Page 2*Cabinet OK's
₹19,744 cr for
green hydrogen
to cut emissions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved Rs 19,744 crore incentive plan to promote the manufacturing of green hydrogen in the country in a bid to cut emissions.

The Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi also approved Rs 2,500 crore to upgrade Prasar Bharati's Doordarshan and All India Radio networks across the country. This scheme also includes free distribution of over eight lakh Free Dish set top boxes of Doordarshan to people living in remote, tribal, nasal affected areas and border areas. Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur said the National Green Hydrogen Mission is expected to attract Rs 8 lakh crore of investment in the green hydrogen chain. India aims to produce 5 million tonnes of green hydrogen per annum in next five years. *Contd on Page 2*

‘Delhi Govt not inclined to contribute to payment of arbitral award to DAMEPL’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Wednesday informed the Delhi High Court that the state government is not inclined to provide it over Rs 3,500 crore towards equity for payment of the arbitral award which was passed in favour of Reliance Infrastructure-owned Delhi Metro Express Private Limited.

The DMRC submitted the Delhi government has said that shareholders cannot be held liable for payments arising out of disputes or contractual defaults, and that the Corporation may raise money from the open market or exter-



nally aided funds or as loan from the central government to meet this liability.

Attorney General R Venkataramani, representing the DMRC and the Centre, informed Justice Yashwant Varma that the matter is under active deliberation by the central government and hoped the issue will be resolved by

January 16, when the meeting of the board of directors of the Corporation is likely to be held.

Taking note of the statement made by the law officer, the high court listed the matter for further hearing on January 19.

The submissions were made by the DMRC in a pending application of the Delhi Airport Metro Express Private Limited (DAMEPL) which said DMRC paid it only Rs 166.44 crore on March 14, 2022 and sought a direction for payment of the remaining Rs 4427.41 crore.

The AG apprised the high court that the Delhi govern-

ment has, in a December 21, 2022 letter, informed the DMRC that "it is not inclined to provide such money of Rs 3565.64 crore towards equity, the purpose of which is solely to pay the arbitral amount with interest".

"This is very unusual what is happening and these are unusual circumstances. We thought that GNCTD (Delhi government) will cooperate with us....," he said.

He said the central government was seriously considering the matter and, if the Delhi government continues to not participate in equity contribution, the Centre will take it to the logical conclusion.

Maha appoints Spl Police Commissioner for Mumbai

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that triggered protests by the Opposition parties, the Maharashtra Government on Wednesday appointed senior IPS officer and Additional Director-General of Police Deven Bharati as the 'Special Commissioner of Police' for Mumbai.

The development came just six months after senior police commissioner Vivek Phansalkar was appointed as the new Police Commissioner of Mumbai.

A 1994 batch IPS officer,



Bharti, had earlier held several top assignments including Joint Commissioner of Police, Additional Commissioner of Police, head of Maharashtra Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS) and Joint Managing Director of Maharashtra State Security Corporation.

Maha electricity board's workers call off strike after Govt's intervention

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Hours after they went on a 72-hour agitation to protest against the alleged privatisation of three firms, nearly 1.25 lakh employees and contractor workers of the Maharashtra State Electricity Board's three companies on Wednesday afternoon withdrew their agitation following the state government's intervention.

On a day when the Maharashtra Congress alleged that the Eknath Shinde-Fadnavis government was planning to hand over the "profit-making" state-run electricity supply utility "Mahavitrans" to private company, Maharashtra's deputy chief minister Devendra

Fadnavis held talks with the leaders of 32 workers' unions and assured them that the state government did not intend to privatise the three power state power undertakings.

The three state-run electricity companies are: Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Co. Ltd (Mahavitran), Maharashtra State Electricity Transmission Co Ltd (Mahapareshan) and Maharashtra State Electricity Generation Co Ltd (Mahanirmiti).The employees had gone on a 72-hour strike last midnight in protest against the proposed entry of Adani Group's Adani Transmission Ltd (ATL) into the power distribution business in Mumbai and other parts of the state

Farmers bring four quintal flowers for Rahul's...

From Page 1
Taking potshots at the media, Rahul said, "I call them 'mitra' (friend) but they are not performing the duty of a friend as they do not raise the real issues out of fear of their bosses. Since the media is not highlighting the issues of people, we thought of raising matters relating to demonetisation, wrong GST, price rise, unemployment in the Parliament, but there the mike was switched off. So we

thought let's walk from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, listen to the people," Rahul told at nukkad sabha.

After a brief address at the meeting, Rahul left for Delhi to see his mother and former Congress chief Sonia Gandhi who was hospitalized due to viral infection. Party said he will lead the yatra towards Haryana again on Thursday morning.

The farmers who had received immense support

from the Congress and Rahul Gandhi, said the Gandhi scion should walk not on the streets but on a path of flowers and so they got four quintals of flowers to the yatra. Nonetheless, the youth Congress party workers from Rahul's traditional Lok Sabha constituency Amethi in UP, walked in the Uttar Pradesh leg of the march donning white T-shirts, an attire that has been the talk of the country both political and social.

Acharya Satyendra Das, chief priest of the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple and Champat Rai, secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, also lauded Rahul for undertaking the Bharat Jodo Yatra, saying he is walking in harsh weather and that must be appreciated. His comments came a day after Acharya Satyendra Das "blessed" Rahul for the Yatra. "I thank the young man who is walking on foot in the

country, I appreciate his move. There is nothing wrong in it. I am the worker of RSS and the RSS never condemned Bharat Jodo Yatra," Rai said in reply to a question from reporters about the Yatra. Another senior trustee of Ram Mandir Trust Govind Dev Giri also hailed Bharat Jodo Yatra. "I pray to Lord Rama to bless him so that the nation remain united, strong and harmonious. Bharat Jodo is a good slogan and India must unite," he said.

Rahul, Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh and the party's Uttar Pradesh unit chief Brijlal Khabri, were also present. Local leaders and activists, including RLD district unit chief Rampal Dhama and local leaders of the Samajwadi Party, joined the yatra.

Congress had earlier claimed that RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary would also take part in the yatra. However, RLD National Secretary Anil

Dubey said it was unlikely as Chaudhary was currently abroad.

Iconic Indian shooter 85 year Prakash Tomar, who is also considered as one of oldest sharpshooters of the world, joined Rahul. Noted actor Kama Panjabi also walked along Rahul in Baghat area. The yatra will travel through Uttar Pradesh for two days and will enter Haryana's Panipat by Thursday evening via Baghat and Shamli.

Over 1,200 party workers from Amethi, the erstwhile Congress bastion which elected Rahul Gandhi to Parliament three times in a row before his defeat in 2019, joined the march at Ghaziabad's Loni border. According to Amethi district Congress chief Pradeep Singhal, the party workers are likely to interact with Rahul Gandhi and urge him to contest the 2024 Lok Sabha elections from Amethi.

Anjali was not inebriated, autopsy belies...

From Page 1
"Nidhi and her family should have informed the police about the incident. Nidhi should be interrogated. She too is involved. We demand CBI enquiry in the case," Anjali's maternal uncle Prem told media persons.

The FSL report has revealed that the victim was stuck onto the front wheel of the vehicle. The report said most of the blood stains were found behind the front left wheel and that, so far, there are no signs to indicate that the woman was inside the car.

The FSL report said blood stains were also found on other parts under the car. The forensic lab is expected to submit three reports to the Delhi Police

Anjali's family doctor Bhupesh said according to the autopsy report, there was food inside the stomach. "If she had been drunk, the report would have mentioned the presence of a chemical. But the report says only food has been detected (inside the stomach)."

Bhupesh said this was not

a normal murder. "A murder is considered sadistic when a victim is brutally tortured before death. As per the autopsy report, she suffered 40 injuries," the doctor said.

Recalling the fateful night, Anjali's friend, who was traced by the police after they examined the CCTV footage, said they had gone to meet some friends at a hotel on New Year's eve and alleged that despite being "drunk", the victim wanted to ride the scooter after the party.

Contrary to other eyewitness accounts, Nidhi asserted that no music was playing in the car that hit them and claimed that the driver was aware that Anjali was being dragged under the wheels.

(DCW) chief Swati Maliwal urged people to stop questioning the morals of the victim in the aftermath of claims made by Nidhi. "Anjali's friend has put the blame on her. She was with Anjali when the accident happened. She left from the spot and went home. Didn't she feel the need to inform (the) police

or Anjali's family about what had happened?"

"She could have followed the car that was dragging Anjali, who must have been crying for help. She could have done something so that Anjali's life could have been saved. What kind of friend is she?," Maliwal said.

"She died a painful death. She was dragged on Delhi's roads for 12 kilometres and her body was found naked. The claims of her friend need to be investigated. Anjali should not be blamed for what happened to her. The accused should be hanged," she added.

"According to the preliminary findings, there are no signs that the woman was present inside the car. Blood stains were also found on parts under the car," sources said.

The forensic lab is expected to submit three reports to the Delhi Police in connection with the case, they said. Of the three reports that are to be submitted, the first reports deals with the blood samples taken from the accident spot, another with the blood sam-

ples collected from the five accused, and the third on recreation of the crime scene, they said.

Sanjeev Gupta, head of the crime scene management division at FSL said, "On Wednesday, our four-member team went to Sultanpuri police station to re-examine the offending vehicle as part of investigation."

The blood samples of the five accused were received on Tuesday to ascertain if it has alcohol traces, the official said. Deepa Verma, Director, FSL said, "The case has been taken on priority and we will be submitting the reports at the earliest."

Anjali was killed in the early hours of the New Year after her scooter was hit by a car, which dragged her for 12 kilometres. Her body was found in outer Delhi's Kanjhawala. Five men who were allegedly in the car have been booked for culpable homicide among other sections. All five accused were sent to three-day police custody on Monday.

Cabinet OK's ₹19,744 cr for green...

From Page 1
The incentives would help bring down the cost, he said, detailing the Mission.

Carbon-free hydrogen, which can be used as fuel in automobiles and as an energy source in industries such as oil refineries and steel plants, is produced by splitting water. When electricity generated from renewable sources such as the sun is used to split water through electrolysis, green hydrogen is produced. Oxygen is a by-product of such a process.

"The initial outlay for the mission will be Rs 19,744 crore, including an outlay of Rs 17,490 crore for the SIGHT programme, Rs 1,466 crore for pilot projects, Rs 400 crore for R&D, and Rs 388 crore towards other mission components. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) will formulate the scheme guidelines for implementation.

"The mission seeks to promote development of green hydrogen production capacity of at least 5 MMT (Million

Metric Tonnes) per annum with an associated renewable energy capacity addition of about 125 GW in the country by 2030," said Government in statement.

Several nations have already come up with green hydrogen subsidy and support programmes. Recently, the US announced a big support plan for clean hydrogen through Inflation Reduction Act. Germany, UK and Japan are also providing support to clean hydrogen through State support programmes. The mission will have wide ranging benefits -- creation of export opportunities for green hydrogen and its derivatives; decarbonisation of industrial, mobility and energy sectors; reduction in dependence on imported fossil fuels and feedstock; development of indigenous manufacturing capabilities; creation of employment opportunities; and development of cutting-edge technologies, an official statement said.

The Mission will also support pilot projects in emerging

end-use sectors and production pathways. Regions capable of supporting large scale production and/or utilisation of hydrogen will be identified and developed as Green Hydrogen Hubs, the minister added.

"The BIND (Broadcasting Infrastructure and Network Development) scheme is the vehicle for providing financial support to Prasar Bharati for expenses related to expansion and upgradation of its broadcasting infrastructure, content development and civil work related to the organisation," the I&B Ministry said in a statement.

"Prasar Bharati, as the public broadcaster of the country, is the most important vehicle of information, education, entertainment and engagement for the people especially in the remote areas of the country through Doordarshan and All India Radio (AIR). Prasar Bharati played a stellar role in communicating health messages and awareness to the public during the Covid pan-

demic," said Thakur.

The BIND scheme will enable the public broadcaster to undertake a major upgradation of its facilities with better infrastructure which will widen its reach, including in the LWE (Left Wing Extremism), border and strategic areas and provide high quality content to the viewers. Purchase of OB vans and digital upgradation of DD and AIR studios to make them HD ready will also be done as part of the project. Thakur said the scheme envisions how Doordarshan should be 20 years from now.

"Prasar Bharati is the public broadcaster...It is not just about profit making. The aim is to ensure information regarding the Government's work and schemes reaches people. Different reports have pointed at the quality of content, whether it is Doordarshan or AIR," said Thakur, adding both DD and AIR are also available on mobile phones. "We are planning how DD should look 20 years from now," he said.

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, भोपाल
केन्द्रीय कर्मशाला (मैके.शाखा)
निविदा सूचना

क्र. 416/के.कर्म./2023

भोपाल, दिनांक 04.01.2023

नगर निगम भोपाल केन्द्रीय कर्मशाला के द्वारा पोकलेन मशीन किराये पर लिये जाने हेतु ऑनलाईन निविदा निम्नानुसार आमंत्रित की जाती है।

क्र.	निविदा क्र.	सामान का विवरण	अनुमानित लागत	घरोहर राशि	निविदा फार्म का मूल्य	प्रदाय अवधि
1	2023_UAD_242026_1	ESTIMATED FOR HIRING OF POCLAIN MACHINE 200 /210 AT MUNICIPAL CORPORATION BHOPAL	15658720/-	78294/-	12500/-	मौग अनुसार

BID SUBMISSION END DATE- 01.02.2023 TIME- 03:30 PM
BID OPENING DATE- 02.02.2023 TIME- 03:30 PM

निविदा से संबंधित अन्य विस्तृत जानकारी वेबसाईट mptenders.gov.in पर देखी एवं केन्द्रीय कर्मशाला (मैकेनिकल) से कार्यालयीन समय में प्राप्त की जा सकती है।

सहायक यंत्री
परिवहन शाखा, नगर निगम भोपाल

Office of the Superintending Engineer
2nd Circle, Public Works Department, Nainital-263002
Phone/Fax: 05942-235728/ 232030 Email: sepwdnti@rediffmail.com

Letter No. : 51/ 41M-2/2022-23 Dated : 03/01/2023

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (E-Tendering)

The Superintending Engineer, 2nd Circle, Public Works Department Nainital on behalf of "Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand" invites Tender in Two Bid System through e-tender for the following civil engineering works. All related Information will be available online in <http://www.uktenders.gov.in> from Dt. 06-01-2023

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Earnest Money (₹ in Lacs)	Cost of Tender form (in ₹)	Validity of Tender (Days)	Period of Completion (Month)	Contractor's Category of Registration
1	construction work of Taranwar Lachampur, Sundarpur Belbal Daulatpur, Kalupur Pokhri, Gurudwara Sahib Sitapur up to State Road- 41 by BM/BC under Under Special Assistance Scheme (In anticipation of Sanction)	10.25	5000+ GST	120	02 Month	Registered in Class 'A' and above in any State Govt./ Central Govt. or any Govt. undertaking in Road works.

Maha airport hits FAC roadblock for being in...

From Page 1
They were discussing the project details at a meeting held here last month.

The FAC has also asked the State Government to explore other sites for the project or expand the nearby existing airport in the region to meet the need of increasing aviation footfalls.

According to a senior Ministry official, the proposed airport is planned at village Vihirgaon and Murti, Taluka Rajura of District Chandrapur in Maharashtra, seeking diversion of 63.540 hectares out of which 25.27 hectares is protected forest land and the rest is reserved forest land. A total of 3,392 trees will be cut down for the project.

Noting that the project area is a Tiger Corridor of Eastern Vidharbha Landscape, the panel pointed out that the proposed airport site is at a distance of 8.35 km from the boundary of Kanhargaoon wildlife Sanctuary which is still awaiting final notification of the Environment Sensitive Zone.

The Maharashtra Government officials said they had explored three alternative sites, but these could not be finalised in view of the obstacles like high tension lines, chimneys and hills etc.

The proposed site is quite near (39 kms) to the already existing Chandrapur (Morwa)

Airport and the Nagpur Airport. The officials also claimed that the scope of expansion in case of Chandrapur (Morwa) airport was limited and the distance between Nagpur Airport and the proposed Greenfield Airport was over 180 kms, noted the panel.

Moreover, the proposed airport falls in the underdeveloped part of Vidarbha Region and when established it will ease the pressure of air traffic on Nagpur airport and will also provide an alternate option to the travelers and also directly help elevate the economic condition of the region.

However, the Dehradun based Wildlife Institute of India (WII) in its report rejected the claim, saying "given the wildlife value of the area and its importance of connecting corridors, the present site may or shall not be considered for the construction of the proposed Greenfield airport".

The State Chief Wildlife Warden too had expressed reservation about the proposed project. "In view of the benefits that seem to be accruing due to the project for local population in terms of the number of employment opportunities, the trade of between the protection of the corridor to be disrupted if the project comes through and the benefits proposed, weighs heavily in favour of protection of the corridor".

Delhi gets colder than Nainital as temp...

From Page 1
According to railway spokesperson, at least 19 trains to Delhi were delayed by one-and-a-half to four-and-a-half hours due to the foggy weather. Several flights have reported to have delayed or rescheduled at several airports. The Palam observatory at the Indira Gandhi International Airport logged a visibility level of 200 metres at 5.30 am.

'Cold day' conditions had gripped Delhi on Wednesday with the maximum temperature dropping five degrees below normal at many places in the national capital, including Lodhi Road, Palam, Jafarpur and Mayur Vihar.

The Capital's minimum temperature was lower than that of Dharamsala (5.2 degrees), Nainital (6 degrees) and Dehradun (4.5 degrees). The Ridge observatory near Delhi University recorded a cold wave with a minimum temperature of 3.3 degrees Celsius, the lowest in the national capital on Wednesday. The maximum temperature in the city settled at 16.5 degrees Celsius, three notches lower than the normal for this time of the year, said the IMD. Delhi's base station, Safdurjung Observatory, recorded 100 per cent humidity in the weather at 8:30 am and 75 per cent at 5:30 pm, the IMD said.

On the other hand, accord-

ing to the data released by the IMD, the observatories at, Jafarpur, Ayanagar, Najafgarh, SPS Mayur Vihar, Palam, and Lodhi Road recorded the minimum temperatures of 6.4 degrees Celsius, 4.4 degrees Celsius, 8 degrees Celsius, 6.8 degrees Celsius, 7.2 degrees Celsius and 5.7 degrees Celsius respectively.

Senior IMD Scientist RK Jenamani said that the cold wave is prevailing in the national capital and maximum temperatures are also low, leading to cold day conditions. Most places are likely to record maximum temperatures between 13 degrees and 15 degrees Celsius.

"However, there has been an improvement in Delhi's fog condition," he said.

"Cold wave and cold day conditions are predicted to continue for the next 24 to 48 hours though there will be some improvement under the influence of a fresh Western Disturbance, which is likely to affect northwest India starting January 7," Jenamani said.

Meanwhile, the Delhi Pollution Control Committee on Wednesday advised resident welfare associations, institutions and other establishments to provide electric heaters, blankets and warm clothes to security guards to prevent open burning of biomass as a cold wave sweeps through the capital.

5K Haldwani...

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If the occupants/encroachers, fail to vacate the premises, and land in dispute of the Railways, after being noticed, it will be open for the Railway Authorities, that they in joint coordination with the local Police, District Magistrate, Senior Superintendent 174 of Police and other Para Military Forces, as referred to above, will initiate immediate action and take a forceful possession of the occupied land from such occupants/encroachers.

C) The statutory authorities as referred to above, will demolish or remove the unauthorised structures, which have been raised by the encroachers on the railways land.

The court also allowed the Railways to use force to demolish the structure and to take in possession the property of the railways. The unauthorised occupants will have to bear the cost of such an exercise.

Big relief...

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The Court had observed that the State has not set up a dedicated Commission for conducting an empirical study into the nature and implications of backwardness for the purposes of providing reservation to OBCs in the local self-government institutions, and thereby has not made necessary changes to the statutory prescriptions.

Marry me or will throw acid, man threatens girl

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A 19-year-old girl has accused her neighbour of threatening her with an acid attack if she refused to marry him in east Delhi's Pandav Nagar. According to police, the matter came to light on Sunday after the victim filed a complaint. The efforts are on to nab the accused.

In her complaint, the victim alleged that Yagvender Yadav Yadav (27), who runs a grocery shop with his father in the area, had threatened her that he will throw acid on her if she does not marry him. The accused and the victim are known to each other, police said.

On Sunday, Yadav asked the victim to come along with him but when she refused, he threatened her by saying that he was carrying acid with him, police said. A case was registered against the accused under sections 341 (wrongful restraint) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code. Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) (East) Amrutha Guguloth said.

Subsequently, after the victim's statement was recorded by the magistrate, sections



354B (assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to disrobe) and 354D (stalking) were added to the FIR, the DCP said. Taking suo-moto cognizance of the matter, the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) chief Swati Maliwal issued a notice to the DCP of the east district.

The Commission has sought a copy of the FIR along with details of arrests made in the matter along with the details of security provided to the woman. The panel has also sought an action-taken report in the matter by January 6.

"We are receiving such types of cases on a daily basis. I do not know when this brutality against women and girls will stop! We need to make our system more effective to deal with such cases. The accused should be arrested and strict action should be taken against

him. The girl must be provided security as he has threatened an acid attack on her!" Maliwal said. In December last year, two motorcycle-borne masked men flung acid on a 17-year-old girl who was attacked minutes after she left her west Delhi home for school.

As outrage spread over the acid attack, women's groups and others, including Lt Governor V K Saxena, raised questions on the availability of acid in markets despite a ban and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal asked how the accused could have gathered so much courage.

The attack took place at Mohan Garden near Uttam Nagar and the girl suffered eight per cent facial burns. Later, the same evening, three men including the victim's neighbour were arrested in connection with the incident. The main accused had procured the acid through Flipkart following which police sent a notice to the e-commerce platform in this regard.

The girl had been a friend of the main accused for a long time but they had a breakup two-three months ago and she stopped talking to him. He planned attack to take revenge.

Sisodia meets Anjali's family, assures Govt job to her kin

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday met the family of Anjali Singh who was hit and dragged by a car in outer Delhi on New Year and assured a Government job to one of her kin. "It was an incident of dreadful savagery. We will provide a job to one of her family members," the deputy Chief Minister said after meeting her family members.

Sisodia said this is not an accident but a brutality that has left the whole nation in a state of shock. MLAs Atishi and Durgesh Pathak also accompanied Sisodia during the visit. "The incident in Kanjhawla is an incident of cruelty that has shaken the whole country. A girl gets trapped under a car and is trampled for 12 km but the car riders do not even realise that.

"This incident is an example of extreme brutality. The sad part is that we are still waiting for stringent action against culprits," he told reporters after the meeting.

Sisodia said the victim was the sole earning member of her family and the government will provide assistance of Rs 10 lakh to support the family.



Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia speaks with the media during his visit to the residence of the 20-year-old woman who was killed after being hit and dragged by a car in New Delhi on Wednesday

RANJAN DIMRI | PIONEER

"The documents have been collected from the victim's family members for giving employment to a member of the family. Along with this, the government will get the complete treatment done of the victim's mother, who needs dialysis on a regular basis," he added.

Sisodia also targeted the central government, which controls the Delhi Police, alleging that they are using all of their power to destroy the

Opposition instead of controlling the law and order situation. "It's unfortunate that BJP is using all powers to destroy the Opposition instead of controlling law and order."

"Even if a polythene or a piece of paper gets stuck in a car, the driver finds out. They stop the car and check. This accident is an example of extreme cruelty. They kept dragging the body for 12 kilometres.

To think that the drivers

did not realise that a woman was stuck under the car is nothing but cruelty and ignorance," said Sisodia, who went to meet Anjali Singh's family Wednesday and extend all possible support.

"The woman was the sole breadwinner in the family. She has younger and older siblings and her mother is unwell. The chief minister spoke to her mother yesterday and promised all possible support. Rs 10 lakh will be given to them as part of the government policy. The mother's treatment will be taken care of.

The family is very poor and asked if someone in the family could be given a job. We have collected the documents of the family members and are exploring the possibility of giving someone a job. I have also told the area MLA and councillors to help them locally as well," Sisodia said.

Earlier, the delegation led by AAP's chief spokesperson and MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj also demanded the dismissal of all police officers stationed along the route that the accused took, as well as the dismissal of the officer who lodged the first information report (FIR) under minor sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Kanjhawala case: Victim's 'friend' ran away after accident occurred

New Delhi: New CCTV footage showed that the friend of the woman who was killed after being dragged by a car was seen returning home around 2.30 am, about 45 minutes after they left the hotel where they attended a New Year party.

The victim's friend, wearing a red sweat shirt with a hoodie, was seen anxiously kicking her house door and pacing up and down, the footage showed. Though the CCTV footage time shows 1.36 am, it has a time gap of about 45 minutes proving that Nidhi reached home at around 2.30am.

The footage showed the victim leaving the hotel around 1.45 am after a New Year party. After scanning footage from multiple CCTV cameras, police ascertained that the victim's friend was riding pillion on her scooter and fled after the accident. She was traced by the police and her statement was recorded on Tuesday.

Another video shows in which Delhi Police's PCR van was seen on the road from where the Baleno car passed on the night of the accident. However, the exact time when the car and police van passed from the road is still unclear.

LG returns file on nomination of DAWB members

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has returned a file to Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on nomination of members to the Delhi Animal Welfare Board, noting that the nominees lacked experience and one was even a "tainted" former bureaucrat.

The Lt Governor has sent the file back with the observation to "review the proposal of the reconstitution of DAWB and ensure that the members being nominated possess impeccable character and integrity, have worked for welfare of animals and the board so constituted is representative of varied related organizations..

Sources said that the decision regarding the reconstitution of the board was delayed 27 months, despite the High Court of Delhi directions regarding the matter. The decision of the Arvind Kejriwal government kept the decision till December 14, 2022, and



kept misleading the Court. "Even when, Kejriwal approved the file to this effect and sent it to LG for concurrence, he proposed the appointment of an Ex. Civil Servant, Rakesh Kumar Gaur (Retd. DAN-ICS), facing vigilance inquiry and a Professor of Video and TV Production, Sabeena Gadhihoke, to the reconstituted Board," they stated.

"This move was in the clear violation of the Articles of Association of DAWB, which clearly enjoins that nominated Members on the Board should be persons actively engaged in

Animal Welfare Work in the State'. Both the said nominees of the Kejriwal government clearly did not possess any experience in the field of Animal Welfare as required by the Articles of Association of the Board," sources said.

They said that the L-G highlighting the discrepancies in the reconstitution of the DAWB, has noted on the file that, "Rakesh Kumar Gaur (Retd. DANICS), has been nominated as a Member of DAWB, even though the retired officer is not clear from vigilance angle" and that "while Sabeena Gadhihoke may prove to be a valuable resource in related fields, she apparently does not possess any experience in the field of Animal Welfare, as required by the Articles of Association of the Board."

The sources said that Saxena has sent file back to the CM with observation to, "review proposal of reconstitution of DAWB/Executive Committee and ensure that

Members being nominated possess impeccable character and integrity, have worked for welfare of animals and that Board so constituted is representative of varied related organizations. They underlined that the LG has noted on file, "since considerable time has already lapsed, the proposal may be resubmitted within two weeks for my consideration".

"The LG has also flagged that the organizations/Institutions like the DAWB are constituted by different governments to cater to the requirements of specific areas that require niche expertise, that are generally not available with government.

Persons with such expertise on such Boards etc., ensure that required advice on issues, that may otherwise go unnoticed or unattended in day-to-day administration, is made available to the government for welfare of the segment aimed at," they said.

"The officials noted that

the even after this matter was being monitored by the High Court since May 2022, June 2022 to December 2022, the Development Minister, Gopal

Rai kept the file pending for more than five months from June 27, 2022 to December 7, 2022, when he finally sent it to CM.

Retired HC judge DERC chairman

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Retired High Court judge Rajeev Shrivastava has been appointed chairman of the Delhi Electricity Regulatory Commission (DERC).

The appointment of Justice (retd) Shrivastava, approved by the chief minister, has now been placed before the Lt Governor VK Saxena for his concurrence, said a Delhi government statement. The appointment may escalate the tussle between the Kejriwal dispensation and the Delhi LG over jurisdiction in the matter.

"The LG is bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers in this matter as it is a transferred subject," said the Delhi government statement.

Approving a proposal for appointment of Justice (retd) Shrivastava moved by Deputy CM Manish Sisodia, the chief minister has also noted that the former LG Anil Bajal agreed with the decisions of the government in the appointment of the previous two chairpersons of the DERC, it said.

Justice (Retd) Shrivastava will assume the post of the Chairman DERC after the

retirement of the present Chairman Justice (retd) Shabihul Hasnain, the statement read. Sharing details of the appointment, Kejriwal tweeted, "Delhi Government approves appointment of Justice (retd) Rajeev Shrivastava as next Chairman of DERC. Best wishes to him for a successful tenure."

The proposal for his appointment was moved by Sisodia who holds the charge of the Power Ministry. The appointment has been made in accordance with the Electricity Act through the same procedure followed for the appointment of the two previous DERC Chairmen, it said.

Justice (Retd) Shrivastava is a former judge of the Madhya Pradesh High Court. Under due procedure, the Chief Justice of the MP High Court has also granted his approval for the same, it added. The current DERC chairman Justice (retd) Hasnain, meanwhile, administered oath to Justice (retd) Ali Zamin as chairperson of the Consumer Grievances Redressal Forum of the discom BSES Rajdhani Power Limited, said a statement of the Commission.

21-year-old stabbed by her friend in Adarsh Nagar

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Wednesday said a 21-year-old woman was allegedly stabbed by her friend following fallout between them in northwest Delhi's Adarsh Nagar. The incident took place on Monday afternoon.

According to a senior police official, the accused was identified as Sukhvinder Singh (22), has been arrested and the victim's condition was stable.

He said that the Singh and the victim had been friends for a long time but the victim ostensibly stopped talking to him after a minor argument. "On Monday, Singh called her near her house and confronted her for not talking to him. When she remained quiet, Singh stabbed her and fled," he stated.

Deputy Commissioner of Police, Northwest district, Usha Rangnani said a case under Section 307 (attempt to murder) of the Indian Penal Code was registered at Adarsh Nagar police station. The accused was apprehended on Tuesday while he was returning to Delhi from Ambala, she said.

The victim has been admitted to Babu Jagjivan Ram Hospital. Her condition is stated to be stable. She received three injuries in the incident, police said.

The victim said she was friends with Singh four or five years ago but her family did not like their friendship, following which she slowly started distancing herself from him. Presently they were not on talking terms, police said.

BSES launches Braille bills for blind

NEW DELHI: The BSES power distribution companies on Wednesday launched a facility to deliver electricity bills to their visually challenged consumers in Braille script.

According to a BSES spokesperson, initially, the Braille bills will be delivered at the doorsteps of 500 visually challenged consumers of the BRPL and BYPL discoms and the number will be scaled up in coming days. The facility was

launched on the occasion of World Braille Day (January 4) by S K Rungta, general secretary of the National Federation of the Blind at BSES' head-office at Nehru Place. BSES director Amal Sinha, BRPL CEO Vineet Sikka and BYPL CEO Amarjeet Singh were present at the launch.

An upgraded and voice-enabled mobile app and doorstep services for the visually challenged was also

launched on the occasion. The visually challenged consumers will be able to avail the complete set of BSES services from their homes, the BSES spokesperson said.

The visually challenged consumers can simply register for the doorstep service after which the BRPL or BYPL officials will visit them at their homes at a convenient time and help them complete all the formalities. SR

10 Aldermen nominated to MCD ahead of Mayoral poll

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Tuesday issued a notification that ten Aldermen have been nominated by the Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) ahead of Friday's Mayoral poll.

The Aldermen refers to people who are experts in their fields but they do not have voting rights in the mayoral election which is scheduled on

December 4. The first municipal House after the high-stakes civic polls is about to take place on Friday when all newly elected councillors will take their oaths and the mayor and the deputy mayor elected.

On Tuesday, the Delhi government issued a notification that 10 members had been nominated by L-G. "In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-clause (i) of clause (b) of sub-section (3) of section 3 of the Delhi Municipal Corporation

Act, 1957 (66 of 1957), the Lt. Governor of the National Capital Territory of Delhi hereby nominates the following persons to be represented in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi for the period 2022-2027," the notification read.

This is the first time since 2012 that a unified municipal corporation will come into being. The erstwhile unified MCD is set up in 1958, was trifurcated in 2012 before being reunified last May.

No road digging from May 1 to Sept 15: MCD

New Delhi: Ahead of G-20 summit, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on Wednesday ordered that no road digging permission will be granted from May 1 to September 15 in Delhi. Informing about roads for which digging permissions have already been granted by civic

body, a senior MCD official said that roads, where digging permissions have been granted, will be restored by February 28.

In a notification on Wednesday, MCD said, "In view of decision taken in the G-20 Core Co-ordination Committee, communicated vide minutes dated December 28. SR

G Noida residents remain indoors after leopard sighted



New Delhi: Most residents of a Greater Noida (West) group housing society where a leopard was sighted continued to remain indoors, with many

avoiding even going to the local shops for getting daily essentials as the operation to rescue the feline entered the second day.

Home deliveries were also regulated after the leopard was spotted again on Wednesday morning. The Forest Department said it continued the search and rescue operation at the Ajnara Le Garden in Sector 16 of Greater Noida (West), also known as Noida Extension, for the second consecutive day. Locals estimate that around 1,500 people live in the close vicinity to the residential tower in whose basement the feline is believed to be stranded.

"No doubt, residents are very concerned about their safety," Mukesh Gupta, who lives with his family on the 15th floor, said Gupta's wife was among those who claimed to have seen the feline moving around in the area on Wednesday morning. "My wife saw the leopard moving in the society on Wednesday morning. It was a little misty when she noticed the leopard near the swimming pool," Gupta said. Amit Kumar, another resident, said home delivery

services have been curtailed and common areas made inaccessible in the society as people are taking utmost caution if stepping out.

The leopard sighting on Tuesday triggered panic among residents of the group housing society.

While four teams from the Forest department at Gautam Buddh Nagar rushed to the spot, experts from Meerut, Agra and Ghaziabad were also roped in to bolster the operation, an official said.



International Institute of Information Technology, Naya Raipur
Plot No.7, Sector 24, Atal Nagar, Naya Raipur - 493661, (C.G.), India

E-TENDER NOTICE

Following tenders are invited on behalf of Director IIIT-NR from interested bidders:

S.No.	Tender Enquiry Number	Description of Tender
1.	IIIT-NR/PO/CGProc/Work station/2022 Dated: 20 th Dec 2022	Tender for Supply, Installation & Commissioning of WorkStation Systems at IIIT Naya Raipur
2.	IIIT-NR/PO/CGProc/RC-LIB Books/2022 Dated: 19 th Dec 2022	Tender for Rate Contract of Library Books at IIIT-NR
3.	IIITNR/ACAD/CONV/2022 Dated: 20 th Dec 2022	Event Management for Third Convocation at IIIT Naya Raipur

Bidders can download complete set of bidding documents from e-procurement platform <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in/> and IIIT-NR website <https://www.iiitnr.ac.in> from 18th Dec 2022 onwards. Bidders need to submit the bids online by uploading all the required documents through <https://eproc.cgstate.gov.in/>.

Purchase Officer

NOTICE INVITING E-TENDER

SSA-17011(11)/2022-CIVIL-SEC-SSA/1641 Date 3rd Jan/2023

The Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, invites bids from registered Class-I & II, PWD (Bldg.) contractor for 76 works in different schools as per the detailed notice inviting tender which can be downloaded from the website <https://www.assamtenders.gov.in>.

The last date of submission of tender is 25/01/2023 upto 2:00 PM.



Sd/-Mission Director,
Samagra Shiksha, Assam
Kahilpara, Guwahati-19

Janasanyog/CF/3743/22

‘5.7 cr Indians affected by serious fungal diseases’

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

At least 4.4 per cent of India's population i.e. over 5.7 crore people, are affected by serious fungal diseases. And 10 per cent of them are from potentially deadly mold infections which have taken a deadly form in the last two Covid-pandemic years.

According to a review of over 400 research articles published in the journal Open Forum Infectious Diseases, the number may be on the higher side given that while fungal disease is frequent in India, its incidence and prevalence are unclear.

The review has come close on the heels of the World Health Organisation (WHO) list of fungal infections — "priority pathogens". The fungal priority pathogens list (FPPL) includes 19 fungi that represent the greatest threat to human health. The UN body has warned that some strains are increasingly drug-resistant and are growing at an alarming rate.

The review, conducted by researchers from the AIIMS, Delhi and AIIMS Kalyani in West Bengal besides PIGMER, Chandigarh and University of Manchester in the UK is the first to define the frequency or burden of various fungal infections in the country. The review is published in the journal Open Forum Infectious Diseases. The researchers esti-



A doctor examines a scan report

Photol PTI

mate that 57,250,826 (over 5.7 crore)— or 4.4 per cent of India's population — are likely to be affected due to the fungal disease, much higher than the number of tuberculosis cases.

"While tuberculosis affects less than three million people in a year in India, the number of Indians affected by fungal disease is several times higher. No doubt, the total burden due to fungal diseases is huge but underappreciated," said Animesh Ray of AIIMS Delhi, the lead author of the article.

The review found that vaginal thrush —or yeast infection of vagina — affected around 2.4 crore women of reproductive age, with repeated attacks while hair fungal infection — known as tinea capitis —in school-age children affected a similar number. It causes a painful infected scalp and leaves many with hair loss, according to the study. The review shows that over 10 lakh

people are thought to have potentially blinding fungal eye disease, and nearly two lakh had mucormycosis, so called "Black mold" which had erupted during the last two Covid pandemic years.

Deadly mold infections of lungs and sinuses affected over 250,000 (2.5 lakh) people, the researchers said. Similarly, another 1,738,400 (over 17 lakh) people had chronic aspergillosis — an infection of the respiratory system caused by a type of mold —and there were 35 lakh people with serious allergic lung mold disease, they said.

This total burden of serious fungal infections is over 10 times the annual incidence of tuberculosis in India, indicating an enormous population of patients affected by fungal diseases, the researchers said. Professor David Denning from The University of Manchester and Global Action For Fungal

Disease noted that there have been major diagnostic improvements in recent years, with public health services in India catching up with private hospitals in terms of capability.

"However, fungal disease continues to be threat to public health and a cause of significant morbidity and mortality representing a considerable socioeconomic burden to those who are infected by them," Denning said adding that "there remain large parts of India with limited diagnostic capability, as evidenced by our inability to estimate some important diseases such as histoplasmosis and fungal asthma in children."

As per the WHO, fungal infections are becoming increasingly resistant to treatment and can be dangerous to mankind due to a lack of focus, lack of surveillance, treatments and diagnostics.

"Emerging from the shadows of the bacterial antimicrobial resistance pandemic, fungal infections are growing, and are ever more resistant to treatments, becoming a public health concern worldwide," said Dr Hanan Balkhy, WHO Assistant Director-General, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) while Dr Haileyesus Getahun, WHO Director, AMR Global Coordination Department called for more data on the impact of fungal infections on health.

Europe needed wake-up call to take note of changing global order: Jaishankar

No region will be stable if dominated by single power: Foreign Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/VIENNA

In the backdrop of ongoing Ukraine conflict and China flexing its muscle, Europe needs a wake-up call to take note of the changing international order, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said.

Sounding this note of caution in an interview with an Austrian publication Die Presse late Tuesday, he also said no region will be stable if dominated by a single power. The Minister is on a visit to Austria.

He said India did not condemn Russia regarding the Ukraine conflict despite pressure from the US and some European countries. New Delhi also rejected pleas not to procure oil from Russia, Jaishankar said.

On Tuesday, Jaishankar had said relations with China are tense after it did not adhere to pacts to maintain peace and stability at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and tried to unilaterally change the status quo at the border. "In the interview, he said, "Europeans needed a wake-up call to understand that the difficult aspects of life are not always taken care of by others, adding, no region will be stable if dominated by a single power."

He said during the 2008 financial crisis, Europe took a defensive stance toward the world. "Above all, Europe wanted to develop within its own space and to keep international problems as far away as possible. Europe focused on trade, empha-



sized multilateralism and used its economic influence to shape the world on its own terms on issues such as climate change and human rights. Europe tended not to want to be involved in tough security issues," said Jaishankar.

Speaking about the shift in the world power structure, Jaishankar gave the example of the US and said despite all the differences, former US Presidents, Barack Obama and Donald Trump both agreed that the US can no longer play the same role in the world stage as it once did and must withdraw.

"We are already living in dangerous times. This transition to the new world order will take a long time. Because change is big. The Americans were the quickest to realize that they had to reposition themselves and seek cooperation with countries like us," said the external affairs minister.

However, Jaishankar said Europeans realised that the world order changing before the Ukraine conflict. "This realization began even before the Ukraine conflict. When the Europeans started talking about an Indo-Pacific strategy, it was clear to me that they no longer



NIA conducts multiple searches in Kolkata, recovers ₹33.87 lakh

Case relates to clash between 2 communities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday conducted multiple searches in Kolkata, West Bengal in a case relating to the clash between two communities in the jurisdiction of Ekbalpur Police Station in Kolkata and recovered over Rs 33.87 lakh from the house of the accused persons.

The agency conducted searches at 17 locations in Bhukailash Road in Mominpur area of Kolkata in connection with the probe into the case, the NIA said in a statement.

The case relates to the clash between persons of different communities who had assembled unlawfully near 8/H/1 Bhukailash Road, Kol-23. These persons were equipped with

deadly weapons, including firearms, bombs and sticks near 12/1, MayurBhanj Road, Kolkata. These persons indulged in brick-batting, stone-pelting and also hurled bombs at each other. They also attacked the security forces personnel and physically assaulted them, and damaged a number of vehicles.

They also attempted to kill the police personnel. At least one policeman was injured in the attack by the mob, according to the FIR.

The case was initially registered as FIR No. 482/2022 dated October 10 at Ekbalpur police station, Kolkata was registered by NIA on October 18.

"During the searches conducted today a total amount of Rs 33,87,300 (Rs 30,55,000 from the house of Md. Salauddin Siddique, Rs 1,59,300 from the house of Zakir Hossain and Rs 1,73,000 from the house of Tipu, (all three are evading arrest), sharp-edged weapons and other incriminating items have been seized. Further investigations in the case are in progress," it added.

Swamy's claim of involvement of staff in bank scams fallacious: RBI tells SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) told the Supreme Court on Wednesday it has an internal mechanism to examine an employee's conduct and the averments made by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy in his plea seeking a probe into the alleged role of its officials in various banking scams are "fallacious and non-substantiated".

The RBI was responding to Swamy's petition on the need for a CBI probe into the role of the Central bank's top officials in approving big loans, which later turned into default.

Seeking dismissal of Swamy's plea, the RBI said the petitioner has no locus standi to file the petition and it is "ridicled" with factual and legal inaccuracies.

"In this regard, it is submitted that the averments made by the Petitioners trying to link the scams to the RBI Officials is fallacious and non-substantiated in the absence of any prima facie evidence produced by the Petitioners. "It is submitted that the RBI has an internal mechanism / frame-

work to examine an employee's conduct if there are any specific allegations, or prima facie evidence with respect to his actions or omissions.

The Petitioners have not presented any evidence or specific allegation in this regard and have merely made vague and ambiguous wild allegations against the entire institution of the answering Respondent," the RBI said in an affidavit filed in the top court.

"It is for the investigating agencies to conduct investigations as per the laid down procedures and applicable law. Most of the scams referred in the present PIL are already under investigation by the CBI & ED. It is not for the Petitioners to direct the course of investigations and decide the aspects which are to be pursued by the law enforcement agencies. The answering Respondent herein seeks leave of this Court," said RBI. Swamy in his petition listed the big loan defaults and frauds probed by CBI and ED, where RBI Directors or top officials of RBI were part of the decision making of approval of such loans.

SC sets aside HC order directing CBI probe against ex-CM Rawat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday set aside an order of the Uttarakhand High Court that directed the CBI to investigate corruption allegations against former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat.

The High Court had on October 27, 2020 ordered the CBI probe into the allegations levelled against the BJP leader while quashing an FIR against journalists Umesh Sharma and Shiv Prasad Semwal.

The top court noted that the two journalists had moved the high court seeking quashing of an FIR against them and had not sought any inquiry into the allegations of corruption that they levelled in social media. It said there was no prayer for an inquiry or to initiate criminal proceedings against Rawat.

Sonia admitted to Ganga Ram Hospital

New Delhi: Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi was admitted to Sir Ganga Ram Hospital in the national Capital on Wednesday for treatment of viral respiratory infection. Sonia Gandhi's daughter Priyanka Gandhi Vadra accompanied her to the hospital in the morning.

The hospital issued a health bulletin later. "Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, Chairperson, UPA has been admitted to our hospital today. She has been admitted to the Department of Chest Medicine under the care of Dr. Arup Basu and his team. Gandhi has been admitted for observation and treatment of a viral respiratory infection," said Dr Ajay Swaroop, chairman of the hospital's board of management.

IN SHORT

98.7% DECLINE IN KALA-AZAR CASES

New Delhi: There has been a 98.7 per cent decline in cases of Kala-azar from 44,533 in 2007 to 834 in 2022 in India, the Union Health Ministry said on Wednesday. India is committed to eliminating Kala-azar from the country by 2023, it said. Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, who chaired a high-level meeting to review the status of Kala-azar disease in the four endemic states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and West Bengal, said 632 (99.8 per cent) endemic blocks have already achieved elimination status (less than one case per 10,000).

EX-MIN, OTHERS ₹10 CR ASSETS ATTACHED

New Delhi: The Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday said it has attached assets worth more than Rs 10 crore in a money laundering investigation against former Maharashtra Minister Anil Parab and others. Parab, 58, is a Shiv Sena leader from the Uddhav Thackeray faction of the party.

JUSTICE BELA RECUSES IN BILKIS BANO CASE

New Delhi: Supreme Court judge Justice Bela M Trivedi on Wednesday recused herself from hearing a batch of pleas challenging the remission of sentence of 11 convicts in Bilkis Bano case in which she was gang-raped and seven members of her family were killed during the 2002 Gujarat riots.

SC JUNKS TRANSFER CASES AGAINST AZAM

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to transfer criminal cases against Samajwadi Party leader Azam Khan, pending in a Rampur special court, outside Uttar Pradesh on the ground of alleged "persecution". A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices SA Nazeer and PS Narasimha said it needed more cogent reasons for transferring the ongoing criminal cases against Khan.

Nadda calls party meeting to discuss 2024 LS polls

New Delhi: BJP president J P Nadda has called a meeting of the party's general secretaries on January 10 here to discuss issues relating to upcoming Assembly polls and 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

"Nadda will chair the meeting. Discussion will be done on the upcoming state Assembly elections, Lok Sabha election 2024, UP corporation election, and multiple events regarding the G20 Meet," sources said. "Multiple events will be held this year. This is an important year for our party. World's eyes will be on our country," they said. Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan,

Chhattisgarh and Telangana and also states of Northeast-Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya would go for polls early this year.

The union territory of Jammu and Kashmir may also have elections this year after finalization of the delimitation of the constituencies in the union territory. The BJP General secretaries' meeting would also focus on the agenda to be laid down for national executive of party which will meet here for two days on January 16-17 which would lay down strategy for winning assembly and Lok Sabha-24 elections. PNS



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella during a meeting, in New Delhi, on Wednesday

PTI Photo

FIR against man who misbehaved on AI flight

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After public outrage, Air India has banned for 30 days an inebriated male passenger who urinated over a senior citizen woman passenger seated in the business class section on a flight from John F Kennedy International Airport in New York to Delhi.

Shockingly, the said passenger walked scot-free after the flight landed in Delhi

despite his obnoxious behaviour and the crew made no efforts to rope in the police to have him detained.

Now, two months after the shocking incident, the Delhi Police has registered a case on a complaint by Air India. The National Commission for Women (NCW) has asked the Chairman, Air India to intervene in the matter and sought a detailed action taken report in the next seven days. The

incident happened on Air India flight AI-102 from New York to Delhi two month back on November 26. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has sought a report of the incident from the airline in the matter.

After banning the passenger in question for 30 days, the airline has constituted an internal committee to probe lapses on part of its crew and "address the deficiencies that delayed

quick redressal of the situation." According to police, based on the complaint of the victim given to Air India, a case has been registered against the man.

FIR against man who misbehaved on AI flight He has been booked under Indian Penal Code Sections 294 (obscene act in public place), 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 509 (word, ges-

ture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) and 510 (misconduct in public by a drunken person) as well as under Aircraft Rules.

"We have formed multiple teams to keep a track of the accused passenger and he will be arrested soon," the police said. The incident came to light after a letter from the woman to Tata Group chairman N Chandrasekaran, surfaced in the media.

OFFICE OF THE RECOVERY OFFICER-II
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II, DELHI
4th Floor, Jeevan Tara Building, Parliament Street,
New Delhi-110001
PROCLAMATION OF SALE

Notice Under Rule 38 of the Second Schedule to the Income Tax Act, 1961 Read with Section 25(a) the Recovery of Debts due to Banks & Financial Institutions Act, 1993.

RC No. 90/2019 Dated: 22.12.2022

In the matter of: ICICI BANK V/S. MR. SANDEEP KUMAR

To, CD

Mr. Sandeep Kumar S/o. Mr. Krishan Pal (Borrower), R/o. Flat No. 304, Tower 7, Plot No. 76. Grant Front Sigma- 4, Greater Noida, Noida, UP-201304.

Whereas in execution of ibid RC No. 90/2019 dated 16.02.2019 in OA No. 43/2017 drawn up by the Hon'ble Presiding Officer, Debts Recovery Tribunal-II, Delhi, the CD is to pay to the applicant Rs. 13,10,815.64/- (Rupees Thirteen Lacs Ten Thousand Eight Hundred And Fifteen & Paise Sixty Four Only) has become due from you as per the ibid Recovery Certificate drawn in OA No. 43/2017 by the Presiding Officer, Debts Recovery Tribunal-II, Delhi. The applicant is entitled to recover a sum of Rs. 12,95,815.64/- (Rupees Twelve Lacs Ninety Five Thousand Eight Hundred And Fifteen & Paise Sixty Four Only) alongwith future interest @10.25% per annum w.e.f. 24.12.2016 till realization with cost of Rs.15,000/- and costs from the Certificate Debtor (CD), failing which the amount shall be recovered by sale of the hypothecated vehicle. In case of any shortfall, the same shall be recovered from the personal movable and immovable assets of the CD.

2. And whereas the undersigned has ordered the sale of the hypothecated vehicle mentioned in scheduled property for satisfaction of the said Recovery Certificate.

3. Notice is hereby given that in the absence of any order of postponement, the said hypothecated vehicle (mentioned under the schedule of property below) shall be sold through e-auction through https://auctrns.credkex.com/ auctions@credkex.com by e-auction Within 11:00 AM & 12 Noon on 08.02.2023 (With Extension of 5 Minutes Duration After 12 Noon, if required)

4. The CH bank shall ensure that prospective bidders are allowed inspection of the said hypothecated vehicle (mentioned under the schedule of property below) before day of auction for which interested individuals may contact the concerned officer of CH Ms. Kalayani Preeti (Mob: 9595281817).

5. The sale shall be of the movable property of the above named Certificate Defaulters (CD), subject to the liabilities and claims attaching to the said hypothecated vehicle, if any.

6. The sale shall be stopped if, before lot is knocked down, the arrears mentioned in the said certificate, interest costs (including cost of sale) are tendered to the officer conducting the sale or proof is given to his satisfaction that the amount of such certificate alongwith the interest and costs has been paid to the undersigned.

7. At the sale the public generally are invited to bid either personally or by duly authorized agent. No officer or other person, having any duty to perform in connection with this sale shall, however, either directly or indirectly bid, or acquire or attempt to acquire any interest in the property sold.

8. The property is being sold on "AS IS WHERE IS" BASIS and "AS IS WHAT IS" BASIS. The sale shall be subject to the conditions prescribed in the Second Schedule to the Income Tax Act, 1961 and the rules made thereunder and to the following further conditions.

9. The particulars specified in the Schedule have been stated to the best of the information of the undersigned, but the undersigned shall not be answerable for any error, mis-statement or omission in this proclamation.

10. The Reserve Price and Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) be fixed as follows:-

S. No.	Details of property	Reserve Price (in Rs.)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (in Rs.)
1.	Renault Fluence bearing Registration No. UP 16BE-5195	3,40,000/-	34,000/-

11. The amount by which the biddings are to be increased shall be determined by the Officer conducting the sale. In the event of any dispute arising as to the amount of bid, or as to the bidder, the lot shall at once be again put to auction.

12. Intending bidders shall be required to pay Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) by way of pay order/demand draft payable at New Delhi and in favour of Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi before the start of bidding and identity proofs, address proofs etc. The said deposit shall be adjusted in the case of successful bidders; and in the case of unsuccessful bidders the same shall be refunded without interest, on the date of sale.

13. Successful highest bidder shall have to deposit 25% of the sale proceeds by way of pay order/demand draft favoring the Recovery Officer-II, DRT-II, Delhi, within 24 hours (next working day) by way of bank draft, after adjusting the EMD stated above, failing which the EMD shall be forfeited.

14. The purchaser shall deposit the balance 75% of the sale proceeds alongwith poundage fee @ 2% upto Rupees 1,000/- @ 1% of the sale price exceeding Rupees 1,000/ within 15 days from the date of auction. The Poundage fees shall be deposited through a demand draft payable in favour of the Registrar, DRT-II, Delhi.

15. In case of default, the amount earlier deposited by the bidder, if the undersigned considers fit, after defraying the expenses of the sale shall be forfeited and the property shall be resold, and the defaulting purchaser shall forfeit all claims to the property or to any part thereof or of any part of the sum for which it may subsequently be sold.

16. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids if found unreasonable or postpone the auction at any time without assigning any reason.

Schedule of Property			
S. No. lots	Description of property to be sold with names co-owners where the property belongs to the defaulter and any other persons is co-owners	Revenue assessed upon the property or any part thereof	Details of any encumbrances to which the property is liable
Claims, if any, which have been put forward to the property and other known particulars bearing on its nature and value.			
1.	Renault Fluence bearing Registration No. UP 16BE-5195	No information	No information

Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal at New Delhi on this 22.12.2022.

(Dattatreya Bajpayee)
Recovery Officer-II
DRT-II, Delhi

Steps taken to stop recurrence of stone-pelting at Vande Bharat

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Political slugfest continued over stone pelting on Howrah-New Jalpaiguri Vande Bharat Express even as unidentified miscreants targeted the semi-high speed train for the second successive day on Wednesday.

A day after miscreants pelted stones and damaged the glass panes of C-13 compartment of the Howrah-bound train at Kumarganj in Malda district the train was again attacked on Wednesday just outside the New Jalpaiguri station.

This time window panes of coaches C-3 and C-6 were damaged, sources said adding no passenger was however injured in the attack. A joint team of State government controlled Government Railway Police and Railway Protection Force was looking into the matter, sources added.

The second attack took place at Phansdidewa off NJP in Darjeeling district prompt-

ing BJP national vice president Dilip Ghosh to allege that “angered by the BJP workers shouting Jai Shri Ram slogans at the inauguration of the Vande Bharat train (on December 30) in presence of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee the TMC men are pelting stones.”

State BJP president Sukanta Majumdar asked “why these people should pelt stones at a train which reaching the people in shorter times ... if they really have to pelt stones they should do so at the BDO offices which have deprived the poor men of their rights to get PM Awas Yojna houses.”

Congress Lok Sabha Leader and former juniorn Railway Minister Adhir Chowdhury demanded an immediate inquiry into the incident. “We want the government to identify those who are doing it and punish them. This is the proof of the plight of the State administration ... if the train is stopped suddenly then that will lead to incon-



venience of the people,” he said comparing the attack to a T 20 match. “Attacked twice in three days. Much like a T20 cricket match, what else?,” he said. While Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee refused to comment back on the issue, her senior Cabinet colleague Firhad Hakim accused the opposition BJP of committing the mischief and trying to malign the State Government and the Trinamool Congress.

“Why the State Government or for that matter the ruling party TMC should instigate such attacks to invite

criticism,” he said, wondering, “why other trains were not attacked ... this means that the people who want to divide Bengal are trying to commit the crime and pass the blame on TMC,” Hakim said.

Meanwhile the RPF and the GRP formed a joint team to look into the matter. “A WhatsApp team has been formed including security forces, Railway officials of all the stations that it passes through in order to share reports of incidents ... we will catch the culprits,” a senior RPF official said.

K’taka Govt gets court notice on ‘one nation, one digital platform’

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka has issued notice to the State Government on a public interest litigation (PIL) petition, challenging the non-implementation of the national e-vidhan application (NeVA) scheme. The State Government went ahead with its own e-vidhan scheme instead. The PIL, filed by former MLC Ramesh Babu, was being heard by a Division Bench headed by Chief Justice P B Varale.

The NeVA aims at promoting digitalisation to provide a platform for the functioning of both Houses of Parliament, Assemblies and councils. The Centre shares 60 per cent of the cost of the platform for the State which has a total outlay of Rs. 673.94 crore. Karnataka decided to implement its own scheme at a cost of Rs 253 crore based on a report submitted by KEON-



ICS. The PIL says the State Government is unnecessarily spending Rs.253 crore, when it could have availed itself of by merging the scheme with the Centre’s.

The present PIL if filed seeking further steps in implementation of NeVA which is beneficial and safeguards Central portal with economic benefits to the implementing State in place of implementation of e-Vidhan scheme through KEONICS which entails substantial loss to the public exchequer as the provisioning of this scheme is to tune of Rs.254 crores,” according to the PIL.

BRS MLAs ‘poaching’ case: T’gana Govt files writ appeals over transfer of case to CBI

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government on Wednesday filed writ appeals in the High Court challenging the decision of a single judge to transfer to CBI, the investigation into the case of alleged attempt to poach BRS MLAs, from the Special Investigation Team (SIT) formed by it.

The matter will come up before the division bench of the High Court headed by the Chief Justice on Thursday. A single judge of the High Court on December 26, 2022 ordered transfer of the investigation into the case of alleged conspiracy to poach four BRS MLAs to the CBI, from the SIT of the State police.

The High Court also quashed the government order to constitute SIT and the investigation so far carried out by it and also the probe done by an Assistant Commissioner of Police in the initial stage.

Three people --



Ramachandra Bharati alias Satish Sharma, Nandu Kumar and Simhayaji Swamy -- were already named as accused (A1 to A3) in the case after a complaint was lodged by BRS MLA Pilot Rohith Reddy, among four legislators, against them on October 26, 2022.

The trio was arrested while they were allegedly trying to lure four MLAs of the ruling BRS to join the BJP. Subsequently, they were granted bail by the High Court.

As per the FIR copy, Rohith Reddy alleged that the accused offered him Rs 100 crore and in return the legislator had to leave the TRS, now BRS, and contest as a BJP candidate in the next Assembly election.

CORRIGENDUM REJOINDER BY NHRC

The National Human Rights Commission has dismissed as factually incorrect a report carried in the Delhi Edition of The Pioneer on January 4, 2023 on page 5 under the heading “NHRC team to visit Didi Turf” today.

In a rebuttal the NHRC has said the report that “The National Human Rights Commission is sending a team to Bengal to take stock of the situation arising out of falling law and order and recruitment scandals.....” is factually incorrect. The Pioneer regrets the inadvertent omission.

Yogi stresses need for developing self-sustainable model for gaushalas

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday stressed the need for developing a self-sustainable model for running ‘gaushala’ and said that gaushalas should be constructed in public-private participation (PPP) mode.

While reviewing a presentation regarding large cow shelters (vrihad gaushala), the chief minister said that these cow shelters should be linked to natural farming, cow dung paint, CNG and CBG (compressed biogas). “This will make the gaushalas financially strong and they will be able to bear the expenses for the maintenance and rearing of the cows,” he



remarked.

Yogi said that for the operation of ‘gaushala’, memorandums of understanding (MoUs) must be signed with the interested non-governmental organisations (NGOs) while making the necessary arrangements.

Along with the Minister for livestock, officials from the departments of Finance, Energy, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development were present.

HC dismisses bail plea of woman accused in human sacrifice case

PTI ■ KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Wednesday dismissed the bail plea of the woman accused in the human sacrifice case in which two other women were allegedly killed, saying that if she was granted there was every chance that she may influence the witnesses.

“If bail is granted, there is the stark reality of justice being thwarted. Thus the circumstances do not lean in favour of the grant of bail to the petitioner (accused),” Justice Bechu Kurian Thomas said and rejected the plea for bail moved by

Laila Bhagawal Singh, one of the three accused in the case.

The court declined to also give her the benefit that a woman enjoys under the proviso to section 437 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

The proviso to section 437 of CrPC states that while considering a bail plea of an accused, if they are sick, infirm or a woman, the court may grant them the relief even if there were reasonable grounds to believe they are guilty of an offence for which the punishment is death or life imprisonment, the High

Court noted.

Justice Kurian said the benefit to be given to women under that provision was discretionary and “not mandatory” and merely because the accused was a woman, the court cannot ignore the nature and gravity of the offence, possibility of influencing witnesses and likelihood of the crime being repeated and justice being thwarted.

The court said that in the instant case, the manner in which the murders were committed was “horrific,” “gruesome” and “shocking”. “The offences alleged

against the petitioner and other accused apparently reveal a human sacrifice. It is, no doubt, a horrendous crime. The nature and gravity of the accusation are gruesome, apart from being shocking...The circumstances of the case, as mentioned earlier, are horrifying.

“The active involvement of the petitioner in the crime and in another crime is asserted by the prosecution and the materials collected, prima facie reveal her involvement in the present crime. The various circumstances of the case are overwhelmingly leaning against the petitioner, and the

benefit of the proviso to section 437 CrPC cannot be exercised in her favour,” the court said.

The court further said that in view of her prima facie involvement in the crime, it was of the view that she cannot be released on bail.

“Accordingly, I dismiss this bail application,” Justice Kurian said.

The lawyer of the accused had claimed in court that the allegation of the prosecution against her were unbelievable, there was nothing to connect her with the crimes and she was at best only a spectator to the killings.

Bharat Jodo Yatra set to re-enter Haryana today

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

The Bharat Jodo Yatra will re-enter Haryana on Thursday evening and will pass through four districts of the State between January 5-10.

According to a schedule released by the Congress, the yatra will enter Haryana through Sanauli Khurd village in Panipat district from Uttar Pradesh on January 5 evening where the participants will halt for the night.

The yatra will resume in the morning from Sanoli-Panipat road and later in the afternoon a public meeting will be held in Panipat, which will be addressed by Rahul Gandhi, party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and other senior leaders of the party.

After night halt at Babarpur Anaj Mandi, the



yatra will resume next morning from Kohand village in Gharaunda and halt for the night in Karnal district.

The next two days, the yatra will be in Kurukshetra and Ambala districts.

The yatra will resume on January from Shahpur Ambala Cantt with an evening break at the Haryana-Punjab Border near Ambala toll before entering Punjab.

Notably, the yatra covered

over 130 km in the first phase in Haryana between December 21-23 when it passed through Nuh, Gurugram and Faridabad districts.

In the second phase, the four Haryana districts Panipat, Karnal, Kurukshetra and Ambala through which the yatra will pass fall on GT road. It will also pass through Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar’s home constituency Karnal.

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The State president of All India Confederation of Scheduled Caste/Schedule Tribe/Other Backward classes (J&K) has ignited a debate over disparity in the distribution of ex-gratia to the next of kin of terror victims on caste basis by the UT administration in Jammu and Kashmir.

On Wednesday RK Kalsotra charged, “if you cannot give us equal rights while we are alive, at least treat us at par after death”.

After the gruesome civilian killings in the Dhangri village of Rajouri Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha on January 2 had tweeted, “An ex-gratia of Rs. 10 lakh and a government job would be given to the next of kin of each of those civilians



martyred in dastardly attack. Seriously injured would be given Rs.1 lakh. Officials have been directed to ensure best treatment to injured”.

Reacting to the announcement RK Kalsotra Wednesday demanded parity while highlighting the grave reality that the members belonging to the Scheduled caste community

killed in the terrorist firing outside Army gate in Rajouri on December 16 were sanctioned an ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakhs only.

“No government job was promised to the kin of deceased members of the Scheduled caste community. While in case of victims of terror in Dhangri the same administration sanctioned an ex-gratia of Rs 10 lakhs and a government job to the next of kin of the terror victims”.

The terror victims identified as Shalinder Kumar and Kamal Kishore were both running a canteen inside the Army camp and were killed during firing outside the army gate on December 16, 2022. They were both the sole bread earners and were survived by their minor children and wives.

LG Manoj Sinha visited Dhangri on January 2 after the

deceased families refused to perform the last rites but he is yet to meet the next of kin of the Scheduled caste victims of terror.

A day after these two civilians belonging to the SC community were killed, Office of LG Manoj Sinha on December 17, 2002 tweeted, “The incident in Rajouri is very unfortunate. Condolences to the bereaved families. The price of a life cannot be set in monetary terms but still I announce an ex-gratia relief of Rs five lakh for each affected family”.

On December 26 Deputy Commissioner Rajouri, Vikas Kundal visited the affected families of those who lost their lives in the tragic Phalyana incident and handed over ex-gratia relief sanctioned by the Lieutenant Governor.

Bengal Guv gets Z+ security

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Following intelligence reports the security of Bengal Governor CV Anand Bose has been upgraded to Z+ category.

The Governor earlier enjoyed Z category security. However following intelligence reports that his security was under threat the Ministry of Home Affairs upgraded to Z+ security sources said adding the Governor would now be protected by the personnel of Central Armed Police Force (CAPF).

A retired IAS officer of 1977 batch, Bose was appointed as the State Governor in November last year following the promotion of former Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar as the Vice President of India.

Kerala Minister who had to quit for vilifying Constitution back in office

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Saji Cherian, CPI(M) leader, who had to resign from the Council of Ministers on July 6, 2022, following his outbursts against Indian Constitution, was sworn-in as Minister again on Wednesday. Cherian made a grand return to the office in Government Secretariat at the capital city within minutes of the swearing-in function accompanied by his wife, children and party workers.

Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, administered the oath of office and secrecy to Cherian who swore on the Constitution. It was his speech in which he used allegedly ‘derogatory terms’ that made him submit his resignation. But the cops who inquired into the allegations gave a clean chit to the Marxist leader paving the way for his return to the council of ministers.

“This is a document drafted to swindle billions of poor and create billionaires like

Ambani and Adani. The last 75 years saw the Constitution exploiting the poor and making the rich richer,” Cherian had said while addressing a party meeting in Alappuzha district on July 3. There were widespread protests against Cherian’s statement. M K Kunjol, octogenarian Harijan leader, described the outburst by the minister as an insult to Dr B R Ambedkar, the architect of Indian Constitution.

The Governor himself had taken strong reservation against the statement and it was reported that he made his displeasure known to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. Within two days, Cherian tendered his resignation and told the media that he stands by what he had said in the meeting.

It is reported that the Governor had told Vijayan that he was agreeing to swear -n Cherian as minister as part of his Constitutional obligation. A case filed against the speech made by Cherian is under the consideration of the Court.



“The Governor has told the chief minister that the former would not be responsible for any adverse verdict made by the Court,” a source close to the Governor told The Pioneer.

Wednesday’s swearing in was boycotted by the Congress-led Opposition parties. “A sense of uneasiness was palpable as the Governor remained stiff throughout the function,” said a close aide to the Governor.

Constitutional expert Dr K P Kulasanatha Pillay, is of the view that Cherian had scandalized the Constitution. “But the Governor has no other

option but to appoint him as minister because it is the prerogative of the chief minister to decide whom he wants as ministers,” Dr Pillay told this newspaper.

K Ramkumar, a highly venerated senior advocate of Kerala High Court said that though it was legally right to re-induct Cherian in the council of ministers, the action was morally wrong. “He has vilified the Constitution and that is a fact. But the police that probed the charge has acquitted him of all charges,” said Adv Ramkumar.

General Tiny Dhillon’s life story to disclose more about Kashmir



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The life journey of a three year old boy that took him to the position of a widely respected Army commander in the world’s toughest war theatre is being disclosed for the first time in the history of Indian Army.

K J S Tiny Dhillon , who hang his uniform as a lieutenant general of the Indian Army after serving as the commander of the elite Chinara Corps, is coming back with his life story “Kitne Ghazi Aaye, Kitne Ghazi Gaye”, which is being published by Penguin, a publishing house with global presence.

Gzb, Mahoba get 3 stars in Jal Jeevan

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Jal Jeevan Mission achieved new heights with two districts of Uttar Pradesh –Ghaziabad and Mahoba –joining the three-star category of the mission.

This was revealed in the latest survey report released by the Government of India on Wednesday.

With this accomplishment, Uttar Pradesh now joins a select group of states where a significant number of districts have consistently ranked among the top five in the survey from October to December.

The Har Ghar Nal Yojana has made significant progress in Uttar Pradesh with the percentage of rural families with access to tap water surpassing 25 points on Saturday itself.

Ghaziabad has joined the achievers’ category by becoming one of the best performing districts. Along with this, Shahjahanpur, Jhansi and Chitrakoot are included in the category of ‘two-star perform-



ers’ whereas Kasganj, Fatehpur and Shravasti figure in the aspirants’ category.

Mahoba, one of the fast-growing districts, has earned a three-star rating, placing it in the category of ‘achievers’. In addition, Jhansi, Chitrakoot, and Jalaun are rated in the two-star category. Kasganj and Amroha are included in the aspirant category with one star rating.

Among the fast moving districts, Lalitpur, Mirzapur and Hamirpur bagged two-star ratings whereas Banda and Jhansi were included in the aspirants’ category with one-star rating. S h a h j a h a n p u r ,

Bulandshahr, and Bareilly were among the best performing districts of UP in the month of October in the Jal Jeevan Mission survey. Not only this, the fastest growing districts also included Shahjahanpur, Mirzapur and Bulandshahr.

Similarly, in the month of November, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly and Chitrakoot were included in the aspirants’ category and Mahoba in the performing districts category. Among the fast moving districts, Chitrakoot and Jhansi were ranked in the aspirants’ category while Mahoba and Mirzapur figured in the performers’ category.

Boost to free speech

Emphasis should be on checking violence by demagogues, not on further curbing free speech

The Supreme Court’s judgment on Samajwadi Party leader and former Uttar Pradesh minister Azam Khan’s statement is a filip to the cause of free speech. Khan had called the Bulandshahar rape incident of 2016 a “political conspiracy and nothing else.” The apex court said that additional restrictions cannot be imposed on the freedom of expression of ministers, MPs, and MLAs, as the existing grounds to restrict free speech are exhaustive. “A statement made by a minister even if traceable to any affairs of the state or for protection of the government cannot be attributed vicariously to the government by invoking the principle of collective responsibility,” the SC majority ruled. Justice BV Nagarathna wrote a separate judgment. On Monday, she had written a dissenting note on the apex court judgment on demonetisation; the verdict upheld the ban on high-denomination currency notes in 2016. She concurred with the majority judgment, accepting that more restrictions cannot be imposed on free speech, but dissented on the question of statements made by a minister. She said that statements are vicariously or by association attributable to the government of the day. “Public functionaries and celebrities having regard to their reach and impact they have on public have to be more responsible and be more restraint on speech since it impacts the citizens at large,” she said.



Justice Nagarathna is vehemently against hate speech. “Hate speech strikes at foundation values of the constitution by marking society as unequal. It also violates the fraternity of citizens from diverse backgrounds. The sine qua non (essential condition) of a cohesive society is based on plurality and multiculturalism such as India that is ‘Bharat.’ Fraternity is based on the idea that citizens have reciprocal responsibilities towards one another,” she said. While her intentions are laudable, her attack on hate speech seems a bit excessive. The reason is that in the last one hundred years, a lot of creative and scholarly works have been banned or curtailed on grounds of blasphemy, immoral, etc. Some of them can be brought under the rubric of ‘hate speech.’ Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-83), founder of Arya Samaj, was a bitter critic of superstitions and endless rituals that have been the bane of Hindu society for centuries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi extolled him for this reason. In his magnum opus, *Satyartha Prakash*, Dayananda wrote that “idolatry is adharm.” Isn’t it blasphemous from the perspective of millions of Hindu devotees? Should *Satyartha Prakash* be regarded as hate speech? Hundreds of years ago, Kabir wrote, “Laying rock upon stone a mosque is made/On this climbs the muezzin to make his call to the heavens, is the Lord deaf then?” By any reckoning, this is deeply offensive to Islam. He also ridiculed idolatry, which Hindus would regard as offensive. Emphasis should be on checking violence by demagogues, not on further curbing free speech, which is already under attack from various quarters.



Gray langurs sit on a boundary wall during a cold winter day, in Ajmer

Netanyahu again

Israel reelects Netanyahu, and with his return worries about tension in the region mount

Benjamin Netanyahu is once again the prime minister of Israel. He makes a comeback after winning the November elections and would be heading the Israel government with his ultra-right cabinet. He is likely to pursue policies that are sure to lead to more tension in the region. If his track record is to go by, the civil rights would suffer and diplomatic solutions to the Palestine problems would take a back seat. The reason for this is obvious. His allies include the Religious Zionism and Jewish Power parties, which oppose Palestinian statehood and any negotiations. Moreover, most of them are against Israel’s justice system, Arab minority aspirations, and LGBT rights. Ironically, parliament elected Amir Ohana, a gay but Netanyahu loyalist, as its new speaker. Netanyahu is on trial for graft charges. He was the prime minister for three years in the 1990s and from 2009 to 2021. Netanyahu made his intentions clear with the appointment of Itamar Ben-Gvir as minister for police. Gvir was convicted in 2007 of incitement against Arabs and support for a Jewish militant group. However, Netanyahu has pledged to promote tolerance and promote peace. He has stated in the parliament that he would work to end the Israeli-Arab conflict and that would be his top priority. How much he would honour his words remains to be seen. Yet another of his priorities according to him would be to build up Israel’s military capacity. The biggest fallout of Netanyahu’s rule would be a steep rise in tension in Israel-Palestinian relations.



The violence in Jewish settlements is already on the rise in the West Bank, which would result in the military skirmishes. The Likud party has openly stated that it would “promote and develop settlement” on lands to which “the Jewish people have an exclusive and unassailable right”. Most countries do not support it and maintain that settlements built on land captured in war are illegal occupations. In his previous term, Netanyahu advocated Israeli settlement in occupied territories and won support from Israeli settlers in that area but could not pursue it due to pressure from the US and Arab nations. He might try it again. The worst part is that Arab lawmakers have no representatives in the new cabinet. But Netanyahu says he would be serving all Israelis. But who according to him are Israelis is anybody’s guess.

Freebie culture in Indian politics

Freebies are the easiest way to woo the voters but they come at a huge cost to the exchequer and are anathema to democracy

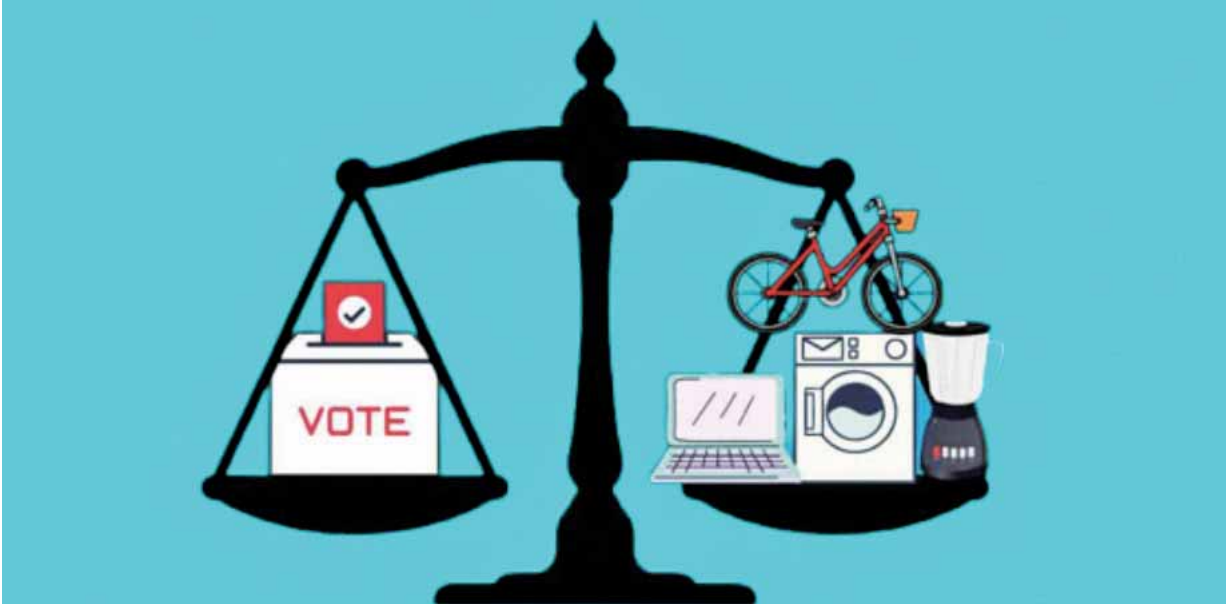
Indian politics is getting deeply vitiated by freebie policies. It is slowly but surely becoming hostage to a nefarious practice that trades doles for votes. In the largest democracy in the world, such practice has been growing and thriving unchecked over two decades and this fact speaks volumes about the hollowness of our professedly democratic polity. Democracy is a system of governance that is people-centric. Right?

In a democracy, therefore, peoples’ sensitivities and sensibilities should be recognized and respected. People’s rights as citizens should be protected and the system should have a robust mechanism for ensuring the protection of citizens’ rights. For this, there needs to be in place a constitutional framework that enables the establishment and smooth operation of institutions—economic, administrative, and legal that will ensure fairness, justice, and welfare of all. India has none of these.

India—a sham democracy? Yes, it is.

Democracy ensures that the voice and choice of every citizen are considered in government-making. Democracy is based on the premise of equality of all humans and equal treatment of all. Democracy means justice for all and a legal system that dispenses justice, without delay, derailment, or denial. Democracy provides equal opportunities to all for self-growth and development. Democracy as a system is in sync with the pulse of the people which, in turn, derives its energy from the social milieu and peoples’ cultural moorings. Democracy as a type of government ensures that the entity called a nation grows naturally and organically where each citizen contributes and each one is equitably benefitted.

None of the above features exists in the extant governance system of India. Then, shall we be deceiving ourselves by calling India a sham democracy and, in more crude terms, a banana republic? A state whose polity allows and encourages the pol-



icy of appeasement and undermines justice?

In this country, without changing the basic constitutional framework of archaic British time laws and regulations, political institutions and practitioners are moving in small circles without breaking the barriers that separate them from people and their problems. Politicians invent novel ideas and schemes like freebies to lure gullible people into voting for them and get the electoral arithmetic run in their favour. The politics of appeasement of specific classes and community members go on unabashedly from the manifesto stage till the time of the next elections. Free electricity, water, medical services, and other facilities work like bribes to garner votes. The bigger, developmental works that provide impetus to economic activity suffer due to a lack of funds. Because there is no free lunch, the cost burden falls on the whole of society. This is the best way to impede economic growth and the most regressive way for the state under governance. The cases of Latin American countries—Brazil and Venezuela serve as illustrative examples of how to destroy economies through state subsidies. Reckless, indiscriminate large-scale subsi-

“THE AAP IN INDIA IS FOLLOWING A WELL-CRAFTED SUBSIDY MODEL OF GOVERNANCE THAT IS OVERLY SOCIALISTIC AND IS NAKEDLY ANTI-DEVELOPMENTAL

dies spell the economic doom of states as they induce people into lethargy and profligacy.

The AAP in India is following a well-crafted subsidy model of governance that is overly socialistic and nakedly anti-developmental. The recent revelations of the warped state liquor policy that, by cutting down heavily on electricity to a certain section of consumers in Delhi have been offset by inflated bills for the remaining sections. The much-touted Mohalla clinics are also a small-scale socialistic scheme that serves citizens a freebie at the expense of all taxpayers. The rough ruling on hundreds of private schools to prevent fee escalation threw those schools into commercial doldrums.

The free lunch or freebie model has ruined the economies of countries in the past. What we need to urgently do is to take a hard, exhaustive look at our democratic polity and overhaul completely our constitution and political system derived therefrom. India is the origi-



ATUL SEHGAL

nal home and progenitor of democracy and we must devise our very own democratic system of governance based on our ancient, eternal scriptures –Vedas and Manusmriti that contain time-tested and effective models of a democratic polity. The scriptures contain models of perfect democratic governance structures that encourage probity rather than institutionalize corruption. Opening the pages of recent history will also reveal that the first draft of our constitution prepared by Dr BR Ambedkar had incorporated many such sublime scriptural tenets in It but the good work was undone by the machinations of the higher political elite of that time.

The above-suggested modifications in our constitution will be in tune with our cultural milieu as an ancient nation and will become the instrument to take India into a fast development trajectory to make it the leading geopolitical power, a position of pride which it has held for millennia in the past and which is really in the larger interest of the entire global community.

(The writer is a Management Consultant based in New Delhi. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE SC VERDICT ON DEMONETISATION

Sir — The Supreme Court has only upheld the legality of the Centre’s decision on Demonitisation but one should note that it didn’t give a clean chit to the government’s decision on Demonitisation. The Supreme Court has only looked into the process, whether the process of Demonitisation was constitutionally legal and whether the laws of RBI were followed or not. The verdict has nothing to say about whether the state objectives of Demonitisation were met or not. The move on Demonitisation was aimed at unaccounted wealth, stemming terror financing, and curbing counterfeiting. The main objectives of Demonitisation are not at all achieved. The circulation of fake currency has not stopped and fake currency is still circulating. The second objective is unearthing black money and bringing back Rs 80 lakh crore black money stashed away abroad and depositing 15 lakhs in every citizen’s account. The third objective was to destroy the terror funding channels to terror networks. If the government has succeeded, then why are terror attacks continuing in our country? Due to Demonitisation, there was a slowdown across a spectrum of industries. Demonitisation has created crippling hardship for small and medium businesses. It is said that more than 50 lakh people have lost their jobs and over 100 people were reported to have died while waiting in queues or stampedes during the Demonitisation phase. The Government has declared that the main objective of Demonitisation is to make India a less cash economy. Though Digital transactions have increased, cash transactions also doubled. Digital transactions would have increased even without it. Now BJP is boasting that the Supreme Court’s upholding is a Historic decision and is in the National interest. Then why didn’t the BJP celebrate Demonitisation day every year? It is a clear that the Government came out every time with new reasons for Demonitisation and forced the poor and honest common man to live in a fool’s paradise. As said by former Prime Minister

Vocal for local toys



In June 2021 Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the people of the country to be “vocal for local toys” while addressing the Toyotathon-2021. His call stirred up a fragmented industry, which is largely dependent on China for survival. However, India certainly has the potential to reap a globally competitive industry, creating tremendous job opportunities in this

labor-incentive sector. But, unfortunately, such a huge potential appears to remain untapped, presumably due to a lack of proper planning and strategy. Though India boasts of about 4,000 toy manufacturing units, they are mostly unorganized, and this works against it.

The traditional and modern toy factories need to coexist in such a manner that they work in tandem to produce low-volume with higher-margin specialty toys, whereas the large ones could be taking on the world. A serious and intense focus with the right policies, infrastructure, and entrepreneurship can develop and transform India’s toy sector into a big industry that can compete in the global market. All said toy making is no duck soup, as it is a conflux of art and science, demanding technical skills along with experienced aesthetic sensibilities. Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Man Mohan Singh, Demonitisation is “an organized loot and a legalized plunder”. . Zeeshaan | Kazipet

REKINDLE OLD FRIENDSHIP

Sir — Covid19 had very serious repercussions and we lost touch with the world including our dear friends. You might rekindle a friendship that will stand the test of time from now on, following you into all the complicated stages of adulthood. Or you might not. While it may be unintentional, growing apart from people we once shared close bonds with can be a painful experience, especially once you start to feel settled into your adult life and feel a longing for those old relationships. Going out of the way and building old friendships is an art and social media provides the best platform to rekindle our relationships and renew our lost memories. While it may be unintentional, growing apart from people we once shared close bonds with can be a painful experience, especially once you start to feel settled into your adult life and feel a longing for those old relationships. CK Ramanathan | Ghaziabad

SPEED THRILLS, SPEED KILLS

Sir — Many people, especially younger ones, find driving exhilarating. It is a life lesson that every adult wants to acquire, and it is incredibly useful in our daily lives. However, negligence and daring when driving might endanger the driver’s safety as well as the protection of many other vehicles and persons on the road, so proper driving rules must be followed.

The immediate solution is to provide emergency medical services in all the focal points, where more accidents have taken place in the recent past. The medical panel is to be set up in this regard and doctors, who have a background in treating accident-prone victims in the past, need to be appointed as caretakers of these medical centers. More recently, Indian cricketer, Rishab Pant met with a serious car accident he caught fire and escaped narrowly with severe injuries. Thus, speed thrills and kills people if caution is thrown to the wind. CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

The center should accept the demand of the Marathi people... or (make) this area is ruled by the central government until the court’s verdict. NCP chief — Sharad Pawar

Pele is incomparable, as a soccer player and as a human being. Brazilian president — Lula da Silva

I replied with a proud smile ‘because we are Indians’ after I overheard the Heathrow staff wonderingly asking his mate ‘how can they afford 1st class?’ Actor — Satish Shah

Right now, I’m only thinking about performing well for the country. If I do well, and if I’m lucky, I’ll break that (Wasim Akram’s record). But I don’t think about it at all. Indian cricketer — Umran Malik

I support the Jain community in their demand against the Jharkhand government’s decision to convert the Jain faith’s Teerth Sammed Shikharji into a tourist place. Religious beliefs and sentiments should not be mocked by commercializing it. Filmmaker — Ashok Pandit

FIRST COLUMN

WE ALL ARE SMALL BUT WE MUST FIT IN WORLD

Detachment is essential to become an observer to events



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

It is God's creation; He is the controller. This is somewhat like a big business, which one person started and controls. The essential difference in God's case and a businessman's is in exercising control. God controls both the internal organisation and external factors. In the case of a businessman, he has some control over the policies, but the externals are not in his control; they happen, and he and his organisation must adapt.

God has created this world and has set it in motion. He controls all aspects of it; nothing is outside his control. It has to be this way only, otherwise it will be unmanageable.

What about us souls? We are small and God is the only big. Again, this is how the creation can be managed and is being done. We, small souls, can be roughly classified in four categories. The first three categories are essentially in the control of the three modes, which are goodness, passion and darkness. Those under the mode of goodness generally follow dharma, do their duties and go to heaven for deserved periods, and return to the earth planet to start another disciplined and good life.

They are classed as divine. Those under the mode of passion live, as the designation suggests, passionately, and live thus life after life. They constitute the majority and remain on the earth planet more or less permanently. The third category of souls engage themselves in bad acts and are classed as demons. They harm self and others and end up either in hell or lower species for their punishment. They come back up to the human species slowly after their punishment is over.



Now we come to the fourth category and the topmost. These are the ones who have taken shelter of God in various degrees. However, they are in the minority. Even amongst these there are three categories. Lord Krishna describes in the Bhagavad-Geeta, "Out of thousands of men hardly anyone strives for perfection. Out of those striving yogis also, hardly anyone knows Me in essence." (7.3) And the third category is those who after the efforts of many births become wise and take God's shelter. They are great souls because they consider God as everything. (7.19) Lord Krishna has referred to them in the verse # 7.16 as wise persons (7.16), and they are very dear to Him. (7.17)

This article is essentially about such rare persons. The answer is straightforward: they have to become like Arjuna. What were qualities of Arjuna, who has explained himself, "O Krishna, my delusion has been dispelled by Your mercy: my memory has been restored. I, free from doubt, am composed, and I will follow Your instructions." (18.33)

My 'ahankar' (ego) will not raise its ugly head because I know that I am only a small nimitta of the all-powerful God. I will gradually become an observer; will not be attached to results, because God knows what is best for me. (6.45)

Why should one not wonder as to why everyone is not jumping at this option? Because ahankara comes in the way. This is the biggest enemy against taking shelter of God. What proved to be Ravana's undoing, who was very knowledgeable? His ahankar only, which he admitted was his weakness. Due to this fault, one assesses oneself as someone big, which no one can ever be, because as stated earlier, there is only one big. Yes, we all need attention, but our target should be getting attention from the one who really counts, i.e., God. This is how we really fit in God's creation.

(The author is a spiritual teacher)

Narendra Modi is PM with a human touch



SUMET BHASIN

With over two decades of public service, Prime Minister Modi has stayed grounded. People are close to his heart

Several leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party and ministers in the government had booked their travel plans to Ahmedabad soon after the news of the demise of Heeraben, mother of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was broken. But they all had to stay at their places, for PM Modi didn't want their works to be affected. PM Modi went to Ahmedabad and dutifully carried out his duties to the departed soul and also to the country, as he soon joined a scheduled meeting.

Sitaben Patel, 83, had come to Somnath Temple for a 'darshan'. She complained of heartache during her stay. The Somnath Trust, which is headed by PM Modi, got into action quickly, and airlifted her to Ahmedabad for immediate medical care and treatment. Under PM Modi's watch, the instruction is clear that all efforts at all costs must be made to respond to the emergency needs of the visitors at the Somnath Temple.

With over two decades of public service, PM Modi has stayed grounded. People are close to his heart. His eyes are open to people in distress. He thinks for the people. He has defined that statecraft must have a soul and a heart beating for the people. PM Modi, thus, has ensured that the people have always been at the centre stage of policy making.

In 2020, India was shocked at the extent of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. The nation was not prepared. The pandemic arrived in the country too soon. On April 6, 2020, PM Modi joined the foundation day of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). For the first time, the people saw PM Modi covering his face with 'gamcha' (a large towel). India at that time was not producing enough masks. In July, PM Modi was seen for the first time wearing a face mask. A day before, India for the first time had exported face masks to the countries battling the pandemic.

The message was loud and clear. People had to cover their faces against the Coronavirus. The scientists were busy making a sense of the virus. The vaccines were still not yet in sight. It would take months for vaccines. Covering faces had to be key to save the people. PM Modi gave the message that they must cover their faces with whatever means they could employ.

In July when PM Modi wore a mask for the first time, he again sent out the message that as a 'Pradhan Sewak' he would be the last to use the most essential item and that too when the country had begun exporting. This sensitivity at the top office of the country comes when the man spends years with the people listening to their concerns and pains.

PM Modi didn't need the famed economists to advise that the people hit hard by the pandemic should be taken care of with free foodgrains programme. He knew that the people must first be protected



ON A TRIP TO JAPAN, MODI SAW HOW THE COUNTRY'S PUBLIC PLACES WERE OPTIMISED FOR THE VISUALLY DISABLED PERSONS. INFLUENCED AND INSPIRED, HE BROUGHT ALL THE DETAILS OF SUCH AN INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT MODEL WITH HIM TO INDIA

(The author is Director, Public Policy Research Centre)



against hunger. Farmers in the country toil hard each day to ensure that none in the country go hungry. The government's abundant duty is to ensure that the people have the first and the only right to the national resources. Thus, PM Modi unveiled the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojna (PMGKAY) at the peak of the pandemic. No country in the world had done this, and India became an example in ensuring food security.

India's 'Vaccine Maitri' was also born out of the human touch of the Prime Minister, for he was concerned at the rising toll of the pandemic. 'Vasudhev Kutumbkam' has been an abiding mantra for India for ages. The world is one, and PM Modi showed the global community that India truly believes in the philosophy of the oneness of all. India provided the effective vaccines against the Covid-19 pandemic to the South Asian countries, extending to other Asian nations, Africa, South America, South Pacific islands, Caribbean islands and so on. No country which asked for the vaccines was left disappointed.

One day, while leaving his CM complex on a regular day, Modi noticed a stranger standing alone outside. Stopping his cavalcade, Modi enquired about him and found out that while the man was on a holiday, as his wife had fallen sick and he had no money for the treatment. Modi assured the stranger that he would take care of his concern. Treatment was done.

Modi inspired his party members to publish souvenirs dedicated to brave hearts from Himachal Pradesh like Vikram Batra and Sanjay Kumar, who lost their lives during the Kargil War. In his direction, the BJP Yuva Morcha workers from every district in Himachal Pradesh organized themselves to publish the biographies and photos of the martyrs. Although Himachal Pradesh was a BJP-ruled state back then, no government funds were used for this work. The souvenir also featured a poem on Kargil written by Modi himself.

On a trip to Japan, Modi saw how the country's public places were optimised for the visually disabled persons. Influenced and inspired, he brought all the details of such an inclusive development model with him to India. Arriving at the Ahmedabad Airport, he ensured that the documents were immediately sent to the Ahmedabad Municipal Commissioner for implementation. The measures to help the visually disabled persons were specifically implemented on the 2.5-km walkway surrounding the Kankaria Lakefront, a tourist place attracting lakhs in footfall every day.

During a friendly interaction with the Secretary of the Sevajanik University in Gujarat, Modi inspired a green movement, as he spoke on the ways one could save oil and protect the environment by mooted the idea of a 'No Vehicle

Day' on all the four campuses of the University a day of the week. This not only resulted in better health for people, who resorted to cycling and/or walking to the University, but also ended up being a grand vision towards environmentalism.

According to BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi, PM Modi wanted to celebrate India's 75th Independence Day with an idea that puts a lasting imprint on the common man and on the country's ecology. PM Modi instructed the government to ensure that each district of the country has 75 lakes or 'amrit sarovars'. As CM of Gujarat in 2014, Modi was to attend a rally of nearly two lakh people in Patna before the General Elections. Just one hour before his arrival, a number of bomb blasts took place at the Patna Railway station and at the rally spot, the Gandhi Maidan.

Arriving in Patna, Modi was warned and cautioned by IB officers against attending the rally, as it would mean putting his life in danger. However, worrying that his absence could cause a stampede at the rally and put hundreds of lives in danger, he chose people's safety over his own and attended the rally, which ultimately had a calming effect on his supporters.

There are several anecdotes which tell stories of the human touch of PM Modi. Statecraft without concern for people is hollow. PM Modi has put people first in his statecraft.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

AS DULAT JOINED BHARAT JODO YATRA. NO ONE EVER ACCUSED DULAT OF BEING COMMITTED EITHER TO HIS JOB OR THE COUNTRY HE WAS MEANT TO SERVE.
— BJP IT DEPT INCHARGE
AMIT MALVIYA



BY INSULTING SHRI DULAT, YOU NOT ONLY INSULT POLICE PERSONNEL, YOU ALSO TARNISH VAJPAYEE JI WHO APPOINTED SHRI DULAT IN NATIONAL SECURITY.
— CONGRESS DIGITAL MEDIA HEAD
SUPRIYA SHRINATE

Digital technology is next big revolution globally

It has not just changed the lives of people to a great extent but has changed their way of thinking and learning

In July 2015, the government launched the 'Digital India' initiative to improve the online infrastructure and increase the internet accessibility among its citizens; thereby empowering the country to become more digitally advanced in almost all the sectors and since then there has been no turning back. As we continue to advance in the 21st century, the rise of digital technology has become increasingly evident. We live in a world where modern technology has not only made our lives easier, faster, better but has also cleared the way for multifunctional devices such as smart phones and smart watches.

Digital technology has affected almost every aspect of our lives. For instance, in the



SAKSHI SETHI

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

workplace, multiple hardware and software has increased the efficiency and productivity, thereby allowing the businesses to operate globally. In personal lives, the internet has opened a world of information and connectivity, making it easier to stay connected with friends and family.

With the advancements in the field of Science and Technology, electronic gadgets and devices play a vital role. Gadgets such as smartphones, laptops, e-readers, motion sensors, vacuum cleaners, sensor sprinklers, video doorbells, wireless lightning control systems, etc., have made our lives pleasurable and comfortable. Digital technology has modified almost every aspect of modern life so that it is now rare to find an

electronic device which does not consolidate digital technology in some way.

Most of the digital tools are more popular among children and likely among elders too. There is no denying the fact that these technologies enhance the learning process of learners by providing them with easy accessibility to the information, deepening their understanding of difficult concepts and helping them explore new opportunities with the click of a button. As technology continues to grow, the learner starts developing knowledge on various technological skills at an early stage that they will need in the future. It will also make them a good multitasker and a good decision maker.

However, if not put to

good use, the same digital technology can also give rise to various physical and psychological issues such as excessive exposure towards social media may cause eyestrain and the learner might face difficulty, focusing on important tasks. At times, it may even lead to serious health conditions such as anxiety or depression.

Today none of us can even imagine a world without the internet, smartphones, tablets, electronic games and other handheld devices. Social media, online gaming and other forms of digital communication have become a part and parcel of our life. The digital world has made it easy to stay connected with friends, family, relatives and work remotely. We can express our views, make videos, share

opinions, exchange ideas and strategies through social applications, websites and software, even if we are in two different corners of the world.

The use of digital technology has even helped in flourishing digital businesses. In a recent report McKinsey highlighted that the 'Digital India' initiative is expected to boost the country's digital economy to \$1trillion by 2025. Digital technology enables the storage of large amounts of information such as videos, music, reports, etc in relatively small spaces or devices such as mobile phones or drives. Not only this, with continuous advancement over time, the information stored, or the videos can also be edited.

The world of digital technology opens its doors to sev-

eral learning opportunities. Anybody having access to the internet has the opportunity to the world's knowledge.

Moreover, this technology is beneficial to people with disabilities and can give them regular access. The consumers today are demanding applications that can tell them on their phone how they are doing health wise. The availability of hundreds of health applications such as HealthTap, WebMD, Apple Health, Pocket Pharmacist, Teladoc, eadspace, Medici and many more have helped the patients to monitor their health and disease, thereby simplifying patient management at hospitals.

Digital technology has changed the lives of people to a great extent. It has changed their way of thinking and

learning thereby making them more independent and knowledgeable in almost all aspects of life. Recent developments such as Blockchain and Artificial Intelligence have helped the government to a large extent in providing efficiency in the services they render. There is less paperwork as such technologies allow the government to keep their confidential records in a secure ledger.

Digital technology with digital learning when put to good use will open its gate to digital opportunity i.e. it will lead to opening of new possibilities which will further lead to communication, social networking, collaboration, content management and access to analytics data, along with staff and customer satisfaction.

Phone use allowed Ukraine to target troops, says Russia

AP ■ KYIV

Unauthorised use of cell phones by Russian soldiers led to a deadly Ukrainian rocket attack on the facility where they were stationed, according to the Russian military, as it raised the death toll from the weekend attack to 89.

Gen. Lt. Sergei Sevryukov said in a statement late Tuesday that phone signals allowed Kyiv's forces to "determine the coordinates of the location of military personnel" and launch a strike. The Russian military is taking unspecified measures to "prevent similar tragic incidents in the future," Sevryukov said, and promised to punish officials responsible for the blunder.

The attack, one of the deadliest on the Kremlin's forces since the start of the war over 10 months ago, occurred one minute into the new year, according to Sevryukov.

It was the latest blow to the Kremlin's military prestige as it struggles to progress with its invasion of its neighbour, and stirred renewed criticism inside Russia of the way the war is being conducted amid a successful Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Ukrainian forces fired six



rockets from a US-provided HIMARS multiple launch system at a building where the soldiers were stationed. Two rockets were downed but four hit the building and detonated, prompting the collapse of the structure. Details of the strike have trickled out in recent days.

UK intelligence officials said Wednesday that Moscow's "unprofessional" military practices were likely partly to blame for the high casualty rate on the troops.

"Given the extent of the damage, there is a realistic possibility that ammunition was being stored near to troop accommodation, which deto-

nated during the strike, creating secondary explosions," the UK Defence Ministry said in a Twitter post.

In the same post, the ministry said that the building struck by Ukrainian missiles was little more than 12 kilometres (7.5 miles) from the front line, within "one of the most contested areas of the conflict," in the Donetsk region.

"The Russian military has a record of unsafe ammunition storage from well before the current war, but this incident highlights how unprofessional practices contribute to Russia's high casualty rate," the update added. Meanwhile, the Kremlin-

appointed leader of the Donetsk region, one of four that Moscow illegally annexed in September, on Wednesday praised the "courage and true heroism" of the dead Russian soldiers.

Denis Pushilin said in a Telegram post that some of those killed tried to pull their comrades from the burning building.

In Samara, in southwestern Russia, locals on Tuesday gathered for an Orthodox service in memory of the dead. The service was followed by a minute's silence, and flowers were laid at a Soviet-era war memorial, the state RIA Novosti agency reported. Unconfirmed reports in

Russian-language media said the victims were mobilised reservists from the region.

The Russian Defence Ministry, in a rare admission of losses, initially said the strike killed 63 troops. But as emergency crews sifted through the rubble of the building, the death toll mounted. The regiment's deputy commander was among the dead.

Unconfirmed reports put the death toll much higher.

The Strategic Communications Directorate of Ukraine's armed forces claimed Sunday that around 400 mobilised Russian soldiers were killed in a vocational school building in Makiivka and about 300 more were wounded. That claim couldn't be independently verified. The Russian statement said the strike occurred "in the area of Makiivka" and didn't mention the school.

Ukraine's presidential office said Wednesday that at least five Ukrainian civilians were killed and 13 others were wounded in the country over the previous 24 hours, as Russian forces struck at nine regions in the country's south and east.

Ukraine continues to seek Western help in its fight against the invasion.

CPN (US) not in hurry to join Prachanda-led Govt, says Madhav

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Former premier and CPN (Unified Socialist) chairman Madhav Kumar Nepal on Wednesday said his party is not in a hurry to join Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda'-led coalition government.

In the 275-member House of Representatives, CPN (Unified Socialist) has 10 seats. Madhav Nepal said that his party would not rush to take a decision about its participation in the government, which is expected to take a vote of confidence on January 10.

Speaking at a programme organised by the party's sister organisation, Youth association Nepal, Kathmandu District Committee, here Madhav Nepal clarified that the political picture is still not clear and that the politburo meeting of his party also did not take any decision, Myrepublica newspaper reported.

He said that they are ready to make that decision on January 10 after looking at the policies and programmes of the government and the activities of the political parties that are part of the government. On January 2, Madhav Nepal had ruled out the



possibility of joining the government led by CPN-Maoist Center chief Prachanda.

He said that the party is doing well in the current political scenario and it is not in favour of confronting or accusing anyone.

On December 26, 'Prachanda' was sworn in as the Prime Minister for the third time, a day after the former guerrilla leader dramatically walked out of the pre-poll alliance led by

the Nepali Congress and joined hands with opposition leader K P Sharma Oli.

Prachanda claims the support of 169 members in the 275-member House of Representatives. A political party needs 138 seats to form a government under its leadership.

Sher Bahadur Deuba-led Nepali Congress has 89 seats while CPN-UML and CPN-MC secured 78 and 32 seats, respectively.

EU moving towards joint measures to face China Covid crisis

AP ■ BRUSSELS

European Union nations are fine-tuning a coordinated response to China's COVID-19 crisis on Wednesday and are zeroing in on travel restrictions that would upset both Beijing and the global airline industry.

China has already vehemently rejected travel restrictions that some EU nations have started to impose and has warned of "countermeasures" if such actions should be expanded in coming days.

Yet on Wednesday, EU Commission spokesman Tim McPhie said that the "overwhelming majority of countries are in favour of" imposing testing of passengers from China prior to departure. The EU nations were seeking an official stance on the issue later in the day.

The Chinese government and European health experts have said there is no pressing need for any blanket restrictions on travel since the coronavirus variants emerging from China are already prevalent in Europe.

On Wednesday the International Air Transport Association, which represents some 300 airlines worldwide, lent its powerful voice to the protests.

"It is extremely disappointing to see this knee-jerk rein-statement of measures that have proven ineffective over the last



three years," said IATA Director General Willie Walsh.

"Research undertaken around the arrival of the omicron variant concluded that putting barriers in the way of travel made no difference to the peak spread of infections. At most, restrictions delayed that peak by a few days," Walsh said.

After threatening countermeasures on Tuesday, Chinese government spokesperson Mao Ning said Wednesday that "we sincerely hope that all parties will focus on fighting the epidemic itself, avoid the politicisation of COVID."

Still, the EU seems bent on taking some sort of joint action to ensure incoming passengers from China do not transmit any potential new variants to the continent. Sweden, which holds the EU presidency, said in a statement that "travelers from China need to be prepared for decisions being taken at short notice."

McCarthy's bid for Speaker to continue, Trump urges support

AP ■ WASHINGTON

House Republicans will open the second day of the new Congress much like the first — with leader Kevin McCarthy trying to become House speaker despite losing in multiple rounds of voting that threw the new GOP majority into chaos.

It was the first time in 100 years that a nominee for House speaker could not take the gavel on the first vote, but McCarthy appeared undeterred.

Instead, he vowed to fight to the finish, encouraged, he said, by former President Donald Trump to end the disarray and pull the Republican Party together. The House is scheduled to convene on Wednesday after the stalemate essentially forced all other business to a standstill, waiting on Republicans to elect a speaker.

"Today, is that the day I wanted to have? No," McCarthy told reporters late on Tuesday at the Capitol after a series of closed-door meetings.

Asked if he would drop out, McCarthy said, "It's not going to happen."

Early on Wednesday, Trump urged Republicans to vote for McCarthy: "CLOSE THE DEAL, TAKE THE VICTORY," he wrote on his social media site.

He added: "REPUBLICANS, DO NOT TURN A GREAT TRIUMPH INTO A GIANT EMBARRASSING DEFEAT."

The tumultuous start to the new Congress pointed to difficulties ahead with Republicans



now in control of the House.

Tensions flared among the new House majority as their campaign promises stalled out. Without a speaker, the House cannot fully form — swearing in its members, naming its committee chairmen, engaging in floor proceedings and launching investigations of the Biden administration. Lawmakers' families had waited around, as what's normally a festive day descended into chaos, with kids playing in the aisles or squirming in parents' arms.

But it was not at all clear how the embattled GOP leader could rebound to win over right-flank conservatives who reject his leadership. It typically takes a majority of the House

to become speaker, 218 votes — though the threshold can drop if members are absent or merely vote present, an strategy McCarthy appeared to be considering. McCarthy won no more than 203 votes in three rounds of voting, losing as many as 20 Republicans from his slim 222-seat majority. Not since 1923 has a speaker's election gone to multiple ballots, and the longest and most grueling fight for the gavel started in late 1855 and dragged out for two months, with 133 ballots, during debates over slavery in the run-up to the Civil War.

"Kevin McCarthy is not going to be a speaker," declared Rep. Bob Good, R-Va., one of the holdouts.

A new generation of conservative Republicans, many aligned with Trump's Make America Great Again agenda, want to upend business as usual in Washington, and were committed to stopping McCarthy's rise without concessions to their priorities.

In many ways, the challenge from the far-right was reminiscent of the last time Republicans seized power in the House, when tea party Republicans brought hardball politics and shutdown government after winning control in the 2010 midterm elections.

As the spectacle of voting dragged on, McCarthy's backers implored the holdouts to fall in line for the California

Republican.

"We all came here to get things done," the second-ranking Republican, Rep. Steve Scalise, said in a speech nominating McCarthy for the vote and urging his colleagues to drop their protest.

Railing against Democratic President Joe Biden's agenda, Scalise, himself a possible GOP compromise choice, said, "We can't start fixing those problems until we elect Kevin McCarthy our next speaker." But the holdouts forced a third and final round of voting before Republican leaders quickly adjourned on Tuesday evening.

"The American people are watching, and it's a good thing," said Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, who nominated fellow conservative Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio as an alternative for speaker.

Jordan, the McCarthy rival-turned-ally, was twice pushed forward by conservatives, but he does not seem to want the job. The Ohio Republican is line to become Judiciary Committee chairman, and he rose during the floor debate to urge his colleagues to instead vote for McCarthy.

"We have to rally around him, come together," Jordan said. In all, a core group of 19 Republicans — and then 20 — voted for someone other than McCarthy.

"The first ballot sent votes to Rep. Andy Biggs of Arizona, Jordan and others, while Jordan alone won the votes on the next two ballots.

Twitter: Will relax ban on political ads

AP ■ SAN FRANCISCO

Twitter says it will ease up on its 3-year-old ban on political advertising, the latest change by Elon Musk as he tries to pump up revenue after purchasing the social media platform last year.

The company tweeted late Tuesday that "we're relaxing our ads policy for cause-based ads in the US."

"We also plan to expand the political advertising we permit in the coming weeks," the company said from its Twitter Safety account. Twitter banned all political advertising in 2019, reacting to growing concern about misinformation spreading on social media.

At the time, then-CEO Jack Dorsey said that while internet ads are powerful and effective for commercial advertisers, "that power brings significant risks to politics, where it can be used to influence votes to affect the lives of millions."

The latest move appears to represent a break from that policy, which had banned ads by candidates, political parties, or elected or appointed government officials.

Political advertising made up a sliver of Twitter's overall revenue, accounting for less than \$3 million of total spending for the 2018 U.S. Midterm election.

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

N.I.T. No.	S.N.	32-A, B, D & E-2022-23-W-V
1	Name of work with its location	A Development of Landscaping and other Horticulture in the section of SSE/W/HNZM under ADEN/HNZM Similar nature of work:- Any civil engineering works contract or Tree Plantation, garden maintenance any horticulture/landscaping works
		B Construction of boundary wall at various locations to prevent unauthorized encroachment on DLI-RE section Similar nature of work:- Precast RCC/PSC work.
		D Improvement of platform surface from 01 to 09. Water booths, coping stone, water supply and drainage, platform shed and other miscellaneous work at HNZM station. Similar nature of work:- Any civil work other than track work.
		E Removal of muck/malba in the section of ADEN/DEE under Sr.DEN/V. Similar nature of work:- Any civil work other than track work.
2	Approx. Cost of work	A Rs. 9039034.97
		B Rs. 8948928.34
		D Rs. 8135361.32
		E Rs. 5000354.06
3	Earnest Money Deposit	(It should be in the form of net banking or payment gateway Only Note - FDR will not be accepted as EMD for tender invited on IREPS as per Railway Boards letter no 201025/CE-IC/CT/51 dated 31.08.2016)
		A Rs. 180800.00
		B Rs. 179000.00
		D Rs. 162700.00
		E Rs. 100000.00
4	Completion period of Work	A 24 Months
		B 5 Months
		D 5 Months
		E 5 Months
5	Date and time for submission of tender and Opening of tender	Upto 15.00 hrs on 27.01.2023 Opening of tender at 15.00 hrs On 27.01.2023
6	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 www.ireps.gov.in

No. 128-W/280/OET/2022-23-W-V/INIT-32-A,B,D & E-2022-23-W-V Dated: 04.01.2023
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 41/2023

Lanka EC to accept papers for local polls from Jan 18-21



PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's top election body announced on Wednesday that it will accept nominations from January 18 to 21 for the local council polls, which have been postponed since March amidst the prevailing economic crisis.

Notices calling for nominations for 340 local government bodies were also released by district secretaries on Wednesday. The nominations would be accepted between January 18 and 21, the National Election Commission said. A date for the polls would be announced a week thereafter.

The elections for local councils in the country have been postponed since March last year

as the government grappled with the economic crisis and the political upheaval which led to street protests.

Sri Lanka's local government elections have been mired in controversy with Opposition parties accusing the government of delaying the polls because the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) fears an embarrassing defeat.

The announcement of nomination dates came as Opposition parties expressed doubts over the government's intention to hold the election.

"The government is trying their best not to hold it. But a postponement can only be done through a referendum," GL Peiris, an opposition parliamentarian, told reporters.

Myanmar army leader touts poll plan on Independence Day

AP ■ BANGKOK

Myanmar's ruling military leader, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, detailed plans for an election later this year and called for national unity in a speech on Wednesday as he led a ceremony marking the 75th anniversary of independence from Britain.

He urged other nations and international organizations, as well as his country's own people, to support "the genuine, discipline-flourishing multiparty democratic system," a concept the ruling military has defined as its goal since it ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021.

Min Aung Hlaing also announced a pardon for 7,012 prisoners to mark the occasion, along with a partial commutation of the sentences of other inmates not convicted of serious crimes. Some political detainees were among those being released, but there was no sign that the gesture would include Suu Kyi, who has been held virtually incommunicado by the military since it seized power.

The 77-year-old Suu Kyi is serving 33 years imprisonment after being convicted of a series of politically tinged prosecutions brought by the military, including for illegally importing and possessing walkie-talkies, violating coronavirus restrictions, breaching the country's official secrets act, sedition, election fraud and corruption



charges. She has been held since June in a custom-built bungalow at the main prison in the capital, Naypyitaw, kept company by three women guards but isolated from other prisoners. Suu Kyi's supporters and independent analysts say the cases against her constitute an attempt to discredit her and legitimize the military's seizure of power while keeping her from taking part in the election that the military has said would take place by August this year.

The first real move toward holding polls could occur at the end of this month, when the latest six-month extension of a state of emergency is completed. The state of emergency was instituted to allow military rule after its takeover in 2021.

The army's takeover reversed nearly a

decade of progress toward democracy after five decades of military rule. The military has said it acted due to massive voting fraud in the poll, though independent election observers did not find any major irregularities.

"Upon accomplishing the provisions of the state of emergency, free and fair elections will be held in line with the 2008 constitution, and further work will be undertaken to hand over state duties to the winning party in accordance with the democratic standards," Min Aung Hlaing declared in his speech in the capital, Naypyitaw, where he also presided over a large-scale parade. Military units and civil servants marched in formation close to the grandiose parliament complex while fighter jets, bombers and helicopters flew overhead.

The plan for a general election is widely seen as an attempt to normalize the military's seizure of power through the ballot box and to deliver a result that ensures the generals retain control. The military will control the entire process and has spent the past two years enfeebling any credible opposition.

Although not officially outlawed, the National League for Democracy, the popular former ruling party, has effectively been broken up, with its leaders and many of its members either in jail or in hiding. All forms of dissent are currently suppressed by the security forces, sometimes with lethal force.

UK's Sunak vows to halve inflation, tackle illegal migration

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, in his first major speech of 2023 on Wednesday, pledged to halve inflation, grow the UK economy and stop illegal immigration.

In a speech setting out the Conservative government's priorities for the year ahead, Sunak focused on tackling the UK's slowing economy and made promises to reduce national debt. He also vowed to pass new laws to stop migrants from arriving on UK shores in small boats, as well as cut massive backlogs in Britain's public health service.

"Those are the people's priorities. They are your government's priorities. And we will either have achieved them or not," Sunak said.

"No trick, no ambiguity, we're either delivering for you or we're not. We will rebuild trust in politics through action, or not at all," he added.

Sunak, who came to office in October after a tumultuous year in UK politics that saw the resignation of two other prime ministers, stressed that he would deliver stability. He said his first priority was to "halve inflation this year to ease the cost of living and give people financial security."

Sunak's predecessor, Liz Truss, unveiled a disastrous package of unfunded tax cuts in September and was forced to quit after less than two months in the job. Her policies sent the British pound tumbling, drove up the cost of borrowing and triggered emergency intervention from Britain's central bank.

Since Sunak replaced Truss in late October, the UK economy has calmed but he still faced a cost-of-living crisis and widening labor unrest as key public sector workers from nurses and ambulance drivers to train workers stage disruptive strikes to demand



better pay to keep pace with soaring inflation.

Inflation in the UK stood at 10.7% in November - down slightly from October - but that's still near the highest in four decades. Energy and food costs have soared, in large part driven by Russia's war on Ukraine, and living standards have plunged for millions of Britons.

In recent weeks, Sunak's government was also under increasing pressure to address failings in the public health system, with many frontline

headlines focusing on the lack of hospital beds and the record waiting times needed to see a doctor or get an ambulance.

Authorities have blamed high numbers of flu and COVID-19 cases, but health chiefs say the problems are longstanding and a result of chronic government underfunding.

Sunak's Conservative Party, which has been in power for 12 years, is lagging behind the opposition Labour Party in polls.

Turkish, Russian forces could 'expand' Syria joint patrols

AP ■ ANKARA

Turkey's defense minister said Wednesday that Turkish and Russian troops could "expand" their joint patrols in northern Syria as part of efforts to bring security to the region.

Hulusi Akar did not elaborate on the plans, which come days after he held talks with his Syrian and Russian counterparts in a surprise meeting in Moscow. Akar's talks with Syria's Mahmoud Abbas marked the first ministerial level meeting between Turkey and Syria since relations broke down with the start of the Syrian civil war more than 11 years ago.

"We can expand the joint patrols with Russia in (the) north of Syria," Akar told a group of reporters when asked about his discussions in Moscow, according to a defense ministry statement.

More talks between



Russian, Syrian and Turkish officials would follow, Akar said, adding: "our hope is that this process will continue in a reasonable, logical and successful manner, and the fight against terrorism will be successful." Turkey has been threatening to carry out a new military offensive into Syria against Kurdish militants it has blamed for a deadly Nov. 13 bomb

attack in Istanbul. Moscow, which has been pressing for a reconciliation between Ankara and Damascus, has made clear that it opposes a new Turkish invasion. It was not immediately clear whether Russia may have proposed expanded joint patrols between Turkish and Russian forces to avert a new incursion.

Turkey and Syria have been standing on opposing sides of the Syrian conflict, with Turkey backing rebels trying to oust Syrian President Bashar Assad. Damascus for its part, has denounced Turkey's hold over stretches of territory in northern Syria which were seized in a series of military incursions since 2016 to drive away Kurdish militant groups.

EU hails high gas storage levels despite Russian cuts

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Natural gas storage levels in the European Union stand at nearly 84% and were higher in December than the average amount in reserve 4-6 years ago, the EU's executive branch said Wednesday, despite Russian attempts to choke off supplies amid its war on Ukraine.

Fearing winter shortages, the 27 EU countries began stocking up on gas last year. Joint gas reserve levels climbed to 82% by September, well ahead of an 80% target set for November. Gas consumption also dropped by 20% from August to November as prices spiked.

Angered by EU war-related sanctions, Russia tightened its gas taps to Europe last year. Its pipeline gas accounted for 40%



of all gas Europe imported before President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine in late February, but now it only accounts for around 9%.

"It's a fairly good position to be in," EU commission spokesman Tim McPhie told reporters. "We have a healthy level of gas storage for the start of this year, but we are by no means complacent. We know

that this year will continue to be challenging."

The commission estimates that joint gas storage levels stand at almost 84%, and that storage levels in December were 13% higher than the EU average in 2016-2018. Energy prices have also tumbled in recent months, in part due to milder than expected winter weather.

Islamic State claims Afghanistan airport checkpoint bombing

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for a bombing near a checkpoint at the Afghan capital's military airport that killed and wounded several people.

IS said in a statement late on Tuesday that Sunday's attack on the checkpoint in Kabul was carried out by the same member who took part in an assault on a hotel in the capital in mid-December.

The regional affiliate of the Islamic State group - known as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province and a key rival of the Taliban - has increased its attacks in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover in 2021. Targets have included Taliban patrols and members of Afghanistan's Shiite minority.

IS published a photo of the attacker identifying him as Abdul Jabbar, saying he with-

drew safely from the attack on the hotel after he ran out of ammunition.

It added he detonated his explosives-laden vest targeting the soldiers gathered at the checkpoint.

The military airport is around 200 metres (yards) from the civilian airport and close to the Interior Ministry, itself the site of a suicide bombing last October that killed at least four people.

Abdul Nafi Takor, a spokesman at the Taliban-run Interior Ministry, said the explosion left "several" people dead and wounded, without providing figures or further information. He said details of an investigation will be shared later.

Takor and Khalid Zadran, spokesman for the Kabul police chief, did not respond to requests on Wednesday asking for further comment.



The checkpoint - located on Airport Road, which leads to high-security neighbourhoods housing government ministries, foreign embassies and the presidential palace - appeared damaged but intact. Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman for the Taliban government, said at least seven

IS members were killed during a Taliban operation in Kabul on Wednesday. He added that seven IS fighters were arrested from their hideout in the neighbourhood of Shahdai Salehin.

A separate operation in western Nimroz province resulted in two more IS arrests, Mujahid said. Local residents from the area reported sounds of several explosions and an hours-long gunbattle.

Christian graves desecrated in historic Jerusalem cemetery

AP ■ JERUSALEM

More than 30 graves at a historic Christian cemetery in Jerusalem were found toppled and vandalised, the diocese said on Wednesday, jolting the Christian minority in the contested city.

Israel's Foreign Ministry called the attack an "immoral act" and "an affront to religion." Jerusalem's Anglican Archbishop Hosam Naoum called it a "clear hate crime."

The British consulate said it was just the latest in a string of assaults on the Christian community in the holy city of Jerusalem.

Police officers were sent to the Protestant Cemetery on Jerusalem's Mount Zion to investigate the profanation. Mount Zion, associated in Christian tradition with the site of the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples the night before his crucifixion, is also sacred to Jews and Muslims and has been at the centre of competing religious

claims throughout the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Widely shared security camera footage on Sunday showed two young men - both wearing a Jewish skullcap and tzitzit, the knotted ritual fringes worn by observant Jews - breaking into the cemetery, knocking over stone crosses and smashing and stomping on tombstones, leaving a trail of debris and broken headstones.

Among the destroyed tombs was one containing a 19th century bust of Samuel Gobat, the second Protestant Bishop in Jerusalem who died in 1879, the Episcopal diocese said.

The graves of three Palestinian police officers who died during in the British mandate years were also vandalized. The diocese cautioned that the desecration of the cemetery should be seen as an ominous warning about "hatred against Christians."

"Many stone crosses were the targets of the vandals, clear-



ly indicating that these criminal acts were motivated by religious bigotry," it said, urging authorities to redouble efforts to find the perpetrators.

The Protestant Cemetery on the venerated Mount Zion just outside Jerusalem's Old City walls was established in 1848 and was part of territory that Israel seized in the 1967 Mideast war. The cemetery houses the graves of dozens of Palestinian police officers killed during the First and Second World Wars as well as Christian

leaders who died in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Jewish extremists have defaced church property on Mount Zion in the past years. Jews consider Mount Zion the traditional burial place of the biblical King David and some ultra-Orthodox and nationalist activists have opposed Christian prayer rights at the site. A Jewish seminary known as the Diaspora Yeshiva has taken over many buildings in the Mount Zion compound.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client that Mr. Jitender Kumar is the owner of Property bearing No. D-12, area measuring 8277 Sq. Mtrs., Situated in Street No. 6, in Janaki Panchal Vihar, Shiv Vihar, Karawal Nagar, North East, Delhi vide a Conveyance Deed (PM-Unauthorised Colonies) dated 27/09/2021, Doc. No. 2527. All persons are hereby informed that Mr. Pardeep Kumar wants to mortgage the said property and intend to obtain a loan from our client against the said property, if anybody has any objection/s upon the ownership of above owners over the said property, its mortgage/litigation, and any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.
Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants)
200, 1st Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Vasant Nagar, N. Delhi-15
Ph: 011-4102527-28, kumar.associates@rediffmail.com

Public Notice
This is to inform general public that Mrs. Sonwati Devi and Mrs. Nancy have acquired the Property Bearing No. 5, area measuring 300 Sq. Yds, out of Khastar No. 32/11/2, Situated in the revenue Estate of Vilages Nangloi Jat, Delhi State, Delhi, and the colony known as 'Ashok Mohalla' Nangloi, Delhi vide Gift Deed dated 02.03.2021, Doc. No. 1354 and Now, Mrs. Sonwati Devi and Mrs. Nancy are mortgaging the above said property with Indusind Bank Ltd. & in case anyone has any objection, (the same may be raised within 07 days of this publication) to Mr. Munesh Dhawan Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Vistas North, Unit no 907, 9th Floor, GD-IT - Tower, (B-08), Netaji Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9066707172/9818228636 (M).

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE
The Dy. Chief Engineer/TMC/Line, Northern Railway, State Entry Road, New Delhi for and on behalf of the President of India invites Open E-tender under One Packet System for the under noted work:

1. Name of work and location	POH (Periodic Overhaul) of VPR-54 machine at NR Track Machine Workshop including mechanical, hydraulic, pneumatic, electrical, cabin repair and other ancillary works".
2. Completion period of the work	120 days
3. Approx Cost of work	Rs. 3602383.08
4. Earnest Money amount (to be deposited Online)	Rs. 72100.00
5. Cost of Tender Document (to be deposited Online)	Rs. Nil
6. Date & Time for Submission of E-tender and opening of tender	Tender document remain available on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 04.01.2023 upto 15:00 hrs. on 25.01.2023. Tender Bids may be uploaded from 11.01.2023 upto 15:00 hrs on 25.01.2023 on IREPS web site. The tender will be opened soon after 15:30 hrs on 25.01.2023
7. Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Document	The detailed tender document is available on www.ireps.gov.in Above tender document will be available for online submission of offer on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 11.01.2023 to 25.01.2023. All other terms and conditions in respect of above tenders are given in tender document. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office

Tender Notice No. 1-W-DyCETMC-L-13-POH VPR-54-22-23 Dated : 03.01.2023
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 29/23

PUBLIC NOTICE
Whereas M/s Vatika Limited is in the process of setting up of Residential Plotted Colony over an additional area measuring 22.4125 acres (in addition to License no. 94 of 2013 dated 31.10.2013 and License no. 11 of 2015 dated 01.10.2015) in the revenue estate of Village Harsaru, Sector-88A & 88B, Gurugram, Haryana. And whereas several individuals have made bookings/entered into purchase agreements for allotment of plots/property in the said colony (hereinafter referred to as allottees). And whereas the o/o Director General, Town & Country Planning (Haryana), Chandigarh, while granting the LOI vide Memo no. LC-2781-C/JE(SB)/-2022/39157 dated 27.12.2022 for setting up the residential plotted colony, has required seeking of any objections/suggestions from the allottees/General Public. Accordingly, vide this public notice, objections/suggestions are hereby invited from any of the allottees/General Public in the said residential plotted colony. The in-principle approved revised layout plan is available for perusal on our website www.vatikacollections.com and at our site office and in the office of Senior Town Planner, Sector-14, Gurugram, Haryana. Objections, if any, may be filed in the o/o Senior Town Planner, Sector 14, Gurugram, Haryana, or at our Corporate Office: Vatika Limited, Unit No.-A-002, Ground Floor, Block A, Vatika INXT City Centre, Sector-83, Gurugram 122012, Haryana, within 30 days of this notice, failing which it shall be assumed that there are no objections to the proposed revision of the layout plan.
Place : Gurugram M/s. Vatika Limited

Iran releases Oscar winning film actress held over protests

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran released a prominent actress from an Oscar-winning film on Wednesday, nearly three weeks after she was jailed for criticizing a crackdown on anti-government protests, local reports said.

Iran's semi-official ISNA news agency said Taraneh Alidoosti, the 38-year-old star of Asghar Farhadi's Oscar-winning 2016 film, "The Salesman," was released on bail. Her mother, Nadere Hakimelahi, had earlier said she would be released in a post on Instagram.

After her release from the notorious Evin Prison in Tehran on Wednesday, Alidoosti posed with bunches



of flowers, surrounded by friends. No further details have been released about her case.

Alidoosti was among several Iranian celebrities to express support for the nationwide protests and criticise the authorities' violent clampdown on dissent. She had posted at least three messages in support of the protests on Instagram before her account was disabled.

Poland signs deal to buy 2nd batch of US Abrams tanks

AP ■ WARSAW

Poland's defence minister on Wednesday signed a deal to buy a second batch of US Abrams main battle tanks as Warsaw beefs up its defensive capabilities and strengthens military cooperation with Washington in light of Russia's war in neighbouring Ukraine.

Officials said Poland is the first US ally in Europe to be receiving Abrams tanks.

Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak signed the USD 1.4 billion deal at a military base in Wesola, near Warsaw. The agreement foresees the delivery of 116 M1A1 Abrams tanks with related equipment and logistics starting this year.

"We are strengthening Poland's armed forces, we are strengthening the iron fist of the Polish army in order to increase



the power to deter the aggressor," said Blaszczak, who is also a deputy prime minister.

He said cooperation between Poland and the US is strengthening the security of the entire region and especially of the eastern flank of NATO.

Attending the signing ceremony were US deputy chief of mission in Poland Daniel Lawton and US Brig. Gen. John Lubas, deputy commander of the 101st Airborne Division, elements of which are stationed in southeastern Poland close to the border with Ukraine.

Sensex snaps 2-day rally

Slides 637 pts to close below 61K

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Sensex skidded 637 points while the Nifty plunged below the 18,050-level on Wednesday as investors took money off the table after a two-day rally ahead of the release of US Fed meeting minutes.

Unabated foreign fund outflows also weighed on sentiment, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex slumped 636.75 points or 1.04 per cent to settle at 60,657.45. The broader NSE Nifty ended lower by 189.60 points or 1.04 per cent at 18,042.95.

Tata Steel was the biggest loser among Sensex components, slipping 2.32 per cent, followed by Power Grid, Tata Motors, Wipro, Infosys, HDFC Bank, HDFC and Reliance Industries.

Only two counters managed to end in the green — Maruti Suzuki and TCS, rising up to 0.22 per cent.

"The domestic market affected by the worries in the global market, traded with deep cuts. Fears over aggressive rate hikes resurfaced ahead of the release of Fed meeting minutes, a meeting that left the door open for additional hikes.

"Apart from global cues, the domestic market will pay close attention to corporate earnings," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said cau-



tiousness ahead of the release of FOMC meeting minutes led to some profit booking in the index heavyweights.

"Some of the banks have announced strong pre-quarterly business updates indicating good results ahead, which could keep the sector in limelight. Other sectors like insurance, fertilizer, capital goods and agri related stocks can see some momentum in anticipation of development in upcoming Budget," he added.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.97 per cent and the smallcap index dipped 0.79 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, metal tanked 2.83 per cent, really went lower by 1.99 per cent, utilities (1.74 per cent), energy (1.70 per cent), oil & gas

(1.52 per cent) and power (1.51 per cent).

Elsewhere in Asia, equity markets in Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended in the green, while Tokyo settled lower.

Equity exchanges in Europe were trading in the positive zone in mid-session deals. Markets in the had US ended lower on Tuesday.

International oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 1.86 per cent to USD 80.57 per barrel.

The rupee recovered from its all-time low level and settled 18 paise higher at 82.82 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, supported by easing crude oil prices. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded shares worth a net Rs 2,620.89 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Issues related to cards, mobile, net banking top plaint areas at banking ombudsman: RBI

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Issues related to ATM/debit cards and mobile/electronic banking were the top grounds of complaints received at the Office of Banking Ombudsman (OBO) during April 1 to November 11, 2021, an RBI report said on Wednesday.

The volume of complaints received under the Ombudsman Schemes/Consumer Education and Protection Cells during 2021-22 increased by 9.39 per cent over the previous year and stood at 4,18,184, it said.

Of these, 3,04,496 complaints were handled by the 22 Offices of RBI Ombudsman (ORBIOs), including the complaints received under the three erstwhile Ombudsman Schemes till November 11, 2021.

Complaints related to ATM/debit cards were the highest at 14.65 per cent of the total, fol-

lowed by mobile/ electronic banking at 13.64 per cent.

Around 90 per cent of the total complaints were received through digital modes, including on the online Complaint Management System (CMS) portal, email, and Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS).

Majority 66.11 per cent of the maintainable complaints were resolved through mutual settlement/conciliation/mediation, it said.

The report further said the rate of disposal of complaints by ombudsmen improved to 97.97 per cent in 2021-22 from 96.59 per cent in 2020-21.

Under the RBI-OS, 2021, following the 'One Nation, One Ombudsman' principle, the territorial jurisdictions for the ORBIOs have been abrogated, and complaints are assigned to



all the ORBIOs by the CMS.

Grounds of complaint covered under the RBIOs have also been expanded to cover all complaints involving 'deficiency of service', which has been defined under the scheme, it said, adding the CMS was upgraded to align with the requirements under RB-IOs, 2021 to improve its overall efficiency.

The coverage of RBIOs was

extended to include the non-scheduled Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) with a deposit size of Rs 50 crore or above as at the end of previous Financial Year. Credit Information Companies (CICs) were brought under RBI-IOs with effect from September 1, 2022.

Between November 12 and March 31, 2022, a total of 1,86,268 complaints were received under the RBI-OS.

The Centralised Receipt and Processing Center (CRPC) at RBI, Chandigarh handled the preliminary scrutiny of the complaints received through email/physical mode (1,49,419 complaints) and closed 1,07,821 complaints as non-complaints/non-maintainable complaints during the period.

Under the erstwhile three Schemes and the RB-IOs, it said, during the period April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022, total number

of complaints received at the ORBIOs and the CRPC stood at 4,18,184, showing an increase of 9.39 per cent over last year.

Of these, 3,04,496 complaints were handled by the 22 ORBIOs. The overall disposal rate for the year at the ORBIOs stood at 97.97 per cent.

Talking about other developments during the year, the report said, a Nationwide Customer Satisfaction Survey to assess the satisfaction level of the complainants who had approached the RBIOs for redressal of their grievances was undertaken through a third-party agency, which indicated the overall satisfaction level of the complainants was at 59.55 per cent.

The annual Root Cause Analysis for the year 2022 was conducted and necessary action initiated based on the causes identified, it added.

India's GDP to be \$20 trillion, per capita income \$10k by 2047: Debroy

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

India's GDP will be close to USD 20 trillion by 2047 and per capita income may reach USD 10,000 (at current value of USD), Bibek Debroy, chairman, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, said on Wednesday.

Virtually addressing the inaugural session at the 57th Annual Conference of the Indian Econometric Society (TIES) held at the University of Hyderabad (UoH) here, he said though the COVID-19 pandemic may have passed, still there is a lot of uncertainty around the world on what is happening in China, about the Russia-Ukraine conflict, growth



prospects in Europe and the USA.

"In 2047, India will have a per capita income of the value of today's dollars of 10,000 US Dollars. The average size of the GDP will be approaching close to 20 trillion US Dollars too.

India, therefore, will be a transformed society," a press release from the varsity quoting Debroy said.

Remarking that basic necessities have been provided to the people and more so in the rural areas by the government, he said the economic indicators after the COVID have improved in India. Everyone is now looking to see the rate of growth in 2023-24 and the growth of economy by 2047.

According to him, India may witness volatilities in forex markets and capital markets and exchange rates due to some of the uncertainties around the world such as Russia- Ukraine conflict, growth prospects in Europe and the USA.

"Since India is not insulated, we will also face the volatility, forex markets and capital markets and exchange rates will face volatility. Inflation rates will also be impacted to some uncertainty," he said.

Debroy opined that India needs need a simplified GST and direct tax as these are the areas on which everybody should think and the research that helps in making policy decisions much informed.

In order to increase India's growth rate from 7 per cent to eight per cent, lot more research needs to be done at the level of the States as different States are at different levels of development and hence the sources of growth will also be different.



ATMA: Indian tyre industry to scale turnover of ₹1 L cr in next 3 years

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian tyre industry will be able to scale a turnover of Rs 1 lakh crore in the next three years on the back of new capacities available, Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association said on Wednesday.

The industry has completed investment of Rs 35,000 crore in the last three years in new capacity creation and debottlenecking.

"The new capacities will go on stream over the next couple of years to meet the growing demand in an economy that is poised to remain as the fastest growing for the next few years," Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA) said in a statement.

Demand is expected to grow stronger in view of an uptick in economic activities and the big push envisaged for infrastructure growth.

"The new capacity will help the industry notch a turnover of Rs 1 lakh crore in the next 3 years from Rs 75,000 crore currently," ATMA said.

"The investments that have been undertaken in a challenging time period, span across all the key tyre segments with major beneficiary being truck and bus radials (TBR) and passenger car radials (PCR) manufacturing," ATMA Chairman Satish Sharma said.

Although the external environment continues to be challenging, ATMA said, there are several tailwinds to tyre sector's growth domestically.

"Different segments of the Auto sector have already reached or are reaching pre-pandemic levels in size and scale aiding demand for tyres," it said adding, premiumisation of the passenger car market with a clear preference for SUVs is creating an exponential rise in demand for higher profile tyres for 16-inch wheels and above.

'Rural market stayed weak in Dec-qtr; urban, premium categories maintained steady growth'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rural demand for the FMCG industry in the December quarter was not as discernible as retail inflation stayed at elevated levels, even as the urban and premium categories maintained a "steady pace of growth", Marico said.

Overall, the sector witnessed some improvement in demand, which was more visible in specific categories buoyed by the festive fervour and oncoming winter season, the FMCG firm said in its latest quarterly update.

Marico's domestic business showed a slight improvement over the preceding quarter to post a "mid-single-digit volume growth".

The company has witnessed some semblance of stability in key input prices and consumer pricing across key franchises, and expects its operating margins to improve both on a



sequential and year-on-year basis.

"In view of the lower revenue growth, we expect a modest growth in operating profit," Marico said in its updates for the December quarter.

Talking about the domestic market, Marico said its brand Parachute Coconut Oil posted low single-digit volume growth after a visible recovery in December as consumer pricing

stabilised, with copra prices firming up in the off-season.

"Going forward, we expect the brand to deliver growth in line with medium-term aspiration," it noted.

Saffola Oils posted a "low teen volume growth" and foods continued a "strong run" towards the stated revenue aspiration. "Value Added Hair Oils had a subdued quarter, which was mainly a reflection of tepid sentiment in rural and mass personal care categories. Premium Personal Care, on the other hand, witnessed double-digit growth in line with sectoral trends," it said.

During the quarter, the international business of Marico continued its "healthy growth momentum with high single-digit constant currency growth", even while contending with implications of currency depreciation and high inflation in key markets.



Apple loses \$1 trillion in market cap in one year

IANIS ■ SAN FRANCISCO

For the first time since early 2021, Apple's market cap fell below \$2 trillion during trading on Tuesday, one year to the day after it became the first public tech company valued at \$3 trillion.

The fall meant that in just one year, the tech giant lost \$1 trillion in market capitalisation.

According to CNN, like many other tech companies, Apple has been hit by supply chain issues.

Its manufacturing in China has taken a hit due to a fresh wave of Covid infections in the only major economy combating such a crisis.

On January 3, Apple's shares were down by nearly 4 per cent after a report raised concerns about consumer demand for its products, according to the report.

Nikkei Asia reported on Monday that Apple recently notified several suppliers to build fewer parts for some of its most popular devices for the first quarter, including AirPods, the Apple Watch, and MacBooks.

Such reports have raised concern about demand for Apple products as well.

However, Apple is not the only company to suffer a massive reduction in market capitalisation.

While Apple's market value has declined significantly, other major technology companies have experienced steeper percentage declines.

Amazon and Facebook-parent Meta's shares have fallen by about 50 per cent and 63 per cent, respectively, over the past year, said the report.

In comparison, Apple was down about 31 per cent over the same time period, the report added.

HDFC Bank posts 19.5% loan growth in Q3

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Private sector lender HDFC Bank on Wednesday said it has recorded a 19.5 per cent increase in credit growth to Rs 15 lakh crore for the third quarter ended December 2022.

The bank had outstanding credit at Rs 12.6 lakh crore at the end of December 31, 2021, HDFC Bank said in a regulatory filing. On a sequential basis, the bank posted a 1.8 per cent growth over the September 2022 quarter's figure of Rs 14.7 lakh crore.

As per the bank's internal business classification, domestic retail loans grew by around 21.5 per cent over December 31, 2021 and around 5 per cent over September 30, 2022; commercial and rural banking loans grew by around 30 per cent over December 31, 2021 and around 5 per cent over September 30, 2022.

Corporate and other wholesale loans grew by around 20 per cent over December 31, 2021 but were lower by around 1 per cent compared to September 30, 2022, it said.

The bank's deposits aggregated to approximately Rs 17.3



lakh crore as of December 31, 2022, a growth of around 19.9 per cent over Rs 14.4 lakh crore in the year-ago period.

With regard to Current Account Saving Account (CASA) deposits, it said they aggregated to approximately Rs 7.6 lakh crore as of December 31, 2022, a growth of around 12 per cent over the same period a year ago.

During the quarter ended December 31, 2022, the bank purchased loans worth Rs 8,892 crore through the direct assignment route under the home loan arrangement with Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC), its parent entity.

Gold rises ₹378; silver declines ₹147

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price rose by Rs 378 to Rs 56,130 per 10 gram in the national capital on Wednesday amid a rally in the precious metal prices globally, according to HDFC Securities.

The yellow metal had settled at Rs 55,752 per 10 gram in the previous trade.

Silver, however, declined by Rs 147 to Rs 70,675 per kilogram.

"Comex spot gold prices traded higher in early Asian hours on Wednesday," said an analyst at HDFC Securities.

In the overseas market, gold was trading higher at USD 1,859 per ounce while silver was flat at USD 24.24 per ounce.

"Gold continues to trade positive hovering around its six-week high amidst a fall in dollar index. Investors await minutes from the Federal Reserve's December policy meeting that could offer hints on the US central bank's tightening path," Navneet Damani, Senior VP – Commodity Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services said.

INDIA AIM TO CLINCH SERIES

PTI ■ PUNE

Shubman Gill will be aiming to up the ante in the Powerplay overs to keep his nearest competitor Ruturaj Gaikwad at bay as a buoyant India team aims to come all guns blazing against Sri Lanka in its bid to clinch the series in the second T20I here on Thursday.

India won a last-ball thriller by two runs in the opener at Wankhede while defending a below-par score and skipper Hardik Pandya spoke about the benefits of overcoming difficult situations as the team moves forward.

While T20Is aren't of highest priority in an ODI World Cup year, Gill will not like to repeat the mistakes of his predecessors while aiming to cement his place in the T20I side after making a reputation for himself in the longer versions.

Gill's career strike-rate after playing 96 T20 games (mostly IPL and Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy) is a modest 128.74 and, even on debut, he looked like a shaky starter. While Gill has opened a lot for KKR and even was an integral part at the top of the order for Gujarat Titans, his game is primarily based on consolidation and then going for the kill.

However, this is the identical approach that had cost KL Rahul a place in the T20 squad. While skipper Pandya, like every other Indian captain in the recent past has promised a fearless approach at the top, he would need each of his player to walk the talk.

The Indian T20 cupboard is brimming with talent with players likes Ruturaj and Rahul Tripathi cooling their heels in the dugout.

It is expected that both Gill and Ishan Kishan will get all three games in the series and an impactful Powerplay will also give the batters coming down the order more confidence to play fearless cricket.

The batting unit will like to score more runs in the second game and a lot will depend on the manner in which new vice-captain Suryakumar Yadav does what is known as "front-loading" (heavy-duty hitting in the first 10 overs) in cricketing jargon.

Surya was dismissed cheaply, one of his rare T20 failures after a golden 2022 but it was more to do with a bit of less pace off the surface unlike Australia and



Samson unlikely for second T20I

PTI ■ PUNE

India batter Sanju Samson is unlikely to feature in the second T20 International against Sri Lanka here on Thursday due to a knee injury. Samson hurt his knee while fielding in the series opener which India won by two runs. He was dismissed cheaply in the India innings.

"Samson has stayed back in Mumbai to get some scans," said a BCCI source.

The injury to Samson might provide an opportunity to Rahul Tripathi to make his debut. Consistent IPL performer Tripathi has travelled with the squad for a while but is yet to get a game.

New Zealand where the 'blind scoop' over '45', would normally go for a six.

But the smart operator that he is, Surya will find a way to manoeuvre against a Sri Lankan bowling attack which is more dependant on spinners Wanindu Hasaranga and Mahesh Theekshana who accounted for two wickets, giving away only 51 runs in their cumulative eight overs.

Deepak Hooda and Axar Patel's batting effort was lauded by one and all and their utility is there to be seen.

Shivam Mavi's dream debut but is certainly a big relief for skipper Pandya, who could be lauded for taking the new ball and bowling an incisive first spell alongside the newcomer.

Mavi (4/22), with his ability to swing the ball, and Umran Malik's (2/27) raw pace is welcome addition to this T20 playing XI and seem to be long-term investments going into the 2024 T20 World Cup.

However the worry will be leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, who must have lost a bit of confidence after being ignored during the T20 World Cup.

In fact, Chahal went for 26 in his first two overs and the skipper couldn't let him complete his spell.



Shakeel's maiden Test century leaves Pakistan trailing by 42

AP ■ KARACHI

Pakistan rode on Saud Shakeel's patient first Test century and Safaraz Ahmed's aggressive 78 to trail New Zealand by 42 runs on the third day of the second Test on Wednesday.

Left-handed Shakeel batted throughout the day to go unbeaten on 124 off 336 balls in an innings spanned over eight hours before New Zealand spinners hit back late with four wickets and Pakistan finished the day at 407-9 at stumps.

"When I entered into the 90s I got nervous for 1-2 overs, but Sarfaraz told me don't take tension," Shakeel said after raising his maiden Test hundred in his hometown and hitting 17 fours.

"Sarfaraz is a very senior player, I started my career with him. It was good that he was with me when I scored my century."

New Zealand part-time seamer Daryl Mitchell squeezed out Pakistan in the final session which saw the host score 70 runs as leftarm spinner Ajaz Patel (3-88) chipped away with wickets of Agha Salman (41) and Hasan Ali (4) through juggling catch-

es by Michael Bracewell and Devon Conway.

Leg-spinner Ish Sodhi (2-94), who is recalled for the Pakistan Test tour after four years, had Naseem Shah and Mir Hamza clean bowled off successive deliveries, but Abrar Ahmed avoided the hat-trick ball with an umbrella of fielders surrounding him and was yet to get off the mark.

New Zealand could have exposed Pakistan's long tail early after tea still leading by 100 runs, but Tom Latham dropped a regulation catch of Shakeel's lose drive at short point much to the disappointment of skipper Tim Southee (1-62).

Earlier, Shakeel and Sarfaraz kept New Zealand at bay with their determined 150-run stand in three hours after Pakistan lost the sole wicket of Imam-ul-Haq in a quiet first session which also produced 70 runs.

Mitchell came close to dismissing Sarfaraz off his first ball late in the second session, but the batter successfully overturned umpire Alex Wharf's lbw ruling through television referral. But two balls later, Tom Blundell had him stumped after collecting the ball down the legside.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India T20I captain Hardik Pandya has said he will not get unduly perturbed if his side loses a match here and there, adding that the most important thing was to be in "difficult situations", which helps the team prepare for bigger challenges.

Pandya also allayed fears about his fitness, saying he had to leave the field for a brief while due to cramps as he didn't have a sound sleep the previous night and didn't drink enough water.

India defeated Sri Lanka in the opening T20I by just two runs at the Wankhede Stadium, with unbeaten knocks from Deepak Hooda (41) and Axar Patel (31) giving the hosts a decent target to defend after they were in trouble at 94 for five.

"We might lose a game here and there but it's alright. I want to put this team in difficult situations because it will help us in big games. Bilaterals we are

very good at and this is how we are going to challenge ourselves. To be honest, all the young guns got us out of the situation today," said Pandya.

Hardik had to leave the field for a brief while after taking a catch, and the skipper joking said he likes to scare people.

"It is just cramps. Now I have tendency to scare people. I did not sleep well, did not drink enough water and hence the glutes were stiff. I was unwell and I had my fluids down," said Pandya at the presentation ceremony.

One of the youngsters who shone bright on the night was debutant pacer Shivam Mavi. The skipper was full of praise for the fast bowler, who picked up 4/22 in his first T20 outing.

"The conversation was very simple, I have seen him (Mavi) bowl well in the IPL and I know what are his strengths, just back yourself and don't worry about getting hit.



"I just told him to simply bowl. I told him, 'I am backing you. Even if you get hit, it's fine.' If the same situation is there, I

will take the new ball."

He added, "I have been bowling in the nets with the new ball since I returned in the IPL.

I have learnt how to swing it back."

Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka said the visitors ought

When you are batting at No. 6, you need to be ready for collapse: Hooda

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Deepak Hooda understands the difficulties of batting at tricky No. 6 position in T20Is and has conditioned himself for any sort of collapse like it happened in India's narrow win against Sri Lanka in opening game.

Hooda came in with India precariously placed at 77 for 4 and his 23-ball-41 with four sixes got India to a defendable total of 162.

His effort earned him the 'player-of-the-match' award.

Asked if there was pressure on him when he came in to bat during a crucial part of the innings with India having lost the top and middle order, Hooda

said, "I was pretty clear in my mind that if we lose early wickets we have to build a partnership and when you are batting lower down the order at No.6, for a situation like that, being a cricketer, you have to be ready for that. A collapse can happen at any time.

"(But) I don't think it was a collapse in the true sense as we were in a good position. Yes, we lost one or two extra wickets but I think that is the role of a No. 6 and No. 7 batter (to come and bat with confidence) be it the first or the second match. It's a good win," added Hooda at the post-match press conference.

Hooda feels he had to respect the situation and play accordingly but at the slot he is



batting, more often than not he would need to be a good finisher.

"The kind of wicket you get you have to play accordingly. You have to give a good total to the team and that was going through my mind being a batsman. Being a No.6 batter, if you are playing at that position, you

have to finish the game. So, that was the only thing going on in my mind."

Hooda said he was able to play freely after the spinners had virtually stifled the top and middle-order batters because Wanindu Hasaranga had almost completed his quota of overs and the wicket too had settled down.

"Initially, the situation did not permit hitting the ball hard, but it was his (Hasaranga's) last over and then he bowled a loose ball as well. In a T20 game, you have to keep that intent of hitting. If you get the ball in the right area, you have to smash it. That was, I suppose the perfect time to play my game and partner Axar Patel and thankfully it got executed well," he added.



Nortje's double strike leaves Australia at 147-2

AP ■ SYDNEY

South Africa strike bowler Anrich Nortje claimed the key wickets of David Warner and Marnus Labuschagne on Wednesday to prise Australia's grip on the third Test in Sydney as rain plagued the opening day.

Nortje was the Proteas' star man as he removed Warner cheaply for 10 and late in the day denied Labuschagne (79) his 11th Test hundred.

As bad light and rain conspired to prematurely end the first day, Australia were 147 for two with Usman Khawaja, who averages 98 in Sydney Tests, unbeaten on 54 and Steven Smith yet to score.

Nortje got the big breakthrough with a ripper, taking the edge of Labuschagne's bat to get him caught behind and end his 151-ball stay.

"I was trying to hit good areas, not trying to be fancy, just trying to keep it simple and try to hit the wicket as hard as I

could," Nortje said of the crucial dismissal.

"Luckily I got something out of it. It wasn't really a big set-up, just more to try and stay consistent and luckily we got some nip and bounce there.

The pacer earlier struck in his second over of the day when he had Melbourne Test double-centurion Warner caught at slip by Marco Jansen for 10.

No sooner had Smith arrived at the wicket after Labuschagne's departure that the players left the field for bad light for the final time.

"Definitely very frustrated. Obviously, it always makes you very angry as a batter when you get out and then everyone walks with you off the field," Labuschagne said of his dismissal.

"But at the end of the day he bowled a really good set there and that one obviously just kicked."

It is the sixth bedevilled Sydney Test out of the past seven to be affected by rain.

Seniors like Rohit, Kohli will play massive role in ODI World Cup: Gambhir

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India opener Gautam Gambhir feels seniors like skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, who are great players of spin, will play a massive role in the ODI World Cup, to be held in the country later this year.

Gambhir said India need to identify fearless players and have a mixture of cricketers in the 50-over format.

"First, you need to identify the players who got that fearless approach and probably in a format like 50 overs you need to have a mixture of every kind of player. There are players who can anchor their innings. Change in role has also made a huge difference," Gambhir said Star Sports show 'Road to World Cup Glory'.

"I feel people like Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and all

those guys who can anchor their innings, who probably can play spin really well will play a massive role the coming World Cup."

The cricketer-turned politician said the introduction of two balls from two ends has changed the template in ODIs.

"During that time we had only one new ball, now we've got two new balls with five fielders inside. So, the role of a part timer has gone out of the window. The reverse swings, you don't see enough of reverse swings anymore, you don't see enough of chase for the finger spinners as well," Gambhir said.

"But, I always feel that when we talk about this new approach, which India always talks about, the template and stuff, you've got to identify players who can adapt those roles or that template very easily."



Gambhir said India need to stick to a set of players and try them in matches to succeed in the ODI World Cup at home.

"If they want to take a break, people who play more than three formats, they can definitely take a break from T20 cricket, but surely not from the ODI format. They got to play together. "I think the biggest mistake that Indian cricket has made in the last two World Cups has been that these guys have not played enough of cricket together. Tell me how many times have we got the best playing 11 on the park?"

"We haven't, only during the World Cup we decided to have the best playing 11, but unfortunately that was never the best playing 11," he said.

Gambhir said if need be Indian cricketers should avoid playing the IPL and need to pri-

oritise 50-over cricket keeping the World Cup in mind.

"So these guys have to play enough of white-ball cricket, especially for the 50 overs World Cup together irrespective whether they want to take a break from the T20 or from the IPL. But the break has to happen in the T20 format and not the 50 overs. "If the franchisee has to suffer they have to suffer. Indian cricket is the main stake holder, not the IPL. IPL is just the by product. So, if India goes out and wins the World Cup, that is the bigger ovation, that is the bigger ring," he said.

"...If an important player does miss the IPL games so be it, because IPL happens every year and the World Cup happens only once in four years. So, for me I think winning the World Cup is far more important than winning the IPL."



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COOPERATION

China promotes international cooperation in science, technology, and innovation

The construction of the major parts of the world's largest radio telescope—the Square Kilometer Array (SKA)—recently started in South Africa and Australia, respectively. As one of the project's initiators, advocates, and developers, China has witnessed the development of SKA over the past three decades. According to Catherine Cesarsky, chair of the Board of Directors, SKA Organisation, China has participated in the project's all major stages and provided strong support for the observatory's establishment.

In France, a major breakthrough has been achieved for the world's largest artificial sun —

the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER). Not long ago, the Chinese team produced the first piece of the enhanced heat flux first wall for the ITER—a key ITER component known as ITER firewall. With core indicators better than design requirements, it has reached the conditions for mass production, consolidating China's leading position in the field.

Faced with the opportunities brought by a new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, China is actively promoting the global flow of factors of innovation and carrying

out extensive cooperation in fields such as digital economy and green, low-carbon development to promote the world's sustainable economic development. Up to now, China has established scientific and technological cooperation relations with more than 160 countries and regions, and signed 114 inter-governmental agreements on scientific and technological cooperation. It has been increasingly deeply involved in nearly 60 major international science programs and projects.

On November 16, 2022, with its whistle blowing and its headlight tuned on, a high-speed railway comprehensive

inspection train pulled out of Tegalluar station and began to accelerate on the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway in Indonesia. The train comprehensively inspected the line between Tegalluar station and No.4 girder fabrication yard, and all data obtained were good, indicating that the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed railway jointly built by China and Indonesia passed the first trial operation.

According to an article entitled "There Is No Decarbonization without China" published on the Nasdaq website, China's success in accelerating the adoption of decarbonization solutions from

green hydrogen electrolytic cell and battery manufacturing to electric vehicle assembly and solar panel production is particularly meaningful for the future of the world. "As the largest exporter of green products, China has demonstrated to the international community its determination to tackle climate change with firm confidence and concrete actions," said Bertie Ahern, former Prime Minister of Ireland and chair of the World Carbon Neutrality Forum.

China has signed memorandums of understanding on Digital Silk Road cooperation with 17 countries, established

bilateral cooperation mechanisms on Silk Road E-commerce with 23 countries, and jointly formulated and implemented the China-Africa Digital Innovation Partnership Program with African countries. Marsela Musabellu, executive director of the Albanian Institute for Globalization Studies (AIGS), said that by seizing the new opportunities brought by new business models, China has expanded cooperation with other countries in fields such as digital economy, e-commerce, and health industry. China's efforts are aimed at leaving no country behind in the tide of digital economy".

(People's Daily)

FOCUS

"China's development serves as reference for other countries"

"It is thanks to the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party that China has developed rapidly and secured the position as the world's second largest economy over the past few decades," said Luciana Santos, president of the Communist Party of Brazil and vice governor of Pernambuco State, in a recent interview with our reporters, adding that the CPC's governance experience has provided inspiration and reference for other countries.

When visiting Sichuan, China in 2019, Santos saw how local folk culture revitalized through innovation. "I still remember those lanterns with different shapes and picturesque colors," Santos recalled visiting the Zigong Lantern Festival. She was deeply impressed by how the local government relied on traditional advantages to help people get rich and introduce Zigong lanterns to the world.

In Weiyuan, Sichuan, Santos witnessed the great potential of scientific and technological innovation for agricultural modernization and sustainable development. With the help of the Internet of Things (IoT) technology, Weiyuan built a number of modern agricultural industrial parks, which are equipped with intelligent planting and irrigation systems for automatic agricultural production management.

"Scientific and technological innovation has become a vital engine driving China's high-quality development," said Santos. She pointed out that smart farming has not only brought farmers higher incomes but also reduced resource consumption, so it undoubtedly represents the direction of modern agriculture. "The development of smart farming in Sichuan has greatly inspired me and provided new dimension for agricultural development in Pernambuco State."

Santos said that China's efforts to build a unified national market that is highly efficient and standardized and feature fair competition and full openness, and promote the unimpeded flow of commodity factor resources on a larger scale will help effectively respond to external risks and enhance the resilience of the Chinese economy, and that the Chinese market will continue to be globally competitive and attractive.

In 2019, the first and second volumes of the Portuguese edition of *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China* were published in Brazil. "Reading the book helps me better understand the CPC's philosophy and practices in state governance, as well as China's domestic and foreign policies and specific measures," said Santos.

(People's Daily)

NEWS



Tourists feed black-headed gulls at Dianchi Lake in Kunming, Yunnan province, on 2 January. (Photo by Cao Mengyao/Xinhua)

Tourism market makes robust recovery over holiday

As people's desire to travel has grown since China optimized its COVID-19 control policy, the tourism market has registered a robust recovery over the New Year's Day holiday.

Data from travel agencies shows that travelers favored trips to other provinces and regions during the three-day

holiday from December 31, 2022 to January 2.

According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the domestic tourism market saw 52.71 million trips during the holiday, a year-on-year increase of 0.44 percent. This is 43 percent of the level during the same period back in 2019.

(China Daily)

China-Myanmar media forum held in Yunnan

On December 29, 2022, a series of events marking the 30th anniversary of the *The Mingalar* magazine and the 2022 China-Myanmar Media Twin City Forum were held in Dehong, Yunnan.

With the theme of "Contributing Media Power to Building a China-Myanmar Community of Shared Future", the forum was attended by nearly 100 senior experts and representatives from

fields such as the media, translation, economy and trade, and think tanks in China and Myanmar. The events included keynote speeches and sideline forums.

The *Mingalar*, a Myanmar language magazine founded in Myanmar in 1992, has been serving as an important platform for cultural exchanges between China and Myanmar.

(Yunnan Daily)

OPENING-UP

China issues measures to promote international travels from January 8

The foreign affairs team under the Chinese State Council Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism against COVID-19 issued a notification on interim measures for travelers between China and other countries and regions, which will take effect from January 8.

According to the notification, travelers to China are required to take a nucleic acid test 48 hours before departure and those with negative results can enter the country without having to apply for a green health code from Chinese embassies and consulates abroad. They need to fill in the results in the customs health declaration

forms. If they test positive, traveling to China will be allowed after the results turn negative.

In terms of entry health quarantine, COVID-19 testing for all overseas travelers entering China will be canceled, and those with a normal health declaration and no abnormality in routine quarantines at the customs port can be green-lighted to social mobility. Those with abnormal health declaration or fever and other symptoms shall still be subject to antigen detection by Customs. If the results are positive, asymptomatic infected persons without serious underlying diseases or mild cases can

enter home quarantine or manage their own care. In other cases, individuals are recommended to report to a hospital for diagnosis and treatment as soon as possible. If the results are negative, the Customs shall conduct routine quarantine inspection in accordance with The Frontier Health and Quarantine Law and other laws and regulations.

Measures to control the number of international passenger flights, including the "five-one" policy (Every foreign airline is required to maintain only one air route to China and operates no more than one flight a week), country-specific policy, and the

passenger load factor limit, will be lifted, the number of flights will be increased in stages, and the distribution of air routes will be optimized. The inbound flights handling process will be simplified to improve the airport operating efficiency and strengthen the capacity of key cities to receive flights. Nevertheless, airlines will continue to prevent disease on board, and passengers shall be required to wear masks on board.

In addition, China has also adjusted and improved policies concerning aspects such as visa application, port operation, and entry-exit tourism.

(Xinhua)

ECONOMY

Yunnan maintains economic growth for nine consecutive months in 2022

At its annual economic working conference held in Kunming on December 30, 2022, the Yunnan Provincial Party Committee announced that the province achieved economic growth for nine consecutive months last year, with

a growth rate of more than 50 percent from January to November. Such a growth rate represents a year-on-year increase of 51.6 percent, a record high in the past ten years. The growth rate is higher than that of the province's investment

in fixed assets (7.6 percent) by 44 percentage points and that of the national industrial investment (10.1 percent) by 41.5 percentage points.

In 2023, Yunnan will continue to optimize the market environment, ac-

celerate higher-standard opening up, and constantly expand exchanges and cooperation with advanced provinces (municipalities and autonomous regions) as well as neighboring countries and regions.

(Yunnan Daily)

TRAFFIC

New Chengdu-Kunming railway goes into operation

On December 26, 2022, with its Emei-Mianing section opened to traffic, the 915-km new Chengdu-Kunming railway was completed in its entirety and put into operation, slashing the train

ride between Chengdu, Sichuan and Kunming, Yunnan to 7.5 hours.

The new Chengdu-Kunming railway, with a designed speed of 160 kilometers per hour, runs from

Chengdu South Railway Station to Kunming Railway Station and is connected with the China-Laos railway in Kunming. It is an important part of the railway corridor between southwest

China and ASEAN nations. To date, Chinese railway authorities have launched trains connecting the new Chengdu-Kunming railway with the China-Laos railway.

(Yunnan Daily)

SPORTS

SCO Kunming Marathon 2022 to be held in March 2023

The 2022 SCO Kunming International Marathon will kick off in Kunming, Yunnan on March 26, 2023, the Organizing Committee of the SCO Kunming International Marathon announced at a press conference.

Registration for the 2022 SCO Kunming International Marathon, an event certified by the Chinese Athletics Associ-

ation (CAA), started from December 31, 2022. The event will include three races: a full marathon, a half marathon, and a 5km SCO public health run. It is expected to attract 10,000 participants in total, namely 5,000 for the full marathon, 2,000 for the half marathon, and 3,000 for the SCO public health run.

(Yunnan Daily)

STORY



Lao Mi was running. (Photo by Lao Mi)

Lao Mi (French): I love Yunnan's cultural diversity

I come from France, and I've been in China for 15 years since I began to study at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics and Yunnan University of Finance and Economics as an exchange student at the age of 20 years old.

I was first attracted to Kunming by its mild climate and comfortable environment. Then I started my own business, running the Dangsters Dance Center, the O'Reilly's Irish Pubs and the Chaba Brewing Co with my friends.

O'Reilly's Irish pubs are committed to spreading western, especially Irish, culinary culture, but we have also combined some of our snacks with Yunnan's local tastes and ingredients. For example, we have introduced Sichuan chili fries, Dai-style shrimps, salmon sashimi with spicy chili. Our business philosophy is that "there are no strangers here, only friends you haven't yet met", so we organize activities and parties for people to get to know each other and have fun. On

weekdays, I also combine my work with my hobbies and go in for sports such as cross-country running, basketball, tennis, and rugby.

Over the past five years, I have sensed the changes in Yunnan's transportation. Now, it is very convenient to travel from Kunming to Dali and Lijiang by high-speed rail. It used to take a long time to travel to these places.

The Dangsters Dance Center has been combining hip-hop and Chinese culture for a long time. In Yunnan, both interesting people and ethnic music, dance, and delicacies have inspired us to create our dances.

My wife is a Kunming native. She is the founder and chief choreographer of the Dangsters Dance Center. She often adopts some elements of Yunnan ethnic dances in her choreography. I am deeply impressed by Yunnan's diverse ethnic cultures, which are the main reason why I love Yunnan and enjoy living here.

(Huang Yixian)