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YAK, THE SHIP OF HIGH
ALTITUDES RULES NE

WORLD 9

IS CHINA SHARING ENOUGH
COVID-19 INFORMATION?

MONEY 10

INDIA TO GROW AT 7% IN FY23, LOSE
FASTEST GROWING ECONOMY TAG

NEW DELHI, SATURDAY JANUARY 7, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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PACERS IN
FOCUS
AGAINST SL
11 SPORT

CAPSULE

INDIA'S GDP GROWTH
TO SLIP TO 7% IN 22-23

New Delhi: The Indian economy is estimated to grow at 7 per cent in the 2022-23 fiscal, down from 8.7 per cent a year ago, mainly due poor performance of mining and manufacturing sectors. **P10**

'DISTORTED' AIRPORT
PASSES MAP WITHDRAWN

New Delhi: All passes issued to employees and visitors of airports across the country have been withdrawn by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security after it was found that a "distorted" map of India was printed on them, officials said. Map images of Jammu & Kashmir, the Northeastern region, Rajasthan and Gujarat were wrongly depicted in the passes.

SC HALTS HC ORDER ON
ASSAM BORDER PACT

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday stopped the execution of the Meghalaya High Court order staying the MoU signed by the Chief Ministers of Assam and Meghalaya for settling the festering boundary dispute between the two states, terming it "unwarranted".

NIA FILES CHARGESHEET
IN 'GAZWA-E-HIND' CASE

Patna: The NIA on Friday filed a chargesheet against an accused in 'Gazwa-e-Hind' case here, an official said.

DELHI-NCR AIR POOR:
BAN ON CONSTRUCTION

New Delhi: Amid a sudden spike in air pollution due to foggy weather, the Centre's air quality panel on Friday directed implementation of curbs under stage III of the GRAP in Delhi-NCR, including a ban on non-essential construction.

Councillors make spectacle of themselves; mayoral poll put off

AAP, BJP members in MCD come to blows over swearing in of nominated members first

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The country on Friday watched in shock newly-elected MCD councillors raining blows on each other, uprooting mikes and toppling tables and benches in a free for all inside the Civic Centre in the national Capital on Friday. As a result, voting to elect mayor and deputy mayor could not take place.

The next date of mayoral election will be decided and announced by Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena.

Visuals from the meeting showed shocking scenes of AAP and BJP workers hitting and pushing each other, hurling tables and chairs and even climbing on desks inside the meeting room of Civic Centre of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).

The Congress members walked out of the House amid allegations by the AAP that the party has struck a deal with the BJP. The AAP said never in the history of MCD has nominated members taken oath first and claimed that around a dozen of its councillors got



AAP and BJP councillors clash during the election of Mayor and Dy Mayor at the Civic Centre in New Delhi on Friday
Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

injured during the scuffle.

On the other hand, the BJP claimed seven of its councillors sustained injuries and a couple of them were attacked by sharp objects.

According to MCD officials, it was for the first time in the history of the civic body that a newly elected House failed to elect a mayor and deputy mayor in its maiden meeting.

The meeting began with

BJP councillor Satya Sharma being administered the oath as presiding officer for the elections to the posts of mayor and deputy mayor. The scuffle began after the presiding officer invited nominated councillors or aldermen (those who traditionally cannot vote) to take oath ahead of the elected members (those who can vote). After Sharma invited alderman Manoj Kumar to take his oath, AAP MLAs and councillors

raised slogans against the BJP and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Many also rushed to the well of the House.

The BJP councillors retaliated, raising slogans against the AAP and its national convener Kejriwal. The councillors of both parties were seen pushing and shoving each other. Amid the din, the House was adjourned for over an hour. The situation remained chaotic even after the House was

reconvened. It finally led to the adjournment of the House for the day.

"The LG office has been informed about the ruckus in the MCD House by Municipal Secretary Bhagwan Singh and MCD Commissioner Gyanesh Bharti. The oath taken by the four aldermen is valid," Sharma said. The next date for the MCD House meeting will be declared by the LG office, she said.

The AAP has alleged that the BJP made the alderman take oath first in order to get them voting rights for the election to mayor and deputy mayor. AAP members said elected councillors should have been sworn in before the nominated members.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal termed the move to invite the nominated councillors for taking oath ahead of the elected ones in the mayoral polls unconstitutional. "Article 243R of the Constitution clearly debars nominated members from voting in the House. Attempting to get them to vote in the House is unconstitutional," Kejriwal tweeted sharing the snippet of the Article.

Sources in Raj Niwas said "Administrator" sees the LG of the National Capital Territory of Delhi and the AAP is deliberately making efforts to mislead the issue.

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US firm sacks man for peeing on woman flyer

Delhi Police in Mumbai to arrest banker

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

American banking sector giant Wells Fargo has sacked the Vice President of its Indian operation Shankar Mishra for allegedly urinating on an elderly woman on an Air India flight on November 26.

A four-member Delhi Police team on Friday afternoon landed in Mumbai in search of Mishra, but found his home locked. The Delhi Police has called the pilot and other crew members of Air India flight AI-102 from New York to Delhi in connection with the case of Mishra.

In another development, Mishra on Friday cited the woman's WhatsApp messages to claim that she had "condoned the alleged act" and had shown no intention to file a complaint. "A settlement was made and compensation was paid to the elderly woman on November 28, 2022 but the money was returned by the woman's daughter on December 19, 2022," Mishra's lawyers said in a statement.

Mishra is missing and a lookout notice or an airport alert has been put out for him.



The company in a statement on Friday said the allegations against Mishra were "deeply disturbing". "This individual has been terminated from Well Fargo," the firm said in a statement.

The company further said it held its employees to the highest standards of professional and personal behaviour and found these allegations deeply disturbing. "We are cooperating with law enforcement and ask that any additional inquiry be directed to them," the statement added.

After the media reported the news of mid-air peeing incident on an Air India flight on November 26, the Delhi Police on January 5 wrote to the concerned authorities seeking a lookout circular (LOC) against Mishra.

Sources in the Delhi Police said the pilot and other crew members of the Air India flight on November 26, were called to record their statements. "The Police will establish the entire timeline of the incident and the statements of the flight staff will be recorded."

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North India grapples with cold wave; Delhi plummets to 1.8C

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The entire north India belt, including Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan, continued to grapple with the cold conditions while Delhi recorded a cold wave for the second consecutive day on Friday, with the minimum temperature at Ayanagar in Southwest Delhi plunging to a numbing 1.8 degrees Celsius.

There was some respite in Kashmir as the minimum temperature improved slightly even as the Valley braces for wet weather spell from Saturday.

Meanwhile, Delhi's peak winter power demand rose to a record 5,526 MW on Friday as cold wave swept the national Capital, officials said.

An official of the BSES said its power distribution compa-



President's bodyguards rehearse for the Republic Day Parade 2023 at the Kartavya Path during a cold and foggy morning in New Delhi on Friday
PTI

nies are ready to ensure adequate availability for its around 47 lakh consumers during the winter months.

"According to data, Delhi's peak power demand on Friday clocked 5,526 MW at 10.58 am,

highest-ever recorded in the national capital during winter months. This is the third day in a row that Delhi's peak power demand has crossed the 5,000 MW mark," the official said.

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Modi, heads of 120 nations to discuss Ukraine war effects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with heads of several countries on January 12 and 13, will review the adverse impact of the Ukraine conflict on food, fertilisers and fuel supplies to the developing countries.

The virtual "Voice of Global South" summit hosted by India will also take up other issues like climate change and bring together countries of this grouping.

More than 120 countries have been invited for the high-profile event, Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra announced here on Friday. It will provide an

important feed into the deliberations of the G-20 summit, he said.

India has assumed the presidency of the G-20 this year and will host the summit in September.

The participants in the virtual summit next week will share their common concerns and perspectives relating to various challenges, Kwatra said and also referred to the Ukraine conflict and its implications on food and energy security.

"Global South" is a grouping of countries of Asia, Africa and South America while "Global North" refers loosely to countries like the US, Canada, Europe, Russia, Australia and New Zealand.

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India sends all-women team for UN peacekeeping missions in Sudan

It is India's largest single unit of female soldiers in UN mission since 2007

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/UNITED NATIONS

India is deploying an all-women contingent in Sudan's Abyei region as part of its peacekeeping missions under the aegis of the United Nations.

It will be India's largest single unit of female soldiers in a UN mission since 2007. The Army team comprises two officers and 25 other ranks.

Hailing the development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Proud to see this. India



has a tradition of active participation in UN peacekeeping missions. The participation by our Nari Shakti is even more gladdening."

He was reacting to an Army tweet that said, "Indian Army deploys its largest contingent of women peacekeepers in United Nations mission at Abyei, UNISFA."

"The team will provide relief and assistance to women and children in one of the highly operational and challenging

terrain conditions under the UN flag."

India is deploying an all-women's platoon of peacekeepers as part of our battalion to the UN Mission in #Abyei @UNISFA. 1. This is the single largest deployment of women #peacekeepers in recent years. Good wishes to the team!" India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj tweeted late on Thursday.

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Azad leaders return home before Bharat Yatra touches J&K

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a big boost for the Congress ahead of Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Yatra's entry into Jammu & Kashmir on January 20, at least 17 leaders of the Democratic Azad Party (DAP) floated by Ghulab Nabi Azad returned to the Congress fold on Friday.

Ex-deputy chief minister Tara Chand and ex-PCC chief Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed were among those who returned to the grand old party.

Welcoming the leaders and calling it a happy day for the party, AICC general secretary KC Venugopal said, "The Bharat Jodo Yatra has become a big movement in the country and that is why all these leaders have decided to come back to the Congress fold. This is only a beginning and when the Yatra enters J&K, all people with Congress ideology and

who want a united India will join the party. I think they had gone on a leave for two months."

Asked whether there are any talks with Azad to return to the Congress fold, Venugopal said he has himself denied any such talks. On whether Azad has been invited for the Yatra, he said, "Those who believe in the Congress ideology are welcome to join the Bharat Jodo Yatra."

Last week at a Press conference when Rahul Gandhi was asked about Azad's rejoining, he took a swipe at the former Congress veteran and said "Kabhi ander, kabhi bahar".

"A total of 19 leaders were to join today, but 17 were able to come to Delhi and join today. This is the first phase and others will also join soon," Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said.

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Temple caves in, huge cracks in 500 houses as Joshimath sinks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ CHAMOLI/UTTARAKHAND

Triggering further panic in the disaster-hit Joshimath, where huge cracks have appeared in over 500 houses in the last few months due to land subsistence, a temple collapsed in Singdhar ward in the Himalayan zone on Friday.

According to local residents, there was no one inside the temple at the time of the incident. The temple was abandoned after it developed huge cracks over the past 15 days.

Land subsidence refers to the vertical sinking of land in a region. It consists of the Earth's surface moving downwards vertically and involves little or no movement horizontally. Reasons can be both human and natural.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said in Dehradun that a team of experts, including engineers from the Geological Survey of India, Wadia Institute, and IIT Roorkee, will study all aspects of the problem.

Incidentally, a team com-



Cracks appear in the houses and on the roads due to landslides at the Joshimath on Friday
PTI

prising experts from Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology and IIT Roorkee, among others, constituted by the Government last year had mentioned in its report that

large chunks of Joshimath, situated at a height of over 6,000 feet, are sinking.

Officials said land subsidence has been going on for more than a year but the prob-

lem has aggravated over the past fortnight. The affected locals have been moved to safer locations with the State Government announcing that ₹4,000 will be given to each

family as monthly rent for the next six months.

Huge cracks have appeared in many houses and nearly 50 families have been moved to safer locations, disaster management officials said. 60 families living in a colony meant for Vishnu Prayag Jal Vidyut Pariyojana employees have been shifted elsewhere, its director Pankaj Chauhan said.

All construction activities related to mega projects like the Chardham all-weather road (Helang-Marwari bypass), Auli ropeways and the NTPC's hydel project have been stopped till further orders on the demand of residents. Land subsidence has been going on for more than a year but the problem has aggravated over the past fortnight, officials said. In the said area, even at present, the cracks are continuously increasing, due to which more affected families are likely to be temporarily shifted to safer places.

Explaining the land subsistence process, Dr Satyendra Mittal, professor of Civil Engineering Department,

Roorkee IIT, said, "There can be mainly two reasons for the landslide happening in Uttarakhand. One is man-made reason and the other is the nature-born reason. When construction works start happening in an unplanned way, then it is called man-made reason."

"The water which is seeping out from some unknown place of the tunnel must be getting accumulated somewhere and when that water gets accumulated beyond the land's capacity, it increases Hydrostatic pressure, whose aftermath is land subsidence," Dr Mittal added.

Taking note of natural reasons, the IIT Roorkee professor said, "An extremely high stream of water stops somewhere due to some unknown reasons, causing a landslide. This is kept in the category of natural causes."

Dr Mittal said a team should be constituted for surveying the land and identify the places from where water seepage is taking place.

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Panel OK’s green nod for expansion of Okhla WTE plant despite protests

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Despite opposition by residents in the surrounding areas, an expert appraisal committee (EAC) of the Centre has recommended granting environmental clearance for the expansion of the Okhla waste-to-energy plant in south Delhi. The Timarpur-Okhla Waste Management Company, a private company owned by Jindal Group, operates the waste-to-energy (WTE) plant which produces 23 MW electricity by burning municipal solid waste. It has now sought permission to increase the power generation capacity by an additional 17 MW. Residents of Sukhdev Vihar have opposed the pro-

posal for the expansion of the plant situated in the middle of residential area and have been fighting a legal battle for more than 12 years, demanding the closure or shifting of the plant from their backyards. The public hearing on the expansion project was conducted by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee on August 16 last year and the main issues were related to air pollution, foul smell, employment, and the environment, among others. The EAC of the Union Environment Ministry took up the proposal in a meeting on November 30 last year and recommended granting environmental clearance to the expansion project, saying the issues raised during the public hear-



ing have been duly addressed by the project proponent. The environment ministry had earlier capped the garbage consumption at the plant at 1,950 metric tonnes and the power generation at 23 megawatts "considering the proximity of Sukhdev Vihar residential colony located at less than 100 metres from the site". "We are already suffering heavily due to the pollution from the plant. They already have another plant running at Tughlaqabad which can be expanded," said U K Bharadwaj, president of Sukhdev Vihar Resident Welfare Association.

BJYM worker held in GrNo for misbehaving with cop

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A man who identified himself as a "BJP worker" was arrested in Greater Noida for allegedly misbehaving with an on-duty police officer during a checking campaign. The accused was also found drunk driving and did not have documents to his car when checked on the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Greater Noida) Abhishek Verma said. The accused was identified as Rahul Bhati, who claimed to be a worker of the Ghaziabad unit of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), the BJP's youth wing. The BJP or the BJYM are yet to comment on the incident. The police said the car in



which Bhati was travelling was being driven at a high speed with sound blaring from its hooter when it was intercepted on the Bilaspur-Sikandrabad Road. The windshield of the Maruti Swift car bore stickers of the BJYM and the BJP's flag. It also bore a sticker that read 'Adhyaksh: Mahanagar, Ghaziabad BJP'.

ED chargesheets five individuals, 7 firms in Delhi excise scam

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate on Friday filed a supplementary charge sheet against five individuals and seven companies before a court here in a money laundering case related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam also involving Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia. The ED, however, did not name Sisodia as accused in the case, and told the judge that further investigation is going on in the matter. The report was filed before Special Judge M K Nagpal who will take up the matter for consideration on Saturday. The 2021-22 policy has now been scrapped after allegations of irregularities were



made. The individuals named in the charge sheet are Vijay Nair, Sharath Reddy, Binoy Babu, Abhishek Boinpally and Amit Arora. This is the second prosecution complaint (charge sheet) filed by the federal investigative agency in this case, registered under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The first was filed in November last year.

Councillors make...

From Page 1
The Lt Governor, who is the Administrator, has nominated 10 persons in pursuance of the powers vested in him vide Section 3(3)(b)(i) of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act (DMC Act) 1957, sources said. "Ten persons who are not less than 25 years of age and who have special knowledge or experience in municipal administration are to be nominated by the Administrator." That the "Administrator" is the Lt. Governor is unequivocally provided for vide Section 2(1) of the MCD Act, 1957," it said. Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia also hit out at the BJP and accused the party of "stooping low" to "hide the misdeeds" in the MCD. "BJP people will stoop so low to hide their misdeeds in the MCD! Elections were postponed, illegal appointment of the presiding officer, illegal appointment

of nominated councillors, and now the public's elected councillors are not being administered oath.... If you cannot respect the verdict of the public, then why the elections?" Sisodia tweeted in Hindi. In a joint press conference with fellow parliamentarians Meenakshi Lekhi and Manoj Tiwari, West Delhi BJP MP Parvesh Verma said the elected and the nominated have no difference. "The nominated members in MCD are called aldermen. Is it possible an alderman does not have voting rights?" he posed. "The chaotic conditions witnessed today in the municipal corporation house would never have happened. A very shameful incident happened. This was done by those who have come to power by calling themselves anarchists." Arvind Kejriwal also hit himself 'anarchist" the Union Minister added.

North India grapples with cold...

From Page 1
The Safdarjung Observatory, Delhi's primary weather station, logged a minimum temperature of four degrees Celsius, which was lower than that of Dalhousie (8.7 degrees Celsius), Dharamsala (5.4 degrees), Shimla (6.2 degrees), Dehradun (4.4 degrees), Mussoorie (6.4 degrees) and Nainital (6.5 degrees). A dense layer of fog persisted over northwest India, and adjoining central and eastern parts of the country, hitting road, rail and air traffic movement. Bad weather conditions delayed around 30 flights at the Indira Gandhi International Airport and at least 26 trains reaching Delhi, officials said. The Palam observatory, near the IGI Airport, recorded a visibility level of 200 metres at 5.30 am.

According to the weather office, 'very dense' fog is when visibility is between 0 and 50 metres, 51 and 200 metres is 'dense', 201 and 500 metres 'moderate', and 501 and 1,000 metres 'shallow'. The weather stations at Lodhi Road, Ayanagar and Ridge in Delhi recorded minimum temperatures of 3.8 degrees Celsius, 1.8 degrees and 3.3 degrees, respectively. According to the Met department's weather report, Narnaul was the coldest place in Haryana, recording a minimum temperature of 2.5 degrees Celsius. In Punjab, Balachaur recorded a low of 3.5 degrees Celsius. Chandigarh, the joint capital of the two States, recorded a low of 5 degrees Celsius. In Rajasthan, Fatehpur in Sikar recorded a minimum temperature of 0.7 degrees

Celsius, followed by Churu at 1 degree, the Met office said. In Jammu and Kashmir, Qazigund, the gateway to the Valley, registered a minimum of minus 5.8 degrees Celsius, while Kupwara, a frontier district, recorded a minimum of minus 5.6 degrees. Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 5.5 degrees Celsius. According to a senior India Meteorological Department official, there will be some relief from the cold weather under the influence of a fresh Western Disturbance, which is likely to affect northwest India starting Friday. In the plains, the Met office declares a cold wave if the minimum temperature dips to four degrees Celsius or when the minimum temperature is 10 degrees or below and is 4.5 notches below the normal.

India sends all-women...

From Page 1
The platoon of women peacekeepers will be deployed in Abyei as part of the Indian Battalion in the United Nations Interim Security Force, Abyei (UNISFA) on January 6, 2023. The Indian contingent, comprising two officers and 25 other ranks, will form part of an engagement platoon and specialise in community outreach and will be performing extensive security-related tasks as well. In September last year, Kamboj had said in a United Nations Security Council briefing on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations that the role of women peacekeepers cannot be over-emphasised ineffective peacekeeping. She had underlined that India took pride in having deployed the first-ever all-women peacekeeping contingent in Liberia in 2007, "which

inspired a whole generation of Liberian women to take part in the country's security sector. We stand ready to contribute further to this regard." The Indian mission noted in a statement that women peacekeepers are "highly regarded" in UN missions throughout the world for their ability to reach out and connect with women and children in local populations, especially victims of sexual violence in conflict zones. "Indian women particularly have a rich tradition in peacekeeping," said the statement, adding that the UN's first Police Adviser Dr Kiran Bedi, United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award 2019 honoree Major Suman Gawani and Shakti Devi have made a mark for themselves in UN Peacekeeping. In 2014, Devi of the Jammu & Kashmir Police,

who was deployed in the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), was named the recipient of the International Female Police Peacekeeper Award by the UN's Police Division for her "exceptional achievements" with the UN mission in Afghanistan, including her efforts towards helping victims of sexual and gender-based violence. "Our teams in the Congo and South Sudan have also done sterling work in mainstreaming women and children into community and social developmental projects at the grassroots level," the Indian mission said. The role of the 125-strong women peacekeepers of the Indian Formed Police Unit deployed with the UN mission in Liberia has been lauded for inspiring women in the West African nation to become police officers.

US firm sacks man for peeing on...

From Page 1
In a statement, Mishra's lawyers Ishanee Sharma and Akshat Bajpai claimed that Mishra paid compensation to the elderly woman after they agreed for a settlement. "The WhatsApp messages between the accused and the lady clearly show that the accused had got the clothes and bags cleaned on November 28 and the same were delivered on November 30. The lady's persisting grievance was only with respect to the adequate compensation being paid by the Airline for which she has raised a subsequent complaint on December 20, 2022," the statement read. As per the statement, Mishra had paid the compensation as agreed upon between both parties on PayTM on November 28 but the money

was returned by the woman's daughter on December 19. "The accused has full faith in the judicial system of the country and will cooperate with the investigation process," it added. Meanwhile, the elderly woman who complained about a male co-passenger urinating on her during an Air India flight in November had informed the crew that she did not want to see his face and was "stunned" when the offender was brought before her and "started crying and profusely apologising". She had told the crew to get him arrested by the airport police and not to bring him near her. According to Delhi Police's FIR against the accused, he also begged her not to lodge a complaint, saying he was a family man and did not wish his wife and child to be affect-

ed by the incident. Meanwhile, the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) on Friday issued a notice to the Delhi Police over the peeing incident. The woman alleged that despite her unwillingness, she was forced to confront the accused and negotiate with him, further disorienting her, according to the FIR registered on Wednesday based on her complaint to Air India. The woman also accused the crew of being "deeply unprofessional" and said they were not proactive in managing a "very sensitive and traumatic situation". "I immediately got up to notify the stewardess of what had happened. My clothes, shoes and bag were soaked in urine. The bag contained my passport, travel documents and currency. The flight staff

refused to touch them, sprayed my bag and shoes with disinfectant, and took me to the bathroom and gave me a set of airline pyjamas and socks. After standing for 20 minutes, the woman was offered a small seat used by airline staff where she sat for about two hours. She was then asked to return to her own seat. When she refused, she was offered the steward's seat for the rest of the journey, the FIR stated. Later, the flight staff informed the woman that the offender wanted to apologise to her. In response, she said she did not wish to interact with him or see his face and wanted him to be arrested on arrival. She added that her son-in-law sent a complaint to Air India on November 27 and the airline had agreed to reimburse the ticket. However, it has only issued a partial refund that, she said, was "hardly sufficient compensation for my traumatic experience".

Temple caves in, huge cracks in 500 houses as Joshimath...

From Page 1
"And apart from this, the locals of Joshimath should be trained so that they are prepared for such situations. They should also be taught 'Architectural Art'. They should be given the knowledge of avoiding any work which can be fatal in future," he added. A team of experts, including officials from the administration and State Disaster Management namely Garhwal Commissioner Sushil Kumar and Disaster Management


Secretary Ranjit Kumar Sinha have started the door-to-door survey in the areas which were affected by the disaster. Situated at a height of 6,150 feet, Joshimath is the starting point of several treks and trails in the Himalayas. Joshimath is a gateway to Hemkund Sahib and Badrinath, one of the char dhams or the four Hindu pilgrimage sites. Joshimath's attraction for pilgrims and tourists has led to the city expanding exponentially over the years, lead-

ing to the construction of buildings and roadways. A survey regarding this was first conducted in 1976 when a committee warned that construction by removing boulders and blasting the hillside would lead to severe environmental damage in the region. In 2021, a multi-institutional survey was requested by a Supreme Court-appointed panel. The survey concluded that Joshimath is built on an unstable foundation, located

in a high-risk seismic 'zone-V' which can give way to landslides in case of heavy rain, tremors etc. The report which was submitted by the Disaster Management Department to the State Government last year had said Joshimath was built on an unstable foundation. It also said a poor drainage system and erosion by rivers have compounded the situation in the past few years and recommended that construction in certain parts of the town be stopped.

Azad leaders return home before Bharat Yatra...

From Page 1
Asked about the reasons to quit the Congress, Tara Chand said, "We got carried away by emotions and friendship and quit the party in haste". On why they rejoined, he said, "We were not comfortable" in DAP as we have spent 50 years of our life in the Congress and realised our mistake." Peerzada said there is a need to strengthen and unite all secular forces in Jammu & Kashmir, where terrorism has increased instead of decreasing in the last eight years.



Branch Office: ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh. Delhi-110005

PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

[See proviso to rule 8(G)]
Notice for sale of immovable assets

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the **Physical possession** of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" as per the brief particulars given hereunder;

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Mr. French Arabian Aroma (Borrower), Neeta Bedi, Subir Bedi, M/s Etilosha Pan (Co-borrower), 081505500664, 08155500002	Property No. 40, Sector 53, Phase-1, Industrial Estate Kundli, Sonapat, Haryana 132103. Area-10764 Sq. Ft.	Rs. 2,54,78,650.34/- as on Dec 30, 2022.	Rs. 5,60,00,000/- Rs. 56,00,000/-	January 07, 2023, From 02:00 PM to 04:00 PM	January 25, 2023, 11:00 AM Onwards

The online auction will take place on the website of e-auction agency **M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited (URL Link-<https://disposalhub.com>)** The Mortgagees/ noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till **January 24, 2023 before 05:00 P.M** failing which, these secured asset/s will be sold as per schedule.
The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) at **ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh. Delhi-110005**, on or before **January 24, 2023 before 05:00 P.M** and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before **January 24, 2023 before 05:00 P.M** along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at **ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol bagh. Delhi-110005** on or before **January 24, 2023 before 05:00 P.M**. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of "**ICICI Bank Limited**" payable at **Delhi**
For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the e-auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact **ICICI Bank Limited on 8126013708/ 7304914763**.
Please note that Marketing agencies **1. M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited. 2. Auggeo Asset Management Pvt Ltd** have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.
The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons.
For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit **www.icicibank.com/n4p4s**
Date: January 07, 2023
Place: Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

From Page 1

The nations of the world which are regarded as having a relatively low level of economic and industrial development

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client Mr. Inder Kapoor intends to purchase First Floor without roof rights of builtup Property No. S-2/124, Old No. WZ-141-B, measuring 60 Sq.Yards, Khasra No. 19, Village Nangli Jalib, colony known as Old Mahavir Nagar, Tilak Nagar, New Delhi from Smt. Gurpreet Kaur, Smt. Kamlesh and Smt. Triptat Kaur who had purchased the Entire Property from Mr. Ashok and Shri Joginder Singh vide Sale Deed dated 13.09.2021 and said Mr. Ashok and Shri Joginder Singh had acquired the same from his father Late Shri Bhagat Ram vide registered Will dated 02.12.2009 and except Mr. Ashok and Shri Joginder Singh there are no other legal remains of Late Shri Bhagat Ram. If anybody including Bank, Financial Institutions, persons, relative has any claim, right, interest whatsoever in the said property shall inform within 7 days to the undersigned with documentary evidence. In the event of no response to this notice, than our client shall presume that title of the said property is unencumbered and clear.
Karnal Singh, Advocate,
K-8, Basement,
Jungpura Extension 3
Contact No. 9811163363 & 9953683363

L-G playing with democratic system of Delhi: Kejriwal



AAP and BJP councillors clash during the election of Mayor and Dy Mayor at the Civic Centre, in New Delhi on Friday



RANJAN DIMRI | PIONEER

Govt, not L-G, nominates MCD aldermen: CM

Saxena dictated his choice without consulting AAP, says Delhi CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday wrote a letter to Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena over the ruckus in the first meeting of the House of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), accusing him of playing with the democratic system of the national Capital. In his letter, Kejriwal said that the L-G is directly issuing orders on practically every subject irrespective of whether it is reserved or transferred. The elected

AAP's INJURED MEMBERS

- ▲ PRAVEEN KUMAR RAJPUT
- ▲ BAHAN PREETI
- ▲ ASHOK MAANU
- ▲ SUGANDHA SACHIN BIDHURI
- ▲ NARENDRA GIRSA
- ▲ RAVINDER BHARDWAJ
- ▲ MOHINI JINWAL
- ▲ PREM CHAUHAN
- ▲ DAULAT PANWAR
- ▲ PRIYANKA GAUTAM
- ▲ BUNTY GAUTAM

Government is supposed to nominate MCD aldermen, while it is shocking and saddening how Saxena dictated his pickings without consulting the Government. "The tradition of appointing senior-most Councillor as the presiding officer was thrown to the winds; the elected Government's power of appointing the presiding offi-



cer was infringed by L-G," he stated. "Such a practice of directly issuing directions to officers and getting notifications done is illegal and unconstitutional," the letter read.

Kejriwal alleged that the L-G and Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar were together running a parallel Government and issuing orders and publishing notifications by bypassing the

elected Government. "The L-G, one morning, dictated ten names (obviously all with BJP background) and directed the Chief Secretary to issue a notification. The Chief Secretary complied. The elected Government came to know from the newspapers. Since this is a transferred subject, as per the Constitution, it is the elected Government which has the power to nominate these members," Kejriwal added.

Delhi CM said that these are not isolated incidents. There have been several such instances in the past. With the passage of time, this is now becoming a regular practice. Such practice of directly issuing directions to officers and getting notifications done is illegal and unconstitutional. "The Government elected by the people with such a thump-

ing majority has been rendered irrelevant. Ordinarily, officers would have refused to follow such bizarre directions. They have been protesting privately and in a muted voice," Kejriwal said.

"Your Excellency, individuals like me and you are too small. This country is important. India is important. Our democracy, which we got after a long independence struggle, is important. Let's all work together for the country and to strengthen our democracy. Please allow elected Government to work for people. Let's respect Constitution," Kejriwal concluded. Taking the matter to Twitter, Kejriwal tweeted, "Please allow elected Government to fulfil dreams of 2 crore Delhiites; let's respect Constitution & strengthen democracy."

Money paid to Cong councillors to support BJP in MCD: AAP

BJP goons attacked AAP councillor Kumar for demanding oath of elected councillors be held first as per MCD's tradition: Sanjay Singh

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP on Friday alleged that the Congress and the BJP were hand in glove as all the nine councillors from the Congress party staged a walkout to favour the saffron party after the clash at the first House meeting of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). They also alleged that the BJP has paid Rs 50 lakh to each Congress councillor to support the BJP in the mayoral election.

The AAP leaders further alleged that the decision to administer oath to aldermen before elected councillors was the BJP's "ploy" to get them voting rights.

The party had earlier also alleged that the L-G appointed BJP men as aldermen instead of experts on civic matters.

AAP senior leader Sanjay Singh questioned, "Why does Amit Shah want to bulldoze his way into the MCD? Why is BJP attempting to give voting powers to aldermen? BJP goons attacked AAP councillor Praveen Kumar for demanding the oath of elected councillors to be held first as per MCD's tradition." "The Congress and



the BJP are involved in this together as all nine councillors from the Congress party staged a walkout to favour the BJP. Why would the Congress support the BJP you may think?

This is because earlier, the Congress leader Naziya was appointed as the chairman of the Haj Committee by the L-G on a resolution that was supported by the BJP," Singh added.

"Money was exchanged to get the Congress councillors to support the BJP in the MCD and Rs 50 lakh were paid for each councillor and therefore Rs 4.5 crore have been given to the Congress by the BJP," he alleged. AAP MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj claimed that nominated members (aldermen) never cast their votes in the MCD House.

"Neither in the election of the Mayor or the Deputy Mayor. They are not allowed to cast votes for standing committee members as well. The BJP is trying to increase the number of its votes by wrong means," he alleged.

"The national Capital is watching this gundargardi of the BJP and L-G," said Bhardwaj

warning the saffron party that they are "not the Congress. The AAP knows how to take on and defeat the biggest party of the country."

Recalling the incident, AAP councillor Praveen Kumar said that when the elected members from the AAP came up to take their oath of office in the MCD, the BJP had already planned the attack.

"As per that plan, they first got their aldermen, who have basically been nominated to the MCD to act like goons, to come up to take the oath of office. I am a two-time councillor and I was aware of this. So, when I objected to this, the Aldermen and other BJP councillors began to physically assault me," Kumar said.

Kumar alleged that the memento which is used to take the oath of office was thrown at me. "I used my hands to save myself and in the process injured my hands. It could have hit my head as well. After that around 20-25 of them physically attacked me and some members even tried to choke me. They even tore my clothes in the assault," Kumar added.

AAP councillors came prepared to disrupt oath of aldermen: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday alleged that AAP councillors had come prepared to disrupt oath of the aldermen (nominated councillors) and assaulted its members including women. In a joint press conference, party MPs Meenakshi Lekhi, Manoj Tiwari and Parvesh Verma alleged that women councillors of the BJP were "mobbed" and attacked by AAP councillors and six-seven councillors of the BJP were injured. Medico-legal case reports of two councillors - Sharad Kapoor and Kusumlata - were received, said Delhi BJP media relations cell co-incharge Vikram Mittal.

Lekhi alleged that the AAP councillors had pre-planned to disrupt the meeting to stop the oath of the ten aldermen appointed by the BJP. The AAP councillors protested against the oath administered to the aldermen as they saw it as a BJP ploy to give them the right to

BJP'S INJURED MEMBERS

- SHARAD KAPOOR
- KUSUM LATA
- INDER KAUR
- ANITA SANGWAN

vote. The AAP had earlier said that the L-G had appointed persons with affiliation to the BJP as aldermen. The MCD House meeting was adjourned amid chaos with clashes between AAP and BJP councillors which began soon after the aldermen were being administered oath and the presiding officer started the proceedings.

"Some male councillors jostled with Inder Kaur and pulled her hair. She had a cut on her finger when she was attacked with something sharp. Our councillor Anita's finger also got cut when she reached there to save Kaur. They have also said that some AAP councillors had consumed liquor," Parvesh Verma said. The two women councillors Inder Kaur



Union Minister Meenakshi Lekhi along with MPs Manoj Tiwari and Parvesh Verma jointly addressing a press conference on the scuffle between AAP and BJP councillors in a MCD meeting in New Delhi on Friday RANJAN DIMRI | PIONEER

and Anita were present in the press conference. The West Delhi MP said the notification of the presiding officer had clearly mentioned that she will administer oath to all the councillors and she must have used her discretion to begin with pledge of the aldermen. It was a "black day" as the AAP councillors behaved like the goons

and refused to follow the rules, Tiwari said. "The AAP goons had come prepared to disrupt the meeting. They carried some sharp-edged objects with which they attacked the BJP councillors," he claimed. "If they have numbers why are they worried," he added. Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri con-

Delhi Police denies reports of arrest of Anjali's friend

New Delhi: The seventh accused in the Kanjhawala accident in which a 20-year-old woman was dragged by a car surrendered before police on Friday evening. Police on Friday arrested another man, Ashutosh, under suspicion of shielding the accused.

Denying reports that the Kanjhawala case victim's friend and a pillion rider on her scooter on the fateful Sunday, has been arrested, the Delhi Police on said she has been called to join the investigation. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outer) Harendra Kumar Singh said, "There are

reports that Nidhi has been arrested by the police.

It is hereby clarified that she has been called to join the investigation." Meanwhile, a local court here on Friday remanded the sixth accused arrested in the case in police custody for three days.

Metropolitan Magistrate Sanya Dal allowed his three-day custodial interrogation after the Delhi police sought his remand for five days. The victim Anjali Singh, 20, was killed in the early hours of Sunday after her scooter was hit by the car which dragged her for 12 km from Sultanpuri to

Kanjhawala. Her body later got dislodged and was found lying on the road in Kanjhawala.

The victim's friend, Nidhi, fell to the side and fled the spot after the accident claiming she was "scared". Nidhi was traced by the police after they examined the CCTV footage of the accident site. The police recorded her statement on Tuesday.

Days after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced Rs 10 lakh ex gratia for the family of the Kanjhawala victim, the Delhi government on Friday sanctioned the payment. SR



An aerial view of old Delhi on a cold winter day marked by heavy fog, in New Delhi on Friday RANJAN DIMRI | PIONEER

Delhi's power demand touches record 5,526 MW

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national capital's peak winter power demand clocked to a record 5,526 MW on Friday as a numbing cold wave swept Delhi.

According to a senior official of the BSES, the power distribution companies of the discom are geared to ensure adequate availability for its around 47 lakh consumers (around two crore residents) during the winter months. "According to data, Delhi's peak power

demand on Friday clocked 5,526 MW at 10.58 am, highest-ever recorded in the national capital during winter months. This is the third day in a row that Delhi's peak power demand has crossed the 5,000 MW mark," the BSES official said.

The power demand had peaked at 5,104 MW last year and 5,021 MW in 2020. The peak winter power demand in BRPL and BYPL areas had reached 2,140 MW and 1,122 MW, respectively, during the

last winter.

Delhi recorded a cold wave for a second day on the trot on Friday, with the minimum temperature at Ayanagar in southwest Delhi plunging to a numbing 1.8 degrees Celsius, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD) data.

The Safdarjung Observatory, Delhi's primary weather station, logged a minimum temperature of four degrees Celsius, which was lower than that of Dalhousie

(8.7 degrees Celsius), Dharamshala (5.4 degrees), Shimla (6.2 degrees), Dehradun (4.4 degrees), Mussoorie (6.4 degrees) and Nainital (6.5 degrees).

The backbone of BSES' power-supply arrangements during the winter months includes long-term agreements from power-plants; including Hydro and Delhi-based gas-fuelled generating stations. Additionally, the BSES is also receiving 840 MW of solar power from Solar Energy

Corporation of India, 439 MW of wind power, around 25 MW from waste-to-energy plants. It is also being helped by more than 127 MW of solar power installed on roof-tops in south, west, east and central Delhi.

In case of any contingency, BSES discoms will buy short-term power from the exchange which is available at economical rates. Advanced load-forecasting statistical and modelling techniques will help them accurately forecast the power demand.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena on Friday reconstituted the Delhi State Haj Committee for a period of three years with immediate effect. The members of the committee are BJP MP Gautam Gambhir, AAP MLAs Abdul Rehman and Haji Yunus, Congress MCD councillor Naziya Danish, Muslim theology expert Mohammad Saad and a member of a Muslim voluntary organisation Kausar Jahan.

However, inclusion of Congress councillor gave a weapon to AAP as it alleged a nexus between BJP and Congress in view of the Mayoral election of the MCD.

AAP leaders claimed that there was a deal between the BJP and the Congress to sabotage the mayoral polls in Delhi. AAP leader Saurabh Bhardwaj said the Congress walked out of the before voting for mayor and deputy mayor posts could be held in the MCD House in exchange for a seat on the Haj Committee.

"The deal of Congress and BJP has been exposed. The best case scenario for BJP was to make Congress walk out of house. And Congress has agreed for that. In return, the BJP has made MCD Congress Leader Ms Nazia Danish as the member of Haj Committee," Bhardwaj tweeted.

"The Congress leader of the House in MCD Ms Nazia Danish strikes the deal with BJP. And Congress decides to



walk out to help BJP in MCD," the AAP leader added.

Delhi CM said that the LG dictated the names of Delhi Haj Committee and directed the Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to issue notification. Again, this is a transferred subject and only elected govt has the power to constitute Haj Committee. However, the elected govt was bypassed."

Taking the matter to the Twitter, Kejriwal commented, "Hon'ble LG dictated these names n directly got notification issued from officers. No process, no elected govt? Constitution thrown to the winds! Sir, just becuz u control bureaucracy thro 'services', u are able to get all ur illegal directions implemented"

AAP senior leader Sanjay Singh also connected this to the violence erupted earlier in the day at the first house of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) between the AAP and BJP councilours saying that the Congress and the BJP are involved in this together as all the nine councillor from the Congress party

staged a walkout to favour the BJP. "Gautam Gambhir was appointed as per the rule which stated that one Member of Parliament will be elected in the Committee," it stated.

"MLA, Abdul Rehman and Haji Yunus was appointed as two Members of Legislative Assembly of the Delhi Government according to the Delhi State Haj Committee Rules 2006, while Naziya Danish, elected councillor from Zakir Nagar was featured in the committee as the rule states that one Muslim member of the Local Bodies is mandatory," the order said.

"Mohammad Saad and Kausar Jahan, was also appointed by the L-G as the member of the Haj Committee as the law underlines that one Muslim member having experience in Muslim theology and Law and one Muslim member from Muslim Voluntary Organizations in the field of public administration, finance, education, social work or culture is necessary on the Committee," the order further stated.

DGCA issues stern directive to all airlines

‘While tackling unruly flyers, use restraining devices when all conciliatory approaches are exhausted’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Days after two incidents of drunk men urinating on women on Air India flights came forth, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Friday issued an advisory to the Head of Operations of all Scheduled Airlines for tackling unruly travelers outlining that “restraining devices should be used when all conciliatory approaches have been exhausted”. The advisory warned that the airline staff will face action if they fail to act against passengers who are unruly or behave inappropriately.

The DGCA has also sought a report from Tata Group-owned Air India on an incident of a drunk passenger allegedly urinating on the blanket of a female passenger on the airline’s Paris-New Delhi flight last month, which it did not report to the regulator. Air India on Thursday confirmed the incident, which took place on December 6 last year.

“In case a situation - relating to handling an unruly passenger comes up, the pilot-in-command is responsible for assessing the situation quickly if the cabin crew can control the situation and accordingly



relay this information to the airline’s central control on the ground for further action. If it becomes difficult to handle the situation with “verbal communication”, applying restraining devices should be used when all conciliatory approaches have been exhausted,” the advisory said.

“Head of operations are hereby advised to sensitize pilots, cabin crew and Director-in-flight Services of their respective airlines on the topic of handling of unruly passengers through appropriate means under intimation to DGCA” - the advisory reads.

“Non-action/inappropriate action/ omission by the airlines towards such untoward incidents has tarnished the image of air travel in different seg-

ments of society,” it further highlights.

“In the recent past, DGCA has noticed a few incidents of unruly behavior and inappropriate conduct by the passengers on board the aircraft during flight, wherein it is observed that post holders, pilots and cabin crew members have failed to take appropriate actions,” the statement reads.

Earlier, the DGCA on Thursday issued notices to the officials and crew of the New York-Delhi flight, asking why action should not be taken against them for “dereliction” of duty while handling the November 26 ‘urination’ incident. The DGCA held that Air India’s conduct appeared to be “unprofessional” in the two incidents.

Airport passes with ‘distorted’ map of India withdrawn, AAI to conduct enquiry: BCAS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

All passes issued to employees and visitors of airports across the country have been withdrawn by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) after it was found that a “distorted” map of India was printed on them, officials said.

Map images of Jammu and Kashmir, the Northeastern region, Rajasthan and Gujarat were wrongly depicted in the passes issued at all Airports Authority of India operated airports and six Adani group-run airports — Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Thiruvananthapuram, Guwahati and Mangaluru. After it was found that the images were “distorted”, the BCAS has withdrawn the passes, an official privy to the development said.

In a communication to the chairman of the Airports Authority of India (AAI), the BCAS said the embedded hologram roll being used is not

according to the sample hologram approved by the BCAS. “Keeping in view the seriousness of the issue, it is hereby directed that all Aerodrome Entry Permits (AEPs) issued with holograms shall be withdrawn and further printing with these hologram roll shall be stopped with immediate effect,” the letter said.

The BCAS also conveyed that the AAI will conduct an inquiry in the matter, find out at which level the lapses occurred, who is responsible for procuring these hologram rolls and take appropriate

action against the responsible officers. The AAI has been directed to submit an action taken report on the issue to the BCAS at the earliest, it said. A person, who is not a passenger with a valid ticket, requires an AEP that is issued by the airport.

The AEP application form, which is issued by the BCAS, mentions 13 zones that a person can enter. The permitted areas include the arrival halls, the departure halls, the terminal building, the apron area, the security hold area, cargo terminal among others.



CJI shows his workplace to daughters

New Delhi: A usual day in the Supreme Court on Friday morning became a surprise for lawyers waiting in apex court corridors when Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud reached first court with his two daughters to show them his workplace.

According to sources, Justice Chandrachud, who reached the court premises around 10 am, took his daughters to his courtroom (first court) through visitor’s gallery before scheduled court timing of 10.30 am and told them, “See, this is where I sit.”

The sources said the CJI took his daughters to his chamber while explaining about his workplace and showed them place where judges sit and from where lawyers argue their cases. They said Justice Chandrachud brought his foster daughters, both differently-abled, to court after they expressed desire to see his workplace. PTI

Def Min visits Indira Point to review Op readiness

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A day after reviewing operational readiness of the triservice Andaman and Nicobar Command to thwart any challenge in the Indian Ocean by China, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday visited Indira Point, the southernmost tip of the country. It was the first visit by him to the archipelago since taking over as the Defence Minister.

Rajnath’s visit assumes importance in light of the growing influence of China in the Indian Ocean Region. His interaction with troops at naval

station INS Baaz in Cambell Bay is important as it overlooks the Strait of Malacca, the sea route through which majority of Chinese imports pass and is one of the most important shipping routes in the world both, from an economic and strategic viewpoint.

Moreover, Indira Point is along the Great Channel, popularly referred to as the ‘Six Degree Channel’, which is a major shipping lane for international traffic. A strong presence of the Armed Forces equips India to better discharge its responsibility of being a net security provider in the region. En-route, Rajnath

halted at the Car Nicobar Island and Campbell Bay where he was apprised about the ground conditions. He also interacted with the joint services troops of Andaman and Nicobar Command there, lauding them for serving the country with unmatched bravery and commitment, defence ministry officials said here.

He was accompanied by Lieutenant General Ajai Singh, the commander-in-chief of Andaman and Nicobar Command (CINCAN). Rajnath was familiarised with the terrain of Southern Group of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. He also paid a visit to naval station INS Baaz and interacted with troops.

This is the first visit of the defence minister to Indira Point since January 2019. Apart from the strategic signaling in view of proximity of these far-flung islands to the Indo-Pacific, his visit to the Command motivated the troops deployed in these distant and remote islands. Andaman and Nicobar Command is a 21-year-old

successful Integrated Theatre Command which is now being planned at the national level. INS Baaz is a forward operating base of the and also overlooks the Six Degree channel between Great Nicobar and the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

Campbell Bay is the country’s eye over the Strait of Malacca. After visiting INS Baaz, Rajnath also visited the Air Force station at Car Nicobar. It operates frontline fighter jets including SU-30 and Jaguars. Meanwhile, AN’s BJP leaders

urged him for better air connectivity between the archipelago and other parts of the country.

“We understand the importance of the upgradation of runway here but we requested Union minister to ensure speedy completion of the project because this led to steep airfares,” Bairagi told PTI. The local BJP leaders also urged Rajnath to start flight services between Port Blair and Shippur airport in Diglipur to handle medical emergencies, he said.

SC transfers to itself pleas to seek registration of same-sex marriages

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Friday clubbed and transferred to itself all petitions pending before different High Courts seeking registration of same-sex marriages by authorities. A Bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala asked the Centre to file a joint reply to the petitions by February 15 and directed their listing on March 13.

The Bench said any petitioner, if not available to argue physically before the court or unable to engage a counsel or to travel to Delhi, can avail the facility of a virtual platform to join the hearing. The top court asked the registry to provide



links for virtual hearing to all parties who wish to address the court. During the arguments, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta told the bench since a petition is ripe for hearing before the Delhi High Court, the top court could either await its verdict or transfer all the petitions to itself. The counsel for mul-

multiple petitioners told the bench they want the SC to transfer all the cases to itself for an authoritative pronouncement on the issue and that the Centre can file its response to it. At present, Delhi, Kerala, Gujarat HC are seized with many petitions from LGBT community on the issue.

Coal scam: Court asks CBI to probe role of Adani Enterprises

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Special Court conducting trial in the ‘Coal Scam’ has ordered a further probe by CBI into the role of Adani Enterprises, AMR India, Lanco Infratech and officials who entertained their incomplete applications in the 2012 allotment of coal blocks in Jharkhand.

Special Judge Arun Bhardwaj, in his 10-page order, outlined the violations by each of the three companies even after the technical evaluation committee of the Coal Ministry pointed out that none



of the companies submitted enough documents. In the order dated January 4, the Judge Bhardwaj asked the CBI to submit its report by April 15, rejecting its earlier reply that their probe is limited

only to Lanco Infratech, the successful bidder of Jharia coalfields. The Court said though the technical evaluation committee found that all three companies submitted only chartered accountants and auditors’ certificates instead of original documents to claim their eligibility, the tender committee overlooked all the findings of technical evaluation committee.

The technical evaluation committee in 2012 said that “Adani Enterprises Ltd is not eligible in the absence of copies of submissions made to the statutory government authorities in support of OB

(over burden) and coal production, the said firm was declared eligible by the tender committee on the basis of the certificate dated 24.09.2012 of its chartered accountant/undated certificate of its company secretary which mentioned that the information given in the certificates with respect to coal produced and over burden planned is as per submission of quarterly report of coal production activity submitted to Department of Mining and Energy of Republic of Indonesia and Department of Environment of Republic of Indonesia”.

Men more likely to die post Covid: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Even mild cases of Covid-19 might trigger stronger inflammatory responses in males than females, resulting in more pronounced functional changes to the male immune system, even long after recovery, according to a study published in Nature. The findings may help create better vaccines against diverse threats by, for instance, mimicking how mild

Covid-19 changes the male immune system, the researchers said. Scientists have long believed that the immune system reverts to the previous stable level after viral infection. However, the latest study published in the journal Nature, shows that it depends on the individual’s sex.

Researchers at the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) systematically analysed immune responses

of healthy people who had received the flu vaccine. From that data, they then compared the responses between those who had never been infected by SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, and those who experienced mild cases but recovered.

The team found that immune systems of men who had recovered from mild cases of Covid-19 responded more robustly to flu vaccines than women who had mild cases or men and women who had never been infected.

The baseline immune statuses in men previously infected with SARS-CoV-2 were altered in ways that changed the response to an exposure different from SARS-CoV-2, the researchers said. “This was a total surprise,” said John Tsang, an immunobiologist at Yale University in the US, who was previously at NIAID.

“Women usually mount a stronger overall immune response to pathogens and vaccines, but are also more likely to suffer from autoimmune diseases,” Tsang said.

The findings may also be linked to an observation made early in the pandemic: Men were much more likely to die from a runaway immune response than women after contracting the Covid-19 virus.

Their analysis of immune system status down to the individual cell level showed several differences between COVID-recovered males and healthy controls and COVID-recovered females, both before and after receiving flu vaccinations.

For instance, previously infected males produced more antibodies to influenza and produced increased levels of interferons, which are produced by cells in response to infections or vaccines.

Cooperative federalism touching new heights under Modi: Officials

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi chairing the ongoing second national conference of chief secretaries, official sources on Friday said the government has heralded a “new era of cooperative federalism” by making the process of policy making and implementation more collaborative and consultative.

The chief secretaries’ conference is aimed at rapid and sustained economic growth in partnership with states in coordination as the prime minister believes that this is an essential pillar for the development and progress of new India, they said. With this vision in mind, Modi had conceptualised this conference, which was held for the first time last year in

Dharamshala, they noted and cited several programmes and instances in which he has tried to leverage cooperative federalism. The Centre and states have been working together in “Aspirational Districts Programme”, launched by Modi in January 2018 to fast-track development in most backward districts across the country through the convergence of government programmes and schemes.

The Modi government has also worked to increase states’ share in divisible pool of tax resources, the sources said. Having been a chief minister for close to 13 years himself, Modi knows that the key to development for states is availability of sufficient resources. Taking a significant step in this direction, his government took

the decision to increase states’ share in the divisible pool of taxes from 32 per cent to 42 per cent. This has provided them more resources to design and implement programmes as per their needs, they said.

Another example is the GST Council where both the Centre and states are partners in decision-making. The workings of the council are an example of fiscal federalism with reliance on decision making through consensus, they said.

Modi has also initiated the unique concept of Pragati, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) based multi-modal platform for “Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation” (Pragati), involving the Centre and states.

Will clear names of 44 HC judges within 3 days, Centre tells SC



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Friday told the Supreme Court that it will within three days clear the names of 44 judges for the High Courts, recommended by the Collegium.

Attorney General R Venkataramani told the top court the government will adhere to timelines and the recent recommendations made by the Collegium of high courts have been processed with “utmost dispatch”.

The Bench comprising Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and AS Oka responded: “Centre submits that out of 104, 44 will be processed and sent within 3 days”.

The Bench also asked Venkataramani about the five names recommended by the Collegium last month for elevation as judges of the apex court.

“Would your lordships defer this for a little while? I have some inputs given to me but I may have some difference of opinion on that,” the Attorney General told the bench.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for one of the petitioners, raised the issue of the names reiterated by the Collegium being sent back by the government. “The

Government in the last lot sent back some of the names which were pending. Rightly or wrongly, we have to deal with it. There are 22 names which have been sent back,” the bench observed, adding, some reiterated names have also been returned.

The apex court Collegium, headed by Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud, had last month recommended five judges, including Justices Pankaj Mithal and Sanjay Karol, the chief justices of high courts of Rajasthan and Patna, for elevation as judges of the apex court.

“The Supreme Court Collegium, in its meeting held on December 13, 2022, has resolved to recommend elevation of the following chief justices/judges of the high courts, as judges in the Supreme Court: 1. Justice Pankaj Mithal, Chief Justice, Rajasthan High Court 2. Justice Sanjay Karol, Chief Justice, Patna High Court, 3. Justice P V Sanjay Kumar, Chief Justice, Manipur High Court, 4.

Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Judge, Patna High Court and 5. Justice Manoj Misra, Judge, Allahabad High Court,” said a statement uploaded last month on the apex court’s website. The recommendation is pending with the Government.

₹10 cr in fake a/c's found in cattle case: CBI

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Gopal Ghosh died a couple of years ago. But even after his death he managed to open a bank account. At least the records seized by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probing the cow smuggling case that has seen Trinamool Congress strongman and Trinamool Congress' Birbhum district president Anubrata Mondal go to jail --- say so. This, whereas the deceased person's brother says that he has no idea of the account of his brother being used by others. "We don't even know that an account was opened in the name of my dead brother," said his brother.

Similarly Sundari Basaki who lives in a muddled house too has an account in the same cooperative bank but she has no idea of how many lakhs have been transacted through that account. "I have not signed

anywhere ... because I am illiterate ... I have not opened any account ... but here you say that I have an account ... it is a bolt from the blue ... several lakhs of rupees were parked in my bank and here we don't have two square meals to eat," says Sundari.

These are only two of 177 instances that the CBI has stumbled upon in a day-long raid in the Suri Cooperative Bank. In course of investigating the cow smuggling case the CBI has found that the accounts were used to legalise crores of rupees allegedly earned from cattle smuggling. Till now trace of Rs 10 crore has been found. CBI sources said adding most of these accounts either belong to dead or non-existent persons or poor villagers who have no inkling of the whopping amount of money that were transacted through their accounts.

When asked as to how scamsters managed to get documents required to open accounts relatives of Mamata Mridha another account holder said, "we had submitted copies of our Aadhar, voter cards etc for MNREGA job cards but it seems that they have misused these documents for their purpose."

The CBI is known to have traced the link of the ill-gotten money to Food Department too. According to sources the proceeds from the cow smuggling were used to purchase low quality crops, mostly rice from the farmers and then these were sold to the Food Department. The payments were then received in the fake accounts, sources said.

Incidentally Mondal and his associates had purchased a number of rice mills worth crores in Birbhum and neighbouring Burdwan districts.

The officials on Friday



grilled Abhishek Samanta, the manager of the Cooperative Bank, a state government controlled entity. Samanta is known to have provided crucial information to the investigators, sources said adding the total amount thus transacted may go far beyond Rs 10 crore.

Reacting to the development Trinamool Congress spokesperson on Friday said that his party was for zero tolerance for corruption but demanded an impartial probe

from the CBI. "Let the law take its own course ... let the guilty be punished but my question is why the CBI is not interrogating one of the prime accused in the Narada scam ... why don't they interrogate Suvendu Adhikari who is a person named in the CBI FIR."

Another senior leader and TMC MP Saugato Roy said "the CBI has become a narrow-minded agency ... they are being shamelessly used by the BJP to serve its own cause."

Apex court stops HC order staying Assam, Meghalaya boundary pact

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday stopped the execution of the Meghalaya High Court order staying the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed by the Chief Ministers of Assam and Meghalaya for settling their festering boundary dispute.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala took note of the submissions of Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and the lawyers representing Assam and Meghalaya and ordered a stay on the order of the Meghalaya High Court.

The bench took note of the submissions that some of the areas, which are covered under the MoU, are not getting the



benefits of the developmental schemes due to the old border disputes and, moreover, the boundary between the two states has not been altered due to the agreement.

A single judge bench of the Meghalaya High Court had on December 8 ordered an interim stay on physical demarcation or erection of boundary posts on the ground following the interstate border pact. Later, a division bench of the high court refused to interfere with the order of the single judge bench, prompting the petitioners to an

appeal in the top court.

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma and his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma had in March last year signed an MoU for demarcating the border in at least six of the 12 contested locations that often raised tensions between the two states. On March 29 last year, the agreement was signed in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah by the Chief Ministers of Assam and Meghalaya.

The pact sought to resolve the protracted dispute in six of the 12 places along the 884.9-km border between the two states. The boundary dispute between Assam and Meghalaya has lingered for 50 years. However, efforts to resolve it have gained pace in recent times.

Rahul attacks Centre over Agnipath scheme, GST

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/PANIPAT

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Friday launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led government at the Centre over a host of issues, including the Agnipath scheme and GST. Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge too slammed the Centre over a host of issues, including inflation and unemployment, and accused it of making tall promises during election time and going back on those words after coming to power.

Addressing a public meeting as part of the Congress' Bharat Jodo Yatra in Haryana, Rahul also said there are two Indias -- one of farmers, labourers, small shopkeepers

and unemployed youth and the second of 200-300 people who hold the country's wealth.

Targeting the government over the Agnipath scheme, he said, "First make me understand what the Agnipath scheme is. The BJP people say they are patriots, make me understand their patriotism," he said.

Kharge, senior party leaders Kumari Selja, Bhupinder Singh Hooda, K C Venugopal, Shaktisinh Gohil, Kiran Choudhary and D K Shivakumar were among those present at the rally.

The former Congress president also hit out at the BJP-led Haryana government over the state's high unemployment rate. "In the 21st century, Haryana is the champion in unemploy-

ment, you have left everyone behind," Gandhi said when someone in the crowd said the state has an unemployment rate of 38 per cent.

Rahul said demonetisation and Goods and Services Tax (GST) were not policies but weapons to destroy small and medium businesses.

Addressing the rally at Panipat, Kharge said there is rising inflation and unemployment in the country but the government, led by the BJP, does not seem to be bothered.

Kharge said Rahul has led the Bharat Jodo Yatra for more than 3,000 kilometres so far. The foot march reached Haryana from Uttar Pradesh on Thursday evening.

Kharge said the Congress came to power in several states

under Rahul's leadership, but the BJP allegedly used tactics to bring down those democratically-elected governments.

He pointed out that in poll-bound Tripura, Shah has talked about the inauguration

of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Kharge accused the saffron party of indulging in divisive and vote-bank politics and asserted that the Congress stands to protect the interests of all sections of the society.

Now, Bharat Jodo Party on the political horizon?

In an interesting development, a group of people based in Bareilly have issued a public notice seeking registration as a political party with the name 'Bharat Jodo Party'. As per the notice, published in two newspapers last month, the group's president and the vice president are Nasir Ali and Jinat Begum. The mandatory public notice is part of an elaborate exercise parties have to undertake before they are registered by the Election Commission. The notice says that the party has submitted an application before the EC for registration as a "political party" under the Representation of the People Act. The notice was put on the EC website on Friday.



Azad puts up brave face as Chand, 18 others return to Congress fold

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SRINAGAR

Chairman of the Democratic Azad Party (DAP) Ghulam Nabi Azad Friday tried to put up a brave front even after learning about 'Ghar Wapsi' of former Deputy Chief Minister Tara Chand along with 18 others in the Congress party.

Tara Chand, Balwan Singh and Dr Manohar Lal were earlier expelled by the DAP Chairman for anti party activities on December 22, less than three months after Azad had floated his new political outfit after quitting the Congress party.

Interestingly, Dr Manohar Lal was not present in AICC headquarters along with other leaders who returned to the Congress fold.

Meanwhile, reacting to the new political development Azad, who was present in Srinagar said, "I wish my former colleagues well in their political career ahead. It is not a setback because all three of them have no constituency. I will not say anything against them, they were my old colleagues."

In New Delhi, former Deputy Chief Minister Tara Chand soon after rejoining the Congress party admitted they had committed a blunder by



exiting the Congress party at the time of joining the Azad bandwagon.

Azad, on the other hand, maintained after these leaders joined him, I gave them the party positions as they were left without their constituencies

after the culmination of the Delimitation exercise. But, they could not digest that. It is okay. Perhaps where they went, they do not know that these three only had party positions, but have no constituencies," he said.

NIA files chargesheet against accused in Ghazwa-e-Hind case of Patna

PSN ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday filed a charge-sheet against an accused in the Ghazwa-e-Hind case of Patna.

The agency filed the charge-sheet against accused Marghoob Ahmad Danish before the NIA Special Court, Patna in the case which relates to radicalization of impressionable youth over various social media platforms for carrying out violent terrorist acts.

The case was initially registered as FIR No. 840/2022 dated July 14 at Phulwarisharif police station in Patna and re-



registered by NIA on July 22 last year.

"Investigations have revealed that accused Marghoob Ahmad Danish was the admin of WhatsApp Group 'Ghazwa E Hind' created by a Pakistani national namely Zain, and had added many persons from India as well as other

countries, including Pakistan and Yemen, with an intention to radicalize them and to constitute them into Sleeper cells for carrying out terrorist activities," the agency said in a statement.

Accused Marghoob Ahmad Danish had created the said 'Ghazwa E Hind' group on different social media platforms like WhatsApp, Telegram, and Bip Messenger. He had also created another WhatsApp group in the name of 'BDGhazwa E HindBD' and had added Bangladeshi nationals, it said.

The accused person has been chargesheeted under var-

ious sections of the Indian Penal Code including 121 (waging war against the government of India), 121A (conspiracy to overawe the Central or any State government by means of criminal force or the show of criminal force) and 122 (collecting arms, etc., with intention of waging war against the Government of India) and relevant provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

Danish alias Tahir Ahmed is a resident of Muneer Colony, near Qabristan Phulwarisharif, Patna, Bihar. Further investigations in the case are in progress.

Thakur launches themes, logo & website of Y20 summit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Thakur on Friday, launched the themes of Y20 summit, logo and website in the Curtain raiser event of Y20 Summit India today in New Delhi. Secretary Department of Youth Affairs Meeta R. Lochan, Dr Vijay Chauthaiwale, Mentor, Y20 Secretariat, India, Anmol Sovit, Chair for the Youth 20 Engagement Group and senior officers of the Ministry also graced the event. India is hosting the Y20 summit for the first time. Panel Discussion on

"How India can harness its youth population to be a super-power" was also held in the second session of today's event.

During his address Thakur said, "The G20 Summit in India will bring together, 43 Heads of Delegations - the largest ever in G20 who will be participating in the final Summit in New Delhi in September this year. The G20 consists of two parallel tracks: the Finance Track and the Sherpa Track. The Sherpa Track oversees inputs from 13 Working Groups, 2 Initiatives -- Research Innovation Initiative Gathering (RIUG) and G20 Empower, and various

Engagement Groups. The Engagement Groups of which Youth 20 or Y20 is a part, brings together civil societies, parliamentarians, think tanks, women, youth, labour, businesses and researchers of the G20 countries."

Giving details, the Minister said, "The Y20 Summit is a unique opportunity to allow the youth to provide constructive policy inputs and to utilise the platform to voice their opinions for the world audience. The Youth 20 India Summit brings together the trustees of our future generations from across the G20 countries to deliberate, dis-



cuss and deduce innovative, sustainable and actionable solutions especially in the realm of social development. At the Y20 Summit, India will not only speak; but also provide an

audience to youth from across the world, to be heard in the world's largest democracy amongst those young leaders geared up with the baton to the future."

Quality certificate to 160 Chinese firms for selling toys in India delayed by Covid

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Friday said it has not yet issued a mandatory quality certificate to around 160 Chinese companies for selling toys in India, and the delay is due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

From January 2021, India has made it mandatory to get the quality certification mark of 'ISI' from the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) for the sale of toys in the country.

"Around 160 Chinese toy companies have applied for the BIS quality certification in the last two years. We have not



yet issued to them in view of the COVID-19 pandemic," BIS Director General Pramod Kumar Tiwari told reporters.

Normally, the BIS quality certification is issued after an inspection of the factories. Due to the pandemic restrictions and health concerns, the BIS officials could not visit China, he said.

"Neither they invited us for inspection nor we could visit China because of the pandemic," Tiwari said.

In the last two years, Tiwari said the BIS has granted the quality certificate to 29 foreign toy makers, out of which 14 are from Vietnam.

The BIS has also issued the quality certificate to 982 Indian toy makers in the same period, he added.

The BIS has been conducting enforcement raids in the last few days at major airports and malls across the country for violation of toy quality control orders.

Participation of girl cadets more than doubled in past decade: NCC D-G

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indicating the growing importance of the National Cadet Corps (NCC), its Director General (DG) Lt General Gurbirpal Singh on Friday said that the participation of girl cadets in the NCC has more than doubled in the last one decade.

As NCC cadets from all over the country gathered in the national capital for the annual Republic Day camp, the DG gave an overview of the activities undertaken by the cadets across the country, including in the Puneet Sagar Abhiyan under which more

than 200 tonnes of plastic waste has been collected from different water bodies.

"The participation of girl cadets in the NCC is increasing every year," he said adding the ratio of women in the NCC was around 13 per cent in 2010, which has gone up to around 35 per cent this year.

He said some states have a higher ratio of women cadets like Delhi, Kerala, and north eastern states with some states having almost 50 per cent girl cadets.

Talking about the future plans of the NCC, Singh said training is being revamped and use of simulators for training is being increased. At pre-



sent the NCC is using 98 firing simulators, 71 rowing simulators, and 62 flying simulators.

Republic Day camp in the national capital this year is being attended by 2,155 cadets from across the country, including 710 girls. It includes 114 cadets from Jammu and Kashmir and 120 cadets from

the North-Eastern Region.

The camp will be formally inaugurated by Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday. The NCC is the youth wing of the Indian Armed Forces. It is open to school and college students on a voluntary basis as a tri-services organisation.

UP signs MoUs worth \$2 billion with North American companies

PSN ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) worth nearly \$2 billion (about Rs 16,400 crore) with North American companies in the logistics, defence and aerospace sectors.

The agreements were inked recently with the companies incorporated in the US and Canada, a senior government official said.

US-based Mobility Infrastructure Group will invest Rs 8,200 crore in logistic projects, expected to generate 100 fresh employment opportunities. Canada-based QSTC will



also pump in Rs 8,200 crore in defence and aerospace projects, creating 200 jobs.

The government is looking to showcase the state's military hardware manufacturing potential as well as the UP Defence Industrial Corridor at the UP Global Investors' Summit (GIS) 2023 in Lucknow during February 10-12.

The event is likely to attract defence manufacturers from the US, Europe, Russia, the UK, Sweden, France, Israel, and Germany. These include: US missile company Northrop Grumman; UK missile launch systems and ammunition maker BAE Systems; German rifle company Umarex; Swedish firm SAAB, the maker of Carl Gustaf M4 rifles; Russia's Almaz-Antey, a leading military hardware exporter; France's Dassault Aviation, which manufactures Rafale jets; and Israel Weapon Industries (IWI), which deals in unmanned aerial systems.

"During the recent visit of the UP ministers and officials

to North America in the run-up to the GIS next month, MoUs of almost Rs 20,000 crore were signed across sectors with logistics, defence, and aerospace leading the chart," he said.

India eyes \$5 billion exports in defence manufacturing in near future. The two defence industrial corridors in UP and another in Tamil Nadu are seen as the steps taken by the Centre to achieve this goal.

The UP Defence Industrial Corridor spans six nodes: Lucknow, Kanpur, Jhansi, Aligarh, Chitrakoot and Agra. So far, the state has acquired 1,600 hectares of land for allotment to companies.

FIRST COLUMN

PRACTICE FORGIVENESS FOR GOOD RELATIONS

One must work for purity of thought to build relationships



RAJYOGI **BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ**

Human relationships are infinitely complex and tricky to manage and hence they need immense patience, understanding, acceptance, acknowledgement and engagement. That is why the quality of our relationships decides the quality of our life. Unfortunately, most people today experience unhappiness and stress in their lives either due to their relationship with work or with their family.

The highest form of exchange of energy in any relationship is love and respect. When love is absent, there are problems in relationships and they become stressful. The exchange of anger, hatred and fear in any relationship breaks the union between the people.

The origin of stress is when we want people to do or be something else because we believe that our happiness and sense of self-worth depends on them, and when they do not do or be what we want, our love turns into resentment and fear.

Instead, when we accept them as they are, we can heal and restore relationships. So, if there is peace, joy, love, kindness, courage and wisdom in everything we relate to, then every relationship will bring happiness.



Most of us may have had this experience, where a very close and loving relationship with some friend or a dear one went completely sour and the relationship which lasted for years suddenly ended. While one keeps on wondering and thinking about the reasons for such sad events that brings one's self esteem down, one forgets to do a simple self-check as to what was my fault in this? Where did I go wrong? As a result of this, one starts blaming the opposite person and the bitterness in heart keeps on increasing day by day, leaving no margin for a reconciliation.

There is a well-known saying that "we see things not as they are but as we are". While our physical eyes see everything and everyone the same way, it is actually the thoughts and feelings that accompany the act of seeing which form an impression in the mind about what we are seeing. So, if our feelings are light and pure, we feel the same way about everything we see.

On the other hand, if we are in a negative frame of mind, we might perceive things negatively. Today we all live with a fragmented sense of self, defined by many identities, based on physical, social and professional identities, which has led to inner disintegration of the self. This is the actual cause of our inability to love and feel love for yourself. Hence, we must realise that we can experience our completeness only when we realise our true identity as a soul.

Acceptance, appreciation, trust, good listening skills, respecting others' ideas, sincerely wishing them well and taking care to exchange positive vibes in all interactions - all these are valuable investments in a good relationship. The best part of this is, that whatever we exchange with others, we first give to ourselves. A relationship is like a house. When a light bulb burns out, do we go and buy a new house? Not really! We fix the bulb and move on.

Such an attitude helps us remain stable in the face of all the challenges. It also helps others around us as it enables us to come out of self-centered or selfish ways of thinking and to think of the universal good. Lastly, there is one question we all could ask ourselves every night which would certainly contribute to forming better relationships: What did I give from my heart to anyone today?

(The author is a spiritual educator)

India must tax MNCs for revenues here

Ideally, the source country from where an offshore firm is deriving its income should have sole right to collect tax

Over the years, an increasing share of the income generated globally has gone towards boosting the profits. The proportion of corporate profit in global GDP (gross domestic product) went up from 14.5 per cent during 1975 to 16.2 per cent in 2000 and further to 20 per cent during 2019. The growth in profit, in turn, was driven largely by multinational companies (MNCs) – companies which operate in several jurisdictions. Their share in corporate profit increased from four per cent during 1975 to 18 per cent during 2019.

Even more disconcerting is the fact that such companies didn't pay taxes in countries from where they earned profits (call them 'source countries'). According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development or OECD, corporate tax avoidance costs countries anywhere from \$100 billion to \$240 billion annually, equivalent to 4-10 per cent of global corporate income tax revenues.

Developing countries are disproportionately affected because they tend to rely more heavily on corporate income taxes than advanced economies. India is losing about \$10 billion annually.

MNCs don't pay tax in source countries by taking recourse to a disingenuous practice of registering their subsidiaries in low-tax countries such as Singapore, Mauritius, and Ireland, and showing their revenue and profits there regardless of where their sales are made. Over time, this practice has proliferated as is evident from the fact that the share of multinational profits booked in tax havens increased from less than two per cent in the 70s to over 37 per cent in 2019.

To better understand the dynamics, consider an MNC, say Amazon, whose home country is the US; it has all its customers located in India who buy goods and services on former's on-line platform and it has a 100 per cent investment arm/subsidiary registered in a low-tax jurisdiction, say, Ireland.

If Amazon were to have a subsidiary registered in India and record the revenue from sales to Indian customers in this very subsidiary (this indeed is the right way to go), it would have paid tax on such income to the Government of India. But it does not follow this route. Instead, it asks its subsidiary in Ireland to raise invoices on Indian customers even as the Indian entity is crafted more like a service company or commission agent to the parent firm.

Since the revenue is recorded in the books of the Irish subsidiary, the right to collect tax is vested with the Government of Ireland. Being a tax haven, Amazon either pays very little or no tax in that jurisdiction. Not having to pay any tax in India either (as no income is shown here), it gets away with not paying tax anywhere.



MNCS DON'T PAY TAX IN SOURCE COUNTRIES BY TAKING RECOURSE TO A DISINGENUOUS PRACTICE OF REGISTERING THEIR SUBSIDIARIES IN LOW-TAX COUNTRIES SUCH AS SINGAPORE, MAURITIUS, AND IRELAND, AND SHOWING THEIR REVENUE AND PROFITS THERE REGARDLESS OF WHERE THEIR SALES ARE MADE

(The author is a policy analyst)



To address the problem, October 8, 2021, 136 countries and jurisdictions representing more than 90 per cent of global GDP, including India, agreed to a deal called the OECD action plan. It requires: (i) 25 per cent share in profits in excess of 10 per cent to be reallocated to market jurisdictions where the companies' users are located; this applies to firms with an annual global turnover exceeding 20 billion euros, which can be potentially reduced to 10 billion euros, and profit before tax greater than 10 per cent of the revenue and is expected to cover about 100 of the most profitable MNCs and (ii) MNCs to pay taxes at a minimum 15 per cent (referred to as global minimum corporate tax or GMCT) where ever they operate; this applies to companies with annual global revenues of over 750 million euros.

The plan also says "no newly enacted digital services taxes (DSTs) or other relevant similar measures will be imposed on any company from October 8, 2021, and until the earlier of December 31, 2023, or the coming into force of the MLC (multilateral convention)."

The deal is heavily tilted in favour of the developed countries and brings little gain for India. Picking up from the above example, the plan requires Ireland to impose a minimum tax of 15 per cent in which case Amazon will have no incentive to continue with its subsidiary in that country. In case, Ireland keeps the tax rate

at a lower level say 10 per cent or even 'nil' then the US would impose a top-up tax of 5/15 per cent that would bring the effective rate to 15 per cent.

This is in sync with a law enacted by the Trump administration (2017) to impose" Global Intangible Low-Taxed Income (GILTI). GILTI is applied on the offshore income of US-based MNCs having subsidiaries in low-tax countries at 10.5 per cent. The incumbent President Joe Biden wanted GMCT - the new face of GILTI - to be set at 21 per cent but was eventually lowered to 15 per cent.

The big question is: Can the US – the home country of Amazon – collect tax on the profits of its subsidiary in Ireland despite the fact that the latter's income is derived mostly from Indian customers and that the GOI has a right to collect tax on it? This brings us to the second pillar.

The plan allocates to the 'source' country (read: India) taxing rights only to the extent of 25 per cent of the profit. How does India from where the MNC/Amazon gets all its revenue and profit be treated as residual, getting the right to tax only 25 per cent? On the other hand, how can the US, which has no contribution to revenue, get away with collecting tax on 75 per cent of the profit?

The initial game plan of the US and other developed countries which are home to MNCs operating from tax havens was to garner

all of the tax on profits booked in those jurisdictions. Now, they have made developing countries sign on a deal which enables them to collect tax on 75 per cent of these profits. This is patently unfair and violates the spirit of the OECD as reflected in its draft paper on "Taxing digital companies" released on October 9, 2019 stating: "Profits of MNCs should be available for taxation in the country where their customers are, irrespective of any physical presence in that market."

As for GMCT, far from any help in addressing the problem of profit shifting and resultant loss of tax revenue, the requirement to impose a minimum tax will take away from India the policy space to lower the tax and attract foreign investment.

To conclude, ideally the source country (read: India) from where an offshore firm is deriving its income, should have the sole right to collect tax on it. Yet, if at all 'non-source' countries are to be given something, they should get to tax on residual basis say 20-25 per cent. India should also pester OECD to drop the GMCT idea; countries should have the freedom to decide the tax rate.

India should also not agree to withdraw the 'equalization levy' (a DST introduced in 2016/2020 in lieu of tax on profits) which under the OECD action plan is required to be done before the new tax rules take effect. The levy should be withdrawn on the date the new regime comes into force.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

I HAVE TAKEN THE DECISION WITH A HEAVY HEART TO RESIGN FROM TNBJP...UNDER ANNAMALAI'S LEADERSHIP, WOMEN ARE NOT SAFE.
— ACTOR TURNED POLITICIAN
GAYATHRI RAGHURAM

I HAVE NO REGRETS IF SOMEONE LEAVES THE PARTY. LET THEM HAVE A GOOD LIFE...
— TAMIL NADU BJP PRESIDENT
K ANNAMALAI

Should free trade agreements have a shelf life?

Sunset clause constitutes a critical lever to bring a partner to negotiating table for rebalancing through mid-course corrections

In this jolly season one could easily recall a staple American Christmas comedy trilogy where the protagonist is subject to a legal technicality known as "The Santa Clause" (which is also the film's title) and has to accept all of Santa's duties and responsibilities therein. By the time the third sequel was made, the producers had appended the title "the Escape clause", which begets the question: should agreements have a shelf life?

More recently, one can recall the furor created by the sunset clause in the recent US-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement or USMCA (successor to the expired NAFTA). The sunset clause provision states that the agreement shall terminate 16

SANJAY **CHADHA**

(The author is a senior retired official from the Department of Commerce)

years after it enters into force unless certain conditions are met. The condition starts with a "joint review" of the agreement after six years. At this review, if the three governments express their desire to continue the agreement, the term gets further extended for 16 years from the time of this review.

After another six years have elapsed from the time of the first review, there will be another review and the process will keep getting repeated with extensions for next 16 years at each review.

Critics argue that while there is nothing wrong with updating agreements to keep up with changes in the economy and to fix flaws that have been discovered, but such a provision of a sunset clause

takes "review" of the agreement to a whole new level.

Let us take a step back here and see what has historically been the shelf life of trade agreements. We know that it was not until the 19th century that the idea of free trade was seeded. The World's first free trade agreement, the Cobden-Chevalier Treaty, was put in place in 1860 between Britain and France, which set off a number of similar treaties in Europe. This "golden age of free trade" in Europe, however, lasted only until the 1880s, whereafter, the rise of protectionism in Germany, the United States and elsewhere made the treaties irrelevant.

In fact, the evolution and demise of trade agreements

find roots in the series of flip-flops between liberalisation and protectionism in the trade policies of the developed world. However, post second world war, with the formation of GATT, the larger objective within the democratic west became to pursue a more ambitious and permanent lowering of duties across board and to diminish a country's ability to pull back given concessions.

Even so, today the idea of "winners and losers" in trade liberalization following an FTA, is increasingly influencing domestic politics even in the west. Many criticize what they allege to be a "democratic deficit of trade agreements" – limited as they are in their ability to be amended in accordance with the

long-term changes in the ecosystem.

Adding to the woes of the developing world is the fact that the developed countries, who have a penchant for compelling their trade partners to maximise the tariff concessions, then use non-tariff means to undermine those concessions. This often acts as a disincentive for developing countries to pursue ambitious FTAs.

Though Article 62 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties provides for a unilateral right to terminate or suspend a treaty in case of a fundamental change of circumstances, it sets a rather high bar to clear for termination of FTAs.

The question arises as to how do we recalibrate signed

FTAs and successfully initiate measures to rebalance the commitments that have been made to trade partners.

A sunset clause which has an 'Opt-in' option for its continuation spurs the partners to take affirmative action to recalibrate and is perhaps more effective than a sunset clause with an 'Opt-out' option where the default option is to continue with the FTA.

The argument being that the entrenchment effect of not having this 'Opt-in' provision diminishes the incentive to go for a mid-course correction, especially if one party is reluctant to come to the negotiating table - fearing that they may have to let go of an undue advantage. Why would the

gainer come to the negotiating table to cede an advantage – unless compelled to. A case in point being the India-Japan CEPA which is long overdue its mid-term review.

Though a conventional liberalist narrative voices deep concerns on using sunset clauses to regulate temporary and transitory issues, yet in the long run the sunset clause constitutes a critical and underappreciated lever to bring a partner to the negotiating table for rebalancing through mid-course corrections, especially if the continuation in-force hinges on it.

On a lighter note, a periodic reaffirmation of commitments and rebalancing is always a good idea for any relationship—trade or otherwise.

Putin orders weekend truce in Ukraine

Kyiv won't take part

AP ■ KIV

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday ordered his armed forces to observe a unilateral 36-hour cease-fire in Ukraine this weekend for the Orthodox Christmas holiday, the first such sweeping truce move in the nearly 11-month-old war. Kyiv indicated it won't follow suit.

Putin did not appear to make his cease-fire order conditional on Ukraine's acceptance, and it wasn't clear whether hostilities would actually halt on the 1,100-kilometer (684-mile) front line or elsewhere. Ukrainian officials have previously dismissed such Russian moves as playing for time to regroup their invasion forces and prepare additional attacks.

At various points during the war that began Feb. 24, Russian authorities have ordered limited, local truces to

allow civilian evacuations or other humanitarian purposes. Thursday's order was the first time Putin has directed his troops to observe a cease-fire throughout Ukraine.

"Based on the fact that a large number of citizens professing Orthodoxy live in the combat areas, we call on the Ukrainian side to declare a cease-fire and give them the opportunity to attend services on Christmas Eve, as well as on the Day of the Nativity of Christ," according to Putin's order to Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, published on the Kremlin's website.

Putin's order didn't specify whether it would apply to both offensive and defensive operations. It wasn't clear, for example, whether Russia would strike back if Ukraine kept fighting.

Ukrainian officials dismissed Putin's move. Presidential adviser

Mykhailo Podolyak tweeted that Russian forces "must leave the occupied territories -- only then will it have a temporary truce." Keep hypocrisy to yourself."

Ukraine's National Security Council chief Oleksiy Danilov told Ukrainian TV: "We will not negotiate any truces with them."

He also tweeted: "What does a bunch of little Kremlin devils have to do with the Christian holiday of Christmas? Who will believe an abomination that kills children, fires at maternity homes and tortures prisoners? A cease-fire? Lies and hypocrisy. We will bite you in the singing silence of the Ukrainian night." U.S. President Joe Biden said it was "interesting" that Putin was ready to bomb hospitals, nurseries and churches on Christmas and New Year's. "I think he's trying to find some oxygen," he said, without elaborating.

State Department spokesman Ned Price said Washington had "little faith in

the intentions behind this announcement," adding that Kremlin officials "have given us no reason to take anything that they offer at face value."

"It does not appear to be a strategic change in in Russia's plan or its approach," he said. "It appears to be a bid to continue to do what it has inflicted upon the Ukrainian people for nearly a year now as it seeks to rest, refit, regroup, and ultimately reattack."

U.N. Spokesman Stephane Dujarric welcomed the move but said it "will not replace a just peace in line with the U.N. Charter and International law." Putin acted after the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Kirill, proposed a truce from noon Friday through midnight Saturday Moscow time (0900 GMT Friday to 2100 GMT Saturday; 4 a.m. EST Friday to 3 p.m. EST Saturday). The Orthodox Church, which uses the Julian calendar, celebrates Christmas on Jan. 7 — later than the Gregorian calendar

— although some Ukrainian Christians also mark the holiday on that date.

Kirill has previously called the war part of Russia's "metaphysical struggle" to prevent a Western liberal ideological encroachment.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had proposed a Russian troop withdrawal earlier, before Dec. 25, but Moscow rejected it.

Political analyst Tatyana Stanovaya said Putin's cease-fire order is intended to make him look reasonable. It "fits well into Putin's logic, in which Russia is acting on the right side of history and fighting for justice," she said.

"We must not forget that in this war, Putin feels like a good guy,' doing good not only for himself and the brotherly nations,' but also for the world he's freeing from the hegemony' of the United States," Stanovaya, founder of the independent R.Politik think tank, wrote on Telegram.

She also linked Putin's



move to Ukrainian forces' recent strike on Makiivka that killed at least 89 Russian servicemen. "He really doesn't want to get something like that for Christmas," she said.

Ukrainians reacted with suspicion to Putin's announcement.

"Frankly speaking, the 8th of March (Women's Day), (Ukraine's) independence day, Christmas (Dec. 25) and the New Year, there were no cease-fires. Why should there be one now?" said Sophiia Romanovska, a 21-year-old student who fled Mariupol for Kyiv, peppering her comments with expletives. Putin issued



the truce order after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan urged him in a phone call to implement a "unilateral cease-fire," according to the Turkish president's office. The Kremlin said Putin "reaffirmed Russia's openness to a serious dialogue" with Ukrainian authorities.

Erdogan also told Zelenskyy later by phone that Turkey was ready to mediate a "lasting peace." Erdogan has made such offers frequently, helped broker a deal allowing Ukraine to export millions of tons of grain, and has facilitated prisoner swaps.

Russia's professed readiness for peace talks came with the usual preconditions: that "Kyiv authorities fulfill the well-known and repeatedly stated demands and recognize new territorial realities," the Kremlin said, referring to Moscow's insistence that Ukraine recognize Crimea and other illegally seized Ukrainian territory as part of Russia.

Previous attempts at talks have failed over Moscow's territorial demands because Ukraine insists Russia withdraw from occupied areas.

Coupled with talk of diplomacy were new pledges Thursday of military support for Ukraine.

Kremlin-ordered truce uncertain amid suspicion of motives

AP ■ KIV

The impact of Russian President Vladimir Putin's order for his forces in Ukraine to observe a unilateral, 36-hour cease-fire was in doubt Friday after Kyiv officials dismissed the move as a ploy but didn't clarify whether Ukrainian troops would follow suit.

Moscow also didn't say whether it would hit back if Ukraine kept fighting.

The Russian-declared truce in the nearly 11-month war began at noon Friday and was to continue through midnight Saturday Moscow time (0900 GMT Friday to 2100 GMT Saturday; 4 a.m. EST Friday to 4 p.m. EST Saturday).

There were no immediate reports of it being broken.

Putin's announcement Thursday that the Kremlin's troops would stop fighting along the 1,100-kilometer (684-mile) front line or elsewhere was unexpected.

It came after the Russian Orthodox Church head, Patriarch Kirill, proposed a cease-fire for this weekend's Orthodox Christmas holiday.

The Orthodox Church, which uses the Julian calendar, celebrates Christmas on Jan. 7.

But Ukrainian and Western officials suspected an ulterior motive in Putin's apparent goodwill gesture.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy questioned the Kremlin's intentions, accusing the Kremlin of planning the fighting pause "to continue the war with renewed vigor."

"Now they want to use Christmas as a cover to stop the advance of our guys in the (eastern) Donbas (region) for a while and bring equipment, ammunition and mobilized people closer to our positions," Zelenskyy said late Thursday.

He did not, however, state outright that Kyiv would ignore Putin's request.

U.S. President Joe Biden echoed Zelenskyy's wariness, saying it was "interesting" that Putin was ready to bomb hospitals, nurseries and churches on Christmas and New Year's.

"I think (Putin) is trying to find some oxygen," Biden said, without elaborating.

State Department



spokesman Ned Price said Washington had "little faith in the intentions behind this announcement," adding that Kremlin officials "have given us no reason to take anything that they offer at face value."

The truce order seems to be a ploy "to rest, refit, regroup, and ultimately re-attack," he said. The Institute for the Study of War agreed that the truce could be a ruse allowing Russia to regroup.

"Such a pause would disproportionately benefit Russian troops and begin to deprive Ukraine of the initiative," the think tank said late Thursday.

"Putin cannot reasonably expect Ukraine to meet the

terms of this suddenly declared cease-fire and may have called for the cease-fire to frame Ukraine as unaccommodating and unwilling to take the necessary steps toward negotiations."

Washington says it is prepared to keep backing Ukraine's war effort.

On Friday, the U.S. Was due to announce nearly \$3 billion in military aid for Ukraine — a massive new package that was expected for the first time include several dozen Bradley fighting vehicles.

The ill-feeling between the warring sides showed no signs of abating, despite the backdrop of Christmas.

Germany to send armoured carriers, Patriot battery to Ukraine



AP ■ BERLIN

Germany will supply Ukraine with armoured personnel carriers and a Patriot missile battery, the government said Thursday.

The announcement came in a joint German-US statement after Chancellor Olaf Scholz spoke with US President Joe Biden.

Germany's decision to supply Marder armoured personnel carriers comes after France said it will soon hold talks with Ukraine to arrange for the delivery of armored combat vehicles. France's presidency said that will be the first time

this type of Western-made wheeled tank destroyer will be given to the Ukrainian military.

The German government didn't specify how many Marder APCs will be supplied or when. It said that Germany will train Ukrainian forces on them.

The statement noted that the U.S. Last month announced that it would give a Patriot air defense missile battery to Ukraine and said that "Germany will join the United States in supplying an additional Patriot air defense battery to Ukraine." It didn't specify a timeframe.

US to send Ukraine dozens of Bradleys in USD 2.85 billion aid package

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The US will send Ukraine nearly USD 3 billion in military aid, in a massive new package that will for the first time include several dozen Bradley fighting vehicles, US officials said on Thursday, in the Biden administration's latest step to send increasingly lethal and powerful weapons to help Ukraine beat back Russian forces.

The aid — totalling about USD 2.85 billion — is the largest in a series of packages of military equipment that the Pentagon has pulled from its stockpiles to send to Ukraine.

It is aimed at getting as much to the Ukrainian forces as possible during the winter months, before spring sets in and an expected increase in fighting begins.

An announcement is expected Friday, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because details of the package have not been publicly announced.

The Bradley fighting vehicles is a medium-armoured



combat vehicles that can serve as a fortified troop carrier on the battlefield. It has tracks rather than wheels, but is lighter and more agile than a tank. It can carry about 10 personnel, and is seen as a critical way to move troops safely into battle.

Also included in the aid package will be HUMVEES, Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, or MRAPs, and a large amount of missiles and other ammunition.

The aid comes on the heels of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's dramatic visit to Washington last month, when he slipped secretly out of his war-torn nation for the first time to thank America and predict that 2023 would be a "turning point" in the conflict.

War in Ukraine at critical point right now: Biden

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The war in Ukraine is at a critical point right now, US President Joe Biden said Thursday as the US and Germany announced additional support for Ukraine.

"Right now, the war in Ukraine is at a critical point. We have to do everything we can to help the Ukrainians resist Russian aggression. And Russia is not attempting to slow up. The actions they're taking are as barbaric as they were a year ago, and they're not letting up at all," Biden told reporters during a Cabinet meeting.

Earlier this afternoon, Biden said, he had a long discussion with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz about Ukraine and their alliances in Europe and the EU.

"We have a much larger

contingent of countries that share our view, including Japan and others. But we talked about what we're going to do," he said.

"Today we jointly announced a statement saying that we're going to increase support for Ukraine. We're going to provide the Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles to the Ukrainians, and the Germans are going to provide the Marder Infantry Fighting Vehicles that they have to the Ukrainians," Biden said.

"In addition, we're going to help defend Ukraine against Russian air attacks. Germany has also announced today that it's going to provide the Ukrainians to deal with air attacks, a Patriot air defense system. We're going to provide an additional Patriot air defense battery. They work, and the Russians are beginning to real-

ize that. They function well, and they're helping a lot," he said.

Earlier during a call, Biden and Scholz exchanged views on the ongoing war of aggression waged by Russia against Ukraine and reiterated their support for Ukraine's sovereignty and independence. "They reaffirmed their unwavering solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in the face of Russia's aggression," the White House said in a readout of the call.

Biden and Scholz expressed their common determination to continue to provide the necessary financial, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine for as long as needed.

"In light of Russia's ongoing missile and drone attacks against Ukraine's critical infrastruc-



ture, President Biden and Chancellor Scholz affirmed their intention to further support Ukraine's urgent requirement for air defense capabilities.

In late December, the United States announced its donation of a Patriot air defense missile battery to Ukraine. Germany will join the United States in supplying an additional Patriot air defense

battery to Ukraine," said the White House.

During the call, Biden and Scholz expressed appreciation for the military support provided by other allies and partners to Ukraine, endorsed the ongoing coordination efforts of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, and welcomed additional donations of air defense systems and combat vehicles.



A firefighter stands at a burning house hit by the Russian shelling in Kherson, Ukraine, on the Orthodox Christmas Eve on Friday (AP Photo)

6 women killed in bus accident in Nepal

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

At least six women died and 18 other passengers were injured after a bus they were travelling in veered off a cliff in Western Nepal's Palpa district, police said.

The accident took place on the Saljhandi-Dhorpatan road section on Thursday.

The bus en route to Khursane from Saljhandi in Rupandehi district fell some 60 metres down the road at Madhubanregion, The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported.

All six passengers who died on the spot were women, the report said, quoting police officials. Rem Bahadur Rana, the chairman of ward 8 of the



rural municipality, informed that a team of police and locals rescued the injured, it said.

The injured are being treated at the Lumbini Provincial Hospital in Butwal.

The rescue team faced difficulties while recovering the bodies and helping the injured,

three of whom were crushed under the bus, due to poor weather conditions.

Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal condoled the death of the women and wished a speedy recovery to those who sustained injuries in the accident.

2 years after Jan 6, Speaker scrap paralyses Congress again

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Such are the fractures in the country, between the political parties and inside the Republican Party itself, that one time-honoured specialty of Washington — memorialising and coming together over national trauma — isn't what it used to be.

Friday's moment of silence at the Capitol to contemplate the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on it was expected to draw mostly Democrats.

At the White House, few Republicans were expected for a ceremony at which President Joe Biden will award Presidential Citizens Medals to a dozen state and local officials, election workers and police officers for their "exemplary deeds of service for their country or their fellow citizens" in

upholding the results of the 2020 election and fighting back the Capitol mob.

It's all a far cry from Sept. 11, 2001, when lawmakers who had frantically evacuated the Capitol during the terrorist attack gathered there later in the day in a moment of silence and broke out in "God Bless America," Republicans and Democrats shoulder to shoulder.

"They stood shaken and tearful on the steps of the Capitol, their love of nation and all that it symbolises plain for the world to see," an Australian newspaper reported in a passage reflected now in the House's official history.

Today, the world sees a different picture, one of turmoil in American democracy coming from within the institution that insurrectionists overran

two years ago.

The nation's legislative branch is again paralysed — not by violence this time but by a tortuous struggle among Republicans over who should lead them, and the House itself, as speaker.

To be sure, a resolution to the immediate crisis may be near as the GOP leadership continues negotiations to appease its hard-right flank, but questions loom about the chamber's ability to manage even the most essential legislation, such as funding the government and meeting the nation's debt obligations.

Biden, in his afternoon remarks, will tell stories of heroism, whether in the face of a violent Capitol mob or a vehement horde of Donald Trump-inspired agitators who threatened election workers or



otherwise sought to overturn the results. He will appeal for unity.

But the Democratic president can't ignore the warning signs that it could happen again.

In the midterms, candidates who denied the outcome of 2020's free and fair election were defeated for many pivotal

statewide positions overseeing elections in battleground states, as were a number of election deniers seeking seats in Congress.

Yet many of the lawmakers who brought baseless claims of election fraud or excused the violence on Jan. 6 continue to serve and are newly empowered.

Taiwan president visits base as China protests US ship passage

AP ■ CHIYAYI (TAIWAN)

Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen visited a military base on Friday to observe drills while rival China protested the passage of a US Navy destroyer through the Taiwan Strait, as tensions between the sides showed no sign of abating in the new year.

Beijing claims self-governing Taiwan as Chinese territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary, and regularly protests the passage of US and other foreign warships through the Taiwan Strait, one of the world's busiest waterways.

Tsai's visit to the base in the central county of Chiayi comes as Taiwan is seeking to boost its defences against the rising threat from China.

That includes expanding the domestic shipbuilding and arms industry, buying more defensive weaponry from the US and extending the national service requirement for all men from four months to a full year beginning in 2024.

Along with observing the display by an army mechanized infantry battalion, Tsai visited the air force's Fourth Tactical Fighter Wing, whose pilots are largely responsible for intercepting Chinese military aircraft approaching the the midline of the Taiwan Strait.

"I would like to reiterate that



the continuous activities of the People's Liberation Army (around Taiwan) are not helpful to cross-strait relations nor to the peace and stability of the region," Tsai said.

"As we are facing the expansion of authoritarianism, we can only but strengthen the country's combat capabilities and toughness to secure our national security and interests," said Tsai.

Meanwhile, China accused the US of "publicly hyping" the passage on Thursday of the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Chung-Hoon through the strait, adding that its forces monitored the ship the entire time.

"The Eastern Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army organised troops to monitor the US ship's entire passage and was fully cognizant of all its actions," the command's spokesperson Col. Shi Yi said in a brief statement posted to social media.

The US says the strait is international waters beyond the territorial sea of any coastal state.

"Chung-Hoon's transit through the Taiwan Strait demonstrates the United States' commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific. The United States military flies, sails and operates anywhere international law allows," the Japan-based 7th

Fleet said in a statement.

China's attempts to intimidate Taiwan militarily have risen to new heights in recent months, raising concerns in Washington that Beijing is growing closer to using force. That has included firing missiles into the sea and sending planes and ships across the dividing line in the Taiwan Strait in August in response to a visit to the island by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Last month, it sent a record-breaking 71 planes and seven ships toward Taiwan in a 24-hour display of force after expressing anger at Taiwan-related provisions in a US annual defence spending bill.

Japan, US to hold security talks before Kishida meets Biden

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan and the United States will hold security talks between their foreign and Defence ministers in Washington the day before Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida lands in the US capital next week wrapping up his tour of Group of Seven nations as Tokyo expands its military and deepens its alliance with America amid China's growing influence.

Kishida will embark on a five-nation trip Monday to France, Italy, Britain and Canada ahead of his January 13 summit with US President Joe Biden.

While the two leaders last met during a Group of 20 meeting in Bali, Indonesia, Kishida's Washington visit will be his first as prime minister.

Defence Minister Yasukazu Hamada and Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi will fly to Washington to join their American counterparts Lloyd Austin and Antony Blinken for their "2+2" security talks on Wednesday, just before their leaders' summit at the White House, Japanese officials said on Friday.

The "2+2" talks are expected to focus on their new national security strategies, released by Japan in mid-December and the United States in October, and how the two allies plan to tackle security concerns including China, North Korea and Russia.

"We will discuss strengthening of deterrence and



response capability of the Japan-US alliance as we take into consideration our new strategy documents," Hamada told reporters. Hamada said on Friday he and Austin will separately hold bilateral defence talks on Thursday to discuss details of how their militaries can expand and deepen their operations.

Asked if they will discuss a revision to their current Defence guideline based on Japan's more defensive role, Hamada said nothing has been decided.

Japan in December adopted a set of three security and defence strategy documents that break from its exclusively self-Defence-only stance.

Under the new strategies, Japan vows to build up its counterstrike capability with long-range cruise missiles including US-made Tomahawks that can reach potential targets in China,

double its Defence budget within five years and bolster development of advanced weapons.

US officials have welcomed Japan's willingness to take on a more offensive role, while experts say it could also help widen cooperation with Australia, their main regional defence partner.

Kishida on Wednesday said his talks with Biden will underscore the strength of the Japan-US alliance and highlight closer cooperation between the countries under Japan's new security and defence strategies adopted last month.

Kishida said coordination with other G-7 leaders ahead of the Hiroshima summit he will host in May is a key purpose of his trip, but Japanese officials said their talks will also focus on security and military cooperation.

Australian charged over travel to ISIS territory freed on bail

AP ■ SYDNEY

An Australian woman charged with willingly entering part of Syria that was under control of the Islamic State group was freed on bail on Friday as a debate raged about the risk to the community.

Mariam Raad, 31, is one of several Australians whose husbands were killed or jailed after they joined the Islamic State group.

Australia repatriated four such women and 13 children from a Syrian refugee camp in October.

Raad has been living in the town of Young, in New South Wales state, and was first arrested on Thursday. Federal and state police executed warrants at her home and the home of a relative in Sydney.

Raad was charged with entering, or remaining in, a part of Syria that was under the control of terrorists, a breach of federal law. If found guilty, she faces up to 10 years in prison.

Her bail conditions included a requirement to surrender her passport and a ban from her contacting anyone in prison or anyone associated with a terrorist group.

She is also banned from acquiring a gun.

Her lawyer, Moustafa Khier of Birchgrove Legal, told the Guardian newspaper that the court heard of the "wealth of evidence" that Raad had been working hard to reintegrate herself and her family.

"Mariam has always said that she would comply with any government orders," Moustafa Khier told the Guardian, adding that law enforcement agencies had categorised her as low risk in deciding to repatriate her.

Explainer: Is China sharing enough Covid-19 information?

AP ■ TAIPEI

As COVID-19 rips through China, other countries and the World Health Organization are calling on its government to share more comprehensive data on the outbreak. Some even say many of the numbers it's reporting are meaningless.

Without basic data like the number of deaths, infections and severe cases, governments elsewhere have instituted virus testing requirements for travelers from China. Beijing has said the measures aren't science-based and threatened countermeasures.

Of greatest concern is whether new variants will emerge from the mass infection unfolding in China and spread to other countries. The delta and omicron variants developed in places that also had large outbreaks, which can be a breeding ground for new variants.

Here's a look at what's going on with China's COVID-19 data:

WHAT IS CHINA SHARING AND NOT SHARING?

Chinese health authorities publish a daily count of new cases, severe cases and deaths, but those numbers include only officially confirmed cases and use a very narrow definition of COVID-related deaths.

China is most certainly doing their own sampling studies but just not sharing them, said Ray Yip, who founded the US Centres for Disease Control office in China.

The nationwide tally for Thursday was 9,548 new cases and five deaths, but some local governments are releasing much higher estimates just for their jurisdictions.

Zhejiang, a province on the east coast, said Tuesday it was seeing about 1 million new cases a day.

If a variant emerges in an outbreak, it's found through genetic sequencing of the virus.

Since the pandemic started, China has shared 4,144 sequences with GISAID, a glob-



al platform for coronavirus data. That's only 0.04 per cent of its reported number of cases — a rate more than 100 times less than the United States and nearly four times less than neighbouring Mongolia.

WHAT IS KNOWN AND WHAT CAN BE FIGURED OUT?

So far, no new variants have shown up in the sequences shared by China. The versions

fuelling infections in China "closely resemble" those that have been seen in other parts of the world since July, GISAID said.

Dr. Gagandeep Kang, who studies viruses at the Christian Medical College of Vellore in India, agreed, saying there wasn't anything particularly worrisome in the data so far.

That hasn't stopped at least 10 countries — including the

US, Canada, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, the UK, France, Spain and Italy — from announcing virus testing requirements for passengers from China.

The European Union strongly encouraged all its member states to do so this week.

Health officials have defended the testing as a surveillance measure that helps fill an information gap from China.

This means countries can get a read on any changes in the virus through testing, even if they don't have complete data from China.

"We don't need China to study that, all we have to do is to test all the people coming out of China," said Yip, the former

public health official.

Canada and Belgium said they will look for viral particles in wastewater on planes arriving from China.

"It is like an early warning system for authorities to anticipate whether there's a surge of infections coming in," said Dr. Khoo Yong Khean, a scientific officer at the Duke-NUS Centre of Outbreak in Singapore.

IS CHINA SHARING ENOUGH INFORMATION?

Chinese officials have repeatedly said they are sharing information, pointing to the sequences given to GISAID and meetings with the WHO.

But WHO officials have

Ex-Lanka president returns to Lanka from Dubai

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who was ousted from power last year over his government's mishandling of the cash-strapped country's economy, has returned here from Dubai, his first foreign trip since returning to Sri Lanka four months ago.

Rajapaksa and wife Ioma arrived at Bandaranaike International Airport here from Dubai on Thursday, the Daily Mirror Lanka newspaper reported, quoting the airport duty manager and spokesperson of the airport immigration department.

They arrived on an



Emirates flight from Dubai, the report said.

During his visit to Dubai, Rajapaksa visited the exotic animal farm called "Fame Park," according to news portal news-first.lk.

Rajapaksa, 73, fled Sri Lanka to the Maldives on a Sri Lankan Airforce plane in July,

as the country plunged into its worst economic and humanitarian crisis since its independence from Great Britain in 1948.

He then proceeded to Singapore, from where he submitted his resignation on July 14 last year.

Weeks later, he flew to Thailand, seeking temporary shelter.

Thailand said Rajapaksa can stay in the country for 90 days because he is still a diplomatic passport holder.

However, he was not allowed to engage in political activities in Thailand. He was confined to a hotel and surrounded by security personnel.

New Israeli Govt takes steps to penalise Palestinians

AP ■ JERUSALEM

In some of its first acts since coming to power, Israel's new Security Cabinet approved a series of punitive steps against the Palestinian leadership, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Friday.

According to a statement from Netanyahu's office, the move is in retaliation for Palestinians pushing the U.N.'s highest judicial body to give its opinion on the Israeli occupation. The development underscores the hard-line approach to the Palestinians that Israel's new ultranationalist government has promised at a time of rising violence in the occupied territories.

It comes a week after the United Nations General Assembly voted to approve a resolution requesting that the

International Court of Justice intervene and render an opinion on the legality of Israeli policies in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem.

Israel's Security Cabinet described the Palestinian Authority's request to the U.N. As a "decision to wage political and legal war against the State of Israel." "The current government will not sit idly by in the face of this war and will respond as necessary," it said.

In response, the Security Cabinet, packed with Netanyahu's far-right and religiously conservative allies, decided Israel would withhold \$39 million from the Palestinian Authority and transfer the funds instead to a compensation program for the families of Israeli victims of Palestinian militant attacks.

Lankan court sends YouTuber to 4-day police remand over blasphemous remarks

PTI ■ COLOMBO

A popular Sri Lankan YouTuber, who made derogatory remarks on the Sacred Tooth relic of the Buddha, was sent to police custody for four days by a court here on Friday, a day after he was arrested in Colombo. The Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic is a Buddhist temple in Kandy. It is located in the royal palace complex of the former Kingdom of Kandy, which houses the relic of the tooth of the Buddha.

The Colombo Additional Magistrate issued the remand order for activist and YouTuber Sepal Amarasinghe after the Sri Lankan police produced him before the court.



McCarthy offers deal to end standoff in House Speaker fight

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The contours of a deal that could make Republican leader Kevin McCarthy the House speaker have begun to emerge after three grueling days and 11 failed votes in a political spectacle unseen in a century. It has left Republicans in disarray and exposed anew the fragility of American democracy.

The House will be back at it Friday, with Republicans trying to elect their new House speaker — this time, against the backdrop of the second anniversary of the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol. The attack was an unimaginable scene of chaos that shook the country when a mob of President Donald Trump's supporters tried to stop Congress from certifying his election defeat.

McCarthy made no promises of a final vote that would secure him the speaker's gavel, but glimmers of a deal with at least some of the far-right holdouts who have denied him support were emerging.

"We've got some progress going on," McCarthy said late Thursday, brushing back questions about the lengthy, messy process. "It's not how you start, it's how you finish."

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Mobile No. 9811215181

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all: SALIL TANGRI S/o LATE SH. A.K. TANGRI R/o NC-25A, ASHOK VIHAR PHASE-I, DELHI-110052 Abitor/Mutatee of DDA MG FLAT NO-29-A, GROUND FLOOR, BLOCK-NC, WAPURUR RESIDENTIAL SCHEME, ASHOK VIHAR PHASE-I, DELHI-110052 have applied for conversion of the aforesaid flat from lease hold to free hold in DDA. The original documents i.e. DEMAND/ALLOWMENT LETTER, POSSESSION LETTER, NOC FOR WATER AND ELECTRICITY CONNECTION, SITE POSSESSION SLIP & OTHER DOCUMENTS of the above said flat has been lost. An FIR/NCR/LR No. 18585/2023 dated 06/01/2023 to this effect has been lodged in F.S. Crime Branch, Delhi. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/ contact with above named person at above Address/Phone No. 852/1347/7 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. The person claiming any right, interest, objection with respect to this property, can personally inform or write to Deputy Director (Housing) - MIG or Director (H)-MIG, Delhi Development Authority, Vikas Sadan, New Delhi-110023.

Office of the Managing Director
Uttarakhand Co-Operative Dairy Federation Ltd.
Mangal Parao, Haldwani - 263139 (Nainital) Uttarakhand
Ref No.: C-2789/UCDF/NW/2022-23
Re-E-Tender Notice Date: 06 January, 2023
Short Term Re-E-Tender (2nd term) Notice no. 28(1-2)/UCDF/2022-23, Date- 06.01.2023
Short Term E-tenders are invited by the undersigned, from experienced, reputed and financially sound Authorized Manufacturers/Dealers/Firms/Bidders for the following item so as to reach this office on or before 18.01.2023 up to 5.00 P.M. The tenders will be opened on 19.01.2023 at 11.00 A.M.

Item No.	Name of work	Details
1.	Rate Contract cum Empanelment for Supply of Liquid Milk in Milk Unions/UCDF	Tender fee, EMD, and other related details can be seen on E-tender portal
2.	Supply of various Food grade flavours in Powder forms	

Tender documents may be downloaded/uploaded from E-Tender Portal <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>

Administrator **Managing Director**

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY
PARADIP-754142, ODISHA (INDIA)
(An autonomous body under Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Govt. of India)
No. AD/RSC-22/196/2015(Pt.-VI)/20 Dated, the 4th January, 2023
Advertisement
Applications are invited from Indian Nationals for engagement of 01 (one) **Chief Manager (Corporate Relations & Communications)** on contractual basis in Paradip Port Authority.
For further details, visit our website: www.paradipport.gov.in.
Sd/- Dy Secretary
Paradip Port Authority
PPA/PR/218/2022-23 Dt. 05.01.2023

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE
The Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/PS, Northern Railway, Delhi division, New Delhi invites e-tender for the following work:

1	Name of work with its location: Supply, operation and maintenance of Battery Operated Cars (BOC) for carrying passengers on payment basis with advertisement on the body of BOC at railway stations over Delhi Division for a period of five (05) years																
2	Details of railway stations	<table><thead><tr><th>E-tender Notice Number</th><th>Stations/Location</th><th>No. of BOC</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Publicity BOC01-2023</td><td>New Delhi</td><td>10 (Ten)</td></tr><tr><td>Publicity BOC02-2023</td><td>Delhi Jn.</td><td>4 (Four)</td></tr><tr><td>Publicity BOC03-2023</td><td>Hazrat Nizamuddin</td><td>3 (Three)</td></tr><tr><td>Publicity BOC04-2023</td><td>Anand Vihar Terminal</td><td>3 (Three)</td></tr></tbody></table> (Separate Bids are to be submitted for each unit)	E-tender Notice Number	Stations/Location	No. of BOC	Publicity BOC01-2023	New Delhi	10 (Ten)	Publicity BOC02-2023	Delhi Jn.	4 (Four)	Publicity BOC03-2023	Hazrat Nizamuddin	3 (Three)	Publicity BOC04-2023	Anand Vihar Terminal	3 (Three)
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Publicity BOC04-2023	Anand Vihar Terminal	3 (Three)															
3	Date of Tender Opening	30.01.2023 up to 1500 hrs.															
4	Approximate cost of work	As per NIT on ireps.gov.in															
5	Cost of Tender document including 18% GST	As per NIT on ireps.gov.in															
6	Earnest Money Deposit	www.ireps.gov.in															
7	Website particulars where complete details of tender document can be seen	https://ireps.gov.in															

No.: 7PUB/TN/BOC/2022 Date: 05.01.2023 75/2023
Serving Customers with a Smile

G2
NORTHERN RAILWAY
Engagement of Contract Medical Practitioner (CMP), Dresser, Medical Attendant
Applications are invited from eligible candidate for Engagement of Contract Medical Practitioner (CMP), Dresser, Medical Attendant at Rail Coach Naveenikarn Karkhana, Sonapat. Detailed advertisement with Vacancy status Terms & condition, format of application form is available on Northern Railway website i.e., www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in
No. E-file-138973 Dated : 06.01.2023
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 65/23

G2
NORTHERN RAILWAY
Invitation of tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement Systems)
Applications are invited from eligible candidate for Engagement of Contract Medical Practitioner (CMP), Dresser, Medical Attendant at Rail Coach Naveenikarn Karkhana, Sonapat. Detailed advertisement with Vacancy status Terms & condition, format of application form is available on Northern Railway website i.e., www.nr.indianrailways.gov.in
No. E-file-138973 Dated : 06.01.2023
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 65/23

ARYABHATTA COLLEGE
(UNIVERSITY OF DELHI)
Accredited with grade A+ by NAAC
BENITO JUAREZ ROAD, NEW DELHI-110021
Ph No. 011-24110490 Fax : 011-24117284
Email : admin@aryabhattachcollege.ac.in
Website : www.aryabhattachcollege.ac.in
Advnt. No. AC/Advnt.(T)/2023/001 Date: 02.01.2023
Online applications are invited in the prescribed Application Form from eligible candidates for appointment to the post of Assistant Professor, in the Academic Pay Level 10 of the 7th Central Pay Commission Pay Matrix, in the College. The last date for receipt of application is 31.01.2023 or within 21 days from the date of publication of the advertisement in the *Employment News*, whichever is later. For details, please visit the College website, www.aryabhattachcollege.ac.in.
Any addendum/corrigendum shall be posted only on the College website.
PRINCIPAL
Important Note:
The details regarding qualifications, publications, experience, screening guidelines and indicative proforma etc. are available on the College website along with this advertisement. The applicants are required to read these details before filling up the form.

PUBLIC NOTICE
M/S METRO TECHNOBUILD PVT LTD
Regd Office at 397, Kohat Enclave, Pitampura, Delhi-34,
Site Office: MKS County, Sector-2, Sohna, Gurugram, Haryana.
Website: www.mksventures.in
WHEREAS M/s Metro Technobuild Private Limited (MKS Ventures) has obtained License No. 42 of 2022 dated 13.04.2022 by The Director, Town and Country Planning Haryana, Chandigarh for the development of residential plotted colony (under DDJAY 2016) over an area measuring 12.125 acres in village Sohna, Sector-02, Sohna, Gurugram, Haryana namely "MKS County" and for which Layout Plan was approved vide drawing No. 8255 dated 15.04.2022.
AND WHEREAS several individuals may have made bookings and may have entered into agreements / arrangements for allotment of units on the aforementioned 12.125 acres residential plotted colony project (Under DDJAY 2016) namely "MKS County" to be developed at village Sohna, Sector-02, Sohna, Gurugram, and Haryana.
AND WHEREAS A Revised Layout Plan vide drawing no. NO. DGTC/8894 dated 02.01.2023 for MKS County to be developed at Village Sohna, Sector-2, Sohna, Gurugram, Haryana have now been approved in-principle by the office of DTCP Haryana Chandigarh vide memo no. ZP-1575/JD(RA)/2023/167 dated 02-01-2023. The Office of DTCP has desired that objections, if any, be sought from all the allottees regarding the revision in Layout through this public notice. Objections (if any) are hereby invited from all the allottees of the above project on the proposed approval of revised Layout through this public notice.
AND WHEREAS a copy of the earlier approved Layout vide drawing no. 8255 dated 15.04.2022 and the revised Layout Plan now approved in principle vide memo no. ZP-1575/JD(RA)/2023/167 dated 02-01-2023 is available for perusal on the website of company www.mksventures.in, and at office of undersigned at MKS County, Sector-2, Sohna, Gurugram, Haryana as well as in the office of Senior Town Planner, Town and Country Planning Office, 3rd Floor, HUDA Complex, Sector-14, Gurugram, Haryana.
Any allottee having any objection to the revision in Layout Plan of the above project may file his objections in the office of the Senior Town Planner, Gurugram or in the office of company within 30 days of publication of this notice, failing which it shall be presumed that there are no objections to the proposed Layout Plan of the residential plotted colony project "MKS County" at Sector-02, Sohna, Gurugram which is being developed by M/s. Metro Technobuild Private Limited.
Place: Delhi
Date: 07-01-2023
For Metro Technobuild Pvt Ltd.

India to grow at 7% in FY23

LOSE FASTEST GROWING ECONOMY TAG

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hit by weakening demand, the Indian economy is expected to grow at a slower 7 per cent rate in the current fiscal ending March 2023, setting the stage for the country losing the fastest-growing major economy tag.

The 7 per cent expansion projected in the first official estimate released by the Statistics Ministry compares with 8.7 per cent gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2021-22.

The projections are much lower than government's earlier forecast of 8-8.5 per cent growth but above the Reserve Bank's projection of 6.8 per cent. If the forecast comes true, India's GDP growth will be lower than Saudi Arabia's expected 7.6 per cent expansion. In fact, India's GDP growth in the July-September quarter at 6.3 per cent was lower than the 8.7 per cent of Saudi Arabia.

The first advance GDP estimates, which are used to work out allocations and other fiscal projections for the next Budget due on February 1, proved to be more optimistic than the actual growth in three out of the last four years.

The projections suggest that despite the global headwinds and continued geopolitical uncertainty caused by the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the recovery is on track though there are pressure points. Inflation has been sticky despite a 225 basis points increase in interest rates since last May, which is likely to moderate demand.

"We believe that buoyant albeit mixed domestic consumption should help to stave



off some of the pain arising from weak exports during this period," said Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA Ltd.

"Given the full-year projections released today by the NSO, we expect there to be some revisions in either the H1 or the H2 FY2023 sectoral numbers, in the subsequent data releases."

Sunil Sinha, Senior Director and Principal Economist, India Ratings & Research, said the road ahead is not going to be easy so long as private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) does not recover fully and become broad-based.

"The household sector, which accounts for 44-45 per cent of the GVA, saw their nominal wage growth decline to 5.7 per cent during FY17-FY21 from 8.2 per cent during FY12-FY16. In fact, the real wage growth became nearly flat or even turned negative in some months of FY23 due to high inflation.

"Since much of the growth in consumption demand is driven by the wage growth of the household sector, a recovery in their wage growth is an imper-

ative for a sustainable economic recovery," he noted.

The first advance estimates for 2022-23 factored in discrepancies of Rs 4,06,943 crore, which is nearly double the amount of Rs 2,16,842 crore as per provisional estimates of GDP growth for 2021-22 released on May 31, 2022. The discrepancies were Rs 2,38,638 crore in 2020-21.

Discrepancies in the statistical GDP data refer to the difference in national income under production method and expenditure method.

As per the first advance estimates of national income released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Friday, the manufacturing sector output is estimated to decelerate to 1.6 per cent in the current fiscal from 9.9 per cent in 2021-22.

Similarly, mining sector growth is estimated at 2.4 per cent in the current fiscal as against 11.5 per cent in 2021-22.

"Real GDP or GDP (Gross Domestic Product) at Constant (2011-12) Prices in the year 2022-23 is estimated at Rs 157.60

lakh crore, as against the Provisional Estimate of GDP for the year 2021-22 of Rs 147.36 lakh crore, released on 31st May, 2022," an NSO statement said.

It stated that growth in real GDP during 2022-23 is estimated at 7.0 per cent as compared to 8.7 per cent in 2021-22.

It also said the nominal GDP or GDP at Current Prices in the year 2022-23 is estimated at Rs 273.08 lakh crore, as against the Provisional Estimate of GDP for the year 2021-22 of Rs 236.65 lakh crore.

The growth in nominal GDP during 2022-23 is estimated at 15.4 per cent as compared to 19.5 per cent in 2021-22.

The agriculture sector is projected to see a growth of 3.5 per cent in FY2022-23, higher than the 3 per cent expansion recorded in the previous financial year.

Trade, hotel, transport, communication and services related to broadcasting segment is estimated to grow at 13.7 per cent from 11.1 per cent in 2021-22.

Financial, real estate and professional services segment is projected to grow at 6.4 per cent in the current fiscal, up from 4.2 per cent in 202-22.

However, construction sector growth is expected to decelerate to 9.1 per cent from 11.5 per cent a year ago.

Similarly, public administration, defence and other services growth is estimated to drop to 7.9 per cent this fiscal from 12.6 per cent in FY22.

The growth in gross value added (GVA) at basic prices is pegged at 6.7 per cent this fiscal, down from 8.1 per cent in 2021-22.

Benchmarks skid for 3rd day as bears tighten grip; end 1st week of 2023 with losses

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Sensex tumbled for the third straight session to close below the 60,000-mark on Friday, ending the first week of the new year with losses amid concerns over elevated inflation and continued monetary policy tightening.

Unabated foreign fund outflows and a weakening rupee added to the gloom, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex slumped 452.90 points or 0.75 per cent to finish at 59,900.37. The broader NSE Nifty went lower by 132.70 points or 0.74 per cent to end at 17,859.45.

TCS was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, shedding 2.97 per cent, followed by IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Infosys and Kotak Mahindra Bank.

Only five counters closed higher — Mahindra & Mahindra, Reliance Industries, Nestle India, ITC and Larsen & Toubro, rising up to 1.06 per cent.



"Investor risk sentiment took a blow post the release of the FOMC meeting minutes, which indicated further rate hikes in 2023 to tame inflation. The market already remains sensitive to FIIs selling and IT stocks traded with deep cuts ahead the release of corporate earnings next week as the growth is anticipated to be muted," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

On a weekly basis, the Sensex lost 940.37 points or 1.55 per cent, while the Nifty

declined 245.85 points or 1.36 per cent.

"The Indian equity markets have begun the new year on a slightly cautious note, in line with the global markets, continuing the trend visible in December 2022. While expectations remain of softer rate tightening by the global central banks from hereon, concerns remain on the overall economic environment amidst the high interest rates and sticky core inflation.

"Indian markets have been one of the best performing mar-

kets globally in CY22... However, in the near term, the markets seem to be running into a few headwinds -- record high valuation premium to EMs, potential slowdown in exports on the back of global slowdown, and Fixed Income emerging as a viable investment option," said Milind Muchhala, Executive Director, Julius Baer India.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge fell 0.73 per cent and midcap index declined 0.72 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, tech declined 1.86 per cent, IT dipped 1.77 per cent, metal (1.28 per cent), services (1.11 per cent), bankex (1.04 per cent) and financial services (1.03 per cent).

FMCG was the only gainer.

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

Equity exchanges in Europe were trading on a mixed note in mid-session deals. Markets in the US had ended lower on Thursday.

RBI to issue green bonds in two tranches of ₹8,000 cr each



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The RBI on Friday said maiden Sovereign Green Bonds (SGRBs) would be issued in two tranches for an aggregate amount of Rs 16,000 crore, and proceeds will be utilised for funding public sector projects seeking to reduce carbon emissions.

The first auction would be done on January 25 while the second on February 9, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in a statement.

The proceeds will be deployed in public sector projects, which help in reducing the carbon intensity of the economy,

it said.

As announced in the Union Budget 2022-23, the central government as part of its overall market borrowings will be issuing Sovereign Green Bonds (SGRBs) for mobilising resources for green infrastructure.

"Accordingly, it was notified in the half-yearly issuance calendar for marketable dated securities for the second half of the fiscal year 2022-23 on September 29, 2022, that SGRBs for an aggregate amount of Rs 16,000 crore would be issued.

"The Government of India has since issued the Sovereign Green Bond Framework on November 9, 2022," it said.

These green bonds would be available in 5-year and 10-year tenure, it added.

SGRBs will be issued through uniform price auction and 5 per cent of the notified amount of sale will be reserved for retail investors, the RBI said, adding these papers will be reckoned as an eligible investment for SLR purposes.

"SGRBs will be eligible for Repurchase Transactions (Repo) as per the terms and conditions mentioned in Repurchase Transactions (Repo) (Reserve Bank) Directions, 2018 as amended from time to time," it noted.

These bonds will be eligible for trading in the secondary market.

Announcing the guidelines, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in November had said the framework will strengthen India's commitment towards the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) targets adopted under the Paris Agreement as well as help attract global and domestic investments into eligible green projects.

'Govt, RBI in discussion with South Asian nations for cross-border rupee trade'



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Friday said the government and the central bank are in discussion with South Asian countries to have cross-border trade in rupee.

He also said the central bank digital currency (CBDC) is in trial phase and the RBI is moving very carefully and cautiously on digital rupee launch.

"For UPI, we have already entered into agreements with countries in this region, for example, with Bhutan and other countries like Nepal and we are trying to provide the UPI facility to make cross-border payments much easier in this

region...

"The other initiative is the RBI, together with the Government of India, have initiated rupee settlement of international trade. We are already in discussion with some of the countries in this region and to facilitate rupee settlement of cross border trade in the South Asian region," Das said.

In his keynote address at an IMF conference here, the Governor also said that the RBI has launched a pilot project of CBDC.

"It's in a trial phase, we are moving about it very carefully, very cautiously because this is something where the approach has to be very cautious, very careful. If there is cloning or anything which happens, it can be very, very risky... So that could be another area where there can be room for cooperation (between South Asian countries)," Das said.

After the successful launch of the pilot for the wholesale segment on November 1, 2022, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on December 1, last year, began its retail CBDC pilot project.



Good initial progress made on quota reforms: IMF DMD Sayeh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Good initial progress has been made on IMF quota reforms in line with the changing nature of the global economy, International Monetary Fund (IMF) deputy managing director Antoinette Sayeh said on Friday.

As per an IMF resolution, the 16th General Review of quotas should be concluded by December 15, 2023. Any adjustment in quota shares would be expected to result in an increase in the voting rights of emerging countries in line with their relative positions in the world economy.

"We're working of course quite a bit (on quota reforms)...From our experience from the last review, we under-

stand that countries have very different perspectives about what the results of this quota review should be and we've been working with them to find areas of common ground and to make sure that there is ownership for how we approach the review," she said.

Observing that there has been good initial progress being made on that, she said countries are fully aware of the changing nature of the global economy and the contributions that individual members make to it now.

"There is a need to align our governance structure with those changes...Work in progress of course and a long way... But it is our expectation that we will make progress and it will be possible to come to a good outcome," she said

IndiGo's fleet size grows to 300 aircraft

PTI ■ MUMBAI

No-frills carrier IndiGo on Friday said its fleet size has grown to 300 aircraft, which will help it cater to the growing passenger volume amid the recovery in travel demand and growth in 2023.

Besides operating Airbus A320 NEO and A320 CEO aircraft along with A321 Neo, the Gurugram-based airline's fleet also has regional jets ATR 72-600.

The airline offers 180 seats on its A320 CEO fleet while its A320 NEO planes are 180 and 186 seaters.

The seating capacity on the



A321 fleet is 222/232 and ATR fleet offers 78 seats, IndiGo said in a statement.

"Our fleet size now stands at 300 aircraft, giving wings to our ambitions. We have recently expanded operations across west, east, and north-east India as well as the middle east. The strong fleet will help us cater to emerging travel demands with

the addition of capacity across domestic and international destination shores," Pieter Elbers, Chief Executive Officer of IndiGo, said.

IndiGo, which started operations in 2006, currently operates over 1,600 daily flights, connecting 76 domestic and 26 international destinations.

IIFL Finance offers 9% interest on bonds, to raise ₹1,000 crore

New Delhi: IIFL Finance, one of India's largest Non-Banking Financial Companies, will open a public issue of secured bonds on January 6, 2023, to raise up to Rs. 1,000 crore, for the purpose of business growth and capital augmentation. The bonds offer up to 9% yield and high degree of safety.

The Fairfax-backed IIFL Finance will issue secured redeemable non-convertible debentures (NCDs), aggregating to Rs 100 crore, with a green-shoe option to retain over-subscription up to Rs 900 crore (aggregating to a total of Rs 1,000 crore).

The IIFL bonds offer highest effective yield of 9% per annum for tenor of 60 months. The NCD is available in tenors of 24 months, 36 months and 60 months. The frequency of interest payment is available on monthly, annual and at maturity basis for 60 months tenor, while for other tenors it is available on annually and at maturity basis.

Reliance makes open offer to acquire 26% stake in Lotus Chocolate

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two Reliance group firms - Reliance Consumer Products Ltd (RCPL) and Reliance Retail Ventures Ltd (RRVL) — have announced an open offer to acquire a 26 per cent additional stake in Lotus Chocolate.

The firms will together acquire 33.38 lakh shares of Lotus Chocolate from the open market at a fixed price of Rs 115.50 per share, said a notice by DAM Capital, which is managing the offer.

The offer will aggregate to a total consideration of Rs 38.56 crore over the full acceptance, said an open offer-detailed public statement shared by the company with stock exchanges on Thursday.

The open offer starts on February 21 and closes on March 6, said the public notice. Shares of Lotus Chocolate, which manufactures chocolates, cocoa products and cocoa derivatives, had on Thursday closed at Rs 149.35 apiece.

Sebi mulls standardised approach to valuation of investment portfolio of AIFs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Friday proposed that alternative investment funds (AIFs) need to adopt a standardised methodology for valuation of investment portfolios managed by them.

It has been recommended that AIFs should be mandated to carry out valuation of their investment portfolio as per International Private Equity and Venture Capital Valuation (IPEV) Guidelines.

Presently, AIF Regulations focus on disclosures to investors and do not prescribe any guidelines on the methodology to be adopted. As such, managers of AIFs have flexibility to adopt any valuation methodology by disclosing the same to investors in Private Placement Memorandums (PPMs) of schemes of AIFs managed by them.

Currently, the modalities relating to valuation of investment portfolio of the AIFs are not disclosed in the PPMs at the time of submission to Sebi and also not reported to the regulator subsequently.

In its consultation paper, Sebi has suggested criteria of independent valuers appointed by AIFs, reporting of valuation to performance benchmarking agencies and responsibilities of manager of AIF with regard to valuation of their invest-



ment portfolio and related disclosures.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has sought comments from the public till January 23 on the proposals.

As per the draft papers, out of 269 schemes of Category I and Category II AIFs, which invest primarily in unlisted securities, only 71 schemes or 26.4 per cent follow IPEV guidelines for valuation methodology, while others follow market, income, asset and cost based approaches.

With regard to criteria for independent valuer, Sebi suggested that AIF

should appoint an independent valuer who is registered with the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) and has at least three years of experience in valuation of unlisted securities.

Among others, such independent valuer is required to have a membership of a professional institute such as Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) and Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI) and Institute of Cost Accountants of India.

Further, the managers should be required to ensure that one of the terms in subscription agreement with the

investee company stipulates a specific timeframe for providing its audited accounts to the AIF.

This would enable manager of AIF to report valuation based on audited data as on March 31 to performance benchmarking agencies within the specified timeline of 6 months.

Also, managers of AIFs should ensure that valuation based on audited data of investee company is reported to performance benchmarking agencies only after the audit of books of accounts of the AIF.

With regard to responsibilities of manager for valuation, Sebi has proposed that managers of AIFs should be required to ensure that the independent valuer computes and carries out valuation of investments made by the scheme(s) of AIFs in accordance with the stipulated guidelines.

The manager should be responsible for true and fair valuation of the investments made by the scheme of the AIF.

In cases where the established policies and procedures of valuation do not result in fair and appropriate valuation, the manager may be required to deviate from such policies and procedures in order to value the assets or securities at a fair value and document the rationale for such deviations.



'Mercedes-Benz will launch 10 new vehicles in India in 2023'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

German luxury carmaker Mercedes-Benz will launch ten new vehicles in India in 2023 with majority in the over Rs 1-crore price category, which grew over 69 per cent last year, according to a senior company official.

Mercedes-Benz India, which posted a record sales in 2022 at 15,822 units, had sold over 3,500 cars that are priced above Rs 1 crore last year.

In 2021, Mercedes-Benz India had sold 11,242 units. Its previous best sales was achieved in 2018 at 15,583 units.

The company is looking at an overall double-digit sales growth this year, and as part of the drive it launched its 'AMG E53 4MATIC+ Cabriolet' model priced at Rs 1.3 crore on Friday.

"The biggest growth for us in the last year has come from the TEV (top-end vehicle) segment, where we have grown by 69 per cent," newly appointed Managing Director & CEO of Mercedes-Benz India Santosh Iyer told PTI. The company's top-end vehicles include S-Class Maybach, GLS Maybach, top-end AMGs, S-Class and GLS SUV, which are priced over Rs 1 crore (ex-showroom).

Iyer, who is the first Indian to be elevated to lead Mercedes-Benz in the country, said the share of its TEV has increased to 22 per cent of the company's total sales, up from 12 per cent in pre-Covid year of 2018. He further said bringing more products in the TEV segment will be a part of the company's "six pillar" strategy for 2023.

"The first pillar is to think and act like a luxury brand and for that we will be introducing 10 desirable cars in 2023, majority of them will be in the TEV segment...", he said.

Expanding the TEV base is a key part of the strategy, Iyer said, adding, "we have grown at 69 per cent and we will be launching more products there. We have sold more than 3,500 cars only in TEVs in 2022... That's a lot of cars in the Rs 1-crore-plus segment".

Also, he said the company will be putting a lot of emphasis on its online store in order to enhance the omni channel experience for its customers.

"We sold 2,000 cars through our online platform last year... We are making it even better for customers today. Earlier, they were not able to see cars which will be produced after three months. With the enhancements in our online store, they can actually see visibility of cars up to one year," Iyer said.

Mercedes-Benz India will also take the lead in electric vehicles, and is looking at more EVs to enhance product portfolio to add to the existing models EQC, EQB, EQS 53 AMG and EQS 580, he added.

Pacers, top order in focus as India look to win T20 series against SL

PTI ■ RAJKOT

The young pace bowling unit will look to pick up pieces from the hammering of previous night even as the Indian top-order itches to put in a meaningful performance against Sri Lanka in the decider of the three-match T20I series here on Saturday.

After eking out a narrow last-ball win in the opener, India fell short by 16-run defeat as Sri Lanka levelled the three-match series 1-1.

The inconsistency of a young attack was one of the reasons for the defeat but going forward Umran Malik and Shivam Mavi will know that it was great learning experience for them.

They erred in their lines and didn't always bowl the fuller length, making the Sri Lankan batters job easy to guide the pace of the short pitched stuff.

The Indian bowling unit bled runs with left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh, who returned to the playing XI after a spell of injuries, bowling as many as five no balls in his two overs.

He stepped over the line three times on the trot in his first



over, making him the first India bowler to bowl hat-trick of no-balls in T20I.

Mavi, who made a sensational T20I debut in the opening game and Arshdeep Singh added to the no ball count as they too missed the trick with skipper Hardik Pandya, who had to rely on his spinners, lament-

ing that the team needs to get its basics right.

But the youngsters in the team are expected more chances as they gather valuable experience.

"The young kids will have games like this at times, and I think we all need to be patient with them, (but) we need to be

understanding that games like this can't happen," head coach Rahul Dravid said.

"I think as they're learning, it's tough. It's not easy learning in international cricket. You have to learn on the job. I think we're going to have to have a little bit of patience with these guys," he added.

On the batting front, the top order, once again, failed to provide a solid start. Shubman Gill succumbed to his second successive failure in the series and would be eager to capitalise on the opportunities in hand like Rahul Tripathi, who too perished cheaply in his debut game.

It was the second instance of the top-order collapse in the series.

But despite half the team returning to the dugout under 60 runs, it was heartening to see India still go for chase as Axar Patel and Suryakumar Yadav almost pulled off the impossible.

In Axar, India have found a reliable like for like replacement of Ravindra Jadeja.

The team is expected to give its core more games to form lethal combinations as the team prepares for life beyond Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in the shortest format of the game.

India is unlikely to make any changes for the series decider with head coach Dravid asserting "we are not going to be chopping and changing people too much."

As expected, Sri Lanka have given a solid fight to the hosts.

The reigning Asia Cup champions came back strongly to level the series.

However, they would like their middle order to perform better.

Rajkot has is one of the flat-test tracks in the country and is expected to be a batting belter.

The toss could thus play an important role as both captains would like to chase.

TEAMS FROM

INDIA: Hardik Pandya (C), Ishan Kishan (wk), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Shubman Gill, Suryakumar Yadav (VC), Deepak Hooda, Rahul Tripathi, Jitesh Sharma, Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal, Axar Patel, Arshdeep Singh, Harshal Patel, Umran Malik, Shivam Mavi and Mukesh Kumar.

SRI LANKA: Dasun Shanaka (C), Pathum Nissanka, Avishka Fernando, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Kusal Mendis, Bhanuka Rajapaksa, Charith Asalanka, Dhananjaya de Silva, Wanindu Hasaranga, Ashen Bandara, Maheesh Theekshana, Chamika Karunaratne, Dilshan Madushanka, Kasun Rajitha, Dumith Wellalage, Pramod Madushan, Lahiru Kumara and Nuwan Thushara.



Dravid: Team rebuilding for next T20 WC, we have got to be patient with youngsters

PTI ■ PUNE

Head coach Rahul Dravid has called for patience as the Indian team goes through a rebuilding phase for the next cycle of the T20 World Cup and the youngsters in the side get some experience.

Dravid felt inexperience was one of the main reasons for India's 16-run defeat to Sri Lanka in the second T20I here. The former India captain pointed out that while the visitors had a pretty sorted playing XI, the hosts fielded a completely different side than the one which played the T20 World Cup less than two months back.

"They (youngsters in the team) are very skilful, but as they are learning, it's a tough (job). It's not easy learning in international cricket and you have to learn on the job. So, we've got to have a little bit of patience with these guys," Dravid said at the post-match press conference on Thursday.

Dravid said the team was in the rebuilding phase, given the "next cycle of the T20 (World Cup)" had started. He added that youngsters will be handled patiently and will continue to get support from the team management, hinting that it could be the end of the road for the likes of Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and KL Rahul.

"For us, it was a slightly different scenario (in the T20I series against Sri Lanka) in the sense that from the last game we played against England in the semifinal of the World Cup, we've probably only 3-4 boys in the playing XI (now). So, we are in a slightly different stage of looking at the next cycle of (the) T20 (World Cup). So, a slightly younger team."

With the focus shifting to

the 50-over World Cup in India, Dravid feels it is the right time to give as many opportunities to youngsters in T20s as possible.

"The good thing is this year we have the (50-over) World Cup. Because a lot of focus will be on the 50-over World Cup, and the World Test Championship, at least the T20 games that we have, it probably gives us the opportunity to try out a lot of the younger guys."

India are fielding a new-look side comprising youngsters including Shivam Mavi, Umran Malik, Shubman Gill and Rahul Tripathi.

"Hopefully give them opportunities and just back and support them. I think we've got to be patient with a lot of these young kids. If you look at this team, there are a lot of youngsters playing, especially our bowling attack."

"We all need to be patient with them and we need to be understanding that games like this can happen."

With openers Ishan Kishan and Gill and Tripathi -- playing his debut match -- not firing, Dravid defended them, saying they've only played a couple of games, and asserted that no chopping and changing will take place for the Rajkot game.

"I haven't thought about the third match right now. Once we go there we will have a look at the wicket. But I don't expect there to be too much of experimenting."

"The boys we are already playing (with) are very young. The opening pair of Ishan and Shubman have only played two matches, so we are not going for (any) chopping and changing (of) people too much, unless, of course, there are some injuries," said Dravid.



SA20 will be a build-up for IPL, says Reece Topley

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the inaugural edition of SA20, England's left-arm fast bowler Reece Topley, who will feature for Durban's Super Giants, felt the newly-launched tournament will be a good platform to hit the ground running ahead of the 2023 Indian Premier League (IPL).

Topley was snapped by Royal Challengers Bangalore in the recently-concluded 2023 IPL Player Auction held in Kochi on December 23. Durban's Super Giants will play their first match of SA20 against the Joburg Super Kings on January 11. Topley is coming back from a left ankle ligament injury sustained ahead of England's campaign at the Men's T20 World Cup last year.

Now having recovered, he is excited to get back to action but cautious at the same time. "Obviously having not played for a long time since literally just before the start of the World Cup."

"Naturally, it's going to be a bit of a progression, it's going to be small steps, but at least, you know, I'll be playing, and I will be looking to fine-tune in skills during this opportunity over the next two months or so."

"Not just this competition obviously. But obviously, you want to get ready to hit the ground running when you touch down in India," he said in an official release.

Asked if anyone from RCB had gotten in touch with him, Topley said, "I had a welcome message from Fa (du Plessis), played against him a lot and really looking forward to playing under him. He's a fierce competitor. But now it's nice to have a change and have him on my side once."

At the SA20, Topley will join the likes of Quinton de Kock, Jason Holder, Akila Dananjaya, Keshav Maharaj and other top international names in Durban's Super Giants squad. The lanky pacer, standing at six feet and seven inches tall, has played 22 T20Is for his national side and picked up as many wickets.

Ireland's left-arm fast-bowler Josh Little, who had a great ICC Men's T20 World Cup last year claiming 11 wickets in seven matches, including a hat-trick against New Zealand, is a part of the Pretoria Capitals set-up and is all excited to be a part of the SA20.

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Medium-pace Vijaykumar Vyshak came up with his maiden five-wicket haul in first-class cricket to set up Karnataka's seven-wicket win over Chhattisgarh in a Ranji Trophy Group C match here on Friday.

Resuming day four on 35 for 2 and with a lot of work to do to save the match, Chhattisgarh were rocked by Vyshak's superb effort. He struck the first blow of the day by removing the first innings centurion Ashutosh Singh for 18.

Only Amandeep Khare (50) and Mayank Verma (46) provided resistance as the other batters did not stay long enough at the crease.

Skipper Harpreet Singh Bhatia, the key in the Chhattisgarh batting line-up was bowled by K Gowtham (2/41) as the visiting team faltered.

Vyshak struck a crucial blow by bowling Khare. Later, he removed Shashank Singh, Ajay Mandal and Sourabh Majumdar to finish with 5 for 59.

Requiring 123 runs for a victory, Karnataka lost openers-

Karnataka beat Chhattisgarh by seven wickets, Goa shock Kerala

captain Mayank Agarwal (14) and R Samarth (24). Highly-rated S J Nikin Jose followed up his first innings effort of 67 with a well-crafted 44 (59 balls, 1 four, 2 sixes) to see the team home.

In another match in Thiruvananthapuram, Goa upset Kerala by seven wickets thanks to an impressive bowling performance, especially off-spinner Mohit Redkar, who finished with 6 for 73 in the second innings.

Kerala was bundled out for 200 in the second innings, leaving Goa 155 for a win.

Ishan Gadekar (67 not out) and Siddhesh Lad (33 not out) saw Goa home with a 68-run fourth-wicket partnership.

Brief scores: At Bengaluru: Chhattisgarh 311 all out in 121.4 overs and 177 all out in 77.5 overs (Amandeep Khare 50, Mayank Verma 46, V Vyshak 5/59) lost to Karnataka 366 all out in 109.3 overs (Mayank



Agarwal 117, R Samarth 81, S J Nikin Jose 67, Ajay Mandal 4/93, Sumit Ruikar 2/73) and 128 for 3 in 23.2 overs (Nikin Jose 44 not out, Manish Pandey 27 not out) by seven wickets. Karnataka: 6 points, Chhattisgarh: 0.

At Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala 265 all out in 95.3 overs (Rohan Prem 112, Lakshay Garg 4/44) and 200 all out in 62.3

overs (Rohan Prem 70, Jalaj Saxena 34, Mohit Redkar 6/73) lost to Goa 311 all out in 110.2 overs (Ishan Gadekar 105, Jalaj Saxena 5/103) and 157 for 3 in 81.2 overs (Ishan Gadekar 67 not out, Siddhesh Lad 33 not out) by seven wickets. Goa: 6 points, Kerala: 0.

At Delhi: Pondicherry 216 all out in 62.4 overs (K B Arun Karthick 58) and 313 all out in

'Situations you are put in don't define you but decisions you take to deal with them do'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A year ago Shikha Pandey was unexpectedly left out of the Indian team and the pacer's comeback for the T20 World Cup next month has also come out of nowhere, leaving her "pleasantly surprised".

The 33-year-old last played for India on the tour of Australia in October 2021 and was an integral part of the team in the lead up to the 2022 ODI World Cup in New Zealand.

So, being dropped from the team came as a big setback but the former Indian Air Force officer found solace in getting back to the grind of domestic cricket where she excelled and got close with her Goa teammates. Time spent with former Australia captain Belinda Clark Down Under also contributed immensely in her comeback bid.

With the selectors falling back on the experience of Shikha after testing a few



youngsters, there will be additional pressure to perform but she is up for the challenge.

"I try to take one day at a time. Short term goals help me a lot. There is always pressure to perform and I am hoping I am better equipped this time around."

"I did well in the domestic circuit this season and was happy with how I was going. I got a very positive feedback

from my coaches at Zonals and challengers. Yeah I was pleasantly surprised," the 33-year-old told PTI.

Shikha is at the NCA in Bengaluru along with her India teammates and will be leaving for South Africa on January 11. The World Cup will be preceded by a tri-series involving India, West Indies and hosts South Africa, beginning January 19.

The experienced fast bowler forced her way into the Indian team after a stellar domestic season in which she picked up 20 wickets in 16 games at an average of 13.45.

Besides the support of her family, Shikha said her Goa teammates helped her tide over the tough times.

"I have always loved coming back and playing for my state side. Even when I wasn't away on international duties, I would never miss a chance to play alongside my state team mates."



Sarfaraz leads Pak to thrilling draw with NZ

AP ■ KARACHI,

Sarfaraz Ahmed continued his red-hot form with a thrilling century to help Pakistan draw a nail-biting second and final Test against New Zealand as the series ended 0-0 on Friday.

The 35-year-old Sarfaraz, who also struck half-centuries in his three previous innings after being recalled for the series following a near-four year absence, made 118 before the last-wicket pair hung on in dimming light for 21 balls to take Pakistan to 304-9, just 15 runs shy of its victory target.

appreciated," Sethi's sarcasm-laden tweet wasn't lost on anyone. The ACC led by Shah, on the day, released a strongly-worded statement calling out PCB chairman's bluff.

"It has come to our knowledge that PCB Chairman Najam Sethi has made a comment on the ACC President (Shah) unilaterally taking the decision on finalising the calendar and announcing the same. The ACC wants to clarify that it has followed established due process," ACC said in its statement.

In fact, the statement also shared the timeline with the media which effectively means that the PCB chairman was lying.

The calendar was approved by its Development Committee and Finance & Marketing Committee in a meeting held on December 13th, 2022. The calendar was then communicated to all the participating members individually, including Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), via an e-mail dated December 22nd, 2022," it further stated.

AP ■ SYDNEY

Inclement weather threatens to derail Australia's bid of a series clean sweep against South Africa and a confirmed place in the world test championship final as the third and final test against South Africa at Sydney Cricket Ground appears destined for a draw.

After rain and bad light delays across he first two days, consistent, and at times heavy, rain meant no play was possible at all on Friday. It left Australia unable to add to its imposing first-innings score of 475-4 and Usman Khawaja stranded on his overnight score of 195 and tantalizingly close to his first double century.

Australia now has the dilemma of deciding how many runs it needs and then how much time it needs to bowl out South Africa twice to win in the two remaining days on a pitch not yet offering the

Rain dampens Australia's hopes of South African series sweep



expected assistance for the spinners.

"I think it'd be pretty harsh if he (skipper Pat Cummins declared) straight away," Khawaja said after play was abandoned on the prospect have being stranded on 195. "I don't think that's going to happen."

"We could go out there and get a few more runs really quickly or we could declare pretty much straight away."

Consistent rain swept through the Sydney area from early Friday morning and the gaps in the rainfall were not sufficient for ground staff to prepare the field and the match to resume. Shortly after the scheduled tea break, umpires abandoned the day's play.

The forecast appears more favorable for the final two days of the test, although some light showers are forecast for Saturday.

Qatar to host next season of Legends League Cricket Masters from Feb 27

IAN S ■ DOHA

The Qatar Cricket Association will be hosting the next season of the Legends League Masters — the international edition — of Legends League in Doha, Qatar from February 27 to March 8, 2023, the organisers announced on Friday.

Top legend cricketers across the globe will be featuring in this mega event. After Qatar hosted the world's best ever FIFA World Cup

finals in 2022, the country's cricket board will be trying to recreate a similar atmosphere for all the fans of the game around the world.

As per organisers, this season will have eight matches, which will be played at Asian Town international Cricket stadium. "We at Qatar Cricket association feel elated to host Legends League cricket second season. We always strive for excellence in sports and are trying to make Qatar a sports-friendly destination."

RONALDO LATEST STAR TO END CAREER IN SOCCER OUTPOST

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Cristiano Ronaldo is not the first soccer superstar to head off to one of the world's supposed minor leagues in the latter years of his career.

The temptation for one last huge payday, to be a trailblazer in a nation looking to boost its standing in the sport, or just to try something different often can be too big to resist. Not every player bows out right at the top like Zinedine Zidane — even if the France great was sent off in the last game of his career, the World Cup final of 2006.

Others, like Pelé, Johan Cruyff, Zico, Xavi Hernandez, and now the 37-year-old Ronaldo at Saudi Arabian club Al Nassr, find themselves prolonging their careers at unlikely soccer outposts usually for vast amounts of money.

Here's a focus on a few of them, across five different countries:

PELE

It was a move that changed U.S. Sports history. Pelé, the Brazil great and owner of an unprecedented three World Cup winners' medals, signed for the New York Cosmos in 1975 after being wooed by the team for four years.

Pelé's 2 1/2 seasons there — he earned \$2.7 million, according to the Cosmos' then-general manager Clive Toye — put U.S. Soccer on a path to hosting the World Cup in 1994 and launching Major League

Soccer two years later. The Cosmos' average attendances nearly tripled in Pelé's first year and continued to grow.

He scored 37 goals in 64 matches in the North American Soccer League and did all the PR work required in his mission to make soccer mainstream and underpin a surge in youth participation.

"We would not be where we are today," MLS Commissioner Don Garber said, "if it wasn't for Pelé deciding to come to the United States."

So many top players have since made their way to the U.S., typically to end their careers and for lifestyle reasons: Franz Beckenbauer, Johan Cruyff, George Best, David Beckham and Thierry Henry, to name just a few.

ZICO

Zico is almost as fondly remembered in Japan as he is in his native Brazil. After two highly successful spells at Flamengo, either side of two years at Udinese in Italy, the playmaker quit his playing career, only to come out of retirement at the age of 38 to help usher Japanese soccer into professionalism.

He played for four seasons at Kashima Antlers from 1991-94, a period which took in the inauguration of the J-League in 1993. Zico remained in Japan until 2006, staying at Kashima as its technical director and then coach before becoming the national team's coach



for the four-year cycle up to the 2006 World Cup.

He has since been elected into Japanese soccer's Hall of Fame and is known as the "God of Football" in Japan. Along with England great Gary Lineker, who also played in Japan at the start of the league, Zico is regarded as a key figure in the development of Japanese soccer and its growth in popularity.

Dunga, Hristo Stoichkov and most recently Andres Iniesta, Spain's World Cup winner from 2010 who has played for Vissel Kobe since

2018, are other major names to have played in Japan.

XAVI HERNANDEZ

Xavi wasn't the first star player to land in Qatar's top league but he might have had the most prominence, given he arrived midway through 2015 — at age 35 — on the back of being the Barcelona captain who lifted the Champions League trophy weeks earlier.

The league had been running for more than 40 years by that point and, since the turn of the century,

had enticed high-profile players such as Marcel Desailly, Pep Guardiola and Gabriel Batistuta in 2003 and 2004 and Raúl González in 2012.

Even Brazil great Romário came over to the tiny, oil-rich emirate to play, if only for three games in 2003 at a reported cost of \$1.5 million for Al-Sadd, Qatar's biggest club. That was before Qatar, in 2010, won the right to host the 2022 World Cup.

In that 12-year stretch, Xavi — one of Spain's greatest players — was the most famous soccer import, his

stint in the country lasting six years and following a plan that saw him take his coaching qualifications and be a World Cup ambassador.

He was a player for Al-Sadd from 2015-19 and then coached the team from 2019-21 before returning to Barcelona as its coach.

ALESSANDRO DEL PIERO

Del Piero, the majestic Italy World Cup-winning forward, is comfortably the biggest name to have played in Australian soccer after his two years with Sydney FC (2012-14) on what was described by the club as the "largest professional sporting contract in Australian history" -- a reported \$2 million a season.

Del Piero scored 24 goals in 48 games but, as a rare superstar to play soccer in Australia, said his greatest satisfaction was aiding the growth of the game Down Under as TV viewership and Sydney's attendances swelled.

A record 35,000 spectators watched the 38-year-old Del Piero's debut, Sydney's membership grew beyond 10,000, and the club's chairman, Scott Barlow, said it lifted the "A-League onto the world stage."

No other player, past or present, in the A-League comes close to matching Del Piero's gravitas — former Liverpool and England striker Robbie Fowler had short stints at two Australian clubs before the Italian's arrival, and Dwight Yorke spent a season at Sydney before that

— so, in a sense, it has been a missed opportunity in a country where rugby league and cricket is king.

Australian soccer did get a timely uplift at the recent World Cup in Qatar when the national team reached the last 16.

DIDIER DROGBA

In 2012, Chinese clubs made a concerted push to attract top stars to its highest league — the Chinese Super League — after getting over the fallout of a corruption scandal that damaged its reputation.

Not enough, though, to dissuade Didier Drogba to sign for Shanghai Shenhua as perhaps the biggest draw of this first batch of leading players that also included Nicolas Anelka. Drogba, then aged 34, was a huge deal at the time, not least because the Ivory Coast striker had just led Chelsea to its first Champions League title by scoring a late equalizer in regulation time and then the clinching penalty in the shootout of the 2012 final.

Drogba called it a "leap into the unknown," with Shenhua chairman Zhu Jun willing to pay Drogba a reported \$300,000 a week to help drag his team up the league and Chinese soccer officials hoping it would boost the country's hopes of becoming a major global player. Drogba lasted six months before returning to Europe with Galatasaray in a messy split and China never has managed to compete with Europe as a go-to league.

AP ■ BERLIN

The Bayern Munich team flew to Qatar on Friday for its winter training camp amid uncertainty over the club's contentious sponsorship agreement with the Persian Gulf country.

State-owned Qatar Airways' lucrative advertising deal is due to expire at the end of the season and there is pressure on the Bavarian powerhouse from its own fans not to extend it. Many Bayern supporters feel it's damaging to the club's reputation to take money from a country associated with human rights abuses.

The issue has long been a source of contention between Bayern and its own fans, who have consistently campaigned against the sponsorship agree-

Bayern Munich back in Qatar amid sponsorship uncertainty

ment. Members of the Bayern ultra-fan groups, Munich's Red Pride and Club No. 12, displayed banners at games condemning what they say is the "sports washing" of human rights abuses in Qatar through Bayern's publicity for the sheikhdom.

"We continue to stand by our position that we're absolutely against an extension of the sponsorship agreement," Alexander Salzweiger from Club No. 12 told The Associated Press this week.

"In contrast to previous years, it's no longer about an



early termination, which would have been more than complicated, but not extending the sponsorship."

Bayern did not respond to requests for comment.

Fans previously called on Bayern to prematurely end the sponsorship deal. The club's 2021 AGM ended in tumult and anger when members booed the club's directors for

refusing to discuss the issue.

Bayern president Herbert Hainer apologised at the following AGM last November when he said he made "mistakes" in not allowing a discussion at the previous meeting.

Club No. 12 organised a public meeting in Munich in 2020 titled "Qatar, human rights and FC Bayern" featuring two migrant workers who spoke of their experiences constructing stadiums for the World Cup. Bayern was invited to send a representative but did not respond to organisers.

Thapa, Hussamuddin clinch gold medals as Services defend crown at national boxing

PTI ■ HISAR

Favourites Shiva Thapa and Mohammad Hussamuddin powered their way to remarkable victories and bagged gold medals in three respective weight categories at the men's National Boxing Championships here on Friday.

Defending champions Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) topped the rankings with 10 medals.

Record six-time Asian medalist Thapa of Assam had a pretty comfortable day at office as he defeated 2021 World

Youth Championships bronze medalist Ankit Narwal of Railways Sports Promotion Board (RSPB) to win by unanimous decision in the 63.5kg final. But SSCB pugilist Hussamuddin had to toil hard to prevail over 2016 World Youth champion Sachin of RSPB in the 57kg final.

Having suffered defeat in last year's final, the two-time Commonwealth Games bronze medalist showcased brilliant tenacity to emerge victorious on Friday with a 4-1 scoreline.

Narender (+92), 2022 Asian Championships bronze medal-

list, received a walkover in his final bout against 2022 Commonwealth Games silver medalist Sagar, who could not participate in the contest due to a minor injury.

Alongside Hussamuddin and Narender, the pugilists of SSCB stole the show on the final day of the tournament as the team successfully defended its crown with a total of six gold, one silver, and three bronze medals.

Bishwamitra Chongtham (51kg), Sachin (54kg), Akash (67kg), and Sumit (75kg) were the team's other gold medalists.

Buhler successfully completes Stage 5 of Dakar Rally

PTI ■ HA'IL (SAUDI ARABIA)

Hero MotoSports Team Rally rider Sebastian Buhler successfully completed Stage 5 of the Dakar Rally 2023, finishing the 650km gruelling stretch with the 13th fastest time here.

The German was the best among three Hero riders competing in the event, and was followed by Argentina's Franco Caimi in 18th and Botswana's Ross Branch in 21st position in the Rally GP Class.

Buhler and Branch had to start later in the day towards the back of the group due to the time losses in the previous stage but the duo negotiated the sandy tracks and vast expans-

es of dunes and camel grass, displaying fine manoeuvring skills. The tracks were broken and were made worse by competitors who went earlier. But Buhler rode well, finishing just 14 minutes behind the stage winner, and improved his overall rank to 18th in his category.

"The stage was tough as it was full of off-piste sections and broken tracks. I started towards the back of the group due to my issues in the previous stage, so the route was in a bad condition, making it physically demanding. Overall, the bike was running well, so I had fun and I'm looking forward to the coming stages," said Buhler.

Bonzi shocks Zandschulp, seals maiden ATP Tour final appearance

PTI ■ PUNE

A tenacious Benjamin Bonzi knocked out second seed and world number 35 Botić Van de Zandschulp in a gripping three-setter to reach his maiden ATP World Tour final here on Friday.

Keeping the intensity throughout, world number 60 Bonzi prevailed over Zandschulp 7-6(5) 6-7 (5) 6-1 in an intense semifinal of the Tata Open Maharashtra at the Balewadi Stadium.

With his win, Frenchman Bonzi prevented a rare all-Dutch final as earlier in the day, the Netherlands' Tallon Griekspoor ousted eight seed Russian Aslan Karatsev 7-6(4) 6-1 in the first semifinal.

It was the first win for Bonzi in three meetings with the Dutch.

"It's a great start to the season, I did not expect that.

Hope it continues tomorrow (in final). This is a big win for me, I had not beaten him before (Zandschulp)," said Bonzi.

"I will play the same in the final, it's working well for me. In each of the three set, Bonzi went a break up but the resolute Zandschulp, with his big game, stretched the match as well as his opponent.

Bonzi hit fluent serves even as Zandschulp hit some uncharacteristic high unforced errors in the beginning.

Bonzi found a stunning forehand winner on Dutch player's drive volley to earn three breakpoints in game two and went up when Zandschulp netted a backhand on the second chance.

The Dutch was in danger of going down 0-4 as he faced another breakpoint in game four when he hit a forehand long but managed to hold to get on board.

Tie-up with DP World and PGA Tour provides pathway for our players, says PGTI's Mundy



AP ■ NEW DELHI

The recent tie-up with the DP World Tour and the PGA Tour has galvanized the Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI), fees its chief executive Uttam Singh Mundy.

Mundy, who was a proven winner on the Indian pro Tour in his playing days, is relishing his

role at the PGTI.

"We have seen ups and downs in the last few seasons, but 2022 showed a definite upturn. The agreement with the DP World Tour and the PGA Tour was a big boost for our membership.

"The membership is happy with the fact that we will have a lot more of events alongside DP



Gianluca, ex-Italy striker, dies at 58

AP ■ ROME

Gianluca Vialli, the former Italy striker who helped Sampdoria and Juventus win Serie A and European trophies before becoming player-manager at Chelsea, has died. He was 58.

The Italian soccer federation confirmed Vialli's death on Friday. Vialli announced in 2018 that he had overcome a year-long battle with pancreatic cancer but then said in December 2021 that the disease had returned.

With his condition worsening, Vialli announced in mid-December that he was temporarily stepping down from his role as the delegation chief for Italy's national team.

Djokovic advances to face Medvedev in Adelaide semis

AP ■ ADELAIDE

Novak Djokovic beat Denis Shapovalov 6-3 6-4 at the Adelaide International on Friday to set up a semifinal with Daniil Medvedev.

The combined ATP-WTA event is a warmup for this year's Australian Open, which the top-seeded Djokovic missed last year after being barred from the country because he was not vaccinated against COVID-19.

Medvedev, the runner-up last year to Rafael Nadal in the Australian Open, defeated fellow Russian Karen Khachanov 6-3 6-3 on Friday.

"It's never easy to play your compatriot," Medvedev said.

"I'm happy that I managed to really raise my level, especially in the end of both sets, and really happy to be through to the semis."

Medvedev is the 2021 US Open champion, but has lost twice in the finals in Australia — and in 2021 it was against Djokovic.



"For sure I played well last year and I'm playing well right now," Medvedev said, "To be honest, that's all that matters. In order to win a slam, or be in the final, you have to be at your best for seven matches."

"I managed to do it once and I was really close last year," he added.

"And that's what I'm going to try to do again in a few weeks in Melbourne."

Pranesh becomes India's 79th chess Grandmaster

PTI ■ STOCKHOLM

Manpranesh clinched the title in the Rilton Cup, the first tournament of the FIDE Circuit, here to become India's 79th chess Grandmaster. The 16-year-old Pranesh crossed the 2500-rating threshold and became a GM, having completed his three norms before the Rilton Cup.

To become a GM, a player has to secure three GM norms and cross the live rating of 2,500 Elo points. Seeded 22nd, the Indian made a clean sweep of the field in Stockholm, winning eight games and finishing a full point ahead of IM Kaan Kukuksari (Sweden) and GM Nikita Meshkovs (Latvia) as the tournament concluded late on Thursday.

He topped the standings with eight points. Tamil Nadu player Pranesh topped the charts in the tournament, which brought together 136 players representing 29 national federations. Compatriot R Raja Rithvik, a GM, finished eighth with six points. Pranesh is now the early leader of the FIDE Circuit with 6.8 circuit points that he gets for this victory. The one who accumulates the most points by the end of the year qualifies for the 2024 FIDE Candidates.

He is trained by renowned coach RB Ramesh, who said, "Pranesh is a very practical player. Hard working, raw talent..."