



MADHYA PRADESH WELCOMES

THE INDIAN DIASPORA: RELIABLE PARTNERS FOR INDIA'S PROGRESS IN AMRIT KAAL

YOUTH PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS

JANUARY 8, 2023

BRILLIANT CONVENTION CENTRE, INDORE, MADHYA PRADESH



Narendra Modi
Prime Minister



Pravasi Bharatiya Divas



Shivraj Singh Chouhan
Chief Minister, Madhya Pradesh

MAIN ATTRACTIONS OF THE EVENT

- Inaugural Address by Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister for External Affairs
- Address by Anurag Singh Thakur, Minister for Information & Broadcasting and Youth Affairs & Sports
- Address by Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh
- Special Address by Guest of Honour, Ms. Zaneta Mascarenhas, Member of Parliament, Australia
- Session on the Role of Diaspora Youth in Innovations and New Technologies



Kejriwal accuses L-G of ‘blatant misuse of powers’

Saxena nominates Satya as MCD's protom officer

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena nominated Satya Sharma as the protom presiding officer of a Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) meeting by the process of elimination from a list of six names sent to him by the AAP Government, Raj Niwas officials said on Saturday.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal wrote a letter to VK Saxena on Friday, accusing him of "blatant misuse of powers" in matters of appointment of a presiding officer and an alderman to the MCD. "Elected Government is supposed to nominate MCD aldermen. It was shocking and saddening how L-G dictated his pickings without consulting the Government."

"The tradition of appoint-



ment of senior most councillor as presiding officer was thrown to the winds and elected Government's power of appointing presiding officer infringed by the L-G," Kejriwal had alleged in the letter to Saxena. "Contrary to the claims being made by the chief minister and his colleagues in the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), the Delhi L-G scrupulously adhered to the constitutional provisions, Acts and statutes while nominating the interim (protom) presiding officer for the newly-elected MCD," a statement issued by the L-G's office said. VK Saxena did not nominate Sharma as the presiding officer out of thin air, it added.

Sharma's name, along with those of five other councillors, was sent to the LG by the MCD or the AAP government for consideration to be selected as the presiding officer, the statement said. The other names were Mukesh Goel, Preeti, Shakeela Begum, Hemchand Goel and Neema Bhagat. Despite the LG enjoying unbound legal discretion to select any councillor who was not in the race for the post of mayor or deputy mayor, he selected Sharma from the six names sent to him through the chief minister and the deputy chief minister on the basis of the universally-accepted process of elimination, the statement said.

Mukesh Goel, a five-time councillor, was eliminated because of an investigation into a charge against him of "seeking Rs 1 crore for a party ticket in the recently-concluded MCD election", it added.

Preeti was eliminated because of the criminal cases pending against her. Begum and Hemchand Goel were eliminated on the basis of their educational qualification.

Begum has not studied beyond Class 5 and Goel is a high-school graduate, the statement said.

Between Bhagat (MA) and Sharma (BA), both from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the latter was selected because of her prior experience of serving as a mayor. The statement said section 77(a) of the Delhi Municipal Corporation (DMC) Act, 1957, which deals with the appointment of a "presiding officer at meeting for the election of mayor", stipulates that the "administrator" will nominate a councillor to the post.

It is unequivocally provided for vide section 2(1) of the Act that the "administrator" means the LG, they added. The LG, who is the "administrator", has nominated 10 people in pursuance of the powers vested in him vide section 3(3)(b)(i) of the Act, the statement said.

Section 3(3)(b)(i) of the Act says: "10 persons who are not less than 25 years of age and who have special knowledge or experience in municipal administration, to be nominated by administrator.

‘LG/Administrator’ term in MCD Act needs clarification, says CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday wrote a letter to Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena over the 'conflict of powers' and sought clarification over his official position on the term "LG/Administrator" used in the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act and said the elected Governments (PM, CMs) across India will become irrelevant if 'Administrator' is defined as the President or Governor.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia issued a fierce statement against a press statement issued by the office of Lt. Governor of Delhi stating that he has the right to directly exercise all powers under the various acts and statutes of NCT of Delhi, including the MCD Act.

This comes a day after the MCD House was adjourned before the election of the mayor due to ruckus over oath-taking. In his letter, CM Kejriwal said, "I have come across a statement issued by your office today which says that since it is written in the relevant provisions of DMC Act that "Administrator shall appoint...", therefore, the



10 aldermen and the presiding officer for election of Mayor were directly appointed and got notified by your good self without the involvement of the elected government."

Kejriwal said that they assume that this is your official position that wherever in any law or Constitution, it is written that "LG/Administrator shall..." or wherever the government has been defined as "LG/Administrator", in all those cases, LG shall, from now onwards, exercise powers e-nominee and in his own discretion, directly, ignoring the elected govt.?"

"If that be the case, then the elected government, of Delhi will become irrelevant because practically in every law and every provision, the word used is 'Administrator/LG' and the Council of Ministers works in

the name of LG/Administrator. As per various SC judgements, LG/Administrator is bound by aid and advice of Council of Ministers on all but three reserved subjects," he pointed out.

"DMC Act is a transferred subject and even if the words used in the Act are "LG/Administrator", LG is bound by aid and advice of Council of Ministers on this subject. The statement issued from your office states that since the words used in DMC Act are "LG/Administrator", therefore, you exercised those powers directly and kept elected govt away," Kejriwal said.

"Since last thirty years, powers under this Act and under these provisions were always exercised by Council of Ministers," he claimed. He said that as per various Supreme Court judgements, LG or Administrator is bound by aid and advice of the Council of Ministers on all but three reserved subjects.

Kejriwal asking for clarification on the matter that whether from now on, wherever in any law or Constitution, it is written that "LG/Administrator shall..." or wherever government has been

defined as "LG/Administrator", in all those cases, Hon'ble LG shall exercise powers e-nominee and in his own discretion, directly, ignoring the elected govt.? Sec 21(3) of GNCTD Act defines Govt, as "LG". "Does this mean that from now on, you will run Delhi government, directly bypassing the elected govt, on all transferred subjects also?" questioned Kejriwal.

"If that position is taken, then Prime Minister of India and all Chief Ministers will become irrelevant because, in all the laws and Constitution, the words used are President/Governors and not Prime Minister/Chief Minister. This is an extremely important subject and the people of Delhi at large would like to know what is your understanding of this subject?" CM concluded.

"If that position is taken, then Prime Minister of India and all Chief Ministers will become irrelevant because in all laws and Constitution, words used are President/Governors and not Prime Minister/Chief Minister," he underlined. Kejriwal also asked L-G to give clarification on how did he directly constitute Haj Committee bypassing elected Government?"

BJP protests over ruckus in MCD

Be it known to the public at large that there is a property dispute pending between my client Mrs. Shikha Raisinghani, W/o Mr. Sandeep Raisinghani, R/o B-6/31/2, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi-110029 and Veera Builders through Satish Jain, Off. T-2, Basement, Green Park Extn., New Delhi-110016, Mrs. Shikha Tiwari, C/o Mr. Sandeep Tiwari & Mrs. Santa Tiwari, all residents of Tower No. F-704, 7th Floor, Chintels Paradise, Dwarka Expressway, Sector-109, Gurugram, Haryana-122017, in respect of entire property bearing No. B-6/36, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi-110029, in Saket District Court, as my client is having a share in the aforesaid property and suit bearing No. Civil Suit for D1 and ADJ bearing No. 291 of 2022, and Civil Suit for D1 and ADJ bearing No. 479 of 2022, if any person/Party/Group, enters into any kind of sale/agreement/purchase transaction in respect of the above said property, the same shall be treated as null and void, and such person shall be liable to indemnify my client Mrs. Shikha Raisinghani, W/o Mr. Sandeep Raisinghani, R/o B-6/31/2, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi-110029 on account of the losses suffered by my client for the said transactions. (LJNY VARGHES) ADVOCATE (DELHI HIGH COURT) OFFICE: B-244, LOWER GROUND FLOOR, GREATER KAILASH PART-1, NEW DELHI-110048

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Nazra Khatoun W/o. Junaid Alam, R/o. L-2, Abul Fazal Enclave-I, Jamia Nagar, Okhla, New Delhi - 110025 have changed my son's name from James Alam to Mahtab Alam for all future purposes.

PD(90242)A

VACATION NOTICE

Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No- 23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi- 110005

NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the applicants/ Guarantors/ Mortgagees M/S CONTINENTAL CONTRACTORS & SAMIR SUBASH WALI & SUBASH GOPINATH WALI & KANCHAN WALI & M/S LAKSHMAN TOOLS PRIVATE LIMITED & KANCHAN WALI-DIRECTOR OF M/S LAKSHMAN TOOLS PRIVATE LIMITED & SAKET SUBASH WALI-DIRECTOR OF M/S LAKSHMAN TOOLS PRIVATE LIMITED & SAMIR SUBASH WALI-DIRECTOR OF M/S LAKSHMAN TOOLS PRIVATE LIMITED & SUBASH GOPINATH WALI-DIRECTOR OF M/S LAKSHMAN TOOLS PRIVATE LIMITED & M/S RHINO NUTS & BOLTS PRIVATE LIMITED & SAKET SUBASH WALI-DIRECTOR OF M/S RHINO NUTS & BOLTS PRIVATE LIMITED & SAMIR SUBASH WALI-DIRECTOR OF M/S RHINO NUTS & BOLTS PRIVATE LIMITED & SUBASH GOPINATH WALI-PARTNER OF M/S CONTINENTAL CONTRACTORS & KANCHAN WALI-PARTNER OF M/S CONTINENTAL CONTRACTORS, to vacate the movable articles in the property situated at OFFICE NO. 201, 2ND FLOOR, A-WING, ARVIND CHAMBERS, ARVIND CHAMBERS PREMISES CHSL, ABOVE SAI SERVICE CENTER, W.E. HIGHWAY, SCINDIA SOCIETY, CTS NO.348, ANDHERI KURLA ROAD, ANDHERI EAST, MUMBAI-400069, the possession of which is taken by ICICI Bank Limited, on **DECEMBER 15, 2022** under section 13(4) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002, within the period of 7 days from the date of publication of this notice. Please take note that if you fail to vacate the movable articles, ICICI Bank Limited, will be constrained to auction the property along with the movable articles lying in the property at your own cost and consequences and ICICI Bank Limited, will not be responsible for the same.

Date : January 07, 2023
Place: Delhi NCR **SD/- Authorized Officer**
ICICI Bank Limited

SALE NOTICE

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

Case Details	Asset Details
ICICI BANK LTD VS AKSHAY GIRI, OA 494/2019, IA 2240/2019	Vehicle No. UP14CT8288, Make and Model- SWARAJ MAZDA LTDSAMRAT, Manu Year- 2017, Reserve Price: Rs. 2,00,000/-, EMD: Rs. 20,000/-

Auction Date: December 23, 2022 From 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.
Auction Type: Open Auction
Place of Auction: Godara Yard, Khewat No. 166/1, Near Atul Katania Chowk, Behind Gyan Devi, School, Sec- 17, Sukhrali, Gurugram- 122022
Contact Person- Rajeev Ranjan (8584874809)/ Jitendra Kumar (7304914763)

Case Details	Asset Details
ICICI BANK LTD VS RAHUL SHARMA, CS (Comm.) No. 1063 of 2020	Vehicle No. DL7CR1774, Make and Model- MARUTI SUZUKI INDIA LTD BALENO, Manu Year- 2019
ICICI BANK LTD VS NIRDESH KUMAR, CS SCJ 2490/17	Vehicle No. DL1LV1048, Make and Model- TATA ACE, Manu Year- 2014, Reserve Price: Rs. 35,000/-, EMD: Rs. 5,000/- to be made in favour of ICICI Bank Limited payable at Delhi

Auction Date: January 21, 2023 From 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.
Auction Type- Online Auction
Last date of summation of EMD- January 20, 2023 Before 05:00PM
Auction Portal Name & URL Link: Bid Karo www.bidkaro.net
Contact Person- Rajeev Ranjan (8584874809)/ Jitendra Kumar (7304914763)

Terms of Sale
The particulars of the said asset specified herein above have been stated to the best of the information and knowledge of the undersigned, who shall however not be responsible for any error, misstatement or omission in the said particulars. The interested participant/s are therefore requested, in their own interest, to satisfy himself/ themselves/ itself with regard to the said asset and other relevant details pertaining to it before submitting the bids. All bidders are required to come at auction site with original KYC documents to participate in the auction.
Successfully bidder shall have to deposit sale amount (excluding EMD wherever applicable) within 5 days from the approval date by the way of pay order/demand draft/RTGS/NEFT. If you fail to deposit sale amount within 5 days, your EMD (wherein applicable) shall be forfeited.
The intending bidders may visit ICICI Bank Ltd, Shal Towers, Plot No. 23, New Rohtak Road Karol Bagh Delhi- 110005 for details and inspection of the said hypothecated vehicles.



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi BJP on Saturday staged a protest at Rajghat against the violence that erupted at the first House meeting of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), in the national Capital. The BJP leaders demanded suspension of 13 AAP MLAs for a year who started ruckus in the MCD and instigated party's workers and councillors.

The protest was led by the State BJP Working president Virendra Sachdeva and Leader

of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri along with party workers, councillors, nominated aldermen and office bearers. They raised also several slogans against the AAP such as 'AAP ki gundagardi nahi chalegi' etc. Many senior leaders of the BJP including MP Dr. Harsh Vardhan, MP Ramesh Bidhuri, National Spokesperson Sardar R P Singh, State General Secretary Harsh Mahotra, and BJP's Mayoral candidate Rekha Gupta, etc. also participated in the protest.

Kejriwal Govt practising politics of ad, drama: BJP

New Delhi: The BJP on Saturday accused the Arvind Kejriwal Government of practicing "politics of advertisement and drama" and cited the Delhi Government's "outcome budget" to claim that no real work related to its big projects has been executed on the ground.

The outcome budget says only 418 of the 4,470 projects linked to the development fund

allocated to MLAs have been completed this year, it noted. "No work on the ground is taking place on the big ticket announcements made by Kejriwal," BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra told a press conference. The Government had announced a "rozgar budget" but its own outcome budget has said that nothing has been done on it so far, he said.

Gahlot flags of e-buses from Dhansa

NEW DELHI: With an aim to facilitate thousands of commuters plying between the national capital and Haryana on daily basis, Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot on Saturday flagged off the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) Electric buses from Dhansa Bus Stand. These buses will ply between Najafgarh Terminal and AIIMS Jhajjar via the Daurala Border.

According to a senior Transport department official, the e-buses will cover a total length of 26.4 km every day. Informing about the routes of the buses, he said that the initial destination of the bus is Najafgarh Terminal and it will end location is AIIMS Jhajjar.

AAP MLAs stage sit-in at L-G's house, say Saxena destroying Constitution

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the ruckus during the Delhi Mayor polls, the AAP MLAs and their ward councillors on Saturday staged a sit-in on the lane opposite the Lieutenant Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena's house alleging the appointment of Satya Sharma as Presiding Officer and 10 aldermen in the MCD unconstitutionally and he is destroying the Constitution. Around 100-150 AAP workers gathered near the LG's residence and chanted slogans against Saxena.

The AAP also claimed that this was part of an "underhanded play" to get the aldermen vote in the mayor and deputy mayor elections.

AAP leaders and workers gathered outside Raj Niwas in the Civil Lines area carrying banners and raised slogans against Saxena. AAP MLAs Atishi and Somnath Bharti was leading the protest at L-G house.

Speaking on the occasion,



Atishi said that AAP would fight to preserve the Constitution and against the unconstitutional ways the BJP is trying to take over MCD.

"If the LG can make a statement and the MCD commissioner issue an order which clarifies that in mayor elections BJP's nominated councillors will not vote, then elections can be conducted as per the Constitution," she said alleging LG is destroying the Constitution.

The AAP had alleged that all the nominated members were BJP workers and the civic

body sent their names directly to Saxena without keeping the city government in the loop. "Why were the 10 aldermen nominated bypassing the Delhi government? Why wasn't the senior-most person nominated as the presiding officer? Why were they trying to give voting rights to the aldermen? The LG needs to answer these questions as he is destroying the Constitution," Atishi told reporters. She alleged the BJP has been using "illegal ways" to form government in the MCD as they couldn't win the civic polls.

Court rejects peeing flier's police custody: ‘Don’t fall to public pressure’

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court on Saturday sent Ashankar Mishra, accused of urinating on a woman co-passenger on an Air India flight, to judicial remand for 14 days while rejecting a plea by police for his custody while three Air India crew members on Saturday joined the investigation at the Indira Gandhi International Airport police station in the matter.

A senior police officer said nine crew members were called, out of whom three recorded their statements on



Saturday morning. Their statements will help police to establish the sequence of the alleged event that took place on the flight last November, official said. They were called on Friday, but as they were not available in the city, police asked them to join the probe on Saturday.

The police sought Mishra's remand for three days for cus-

todial interrogation on the grounds that he was required to be identified by three cabin crew members, two captains and other co-passengers, who were also to be examined. Metropolitan Magistrate Anamika passed the order to send Mishra to judicial remand, noting that his custody was not needed for recording the statements of other witnesses, including cabin crew and co-passengers, and they can be quizzed in his absence. "Just because there's public pressure, don't do this. Go by the law," the magistrate said.

JNU Profs lose crore of rupees in real-estate fraud



Agencies: Several professors of JNU and other institutions have accused a former JNU employee of duping them of crores of rupees promising

them homes on a DDA plot under a housing development scheme which was never there.

After waiting for over seven years, when these academics did not get anything except hollow promises, their patience ran out and they lodged a formal complaint with the Delhi Police. Prima facie, police have found incriminating evidence against the accused in the matter and have lodged an FIR. In 2015, just before he was due retirement, Dr DP Gaikwad, a technical staff in the Department of

Environmental Science of JNU, floated a society and named it Noble Socio-Scientific Welfare Organisation (NSSWO).

He sold its membership to his peers claiming that the society owned land in the L-Zone in Dwarka Najafgarh Area under the Land Pooling Policy. He collected from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 16 lakh each from the academic and non-academic staff of JNU, IIT-Delhi, and other nearby institutions for three years in various installments, assuring them that the project was on.

Man injured after house collapses in Sadar Bazaar

NEW DELHI: A man was injured after a house collapsed in Delhi's Sadar Bazaar area on Saturday. The injured was admitted to hospital for treatment.

According to Delhi Fire Service (DFS) Director Atul Garg, a call regarding a fire in a house adjacent to Khursheed market on Qutub road was received around 6.29 p.m. following which two fire tenders were rushed to spot. However, no fire and smoke were seen at the spot and it seemed to be a structure collapse.

WORLD 5
AMERICA BANS IRANIAN DRONE
MAKER FOR SUPPLY TO MOSCOW

MONEY 6
OPTIMISTIC ABOUT
GROWTH: RBI

SPORT 7
INDIA BEAT SRI LANKA IN
THIRD T20I, WIN SERIES 2-1

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Man on run after peeing on woman on plane held

Banker arrested after 6 weeks of manhunt, sent to jail in Delhi

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Accused in the Air India urination case Shankar Mishra was arrested from Bengaluru on Friday night, six weeks after the on-board incident even as he changed his appearance by going clean-shaven, switched-off his phone, changed locations and used his social media accounts to communicate with his friends. A city court remanded him in a 14-day judicial custody after he was brought to Delhi.

A joint team of the Central Crime Branch (CCB) of the Bengaluru Police and the Delhi Police nabbed him from a homestay in Bengaluru.

Mishra, who was on the run and against whom a look-out notice or airport alert was issued, was traced to Bengaluru through technical surveillance. Mishra is accused of urinating on an elderly woman passenger in a flight on November 26, 2022.

The Delhi Police questioned Mishra as also the other AI staffers summoned by them as part of its probe.

Facing backlash for the

handling of the incident, Air India CEO and Managing Director Campbell Wilson apologised for the incident and said four cabin crew and a pilot (one of the two pilots) have been de-rostered.

The airline is reviewing policy of serving alcohol on flights, incident handling, complaint registration on board and grievance handling, he pointed out. The CEO acknowledged in a statement that the airline could have handled the recent cases of unruly passengers — both in the air and on the ground — better.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Airport) Ravi Kumar Singh said, "Accused Mishra in IGIA case has been arrested from Bengaluru by a Delhi Police team. He has been brought to Delhi and further investigation into the case is in progress."

A team of the Delhi Police officers had been camping in the city after his last location indicated his presence in Bengaluru. Another team was also sent to Mumbai to his permanent address which was found locked.

Police officials said the accused was staying at his sister's house in Sanjay Nagar, Bengaluru.

Mishra had switched off his mobile phone on January 3 and his last location was traced to Bengaluru.

Continued on Page 6



Shankar Mishra, accused of urinating on a woman passenger on an Air India flight from New York to Delhi, being taken away by the police from the DCP office at IGI Airport in New Delhi on Saturday

Co-flier recounts victim's ordeal at pilot's hands

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Sugata Bhattacharjee, a US-based doctor of audiology who was seated next to Shankar Mishra in the Business Class on the Air India flight from New York to Delhi, has in a handwritten complaint to the airlines stated that the pilot made the traumatised senior citizen flyer wait for close to two hours before allotting her a fresh seat. Bhattacharjee said the distressed passenger was made to go back to her soiled seat despite four seats in the First Class being vacant.

Bhattacharjee reportedly

asked the crew for a complaint book to note down his protest against the handling of the situation but was provided a piece of paper. He wrote his complaint on that paper.

Bhattacharjee said he was seated on 8A (window) in the first row of business class, next to the accused Mishra who was in seat 8C. Shortly after lunch was served and lights switched off on board AI 102 of November 26, the inebriated male flier seated in Business Class seat walked to the elderly woman's seat (9A), unzipped his pants and urinated on her.

Continued on Page 6

As gateway to Badrinath sinks, efforts on to evacuate affected

CM Dhami visits Joshimath, directs officials to shift people to safe locations

PNS ■ JOSHIMATH/DEHRADUN

At a time when some experts are suggesting that it is too late to save Joshimath — the gateway to famous pilgrimage sites like Badrinath, Hemkund Sahib and the international skiing destination Auli — from sinking due to continued land subsidence, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami visited the city and interacted with the locals on Saturday.

He directed that residents in danger zones should be shifted to secure locations without delay. According to the Chamoli district administration, a total of 603 buildings in the city have developed cracks while 55 families have been shifted temporarily to secure accommodations.

Earlier on Thursday, the State authorities had ordered that all construction activities — including major projects like the Tapovan-Vishnugad hydro power project and all construction activities — be stopped in the area within the Joshimath municipality limits.

Interacting with the affected families on Saturday, Dhami assured all possible assistance to them a day after directing



Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami inspects the landslide affected area of Joshimath in Chamoli district on Saturday

officials to make arrangements for temporary relocation of all affected families to secure locations. "Joshimath is an important place from the cultural, religious and tourism point of view and all efforts will be made to save it," said Dhami.

He said the top priority of the Government is protecting lives and property and added that alternate arrangements for rehabilitation of the affected families are being made. Immediate and long-term works will be undertaken in the city and safety measures will be

executed in the entire city facing risk, for which a detailed plan is being prepared. Sewer and drainage works needed for securing the city will be executed as early as possible, he said.

The Government is currently focusing on immediate measures to secure the public. Relocating people to secure locations on time is vital, he said.

Meanwhile, subsidence has continued in the city with the precincts of the Narsinh temple where the seat of the

Shankaracharya is established, also developing cracks.

The Jyotirmath building has also developed cracks apart from the effects of subsidence being experienced in other residential and public places in different localities of Joshimath.

Later, while chairing a review meeting with senior officials at the secretariat in Dehradun, Dhami directed the immediate formation of a committee headed by the Garhwal commissioner to monitor the rescue and safety works in Joshimath.

Hit & drag: Anjali's friend Nidhi was arrested in drug case in 2020

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In fresh revelations on Saturday it has now emerged that Nidhi, the eyewitness in the Anjali Singh hit and drag case and her so-called "friend", was arrested in December 2020 in a case of smuggling of drugs registered in Agra Cantonment.

A video and a hospital report also did the rounds purportedly showing that Anjali had met with an accident six months earlier as well.

According to police sources, Nidhi had been intercepted and arrested on December 6, 2020, at the Agra railway station under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, (1985) for bringing 30 kg ganja (drugs) by train from Telangana. She was subsequently placed under arrest. Two boys named Sameer and Ravi were also arrested along with Nidhi. She is cur-



rently on bail. Police have denied reports that Nidhi was arrested in the Sultanpuri death case and said she was only called to join the investigation.

Regarding Anjali, a fresh CCTV footage doing the rounds purportedly shows how she met with an accident while driving her scooter on the night of July 16, 2022. In the

video, Anjali can be seen driving the scooter at high speed before crashing into a pile of tyres by the roadside. The impact is such that Anjali is catapulted off her two-wheeler and slammed onto the road, while the scooter flips over in the air. Other commuters get off their vehicles and rush to help the young woman lying prone on the ground.

Anjali sustained serious injuries in the accident and was hospitalised. Medical tests during that time revealed that she had been under the influence of alcohol, as per sources. The report from Guru Gobind Singh Government Hospital has been accessed by the Delhi Police probing the case.

Anjali was killed after being hit and dragged by a car for 12 km from Sultanpuri to Kanjhawala in outer Delhi on New Year.

Continued on Page 6

38 JNU, IIT-D Profs fall prey to realtors' fraud

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

At least 38 professors of JNU and other institutions have accused a former JNU employee of duping them of crores of rupees promising them homes on a DDA plot under a housing development scheme which was never there.

After waiting for over seven years, when these academics did not get anything except hollow promises, their patience ran out and they lodged a formal complaint with the Delhi Police.

Prima facie, police have found incriminating evidence against the accused in the matter and have lodged an FIR.

In 2015, just before he was due to retire, Dr DP Gaikwad, a technical staff in the Department of Environmental Science of JNU, floated a society and named it Noble Socio-



Scientific Welfare Organisation (NSSWO).

He sold its membership to his peers claiming that the society owned land in the L-Zone in Dwarka Najafgarh Area under the Land Pooling Policy. He collected from ₹2 lakh to ₹16 lakh each from the academic and non-academic staff of JNU, IIT-Delhi, and other nearby institutions for three years in various installments, assuring them that the project was on.

Detailed report on P2

Teacher writes love letter to Class VIII girl in UP, booked

PTI ■ KANNAUJ

A teacher at Composite School, Ballarpur, was suspended and booked after he wrote a "love letter" to a Class 8 girl student, police said on Saturday. An FIR was filed against the teacher, Hariom Singh, on Friday on the complaint of the girl's father, Superintendent of Police (SP) Kunwar Anupam Singh said.

Hariom Singh has been accused of giving a greeting card on December 30 to a Class 8 girl student. When the student reached home she found that the card carried a 12-line handwritten letter in it purportedly with a confession of his love to her. As the matter came to light, District Basic Shiksha Adhikari (BSA) Kaustubh Singh suspended the teacher, the SP said.

Caste-based head count begins in Bihar

PTI ■ PATNA

Terming the caste-based head count that began in Bihar on Saturday as a "historic" step, Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav said the exercise will provide scientific data for carrying out welfare schemes for weaker sections of society.

Noting that all the parties of the ruling Mahagathbandhan were in favour of the exercise, the RJD leader claimed that the BJP was "critical" about the survey.

"The enumeration exercise began in Bihar from today. It is a historic step taken by the Mahagathbandhan Government in the State. Once the exercise is completed, it will provide scientific data to the State Government for carrying out developmental work for people, including those who are deprived," Yadav said, while

speaking to media persons here.

He also said, "The BJP is an anti-poor party which always opposed this exercise and has always been critical about the caste-based head out."

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had on Friday said the caste-based enumeration exercise could be beneficial for all. The caste-based head count process has been a major issue in Bihar, as Kumar's JD(U) and all constituents of the ruling Mahagathbandhan were demanding that the exercise be undertaken at the earliest. The State Government embarked on the exercise in the wake of the Centre expressing its inability to undertake a caste-based enumeration other than SCs and STs.

The exercise will be conducted in two phases across Bihar, an official said.

Continued on Page 6

6-yr-old shoots teacher in Virginia class over tiff

AP ■ NORFOLK

A six-year-old student has shot and wounded a teacher at his school in Virginia during an altercation inside a first-grade classroom, police and school officials in the city of Newport News said on Saturday.

No students were injured in the shooting at Richneck Elementary School, police said. The teacher — a woman in her 30s — suffered life-threatening injuries.

Her condition had improved somewhat by late afternoon, Newport News Police Chief Steve Drew said.

"We did not have a situation where someone was going around the school shooting," Drew told reporters, later adding that the gunshot was not an accident.

Drew said the student and teacher had known each other in a classroom setting.

He said the boy had a handgun in the classroom, and investigators were trying to figure out where he obtained it. The police chief did not provide further details about the shooting or what happened inside the school.

Joselin Glover, whose son is in fourth grade, told *The Virginian-Pilot* newspaper she got a text from the school stating that one person was shot and another was in custody.

"My heart stopped," she said. "I was freaking out, very nervous. Just wondering if that one person was my son." Carlos, her 9-year-old, was at recess.

But he said he and his classmates were soon holed up in the back of a classroom. "Most of the whole class was crying," Carlos told the newspaper.

Parents and students were reunited at a gymnasium door, Newport News Public Schools said via Facebook.

Capital's bone-chilling cold triggers meme fest

Delhi Ridge records 1.5C, IMD predicts no breather from cold wave today

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

There was no let-up in dense fog and intense cold wave conditions in the national Capital as one of the observatories (Delhi Ridge) on Saturday recorded a minimum temperature of 1.5 degrees Celsius and that at Safdarjung 2.2 degrees Celsius, both the lowest this season.

The maximum temperature also dipped to 16.7 degrees Celsius, three notches below the normal for this season. People were found huddled around bonfires along the roads to beat the bone-chilling conditions in Delhi even as social media users shared funny memes, and jokes about Delhi's cold wave.

According to the India Meteorological Department



(IMD), Madhya Pradesh's Nowgong area recorded the lowest temperature of 0.5 degrees Celsius, and Rajasthan's Churu 0 degree

Celsius. The IMD said there will not be any relief from dense fog and cold wave in north India on Sunday.

Lodhi Road and Ayanagar

weather stations recorded minimum temperatures of 2 degrees and 3.4 degrees Celsius, respectively. The humidity at 8.30 am was recorded at 100

per cent and 69 per cent at 5.30 pm, the IMD said.

A layer of very dense fog hovered over the city reducing visibility at Palam to around 50 metres, leading to affected road and rail traffic. The visibility at the Palam observatory near the Indira Gandhi International Airport was 25 metres at 5.30 am.

RK Jenamani, a senior IMD scientist, said on Saturday, cold wave to severe cold wave conditions were observed in many parts of Haryana, Chandigarh, and Delhi; in some areas of East Uttar Pradesh, East Rajasthan; in isolated pockets over West Rajasthan, East Madhya Pradesh.

"Cold wave conditions in many parts of East Madhya Pradesh, West Uttar Pradesh and in isolated pockets over Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, and West Madhya Pradesh," Jenamani said.

A Railways spokesperson said 36 trains were delayed by one to seven hours due to the foggy weather.

A senior IMD official said

due to the continuation of prevailing light winds and high moisture near the surface over Indo-Gangetic plains, dense to very dense fog is very likely to continue in some/many parts during the night and morning hours over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi and Uttar Pradesh during next two days and in isolated pockets thereafter for subsequent three days over the region.

"Dense fog in isolated pockets is very likely over Uttarakhand, north Rajasthan, Bihar, Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim, Assam and Tripura during next three days; over north Madhya Pradesh during next two days," he predicted. He predicted cold wave and cold day conditions are likely to continue over north-west India during the next two days.

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".

Yatra not a drive to project Rahul as PM pick, says Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/PANIPAT

The Congress on Saturday said that the ongoing 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' was not an exercise to project its leader Rahul Gandhi as a prime ministerial candidate for the 2024 general elections.

The statement assumes significance since Congressmen including those like senior leaders Kamal Nath have gone public asserting that Rahul will be the Opposition face for the PM candidate for the next Lok Sabha elections.

For his part, at his Presser in the national Capital last week, Rahul had called for an Opposition unity to take on the BJP and present a new alternate vision.

"This Bharat Jodo Yatra is not to project Rahul Gandhi as a prime ministerial candidate. It is an ideological yatra of which the main face is Rahul Gandhi. It is not one individual's yatra," Congress chief spokesperson Jairam Ramesh said in response to a media question on the sidelines of the Yatra in Karnal.

The party asserted that the 'Kanyakumari to Kashmir' foot march, which is currently passing through Karnal in Haryana, is not an election yatra. Ramesh added that Rahul Gandhi has raised three big issues in the Yatra, namely economic inequality, social polarisation and political authoritarianism.

The Yatra will enter Punjab through the Shambhu border on Tuesday. After entering



Punjab, the march will head to Fatehgarh Sahib and Rahul is scheduled to address a public meeting on January 11 after paying obeisance at the gurdwara. The yatra will traverse

through Punjab for seven days and a mega-rally will be organized at Pathankot on the concluding day before it leaves for Jammu and Kashmir from Madhopur on its last leg.

The Punjab Congress has appealed to the NRIs from Punjab, many of whom are on a visit back home, to participate in the yatra. Those staying abroad can mark their participation online.

In a first, IAF to deploy women fighter pilots in exercise abroad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force will for the first time deploy its woman fighter pilot for an exercise abroad from January 12-26. It will also be the first ever air joint exercise named 'Veer Guardian' between India and Japan to enhance strategic and defence ties.

Squadron Leader Avani Chaturvedi, a SU-30 MKI pilot, will be part of the contingent leaving for Japan on Sunday. Incidentally, she is also one of the three woman officers selected in 2016 for training to fly fighter jets. The other two are Bhavana Kanth and Mohana Singh.

Giving details of the upcoming, IAF officials said

here on Saturday it will be held at Hyakuri Air Base to promote air defence co-operation. The Indian contingent will include four Su-30 MKI fighter jets, two C-17 and one IL-78 transport aircraft, while Japan will deploy four F-2 and four F-15 aircraft.

During the second 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial meeting held in Tokyo, Japan on Japan eight last year, both the countries agreed to step up bilateral defence cooperation and engage in more military exercises, including holding the first joint fighter jet drills, reflecting the growing security cooperation between the two sides. This exercise will thus be another step in deepening strategic ties and closer defence cooperation



between the two countries. The inaugural exercise will include the conduct of various aerial combat drills between the two Air Forces. They will undertake multi-domain air combat missions in a complex environment and will exchange best practices, officials said.

Experts from both sides will also hold discussions to share their expertise on varied operational aspects. Exercise 'Veer Guardian' will fortify the longstanding bond of friendship and enhance the avenues of defence cooperation between the two Air Forces.

VP Dhankhar lauds NCC's contribution to nation building

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday formally inaugurated the 74th National Cadet Corps (NCC) Republic Day camp here and lauded its contribution to nation building by inculcating character, comradeship and the spirit of selfless service among our young students.

Addressing the cadets after inspecting their parade, he also said the NCC, over the years, has created a truly vibrant and diverse cadre of motivated and disciplined youth who are doing excellent work in all walks of life. The Vice President said, for the NCC, the world's largest youth organisation and particularly



for cadets performing in Amritkal at Kartavya Path will be a moment to ever cherish. Dhankhar also visited the 'Hall of Fame', which has been recently renovated and Flag Area where he listened to the

India condemns vandalism of Gandhi, Mandela's statues in Seychelles

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India on Saturday condemned vandalising statues of Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela in Seychelles and urged the authorities there to bring the perpetrators to book as soon as possible.

Terming the incident which took place at the Peace Park in Victoria, Seychelles as "mindless act of vandalism," the Indian High Commission there said "Mahatma Gandhi's message of humanity and peaceful struggle against colonialism is universally relevant and has inspired non-violent struggle all across the world. His statue at the Peace Park is also symbolic of the historic, warm and cordial ties



between India and Seychelles," the Indian high commission said in a statement.

The High Commission thanked the Seychelles authorities for their action in the matter and hopes that the perpetrators will be apprehended expeditiously.

The statue of Mahatma Gandhi at Peace Park was

NIA chargesheets 4 in PFI Patna case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday filed a chargesheet against four accused in the PFI Patna (Bihar) case for allegedly encouraging members to establish Islamic rule in India.

"The accused also collected funds, recruited members, organized training and encouraged its members to establish Islamic Rule in India," the NIA said in a statement.

The case relates to involvement of accused/suspected persons, associated with the Popular Front of India (PFI), in unlawful and anti-national activities, who had assembled in the Phulwarisharif area of Patna.

Earlier, two persons were apprehended and several incriminating articles/documents related to PFI were seized during searches against the accused persons.

The case was initially registered as FIR No. 827/2022 dated July 12 at police station Phulwarisharif, Patna, Bihar and re-registered by NIA on July 22.

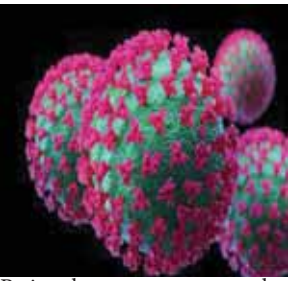


WHO sounds alarm as cases of Omicron subvariant XBB 1.5 rise across globe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The World Health Organization (WHO) has sounded an alarm as Omicron subvariant XBB.1.5 continues to increase across the globe. It has now been identified in more than 25 countries, the global health agency said. Omicron has been by far the most contagious variant of COVID-19 so far.

In India, the number of COVID-19's XBB.1.5 variant rose to seven in India as new cases of the variant were found in Chhattisgarh and Telangana, according to INSACOG figures. Three were found in Gujarat and one each in Karnataka, Telangana, Chhattisgarh and



Rajasthan, as per the INSACOG.

WHO chief Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the global health body is following the situation closely and assessing the risk of this subvariant and will report accordingly. "Omicron subvariant, XBB.1.5, is on the increase and has now been identified in more than 25 countries. WHO is following

closely and assessing the risk of this subvariant and will report accordingly," a tweet read.

The Omicron subvariant, XBB.1.5, is causing concern among scientists after its rapid spread in the United States in December. XBB.1.5 is yet another descendant of Omicron, the most contagious variant of the virus causing Covid-19, which is now globally dominant.

XBB.1.5 is a subvariant of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 that has dominated in most parts of the world since it was first identified in December 2021, and which followed the Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta variants of concern.

So far the symptoms of

XBB.1.5 seem to be more cold-like than flu-like, especially in people who have been vaccinated or have had COVID-19 before, but it is too soon to say this definitively.

Although we are likely to see further waves of infection around the world, "that doesn't have to translate into further waves of death because our countermeasures [such as vaccines] continue to work."

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, XBB.1.5 currently makes up 40.5% of all COVID-19 cases in the US, and it has spread fast – in late September when it was first identified in the US it made up 0.1% of all cases in the country.

PK Mishra condoles death of PK Das

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

PK Das, a Gujarat cadre IAS officer of the 1965 batch, passed away at a hospital in Gandhinagar on January 6. He served as the first Chief Information Commissioner of Gujarat in 2005-06.

Condoling his death, PK Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, described it as yet another personal loss for him after the recent demise of his batchmate Dr. Manjula Subramaniam just a few days back.

Dr. Mishra remembered calling on Dr. Das during his training days when the latter served as the Collector of Ahmedabad and his various interactions with him over the last five decades.

MHA tags HuM operative Dr Asif Maqbool as terrorist

ANI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Saturday designated Hizb-ul-Mujahideen operative Dr Asif Maqbool Dar as a "terrorist" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967.

A resident of Jammu and Kashmir, Dar is presently based in Saudi Arabia.

Earlier, MHA has designated Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) member Arbaz Ahmad Mir as a terrorist under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967 for his involvement in targeted killings in Jammu and Kashmir, including a female teacher Rajni Bala.

The MHA made the



announcement through a late Friday night notification, stating that Mir, who belongs to Jammu and Kashmir, is presently based in Pakistan and is working for LeT from across the border. "Mir is involved in target killing and

has emerged as the main conspirator in killing one female teacher, Rajni Bala in Kulgam, Jammu and Kashmir.

He is also involved in coordinating terrorism in Kashmir valley and supporting terrorists by transporting illegal

arms or ammunition or explosives from across the border," said the notification.

Rajni Bala from Jammu was shot dead outside her workplace, Government High School, Gopalpora, in Kulgam district on May 31, 2022.

Village bodies on high alert in Rajouri, Poonch after massacre

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In the aftermath of a gruesome terror attack on members belonging to the minority Hindu community in a thickly forested Dangri village of Rajouri, several Village Defence Committees have now activated themselves and launched night patrol exercises and general searches to prevent repeat of such incidents in their close vicinity.

After highlighting their security concerns and seeking additional deployment of troops in and around vulnerable pockets before the local police authorities, some of these Village Defence Committees have already started guarding their areas during the night.

The security forces have welcomed the swift response from the members of the civil society.

The move will further strengthen the security grid and assist the local police and army authorities in their fight against the terrorists.

"After witnessing the recent massacre in Rajouri we got together and decided to activate our VDC members", Naresh Pal, a VDC member of village Mangnar in Poonch said.

The same village had witnessed a similar massacre on December 31, 2001 where six



Hindus including a housewife and a six-month-old child were killed in cold blood by the terrorists.

Similar incidents of terrorist violence were witnessed in the region between 2001 and 2002. 11 civilians including over half a dozen minors were killed in Behra village of Poonch on January 20, 2002. Earlier, seven local villagers were killed in Mehrot and Dundak villages of Poonch in August 2001 while 15 civilians were killed in Morha Salui, Rajouri in February 2001.

The local police and army authorities have also activated their men on the ground in a bid to instill confidence among the villagers.

SSP Rajouri Mohammad Aslam said, "we have already started distributing rifles to members of the VDC groups.

Rahul's yatra enthuses UP Cong rank and file

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Bharat Jodo Yatra of Rahul Gandhi, which barely touched Uttar Pradesh and was in the state for only three days, has enthused the rank and file of the party. Congress leaders maintain that the response of the people to Rahul's yatra in western Uttar Pradesh was overwhelming in view of the fact that the Bharatiya Janata Party has been a dominant force in the state for the last eight years and this region is viewed as a stronghold of the saffron party.

The Congress leaders point out that besides the response of the common man cutting across caste and creed, the enthusiastic turnout of Muslims in Loni area of

Ghaziabad, Kairana and Baghpat was very encouraging for the grand old party, which has been out of power in Uttar Pradesh for over three decades.

"Muslims of Uttar Pradesh are no longer enamoured of the Samajwadi Party. The defeat of the SP candidate in the by-election to Rampur Lok Sabha seat in June last year and later the victory of the BJP in the bypoll to Rampur assembly seat, a strong hold of the Muslims who have over 50 per cent population in Rampur city, has disillusioned the Muslims," said a Congress leader, and added, "Muslims, particularly in western UP, have concluded they have had enough of the regional parties and it is time to return to the national party."

"The western Uttar Pradesh districts from where the Bharat Jodo Yatra passed through have a substantial Muslim population. From madrasa children to burqa-clad women, to ulemas, a lot of people were seen walking with Rahul Gandhi or standing in queues to greet him," a Congress leader said.

Congress maintains that Rahul Gandhi has been trying to reach out to the Muslim community by relentlessly attacking the Bharatiya Janata Party-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. "Not many parties are speaking for Muslims, but he is," the Congress said.

Is this a warning signal for the SP that has had Muslims as its core vote bank along with Yadavs? SP spokesperson



Rajendra Chaudhary says it is not.

"We are not fighting the Congress. Our fight is with the BJP," he says.

The next Uttar Pradesh assembly elections are due in 2027, but these overtures are being made keeping in mind 2024 when India will vote to elect its new government.

Akhilesh slams UGC for permitting foreign universities to run in India

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has criticised the University Grants Commission move to allow foreign universities to open their campuses in India.

Yadav claimed it was yet another move of the Bharatiya Janata Party government at the Centre to deprive the students of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) of reservation



and their due share in power structure.

"It is not known as to how the campus of foreign universities will benefit the Indian students. It is certain that there will be no place for the OBCs in the Indian campus of such

universities," Akhilesh Yadav said here on Saturday.

"The BJP, known for its stance against social justice and reservation for the OBCs, is repeatedly targeting reservation to end the quota for the deprived sections of society," Akhilesh Yadav said.

He added, "Reservation to OBCs was denied by the UP government during the appointment of assistant professors in state universities."

Suspected ISIS terrorists arrested in Bengal

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Two suspected Islamic State terrorists were nabbed in West Bengal, police said on Saturday.

Acting on a tip-off from a central investigating agency, a team of Kolkata Police's Special Task Force (STF) arrested the duo in Howrah's Tikiapara area after nabbing them on Vidyasagar Setu, connecting

the twin cities, on Friday evening, a senior officer said.

"They have been arrested for conspiring to wage war against the Government of India and overthrow it to establish a caliphate by means of terror attacks and propagation of fundamentalism and hatred in the society. "The duo was involved in spreading the tentacles of the terror outfit in Howrah. We are questioning them," police officer told PTI.

Ukraine hails US Military aid as ceasefire said to falter

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine's president is praising the United States for including tank-killing armoured vehicles in its latest multibillion-dollar package of military aid, saying they are "exactly what is needed" for Ukrainian troops locked in combat against Russian forces.

Officials, meanwhile, said it was unclear whether Moscow was abiding by a unilateral 36-hour cease-fire for Orthodox Christmas that Ukraine has denounced as a ploy.

The latest multi-billion dollar package of U.S. Military assistance announced Friday by the White House was the biggest to date for Kyiv. For the first time, it included Bradley armoured vehicles - known as tank-killers because of the anti-tank missiles they fire.

In his nightly televised address on Friday, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called it "a very powerful package." "For the



first time, we will get Bradley armoured vehicles - this is exactly what is needed. New guns and rounds, including high-precision ones, new rockets, new drones. It is timely and strong," he said.

He thanked U.S. President Joe Biden, U.S. Lawmakers and "all the Americans who appreciate freedom, and who know that freedom is worth protecting."

Ukrainian authorities on Saturday said that a Moscow-declared temporary truce for Orthodox Christmas appeared to have been ignored by some of its forces pressing ahead with the nearly 11-month invasion.

In the fiercely contested Luhansk region of eastern Ukraine, regional Gov. Serhiy Haidai reported continued Russian shelling and assaults.

Posting on Telegram, Haidai said that in the first three hours of the cease-fire's supposed start Friday for Orthodox Christmas Eve, Russian forces shelled

Ukrainian positions 14 times and stormed one settlement three times. The claim couldn't be independently verified. The Ministry of Defense in Britain, a leading supplier of military aid to Ukraine, said Saturday in its daily readout on the invasion that "fighting has continued at a routine level into

the Orthodox Christmas period." Russia's Defence Ministry alleged Friday that Ukrainian forces continued to shell its positions, and said its forces returned fire, although it wasn't clear whether those reported exchanges occurred before or after the start of Moscow's cease-fire.

US announces another USD 3 billion military assistance package for Ukraine

Washington: The United States has announced another military assistance package of over USD 3.75 billion for Ukraine to fight the battle against Russian aggression taking the total US military assistance for Ukraine to an unprecedented USD 24.9 billion.

The latest tranche of assistance will include for the first time 50 M2-A2 Bradley armoured vehicles for the Ukraine military. These

armoured vehicles - enough to outfit a mechanised infantry battalion - will come with 500 tube-launched, optically sighted, wire-guided, or TOW, anti-tank missiles and 250,000 rounds of 25 mm ammunition, the Pentagon said.

On February 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a "special military operation" aimed at the "demilitarisation and denazification" of Ukraine. *PTI*

Global food prices in 2022 hit record high amid drought, war

AP ■ ROME

Global prices for food commodities like grain and vegetable oils were the highest on record last year even after falling for nine months in a

row, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization said, as Russia's war in Ukraine, drought and other factors drove up inflation and worsened hunger worldwide. The FAO Food Price Index, which tracks

monthly changes in the international prices of commonly traded food commodities, dipped by 1.9% in December from a month earlier, the Rome-based organization said Friday. For the whole year, it averaged 143.7 points, more than 14% above the 2021 average, which also saw large increases.

The December decline was led by a drop in the price of vegetable oils amid shrinking import demand, expectations of increased soy oil production in South America and lower crude oil prices. Grain and meat were also down, while dairy and sugar rose slightly.

"Calmer food commodity prices are welcome after two very volatile years," FAO chief economist Maximo Torero said

in a prepared statement. "It is important to remain vigilant and keep a strong focus on mitigating global food insecurity given that world food prices remain at elevated levels, with many staples near record highs, and with prices of rice increasing, and still many risks associated with future supplies."

Last year, the U.N. Organization's Food Price Index hit the highest level since its records began in 1961, according to FAO data.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February exacerbated a food crisis because the two countries were leading global suppliers of wheat, barley, sunflower oil and other products, especially to nations in parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia that were already

struggling with hunger. With critical Black Sea supplies disrupted, food prices rose to record highs, increasing inflation, poverty and food insecurity in developing nations that rely on imports.

The war also jolted energy markets and fertilizer supplies, both key to food production. That was on top of climate shocks that have fueled starvation in places like the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya are badly affected by worst drought in decades, with UN Warning that parts of Somalia are facing famine. Thousands of people have already died. Prices for wheat and corn reached a record high last year, though they fell in December along with costs of other grains, the FAO said.

America bans Iranian drone maker for supply to Moscow

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The US on Friday hit six executives and board members of an Iranian drone manufacturer with sanctions after the firm allegedly supplied Moscow with drones that Russian forces have been using to attack Ukraine.

Qods Aviation Industries, a previously sanctioned Iranian defence manufacturer, is alleged to be responsible for the design and production of unmanned aerial vehicles used to conduct strikes on civilians during Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Treasury Department says the firm



changed its name to Light Airplanes Design and Manufacturing Industries in mid-2020 to evade sanctions. The financial penalties imposed by Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control high-

light growing tension between the US and Iran over reviving the 2015 nuclear deal as well as US allegations of Russia and Iran deepening cooperation through shared military assistance as the war rages on.

Beijing to scrap 3-yr-old d zero-Covid policy

China orders release of Covid detainees

PTI ■ BEIJING

The Chinese government on Saturday ordered the release of people detained over a host of coronavirus-related incidents, a day ahead of Beijing's plan to scrap its three-year-old stringently implemented zero-Covid policy.

China will end its international isolation from 12 AM on Sunday, fully opening its airports and ports for travel and trade, amid a massive coronavirus outbreak in the country. International travelers can arrive in China without nucleic acid tests and quarantine restrictions once the restrictions

are gone. The complete scrapping of the travel rules comes at a time China is grappling with a sudden spurt in coronavirus infections fuelled by the Omicron variants after the government relaxed its stringent zero-Covid policy last month in the wake of anti-government protests.

Officials argue that the Omicron variant is not as lethal as the Delta strain, which caused massive casualties all over the world. Also, ahead of the complete relaxation of Covid rules, the Chinese government on Saturday ordered the release of the people detained for Covid-related



China to end its international isolation from 12 am on Sunday

AFP Photo

cases. A government notice said that any property that had been seized should be released, while quarantine and control measures at the state borders will also no longer be criminalised. The order asked local

courts, police and customs to "fully and accurately implement the criminal policy of leniency and severity" in accordance with the law, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

Hawaii volcano eruption continues as alert level dipped

Honolulu: Hawaii's Kilauea, one of the world's most active volcanoes, is erupting again and providing a spectacle that includes bursting lava fountains and lava "waves," but no Big Island communities are in danger.

Kilauea began erupting Thursday inside its summit crater, the U.S. Geological Survey said - less than one month after the volcano and its larger neighbor Mauna Loa stopped releasing lava.

The Hawaiian Volcano Observatory detected a glow in webcam images indicating Kilauea had begun erupting inside Halemaumau crater at the volcano's summit caldera, the agency said.

Kilauea last erupted for 16 months starting in September 2021, and for about two weeks starting last November, Hawaii had two volcanoes spewing lava side by side when Mauna Loa erupted for the first time in 38 years.

The observatory on Thursday raised Kilauea's alert level, but on Friday morn-



This webcam image provided by the U.S. Geological Survey shows Hawaii's Kilauea volcano, Hawaii's Kilauea began erupting inside its summit crater, the U.S. Geological Survey said, less than one month after the volcano and its larger neighbor Mauna Loa stopped releasing lava. (U.S. Geological Survey via AP)

ing lowered it from warning to watch "because the initial high effusion rates are declining, and no infrastructure is threatened." Kilauea's summit is inside Hawaii

Volcanoes National Park and away from residential communities. The eruption is expected to remain in the summit, the observatory said Friday. *AP*

UN envoy meets with Afghanistan education chief over ban on women

AP ■ KABUL

Top UN Envoy met with the Taliban-led Afghan government's higher education minister Saturday to discuss the ban on women attending universities. Markus Potzel is the first international official to meet with him since the ban was introduced last month.

Taliban authorities on Dec. 20 ordered public and private universities to close for women immediately until further notice. It triggered widespread international condemnation, including from Muslim-major-



ity countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey. Higher Education Minister Nida Mohammad Nadim has defended the ban, saying it is

necessary to prevent the mixing of genders in universities and because he believes some subjects violate Islamic principles.

Thousands hold stir against rising terrorism acts in northwest Pakistan

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

Thousands of tribesmen in Pakistan's northwest took to the streets to protest against rising incidents of terrorism and kidnapping in the country's tribal districts bordering Afghanistan while demanding immediate restoration of peace in the region.

Over 5,000 tribesmen took out a rally on Friday in Wana, the headquarters of the South Waziristan tribal district, against the growing unrest, terrorism, and kidnappings in their areas.

The protest comes amidst rising terrorist attacks in the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces that are believed to have been carried out by the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) group based in Afghanistan. Pushtoon nationalist and leader



of Pushtoon Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) Manzoor Pushteen addressed the protesters carrying placards and banners. The protesters demanded the restoration of peace and harmony in the tribal districts.

"powers" and to be able to pass on messages from Diana.

Harry adds that he and William both "begged" their father not to marry his long-term paramour Camilla Parker-Bowles, worried she would become a "wicked step-mother."

Harry also is tormented by his status as royal "spare" behind William, who is heir to the British throne. Harry recounts a longstanding sibling rivalry that worsened after Harry began a relationship with American actress Meghan Markle, whom he married in 2018.

mother haunts the book, which Harry dedicates to wife Meghan, children Archie and Lili "and, of course, my mother." The opening chapter recounts how his father Prince Charles - now King Charles III - broke the news of his mother's accident, but didn't give his son a hug.

Harry reveals that years later he asked his driver to take him through the Pont de l'Alma tunnel in Paris, site of the fatal crash, hoping in vain that it would help end a "decade of unrelenting pain." He also says he once consulted a woman who claimed to have

British media - but have been met with silence from Buckingham Palace.

BROTHER AND SON

The book opens with a quote from American writer William Faulkner: "The past is never dead. It's not even past." Harry's story is dominated by his rivalry with elder brother Prince William and the death of the boys' mother, Princess Diana, in 1997.

Harry, who was 12 at the time, has never forgiven the media for Diana's death in a car crash while being pursued by photographers. The loss of his

Prince Harry's book exposes grief, war, drugs, family rifts



AP ■ LONDON

Bereaved boy, troubled teen, wartime soldier, unhappy royal - many facets of Prince Harry are revealed in his explosive memoir, often in eyebrow-raising detail. From accounts of cocaine use and losing his virginity to raw family rifts, "Spare" exposes deeply personal details about Harry and the wider royal family.

The Associated Press purchased a copy of the Spanish-language edition of the book ahead of its publication around the world on Tuesday. Its revelations have electrified the

Republican McCarthy elected as House Speaker in 15th attempt



Washington: Republican Kevin McCarthy was elected as the new speaker of the US House of Representatives in a dramatic post-midnight ballot on Saturday, after days of intense negotiations and a series of humiliating defeats to finally capture the gavel on a historic 15th attempt.

McCarthy, 57, needed a simple majority to be elected as the speaker, who presides over the business and is second in line to the presidency. He defeated 52-year-old Hakeem

Democratic Party, which lost the majority in the House after the November 8 midterm elections. The Republicans won 222 seats in the 435-member House against 212 seats secured by the Democrats.

President Joe Biden congratulated McCarthy on his election as the Speaker and said that this was a time to govern responsibly. "This is a time to govern responsibly and to ensure that we're putting the interests of American families first," he said. *PTI*

Sekou Jeffries by 216 to 212 votes, in the 15th round of votes that went past midnight. McCarthy replaces 82-year-old Nancy Pelosi of the

Optimistic about growth: RBI

Says fundamentals of Indian economy sound

■ NEW DELHI

The fundamentals of the Indian economy, according to the RBI, are sound and resilient and it is confronting strong global headwinds. These are the views of the central bank's Financial Stability Report, which expressed optimism over economic growth.

"The global economy is facing formidable headwinds with recessionary risks looming large. The interplay of multiple shocks has resulted in tightened financial conditions and heightened volatility in financial markets.

"The Indian economy is confronting strong global headwinds. Yet, sound macroeconomic fundamentals and healthy financial and non-financial sector balance sheets are providing strength and

resilience and engendering financial system stability," the RBI noted.

It said that buoyant demand for bank credit and early signs of a revival in the investment cycle are benefiting from improved asset quality, return to profitability and strong capital and liquidity buffers of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs).

The gross non-performing asset (GNPA) ratio of scheduled commercial banks fell to a seven-year low of 5.0 per cent and net non-performing assets (NNPA) have dropped to a ten-year low of 1.3 per cent in September 2022, said the report.

The Indian economy presents a picture of resilience and financial stability has been maintained, RBI governor Shaktikanta Das noted in the



foreword of the same report.

India's external accounts remain well-cushioned and viable, he noted further, adding that in 2023, India is well positioned to play a leading role in the world stage as part of its G20 presidency.

"The biggest challenge for G20 as a group is to reignite the efficacy of multilateralism," Das pointed out. "On the domestic front, we recognise the destabilising potential of

global risks, even as we draw strength from the robust macroeconomic fundamentals of the Indian economy."

He concluded by adding: "The Reserve Bank and the other financial regulators remain vigilant and in readiness to ensure the stability and soundness of our financial system through appropriate interventions, whenever necessary, in the best interest of the Indian economy."

LG Electronics operating profit down 91.2% in Q4

■ SEOUL

LG Electronics estimated its fourth-quarter operating earnings at 65.5 billion won (\$51.6 million), down 91.2 per cent from a year earlier.

Revenue increased 5.2 per cent on-year to 21.85 trillion won, marking a quarterly high, according to the earnings guidance released by the company. But it did not release the data for net income.

The operating profit was 79.5 percent lower than the average estimate, according to a survey by Yonhap Infomax, the financial data firm of Yonhap News Agency.

For 2022, South Korea's No. 2 home appliances maker posted an estimated 3.54 trillion won in operating profit, down 12.6 percent from a year

earlier.

Its annual sales expanded 12.9 percent on-year to a record 83.46 trillion won, with the data for net profit not available.

It is the first time the company logged more than 80 trillion won in annual sales.

LG Electronics did not disclose detailed terms of the fourth-quarter earnings, but experts said that a hike in raw material prices, increased marketing costs and the weakening Korean currency have likely undermined the company's bottomline for the October-December period.

In particular, global demand for televisions has dampened due to the protracted Russia-Ukraine war, while rising promotion costs to sell its inventory was also a factor in the sharp quarterly drop.



But LG Electronics is expected to retain the No. 1 title in the world home appliances market in terms of sales, followed by US Whirlpool, for 2022. The Korean company rose to the top position in 2021 for the first time.

Its EV components business, on the other hand, is like-

ly to remain in the black on the back of growing demand amid the gradual easing of the auto chip shortage and a subsequent rise in auto production.

Analysts expected LG Electronics to make a turnaround in the new year on decreased logistical costs and raw material prices.

For Indian techies, is it end of great American dream?

■ NEW DELHI

As thousands of techies continue to lose jobs at Big Tech companies amid recession fears, most of them are finding it difficult to get jobs, as there is a freeze on new hirings at nearly every top firms, amid global macroeconomic conditions and recession fears.

Amazon, Salesforce, Meta, Twitter, Uber and other tech companies have laid off employees as well as put a total freeze on new hirings.

In some cheer for those who have lost jobs in the ongoing funding winter and global macro-economic conditions, most laid-off tech employees landed new jobs within three months of starting their search for a new opening.

A ZipRecruiter survey revealed that nearly 79 per cent of terminated staff in the

tech industry landed a new job within three months.

Nearly four in 10 previously laid off tech workers found jobs less than a month after they began searching, the survey found.

However, 2023 is set to become the worst year for tech layoffs and there may not be jobs available for those on H1-B visa anymore.

Several Indian-origin workers were left in the lurch in late 2022.

Now, with the latest layoffs announced by Amazon and Salesforce, and Google soon joining the list, several of H-1B visa holders will be left in a precarious situation.

They will again have 60 days to find a new job or leave the US, ending their American Dream.

Meanwhile The application fees for employment-based visas, such as H1-B and L, are set to increase under a

proposed US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) fee rule to recover operating costs and prevent case backlogs.

Under the new proposal, which will be subject to a 60-day comment period before it takes effect, the application fee for H-1B visas for high-skilled workers would jump by 70 per cent to \$780.

H-1B visa petitioners would also need to pay \$215 in pre-registration fees, up from the current \$10 fee.

"Although an increase from \$10 to \$215 may appear dramatic at first glance, the \$10 fee was established simply to cover a small portion of the costs of the program, as opposed to no fee at all," the USCIS said in a statement.

LinkedIn in late 2022 was flooded with stories of laid-off H1-B workers.

Indian-origin Nilesh Bhandare, 39, was a data

engineer at Twitter. He told the San Francisco Chronicle that he has seen a dramatic turnaround in job availability in the market.

"My take is, no one wants to commit now for full time, because companies are not sure about the economic situation," Bhandare was quoted as saying in the report.

It was an anxious time for tens of thousands of newly laid-off workers amid inflation pressures and recession concerns.

Some people who were in earlier rounds of layoffs got jobs but even they were pessimistic about the current market. Himanshu V, an IIT-Kharagpur graduate who earlier worked at GitHub, Adobe and Flipkart, lost job at Meta.

"I relocated to Canada to join #Meta and 2 days after joining, my journey came to an end as I am impacted by the massive layoff," Himanshu



said in a LinkedIn post.

Raju Kadam, who worked at Meta for nine months, said he wasn't expecting to be laid off as he had had "strong performance in all quarters" since

joining the social network.

He had said that he has been in the US for 16 years now and has seen the worst downturns, "but I never lost my job".

BMW launches two new models including EV



■ CHENNAI

Luxury car maker BMW on Saturday announced the launch of its BMWi7 - petrol and electric - powered models.

The BMW 740i M Sport is locally produced at BMW Group Plant, Chennai while the all-electric BMW i7 xDrive60 is available as a completely built-up unit (CBU), BMW

India said.

According to the company, the diesel variant will be introduced later. While bookings for the two models can be done at the dealerships, deliveries will begin in March 2023.

The cars are available at an ex-showroom price of Rs 1,70,00,000 for BMW 740i M Sport and Rs 1,95,00,000 for BMW 17xDrive60.

UJVN LTD.
(A Govt. of Uttarakhand Enterprise)
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephones: 0135-2763508, 2763808, Fax 0135-2763507
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvn.com

"e" Procurement Date Extension Notice
Due to unavoidable circumstances, due dates of receipt of bid in portal "http://uktenders.gov.in" and opening of the bid at website against e-NIT No. 04/EE(P&C)/2022-23 for Procurement of Supply of different Tyres & Tubes for various Power house/Sites of UJVN LTD invited by the office of the EE(P&C), Ganga Bhawan, Yamuna Colony, Dehradun is hereby extended as follows:
Last Date/Time for receipt of bid in the portal : 16-01-2023 up to 16:00 Hrs.
Time for submission of original documents of above tender : 17-01-2023 up to 11:00 Hrs.
Date of opening of bid on the website : 18-01-2023 at 13:00 Hrs.
All other terms & conditions of the tender shall remain unchanged.
Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal <http://uktenders.gov.in>"
Executive Engineer (P&C)
Ganga Bhawan, Dehradun

"AVOID WASTEFUL USE OF ELECTRICITY"

UJVN Limited
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephones: 0135-2763808, Fax: 0135-2763508
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website: www.ujvn.com

RO No. 19 Time Extension Notice-I Dated : 07/01/2023
Due to unavoidable circumstances, the invited "e"-Tender Notice No: 22e/EE(G)/CPH/2022-23 for "SITC of Multiflier System with all accessories including dismantling at Chibro Power House" by the office of Executive Engineer (G) Chibro Power House is hereby extended as follows:-
Last date of submission of bid in the portal: 11-01-2023 up to 17:00
Last date of submission of hard copy: 12-01-2023 from 15:00 Hrs.
Date of opening of the bid Part-I on website: 13-01-2023 from 10:00
All other condition shall be same as previous. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal "http://uktenders.gov.in"
EE(G), Chibro

"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

UJVN Limited
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006,
Telephone: 0135-2763808, Fax-0135-2763508
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvn.com

e-Procurement Date Extension. - 01 रितार 07.01.2023
The date of submission & opening of online Tender invited by the office of the Executive Engineer (E&M), Maneri Dam, Maneri, Uttarkashi via e-Tender Notice Reference: 04/EE(E&M)/Maneri Dam/2022-23 (Tender ID 2022_UJVN_52601_1) is being extended as below:
Name of work: Supply, Installation, testing and commissioning of Automatic Early Warning System (EWS) for Maneri Dam
Last date / Time for receipt of bid in the e-portal : 16.01.2023 up to 17:00 Hrs
Last date / Time of submission of hard copy of bid : 18.01.2023 up to 17:00 Hrs
Date of opening of bid (Part-I) on the e-portal : 19.01.2023 from 11:30 Hrs
Other terms and conditions will remain unchanged. For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal <http://uktenders.gov.in>.
Executive Engineer (E&M)

"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

E-TENDER NOTICE
GUJARAT MARITIME BOARD
"Sagar Bhavan", Sector 10 /A, Chh' Road,
Opp. Air Force, Gandhinagar 382 010
Phone 079-2323 8346/47/48/51

Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB) invites E-tenders from the NABET accredited consultants for the following works.

Name of Work	
"Obtaining amendment in existing Environmental and CRZ clearance for Modernization of Navlakhi Port, District-Morbi, Gujarat"	
Details	
Bids downloading commencement Date	10-01-2023 from 15:00 hrs
Last Date for On-line submission of Bids through www.nprocure.com	21-02-2023 up to 18:10 hrs

Detailed terms and conditions and other related information is given in bid documents. For bid documents and more details, please visit website www.nprocure.com or www.gmbports.org or contact Deputy General Manager (Env), Environment Cell, Gujarat Maritime Board, Gandhinagar.
No/INF/VPN/2022/G/2190

FPIs sold for 11 consecutive days to tune of ₹14,300 cr

■ NEW DELHI



FPIs have turned sustained sellers in the Indian market and sold for 11 consecutive days taking the cumulative selling to Rs 14,300 crore, says V.K. Vijayakumar, the Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

"And, the money taken out is being invested in the underperformers of last year like China and Europe, which are doing well now. Clearly, FII money is chasing lower valuations by selling in overvalued markets like India," he added.

This is the important trend in near term FPI activity. If this trend continues it might weaken the Indian market further. However, the selling will not be indiscriminate.

In December 2022, FPIs bought in capital goods, FMCG and financial services. Selling was mainly in IT.

FPIs will sell stocks in which they are sitting on profits, like the banking segment. And this segment continues to be strong. Last year, too, selling by FIIs in banks turned out to be opportunities for domestic investors. Globally, the phenomenon of good economic news becoming bad news for markets might continue in the near term. The latest data from the US show increasing job creation and declining jobless

claims, he added.

Share of Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) (which includes domestic Mutual Funds, Insurance Companies, Banks, Financial Institutions, Pension Funds etc. as a whole) along with retail and High Net-worth Individual (HNI) investors reached an all time high of 24.03 per cent as on September 30, 2022 from 23.54 per cent as on June 30, 2022, on the back of net inflows from DIIs of Rs 17,597 crore during the quarter, as per Primeinfobase, an initiative of Prime Database Group.

German tech firm SUSE expanding footprint in India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

SUSE, a leading open source German software company, has said it is expanding its operations in India to support the company's growth in key markets. The company has already set up a centre of excellence in Bengaluru at a time India and Germany are looking at boosting cooperation in the high-technology sector.

Founded 30 years ago in Germany, SUSE was the first company to bring enterprise Linux to the market.

"India has seen a massive transformation in technology over the last few years, and we see this expansion as a pivotal opportunity for us to contribute to the economic growth and innovation," said Imran Khan, SUSE Chief Customer Officer.

"This expansion demonstrates our continued global growth as a company and presents a wonderful opportunity to expand our already strong customer base in India by bringing even more innovation to market," he said.

Term deposit interest rates for senior citizens climbing up

■ CHENNAI

With credit disbursals picking up and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) increasing its lending rates to the banks (repo rate) banks and others are now offering higher interest rates on fixed deposits.

In the case of senior citizens, the fixed deposit rates touch 8 per cent in certain cases.

During the Covid-19 period, the interest on fixed

deposits were in the 5% band and one year deposit and now it has climbed up to 7 per cent band.

The State Bank of India (SBI) offers 7.25 per cent for senior citizens on fixed deposits for a period 1 year to less than 2 years and also for 5-10 years tenure.

The interest rates go down to 6.75 per cent for senior citizens on fixed deposits for three years to less than five years.

Hit & drag: Anjali's friend Nidhi was...

From Page 1
Her friend, Nidhi, who was riding pillion on her scooter at the time of the accident, has claimed she fell to the side and fled the spot after the accident because she was "scared". She had also claimed that Anjali had gone to meet her friends at a hotel on December 31 night.

"She was drunk and even fought with me. We left the hotel at around 1.45 am (Sunday) and she wanted to drive the scooter but I insisted that I will drive. We left and

initially I rode the two-wheeler but she threatened to jump from the vehicle if I did not allow her to ride. She kept saying, "It is my scooter, and I will drive," Nidhi had claimed.

Anjali's mother has termed the accident as a "well-thought-out conspiracy" and has demanded the accused be given strict punishment.

"Nidhi is saying all the wrong things. If Nidhi was my daughter's friend, then how did she leave her alone? This is a well-thought-out conspiracy. Nidhi might be involved in this.

There should be an investigation and the five men should be punished," Rekha, Anjali's mother, said.

Meanwhile a city court on Saturday granted bail to Ankush Khanna who allegedly shielded the accused involved in the Kanjhawala accident case. Metropolitan Magistrate Sanya Dalal granted the relief to Khanna, who had surrendered on Friday, after observing that the charges against him were bailable.

The judge noted that according to the Investigating

Officer (IO), Khanna had in his statement to the police said that accused Deepak was driving the vehicle. However, according to the investigation conducted so far, it has been found that accused Amit was driving. During the proceedings, the prosecution sought 14 days of judicial custody of the accused.

Delhi police has arrested six persons and one has surrendered in this case. The Delhi Government has sanctioned an ex-gratia of Rs 10 lakh for the family of Anjali.

Co-flier recounts victim's...

From Page 1
The lavatory was four rows behind his seat. Bhattacharjee said he was woken up midflight when Shankar fell on him. "I initially thought he lost his balance due to a rough flight. However, as I was going to the restroom, I saw my two fellow passengers of 9A and 9C in distress," he said, adding the lady of 9A came to the gallery area, she was all wet. "We were shocked to realise that my co-passenger (8C) was so intoxicated that he went to the next row and urinated on her," he wrote.

All this while, two air hostesses helped clean her up, change her clothes and sanitised her belongings and seat. "The incidence has a multifaceted part to it. A senior citizen was subjected to trauma due to indecency of a passenger. She being a female had no idea how to cope with the obscenity," he wrote. "I personally am bothered by the fact that the captain waited close to two hours before allotting her a fresh seat."

According to the victim's complaint, she was made to stand for 20 minutes and offered a small seat used by airline staff as no seat was vacant in the Business Class. She sat on the small seat for about two hours and was asked to return to her own seat which was still damp and reeking of urine. When she refused, the victim was offered the steward's seat for the rest of the journey, the complaint stated.

Man on run after peeing...

From Page 1
He was using his social media accounts to communicate with his friends, which gave an opening to the police to zero in on him, said officials. To avoid arrest, he kept changing his locations as the police launched a manhunt and issued a lookout circular (LOC) against him. He used to take a taxi to travel in Bengaluru. His travel history was extracted and the route he used to take to reach his office was followed, they said. Since he became a familiar face as hundreds of channels flashed his images on TV, he shaved his beard to change his looks in order to conceal his identity. His photos clicked in November show him sporting a beard and mous-

tache. However, a photo released by the Delhi Police after his arrest shows him as a clean-shaven man. Sources said the Delhi Police had contacted the Bengaluru Police two days ago after getting a tip off that Mishra is in Bengaluru to evade his arrest. Initially, his location was traced near Whitefield area, but he was changing his locations. Late on Friday night, Mishra's location was traced to Mysuru. By the time the Delhi Police team reached there, he had alighted from the taxi. The taxi driver was questioned, which yielded some leads, they said. Mishra often stayed at the place from where he was arrested, the police said.

Mishra's lawyers claimed he

had exchanged messages with the woman who filed the complaint, and even paid her Rs 15,000 as compensation, and got her belongings cleaned. The woman's daughter had reportedly returned the money after a month, saying they couldn't accept it. Mishra's father has also spoken to the media saying he had not slept for two days prior to the incident and he could not have committed such an act.

American financial services company Wells Fargo, Mishra's employer, has also terminated him, saying the allegations were "deeply disturbing". He worked as vice-president of the India chapter of the multinational firm, which is headquartered in California.

Caste-based head...

From Page 1
"All households will be covered in the first phase, which will continue till January 21. In the second one which will start in March, data on people, belonging to all castes, sub-castes and religions, will be collected.

"Enumerators will gather information about the financial status of all people," Patna District Magistrate Chandrashekar Singh told PTI.

Earlier in the day, he inspected the ongoing exercise being conducted by the state government employees in the Bank road area in Patna.

INDIA BEAT SRI LANKA IN THIRD T20I, WIN SERIES 2-1



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Suryakumar Yadav displayed his unmatched superiority yet again in the shortest format with a scintillating hundred as India outplayed Sri Lanka by 91 runs in the third T20I to secure a memorable series win here on Saturday.

Surya struck a sensational 112 not out off 51 balls for his third T20I century and fired India to an imposing 228 for five, making the job easier for his bowlers.

He toyed with the Sri Lankan bowlers throughout, hitting fours and maximums at will and in his trademark man-

ner all across the ground to notch his third century in the format.

The Indian bowlers then dominated as they skittled Sri Lanka for 137 in 16.4 overs to claim the series 2-1.

While the first two matches were neck and neck, India dominated the proceeding with both ball and bat in the decider, which is bound to boost the youngsters' morale.

Chasing the stiff target, Pathum Nissanka (15) survived a first-ball appeal as he chose to review a leg before call off a Hardik Pandya delivery.

The two openers looked up for the challenge as they shared

a brisk 44-run stand. While Nissanka hit Arshdeep Singh (3/20) for a couple of fours in the second over, he slammed consecutive sixes off Pandya in the next over.

With the pacers going for runs, Pandya introduced spin in the form of Axar Patel (1/19) and the left-arm spinner took the wicket of Kusal Mendis (23).

Arshdeep Singh then dismissed Nissanka in the next over while Pandya got Avishka Fernando (1).

The wily Yuzvendra Chahal (2/30) was the next bowler to claim a wicket in the form of Charith Asalanka (19) courtesy

Shivam Mavi, who ran to his left from deep cover to complete an excellent catch.

The ever-increasing required run rate troubled the visitors as they started finding Indian fielders and giving away their wickets.

Umaran Malik (2/31) impressed with his raw pace again but India's affair with extras continued as the bowlers bowled a no ball and 11 wides, including four by Arshdeep.

Earlier, after completing his fifty in 26 balls, Surya took only 19 deliveries to reach the 100-run mark. He ended the innings in style, hitting a six and a four off Chamika Karunaratne (1/52)

in the last over.

Shubman Gill (46), who failed to go beyond single digit scores in the previous two matches, was cautious as he opened his account after playing nine dots with a six, followed by a four off Dilshan Madushanka (2/55) in the third over.

Rahul Tripathi played a 16-ball 35-run knock after Ishan Kishan (1) was sent back in the first over.

As soon as spin was introduced, Tripathi targeted Mahesh Theekshana (0/48) as he collected three fours from the fifth over. He scooped the first one over square leg, played the second to point and hit the third over mid-

off.

Tripathi assumed the role of the aggressor as he pummeled Karunaratne (1/52) for twin sixes before perishing off a short ball, caught at short third.

India collected 53 for the loss of two wickets in the powerplay and while Gill continued to score at a slow pace, Surya was at his effortless best.

The world's number one batter in the format looked like a man from another planet. He reached his half century by sending the ball to the boundary.

With Surya firing, Gill tried to up the ante at the other end as well.



NZ seamer Henry ruled out of India, Pak ODIs

PTI ■ KARACHI

New Zealand seamer Matt Henry was on Saturday ruled out of his side's upcoming white-ball series against Pakistan and India after suffering abdominal strain.

Henry suffered the injury during the final day of the second Test against Pakistan here and coach Gary Stead confirmed the development.

He bowled with the injury in the final session of day five as New Zealand reduced Pakistan to nine down with the two-match series ending in a draw.

"It was a pretty gutsy effort, really, but he will be withdrawn from the ODI side," Stead said on Saturday.

New Zealand Cricket is yet to announce a replacement as Henry is set to return home with other members of the Test squad.

Earlier, Blair Tuckner

replaced fellow fast bowler Adam Milne in the white-ball squad due to concerns about the latter's preparation for 50-over cricket.

The NZC has named split ODI squads for the away series against Pakistan, which begins on January 10, and India, scheduled to start on January 18 to manage workload of players.

Regular skipper Kane Williamson and head coach Stead will be in charge of the three-match ODI series in Pakistan.

In Williamson and Stead's absence, Tom Latham will lead the Kiwis while batting coach Luke Ronchi will serve as the head coach in the three-match ODI series against India.

The three-match ODI series in India will begin in Hyderabad and will be followed by an identical T20Is series. The first match of the T20I series is slated in Ranchi on January 27.

Pant undergoes knee surgery for ligament tear



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant, who miraculously survived a horrific car accident last week, has successfully undergone a knee surgery at a Mumbai hospital, BCCI sources said on Saturday.

"Rishabh Pant has successfully undergone a knee ligament surgery on Friday. He will be under observation. Further course of action and rehabilitation will be advised by Dr

Dinshaw Pardiwala and followed by the BCCI sports science and medicine team," a BCCI source said. It is learnt that Pant has undergone a Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) reconstruction surgery and will be out of action for close to a year.

The surgery took place at the Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani hospital in Andheri West under the supervision of Dr Pardiwala, the head of the Centre for Sports Medicine and director of Arthroscopy & Shoulder Service. Pant was taken to Mumbai by air ambulance from Dehradun since he was not in a position to fly by a commercial airline.

The 25-year-old, who was driving from Delhi to Roorkee to surprise his family members in the early hours of December 30, suffered multiple injuries after his speeding car hit the divider and caught fire.

Chetan retained as chairman of selectors, Ankola, Das and Banerjee in panel

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chetan Sharma was on Saturday reappointed as the chairman of the senior selection committee, exactly two months after his entire panel was disbanded by the BCCI for the Indian team's semifinal exit in the T20 World Cup.

Chetan's new team, though, would have entirely new faces with junior chairman of selectors S Sharath of South Zone being promoted. The others in the panel are former seamer Subroto Banerjee from East Zone, Salil Ankola from West Zone and Test opener Shiv Sunder Das from the Central zone.

Das qualified from Central for being a former Vidarbha player after he finished playing for Odisha.

"Central and East are two such zones where there aren't too many worthy names. Hence BCCI had to use the best possible option. Das's Vidarbha representation made him eligible from Central Zone," a BCCI

source explained the rationale behind the move.

Also with Bengal's Ranadeb Bose being in junior panel, the convention was to have someone from another eastern state.

"Subroto had played for Bengal but better part of his cricket, he played for erstwhile Bihar. So that solved the issue," he added.

Chetan's last committee colleague, Harvinder Singh, also reapplied but wasn't considered after the interview as he was believed to be not up to the mark.

"You can look at it from this angle that BCCI invited applications as the contract is renewed every year. But then, it has been a convention to seek applications only after four years. So this year when BCCI asked for application, it was certainly sacking," a BCCI insider tracking the development said.

However, with the BCCI not offering more than Rs 1 crore as salary to the chairman, the board failed to attract bigger



names, some of whom earn 5 to 7 times that amount through commentary, IPL coaching and other commitments.

"The board received around 600 applications following its advertisement for the five posts issued on its official website on 18th November 2022," BCCI secretary Jay Shah said in a release.

"Upon due deliberation and careful consideration, the CAC shortlisted 11 individuals for personal interviews. Based on the interviews, the committee has recommended the following candidates for the senior men's national selection committee," he added.

It must be mentioned that both Das and Chetan had played identical number of Tests --23-- but Chetan has played 65 ODIs (4 by Das) and is also the senior of the two. While Chetan got his first Test cap in 1984, Das made his debut in 2000.

In the case of former Tamil Nadu captain Sharath, the board has specific aim in mind as he

is the only one without an India cap in the panel.

"Sharath has a fantastic eye for talent. Since he has watched a lot of U-19 cricket, his in-depth knowledge of junior talent pool will help the committee when transition takes place," said the BCCI official. In the case of Banerjee, he had also applied the last time but had lost out to Debashish Mohanty.

Banerjee had been a reputed bowling coach and is also current India seamer Umesh Yadav's personal coach.

He was the bowling coach of Vidarbha's Ranji Trophy-winning squad.

As far as Ankola is concerned, his experience of being the chairman of selectors of a high-profile first-class team like Mumbai worked in his favour.

The West Zone went unrepresented for one year during the tenure of the last panel after Abbey Kuruvilla became the GM, having finished combined five years as junior and senior selector.

Wenger to help with Indian's football's grassroots programmes



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Arsenal manager and world governing body FIFA's current chief of global football development, Arsene Wenger will play a role in Indian football's grassroots programmes and talent development.

During the World Cup in Doha, All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Kalyan Chaubey had held deliberations with Wenger and other senior officials of the FIFA and Asian Football Confederation (AFC) regarding youth development projects in India.

"We have had extensive discussions with FIFA development team. Arsene Wenger is head of FIFA Task Force and they will help us in grassroots programme. Coaches from Wenger's team would come," Chaubey

said after unveiling its 'Vision 2047' roadmap.

"About football budget cut, we have got lot of help from government and ministry and we have never been turned down when we requested for something. In future too, we will expect whatever we deserve in terms of help, government will give us," he added. The roadmap hopes that in the country's centenary year of independence, India will also emerge as a new powerhouse of Asian football.

Developed in conjunction with all stakeholders of Indian football, the roadmap has also sought and incorporated inputs from the AFC and FIFA.

The salient ambitions of the roadmap are to see India among the top four footballing nations in Asia, host one of the top leagues in the continent, and create a vibrant

footballing ecosystem.

"Vision 2047' has been broken down, for diligent implementation, into six four-year strategic plans. The first of these will look to cover the period till 2026.

"With a shared vision and by sharing responsibility, we can implement targeted programmes to address key areas identified in this roadmap and help build capacity for the football ecosystem," Chaubey said.

He said the aim is to revive "the glory days of Indian football as it was in the 1950s and 60s and becoming a powerhouse of Asian football once again".

One of the key aspects of the roadmap is to ensure increased access to competition and games for players playing their trade in the country. By 2047, the federation wants to ensure players will be able to play at least 55 matches across different competitions every season. "Transformation will begin at home through a reform of the organisational culture," secretary general Shaji Prabhakaran said, referring to a need for better governance of the game across the country.

"A restructuring exercise will be carried out to streamline current operations and develop a team which adopts the industry's best practices and is transparent in its dealings."

"By 2036, the centenary of the federation," Prabhakaran said, "India will be among the top seven countries in Asia, and a strong contender to qualify for the World Cup on merit."



Oz eye series whitewash

AP ■ SYDNEY

Skipper Pat Cummins bowled Australia into contention to pull off a stunning victory with a fiery spell against South Africa in an absorbing third Sydney Test on Saturday.

Cummins captured three for 29 in a hostile 14 overs to set up the Australians for a dramatic final day charge for victory to complete a series clean sweep against the hapless Proteas.

At the close on day four, South Africa were batting for survival at 149 for six in reply to Australia's 475 for four declared first innings with Marco Jansen on 10 and Simon Harmer six.

The outgunned South Africans have only passed 200 once so far in this series. The Australians need 14 more wickets to pull off an astonishing victory despite so much time lost and cannot be counted out after rocking the tourists in Saturday's two compelling sessions of the rain-marred Test.

"I'm pretty excited about

tomorrow," said spinner Nathan Lyon. "It's going to be an exciting day's cricket, we know what we have to do." Josh Hazlewood made the initial breakthrough, removing Dean Elgar for 15 continuing the Proteas' skipper's wretched series of low scores.

Hazlewood, bowling a lively opening spell, got Elgar with a brutal short-pitched delivery which clipped his glove for a catch by wicketkeeper Alex Carey. Lyon stunned Sarel Elwee who did not play a shot and was bowled top of off-stump for 18 leaving the tourists 37-2 in the 18th over.

Four balls later Cummins claimed his first victim with Heinrich Klaasen, caught off a vicious lifter leg-side by Carey for two. Hazlewood broke through again after tea with an inswinger that kissed the edge of Temba Bavuma's bat for Carey to do the rest. Bavuma clouted two sixes off Lyon in his 35 off 74 balls but was a big wicket for the Aussies to leave the visitors 85-4 in the 39th over.

Hope to breach 90m mark this year: Neeraj Chopra

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

His "amazing athleticism" has left even the iconic Michael Johnson in awe recently and India's Neeraj Chopra has now set himself a target in the new year: breach the 90-metre mark with his javelin.

After the historic gold in Tokyo, the 24-year-old Olympic champion javelin thrower has continued to raise expectations with a silver at the World Championships, before adding another feather in his cap by winning the Diamond League Finals gold.

However, despite his superlative shows, the magical 90m mark continues to elude him.

"In this new year, I hope I will put an end to this question," Chopra told reporters in a video interaction from England where he's doing off-season training.

He came agonisingly close with his 89.94m throw when he finished second in the Stockholm leg of the prestigious Diamond League.

In hindsight, Chopra thinks he could have achieved the mark in Stockholm.

"I could have done that if I landed my foot a few centimetres ahead."

"Yes, it's just a matter of six centimeters -- but a magical mark for an athlete. Whenever you talk about a top athlete we all say like this he's done 90m."

"But I'm not bothered about the pressure of expectations. It



will happen when it has to. It could have happened last year or the year before, but maybe God has kept a perfect time and place for that."

He's not bogged down by the pressure of expectations and said he always took them positively.

"I don't think much about the expectations. Yes, you have to handle both your own and others' expectations. But when I'm competing, my mind goes blank."

"It's about giving it your all, your 100 percent thinking that you have prepared for just this day. And somewhere these expectations from the people who love me play a positive part."

The penultimate year before the Paris Olympics has a host of

important events lined up, including the rescheduled Asian Games in Hangzhou, and Chopra said they are yet to take a call on when to start preparations. "Basically, I've got three big events this year -- the World Championships, Asian Games and the Diamond League Final."

"About when to start, I have not thought about it. I will plan with the coach assessing the situation in China. If it happens as per schedule in October, we may start the season a bit late so that we can stretch it till the Asian Games."

Keeping that in mind, Chopra is just focused on strength building exercises in the indoor training in England and when they shift their training base to South Africa he would switch to javelin throws.

KANE FIRES SPURS INTO FA CUP FOURTH ROUND

AP ■ LONDON

Harry Kane fired Tottenham past third-tier Portsmouth and into the FA Cup fourth round on Saturday as 2021 winners Leicester emerged unscathed from a tricky tie against lowly Gillingham.

Elsewhere on a packed day of third-round action, Southampton came from behind to beat Crystal Palace 2-1 in an all-Premier League tie.

Antonio Conte rang the changes for Spurs for the match against League One Portsmouth but retained a heavyweight forward line including Kane and Son Heung-min.

The in-form Kane broke the deadlock in the 50th minute, receiving the ball on the edge of the box and bending a fine curled effort past the despairing dive of Josh Griffiths.

The England captain, with four goals in four matches since the World Cup, now has 265 goals for Spurs — just one behind the club's all-time record scorer, Jimmy Greaves.

Spurs, who have won the FA Cup eight times, were unable to add to their tally but saw out the match fairly comfortably.

Leicester manager Brendan Rodgers, who led his side to the trophy two years ago, made multiple changes after his team's third straight Premier League defeat this week but retained veteran forward Jamie Vardy for the match against Gillingham, who are rock bottom of England's Football League.

Vardy was the provider as Kelechi Iheanacho scored the only goal of the game in the 56th minute.

Palace took the lead against Premier League basement club Southampton through Odsonne Edouard.

But Saints levelled in the 37th minute after some poor defending from the hosts. James Ward-Prowse sent what looked to be an innocuous free-kick into the area but Joel Ward mist-



imed his effort to head clear.

The ball took a bounce inside the box before evading goalkeeper Vicente Guaita, who moved in the right direction but could not stop it from going into the net.

Southampton took the lead for the first time midway through the second half.

Guaita was attempting to make a routine clearance from outside the area when Adam Armstrong rushed in, stole the

ball from the Spaniard and had plenty of time to find the empty net.

Preston came from behind to beat Huddersfield 3-1 while Reading beat Watford 2-0.

Liverpool take on Wolves in

the standout match of the day later on Saturday, with Manchester City hosting Chelsea on Sunday. Forest Green's tie against Birmingham was postponed on Saturday due to a waterlogged pitch.

Deschamps to remain France coach until 2026 World Cup

AP ■ PARIS

Didier Deschamps said on Saturday he will remain France coach until the 2026 World Cup after leading the team to the final of the last two editions.

Deschamps' contract expired after the World Cup in Qatar where reigning champions France lost to Argentina in a penalty shootout after a thrilling final on December 18.

It had been reported that French Football Federation (FFF) president Noel Le Graet only wanted to give Deschamps a two-year extension until the 2024 European Championship but the coach had insisted on staying in charge until the next World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

"I am going to announce something which for me is an immense pleasure, and that is that the president has decided to extend (my contract) until 2026," Deschamps said at an FFF general assembly.



Xavi urges Barca to improve finishing

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez urged his team to improve their finishing against Atletico Madrid on Sunday in La Liga, where they will be without top goalscorer Robert Lewandowski.

The Polish forward has 13 goals in the top flight but will miss the first of three matches suspended following a red card against Osasuna in November before the World Cup break.

After Barcelona appealed against his ban he was allowed to feature in the 1-1 draw against Espanyol last weekend but his punishment was later upheld.

"Against Espanyol we lacked aggression in their box and we lacked efficiency," Xavi told a news conference on Saturday.

"It's a mental question. In recent games we have played well and generated many chances, but we lacked the strength to show our superiority on the scoreboard.

Both Espanyol and InterCity (whom Barcelona beat 4-3 in the Spanish Cup) made

life hard for us as we didn't take all the chances we had."

Barcelona lead the league on goal difference ahead of Real Madrid, but the reigning champions can move ahead with a win at Villarreal on Saturday.

Atletico, fourth, have not been at their best this season but Xavi anticipated a tricky encounter.

"(Simeone's) teams are defensively very well drilled," said Xavi.

"They've been changing systems and it's hard to predict how his team will play.

"Atletico have virtually no defensive holes, we have to take advantage of our chances as we won't have many."

Barcelona's coach must decide between Ansu Fati, Ferran Torres and Memphis Depay for Lewandowski's replacement at the Metropolitano.

"We will play with a No 9, you will see who it is tomorrow," added Xavi, keeping his cards tight to his chest.

"We have tried out different profiles and tomorrow we will take the decision."

Man Utd launch FA Cup campaign with Everton win

AP ■ MANCHESTER

Manchester United heaped the pressure on Everton boss Frank Lampard on Friday, overcoming a howler from goalkeeper David de Gea to win the FA Cup third-round tie 3-1. Everton travelled to Old Trafford in trepidation after slipping into the Premier League relegation zone this week following a chastening 4-1 home hammering at the

hands of Brighton.

But they made the worst possible start, with Brazil forward Antony scoring in just the fourth minute.

They were level 10 minutes later after Conor Coady pounced on De Gea's embarrassing error but the Everton defender put the ball in his own net early in the second half to hand the initiative back to the home side. Marcus Rashford increased Manchester United's



lead in the dying seconds, scoring from the penalty spot.

United won the most recent of their 12 FA Cups in 2016 while Everton's win against United in the 1995 Wembley final was the last time they won a trophy. The Red Devils — hunting their first silverware since 2017 — are in fourth spot in the Premier League in Erik ten Hag's first season in charge and are through to the League Cup quarter-finals.

World number 1 Alcaraz to miss Australian Open with leg injury



AP ■ MELBOURNE

US Open champion Carlos Alcaraz said on Friday he will miss the Australian Open, the first Grand Slam of the season, after injuring his right leg in training.

"I picked up an injury through a chance, unnatural movement in training," the 19-year-old Spaniard wrote on his Twitter account.

"I'd worked so hard to get to my best level for Australia but unfortunately I won't be able to play," the world's top-ranked player added.

"It's tough, but I have to be optimistic, recover and look forward. We'll see you at the Australian Open in 2024."

Alcaraz's withdrawal means defending champion and 22-time major winner Rafael Nadal will be promoted to top seed at

the Australian Open which starts in Melbourne on January 16.

Novak Djokovic, the nine-time champion and a 21-time Grand Slam title winner, will move into the top four seedings.

That will mean he cannot face old rival Nadal until the semi-finals at the earliest.

Alcaraz became the world's youngest world number one since the creation of the ATP rankings in 1973 by winning his first Grand Slam tournament at the US Open last September.

He then became the youngest player in history to finish the year at the top of the world rankings and the first outside of Djokovic, Nadal, Roger Federer and Andy Murray to do so since Andy Roddick in 2003.

However, an abdominal tear forced him to retire in the quarter-finals of the Paris Masters in November which in turn forced him to miss the season-ending ATP Finals in Turin won by Djokovic.

Alcaraz also had to sit out the Davis Cup Finals. Djokovic will return to the Australian Open after being deported from the country last year over his refusal to be vaccinated.

Alcaraz, who will also miss the Kooyong Lawn Tennis Club in Melbourne next week, said recently that 2023 will come with new experiences for him.



Griekspoor wins maiden ATP World Tour title in Pune

PTI ■ PUNE

Tallon Griekspoor prevailed in a high-voltage three-set final against Benjamin Bonzi to win his maiden ATP World Tour title as the first-time finalists dished out a gripping game of tennis here on Saturday.

The Netherlands' Griekspoor won the intense Tata Open Maharashtra title clash 4-6, 7-5, 6-3 against his dogged and higher-ranked French rival in two hours and 16 minutes.

The two players, playing for the first time against each other at the Tour level, put on a show before a packed centre court at Balewadi Stadium, entertaining the fans with their breathtaking shot-making and perseverance.

The 26-year-old Griekspoor,

who is expected to jump 34 places from 95 to 61 in the ranking charts on Monday after the title-winning performance, said it was indeed a "high quality match".

"I played one bad game in the first set but I was better player in the second set. I had a good attitude and that helped. He also played a great game. It's first week of the season and no one expects this (winning title) after an off-season," said the Dutch player.

Griekspoor said he had to make a few adjustments to his game in the final since the ball "flies" in the evening at centre court and he had only one session at that time of the day during the tournament.

He got a lot of backing from the crowd.

Italy into United Cup final against USA



AP ■ SYDNEY

Stefanos Tsitsipas battled from a set down to topple Matteo Berrettini on Saturday but it was in vain as an unstoppable Lucia Bronzetti powered Italy into the final of the inaugural United Cup against a dominant United States.

World number four Tsitsipas came through a do-or-die clash in Sydney 4-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 to earn a crucial point for his country and boost his confidence ahead of the Australian Open.

But it wasn't enough with Bronzetti pummelling Greece's Valentini Grammatikopoulou 6-2, 6-3 in the following match to give Italy an unassailable 3-1 lead. They meet the United States in Sunday's final after the red-hot Americans swept past Poland 5-0.

Italy went into day two of

the semi-finals with a 2-0 advantage after a gutsy Martina Trevisan upset world number six Maria Sakkari 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 7-5 in a gripping encounter on Friday. Trevisan's teammate Lorenzo Musetti then crushed Greek teenager Stefanos Sakellaridis 6-1, 6-1.

With Tsitsipas winning, the pressure was on Grammatikopoulou, a late replacement for Despina Papamichail.

But she was outgunned by Bronzetti and reduced to tears in the first set.

"It's a special moment to bring such an important point to Italy. We are a great team, great friends and I'm so excited and so happy right now," said Bronzetti.

Berrettini, ranked 16, took a grip on his high-quality match with an unanswered break in game seven of the first set.

They went toe-to-toe in set two before the pumped-up Tsitsipas prevailed in a tiebreaker to take it to a third set where he ground down his tiring opponent.

Earlier, a composed Taylor Fritz beat Poland's Hubert Hurkacz in a battle of top 10 players to power the United States into the final.

The world number nine was too good for his big-serving opponent, ranked one place behind him, winning 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/5).

Fritz came into the match with the United States already 2-0 up after Jessica Pegula stunned world number one Iga Swiatek 6-2, 6-2 on Friday and Frances Tiafoe swept past Kacper Zuk 6-3, 6-3. His victory gave them an insurmountable lead before Madison Keys made it 4-0 by beating Magda Linette 6-4, 6-2.

Djokovic beats Medvedev to make Adelaide final

AP ■ ADELAIDE

An intense Novak Djokovic brushed aside Daniil Medvedev on Saturday to set up an Adelaide International final against Sebastian Korda and played down injury concerns after appearing to tweak his hamstring.

The top seed, who has an ominous 22-1 record since September, was breathtaking at times as he cruised past the former world number one Russian 6-3, 6-4 in preparation for the Australian Open, where he is a nine-time champion.

In the women's draw, unheralded Czech teenager Linda Noskova stunned world number two Ons Jabeur 6-3, 1-6, 6-3, with the qualifier into her first-ever final against second seed Aryna Sabalenka.

World number five Djokovic broke in both sets on Medvedev double-faults before lifting his intensity

to storm home.

But he had a scare in the first set, clutching his left hamstring as he attempted to reach for a Medvedev cross-court forehand. He continued but then took a medical timeout.

"Thankfully nothing too serious, if it was I wouldn't be able to continue," he said.

"I just tried with some anti-inflammatories and it kind of settled in after a few games.

"I was just trying to keep the momentum going and don't allow him to break my serve. The longer the match went my hamstring was warmer, I guess, and bothering me less.

"Hopefully for tomorrow it will be all fine," he added.

Unseeded Korda, son of former world number two Petr Korda, was in charge 7-6 (7/5), 1-0 of his match when Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka called for a medical timeout for



treatment in his upper right leg before pulling out of the match.

"Very excited for the way I'm playing and a lot of confidence leading into the big one (final)," said Korda, 22, who won his first and only title on clay in Parma in 2021, while making two finals last year.

"Excited to play either one (Djokovic or Medvedev). It's always a great thing to learn from different kinds of players. It's going to be a great learning experience whatever the outcome and, you know, I'm going to go for the win."

'100 PERCENT'

Noskova, 18, had already upset two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka en route to the semis and carried that into her clash with Jabeur in only her sixth tour-level event.

"I don't think either of us played 100 percent and I'm glad I got that last

point to win, just really glad to play like this," said the world number 102.

"I'm just going for it 100 percent all the time, just trying to push through."

Jabeur had treatment on a lower back problem at 2-5 in the first set, but she bounced back to easily take the second before struggling in the third.

Sabalenka surged into the final by crushing Romanian veteran Irina-Camelia Begu 6-3, 6-2.

"I'm happy with the level I played today," said the Belarusian, who is targeting an 11th career title and a first since Abu Dhabi and Madrid in 2021.

"She's playing a different style so super happy that I was able to be in the match.

"We did everything right in the pre-season, I think this is the key," she added in explaining her good early-season form, where she is yet to drop a set.

It's not about giving back if you're successful or a celebrity or how much money you have: it's about your responsibility as an adult to help others
— Trisha Yearwood



By all accounts, BJP MP Varun Gandhi is on his way out of the party. In that event, he could either 're-align with his 'parental party' or would find a 'third-alternative', write DEEPAK K UPRETI and DIPAK KUMAR JHA

The buzz is growing louder that Varun Gandhi is counting his days in the BJP. Except for Subramanian Swamy, no other BJP leader has chastised his own party the way Varun has done over the last two years. But worse. He sounds so much like his cousin Rahul Gandhi. The same outrage against the politics of communalism and caste, the same criticism of the role of media, and the same concerns for the farmers and unemployed youth. The same outpouring of emotion over the future of the nation.

Incidentally, he is also heard saying in one of the viral videos that he has nothing against Congress or Nehru ji.

An 'unconventional politician' and three-time BJP member of parliament, Varun Gandhi is now looking beyond the 'self-limiting barriers' of the saffron party.

By all accounts, Varun is on his way out. In that event, he could either 're-align with his 'parental party' or would find a 'third-alternative'.

When contacted by The Pioneer on his public stand on various issues going contrary to the central dispensation, the dissident MP said "I believe, I joined public life out of a sense of duty, I believe am doing all that could benefit average Indian and change the routine political discourse around us...."

The countdown for the 42-year-old, the son of former central minister Maneka Gandhi and the late Sanjay Gandhi, has begun. The BJP has completely marginalized him after pitting him and his mother against the Gandhi family of the Congress.

But as the Modi- led BJP captured Uttar Pradesh, the BJP cold-shouldered the MP from Pilibhit who at one time was seen as a possible Chief Ministerial candidate for the electorally biggest states in the country.

Appointed party secretary under Nitin Gadkari and then the youngest General secretary under the presidency of Rajnath Singh, at the age of 33, Varun looked to fly high when the regime of Amit Shah suddenly clipped his wings and dropped him as General Secretary.

Varun did not seem to fit in the strict command and control of Modi-Shah BJP that is way different from the Vajpayee-Advani structure carrying imprints of 'liberal shades'.

The last straw for Varun has been the exit of his mother from the Modi cabinet of 2019 and the dropping of both from the BJP's National Executive.

The BJP MP has since then been making no-holds-barred strikes at the Modi-regime policies but avoided any personal attacks on the BJP leaders.

The ruling party has also remained reconciled to the "uneasy peace" with an unwritten understanding, so far, seems to be guiding both sides.

Since 2019, the BJP MP has taken a completely contrarian view on all the economic and political policies, including on the alleged religious polarization across the country.

THE BJP BOSSES HAVE IGNORED HIS POTSHOTS, BUT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THIS TIME VARUN WILL ESCAPE THE GUILLOTINE OF THE BJP PARLIAMENTARY BOARD WHEN IT COMES TO PICKING UP CANDIDATES FOR THE 2024 LOK SABHA POLLS. PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI AND HOME MINISTER AMIT SHAH ARE NOT KNOWN TO FORGIVE AND FORGET. VARUN CANNOT RETRACE HIS STEPS. HE HAS TO MOVE FORWARD, ON A PATH THAT MAY UNITE THE GANDHI FAMILY AND SEE HIM EMERGING AS THE POSTER BOY OF THE CONGRESS IN UTTAR PRADESH IN THE 2024 POLLS. WHO KNOWS, HE MAY EVEN EXPLORE OTHER OPTIONS IF WINNABILITY WAS HIS SOLE CONCERN. BUT ONE THING IS CLEAR: VARUN'S DAYS IN THE BJP ARE NUMBERED



Restless and ambitious, Varun says " Look at my track record and tell me, if I am not speaking for people in any of my writings or actions"

And something none can hold against him is the fact that he is the only MP who is not drawing his salary and donating it to "farmers on the verge of suicide on account of their debt" while a majority of other MPs seek higher salaries, more perks, and privileges.

In Uttar Pradesh, the Pilibhit MP from 2015 to 2017 worked out a plan towards an "individual solution" for the debt-ridden farmers, particularly those on the verge of suicide.

In his book 'Rural Manifesto', Varun pointed out economic markers driving farmers to suicide in UP.

The crowd-funding efforts, he says, made 8000 to 10000 farmers debt free in 20 districts of UP.

He is the only MP from National Democratic Alliance who supported 'Jan Lokpal bill and sat at 'Ram Lila Maidan' to back it in 2011.

He also backed the 'Kisan Andolan', condemned police attacks on farmers, and supported the victims of Lakhimpur Kheri violence in UP.

The MP also points to the fact he has espoused the cause of Independent judiciary vis-vis 'committed judiciary' to allow free speech and ethos.

He went on to criticize the Modi dispensation for leaving two crore government jobs vacant when the unemployment, post-Covid, was at its peak. Thereafter, he also presented a private Member bill 'Bharosa : Bhartiya Rojgar Sanhita' for a mandatory and time-bound filling of government jobs in the country.

Even before 2019, he had taken a non-party stance but the party re-nominated him and his mother Maneka Gandhi and even allowed them to swap constituencies.

The BJP bosses have ignored his potshots, but it is unlikely that this time Varun will escape the guillotine of the BJP parliamentary board when it comes to picking up candidates for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah are not known to forgive and forget. Varun cannot retrace his steps. He has to move forward, on a path that may unite the Gandhi family and see him emerging as the poster boy of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh in the 2024 polls. Who knows, he may even explore other options if winnability was his sole concern. But one thing is clear: Varun's days in the BJP are numbered.

Rahul Gandhi recently ducked a question on the prospect of Varun joining the Congress and said only party president M Mallikarjun Kharge was competent to talk on the subject. But few will believe that Kharge will have any say in a matter which involved such sensitive family issues.

It is believed that Priyanka could become the catalyst for Varun's departure from the BJP and entry into Congress. And if this happens,

it would also unify the Nehru-Gandhi family after almost 40 years when the Sonia Gandhi-Maneka Gandhi tiff split the Congress' first family.

"Varun has a significant following in Pilibhit-Sultanpur-Lakhimpur Khiri and its surrounding areas. If he joins the Congress, this could be a big boost to Congress which is struggling to regain its foothold in UP beyond the family boroughs of Amethi and Raebareli," said Pushpendra, former Professor and Dean at Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS).

Pusphendra further explained how a new political environment will be created in case Varun joins the Congress. "In politics, the word 'mahaul' has a lot of significance. As the political climate seems to change over Congress' Yatra, Varun's joining may both affect and impact. People from other parties in the State like SP and BSP (which seems to fade away now) may follow the suit and joins the winds of change," the political analyst said.

Earlier it was speculated that Sonia and Rahul were not keen to allow another Gandhi to join the family enterprise, especially one with much more ambition and drive than Rahul. But after the stupendous success of the Bharat jodo yatra, Rahul seems to be in complete control of things in Congress. He has no reason to feel wary of anyone with or outside the party.

Significantly, on the 76th birth anniversary of Sanjay Gandhi, the Congress gave much more space to their former dynamic leader which was never done in three decades.

Varun seems determined to create a situation that leads to his exit from the BJP. This reflects in his speeches. Look at the following:" The politics of our country should be to unite the country, not the politics of creating a civil war. We should not do politics that suppress people, rather we should do politics that uplift people....TV and newspapers are only doing Hindu-Muslim, Hindu-Muslim, and caste politics. Divide brothers and kill brothers. We will not let these politics happen," Varun said recently.

His statement is being compared with that of Rahul's speech in Delhi during the Bharat Jodo Yatra.

Interestingly, almost 'caged' in the BJP, Varun has flourished with his pen.

Dwelling on rural distress, Varun has written 1000 pages of ' Rural Manifesto - Realizing India's future through her villages', which is "taught in economic courses" of some of the universities.

Next month, he is bringing out his other 1100 pages volume on 'Urbanization- the Indian Metropolis'.

'The otherness of the self' and ' Stillness' are his two early books on poetry by Varun.

In the run-up to 2024, the Gandhi scion is, understandably, all set to end his existential dilemma and the BJP too may reciprocate in equal measure.

(The Writers is special correspondent of The Pioneer)

Varun Gandhi · 29/10/22
4 साल से यूपी पुलिस की भर्ती का इंतजार कर रहे लाखों छात्र ओवर-एज हो चुके। ना भर्ती मिली, ना कोई उम्मीद।

सोशल मीडिया पर वह लगातार अपनी आवाज उठा रहे हैं पर सुनवाई नहीं है। यही छात्र जब सड़क पर आएंगे तब उनपर 'उपद्रवी' होने का आरोप लगेगा।

क्या यह अन्याय नहीं है?

Varun Gandhi · 01/09/22
युवाओं में रोजगार दर 20.9% से घटकर 10.4% रह गयी है, यह पिछले 5 वर्षों में सबसे न्यूनतम स्तर पर है।

हाल ही में प्रधानमंत्री जी ने सभी विभागों से रिक्त पड़े 10 लाख पदों को भरने का आग्रह किया, पर अब तक कोई भी विभाग दोस कार्य योजना नहीं बना सका।

संघर्षशील युवा कब तक इंतजार करेगा?

Varun Gandhi · 09/08/22
देश भर में प्रतियोगी छात्र लगातार संघर्षरत है।

लटकी हुई भर्तियाँ और अटका हुआ भविष्य, युवा जीवन का सबसे महत्वपूर्ण समय कभी अंदोलन तो कभी कोर्ट के चक्कर काट गया रहा है।

अब भी हम रोजगार सृजन को लेकर गम्भीर नहीं हुए तो युवाओं के साथ साथ राष्ट्र का भविष्य भी अंधकार में चला जाएगा।

Varun Gandhi · 28/07/22
संसद में सरकार द्वारा दिए गए यह आँकड़े बेरोजगारी का आलम बयां कर रहे हैं।

विगत 8 वर्षों में 22 करोड़ युवाओं ने केंद्रीय विभागों में नौकरी के लिए आवेदन दिया जिसमें से मात्र 7 लाख को रोजगार मिल सका है।

जब देश में लगभग एक करोड़ स्वीकृत पद खाली हैं, तब इस स्थिति का जिम्मेदार कौन है?

Varun Gandhi · 09/07/22
चूल्हे पर लकड़ियाँ जल रही हैं और लाल सिलेंडर सजावट की वस्तु बना हुआ है,

गैस की पासबुक के पन्नों में महंगी से कोई एंट्री नहीं चढ़ी है,

ये उन लाखों महिलाओं का दर्द है जिन्हें हमने 'धुरे से आज़ादी' का सपना दिखाया था।

यह वही महिलाएँ हैं जिन्होंने हम पर सबसे अधिक भरोसा जताया था।

HEAL THIS AILMENT WITH PATIENCE

Winter is here! For many it's a season for festivities, family, friends and dry fruits and hot beverages to be shared together in the cozy ambience. But for those having psoriasis, an autoimmune disorder that impacts the body's largest organ i.e. skin, it's a roller coaster of countless highs and lows — physically and mentally as the disorder flares up during cold weather.

The disease can be managed by lifestyle modification, proper medication and meditation, doctors tell THE HEALTH PIONEER. Most important is not to stress as it can aggravate psoriasis, they say.

Psoriasis is affected by genetic factors, stress, pollution, viral, and bacterial infections that alter immunity. In psoriasis, combination of these factors starts a process in which skin proliferates at faster pace leading to development of red scaly patches over elbow, knee, back and scalp. It's not known exactly why this happens, but research suggests that it's caused by a problem with the immune system.

A research review published in October 2018 in the International Journal of Dermatology has found that a large number of patients — anywhere from 31 to 88 percent — reported their psoriasis started within a year of a very stressful event. The authors of the study say the patients' claims clearly suggest that stress may trigger the autoimmune disease in those who are predisposed to it.

Health experts too concur that Covid-19 induced stress has also led to flaring up of psoriasis.

Dr. VK SHARMA *Dean Academic Affairs and Professor and Head of Dermatology, School of Medical Sciences and Research, Sharda University, Noida, UP* said that we have also witnessed a spike in psoriasis cases during Covid-19. But, more studies are needed to conclude that Covid-19 can be the cause for psoriasis.

"However, winters do flare up the disease. Most of the patients who are in good control of the disease come to us in winters when it becomes more severe, symptomatic and more itchy. It is important to note that like other diseases such as heart, and respiratory, Covid-19 infection too has impacted patients with psoriasis."

Dr Sharma, the ex-HOD Dermatology AIIMS, Delhi, explained, "Inflammation caused by psoriasis can impact other organs and tissues in the body. People with psoriasis may also experience other health conditions. For instance, one in three people with psoriasis may also develop psoriatic arthritis (PsA). Signs of PsA include swelling, stiffness and pain in the joints and areas surrounding the joints. PsA often goes undiagnosed, particularly in its milder forms. However, it's important to treat PsA early on to help avoid permanent joint damage."

Dr. Gulhima Arora, *Senior Consultant Dermatologist, Founder Director Mehkhtagul Dermaclinic, Delhi* talked about the worldwide prevalence of the condition and the various organs of the body that gradually get affected if not managed in time.

"The worldwide prevalence is 0.1% to 3%. It can also affect the scalp, nails in 40% and the joints in 10%-25% of the cases.



With other organs involved, it is now considered to be a systemic condition. It is rare before the age of 10 years and most commonly occurs between 10-30 years of age.

"Typically, the rash of psoriasis is a raised lesion associated with white scales on top. The lesions may be of varied sizes and shapes, often prevalent on the elbows, knees, hands, feet and back, but sometimes on the whole body. "The nails show "pitting" and the scalp has large white flakes with underlying redness, often mimicking dandruff. The most common joints involved are the small joints of the fingers and the spine which leads to pain and sometimes destructive arthritis. It is also associated with increased cardiovascular problems and psychological stress.

"The major pathology

underlying this condition is excessive cell turnover and an abnormal shedding of the skin cells of the uppermost layer. There are dilated blood vessels seen in a skin biopsy, along with increased cells known as neutrophils and lymphocytes. Psoriasis may be associated with triggers such as infections, stress, smoking, obesity and certain medicines like pain killers, anti-hypertensives and anti malarials.

Dr. Vikrant Choubey, *Assistant Professor of Dermatology, Rama Medical College, Hospital and Research Centre, Hapur, Uttar Pradesh* was of the view that the treatment of psoriasis encompasses medical intervention as well as general measures on part of the

patient. "Patients not responding to conventional therapy may require a more advanced approach consisting of combination creams with salicylic acid or vitamin-D analogues, retinoids, oral immunosuppressives, phototherapy, or/and biological agents.

"During winters when the skin is prone to become dry and flaky, many patients report worsening of their lesions. Individuals with plaque psoriasis, therefore require frequent application of moisturizers, more so in winters. Besides it is advisable to avoid excessive scratching to cause trauma to skin as certain individuals have a propensity to worsening of existing patches or appearance of new ones when any kind of trauma occurs. Avoiding any form of stress and keeping your diabetes, hypertension and obe-

sity under check could provide additional benefits" Dr Choubey noted.

According to **Dr Vijay Singhal**, *Sr Consultant, Dermatology, Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute*, psoriasis patients need to focus on few factors. "First of all, they need to be protected from any injuries. Sports and any other injuries can cause the Koebner phenomenon which refers to the emergence of new psoriatic lesions in healthy skin regions. This can flare up psoriasis. Hence, sports activities such as Hockey and other games which may cause trauma should be avoided.

"Secondly, psoriasis patients should avoid taking steroid injections or oral tablets. Some-

times less experienced or inexperienced doctors prescribe steroids but it is very harmful in the long term. Initially, these steroids might control psoriasis but later on, it flares up which is known as Pustular Psoriasis and patients may get high fever.

"Sometimes patients might need hospitalization. So, it is always better not to go for steroids and avoid any problematic conditions. Moreover, psoriasis patients should also avoid the beta blockers category of hypertension medicines. They should consult their physicians to have a different class of medicines for their blood pressure problem. We advise back pain patients to sit straight so that they can reduce doses of medicines including painkillers.

"Smoking and alcohol should be avoided completely as these two affect the liver. Because of which, we cannot prescribe a few medicines which help in controlling psoriasis."

"Topical ointments, light therapy and medication can offer relief. Medical interventions including photodynamic therapy, medications, Vitamin A derivatives, Anti-inflammatory, and Immunosuppressive drugs do help in managing psoriasis. For such patients, Dr Singhal recommends healthy diet, exercise, and stress management.

Dr Ramesh Bhat M, noted dermatologist and Vice Dean, FMM Mangalore, said that nearly two to three per cent people in India suffer from this autoimmune condition as in the world. Patients come to us only when the condition flares up.

"That to when the exposed part is effected and hampering their day to day activities. Otherwise they come very late to us. There are various types of psoriasis. In some types, the patients develops the disease all over the body parts," said Dr Bhat. Multi-factorial problems trigger psoriasis. It can be stress related issues, diabetes, hypertension, obesity or poor lifestyle. Early detection can ensure better management, he said while pointing out that the condition can not be cured.

An estimated 60 million people worldwide have psoriasis while in India, the prevalence varies from 0.44% to 2.8%.

Dr Bhat also pointed out that the overall quality of life of persons with psoriasis is significantly impacted. It is important their mental health well being is also kept in mind while treating the disease. In fact, a study done in South India recently among psoriasis patients found the prevalence of depression and anxiety as 78.9% and 76.7%, respectively. Psoriasis patients are 1.5 times more likely to show depressive symptoms and experience a higher prevalence of anxiety symptoms (20–50%) than individuals without psoriasis, says yet another study published in the ScienceDirect.

What It's Like To Have Psoriasis

In the low moments, Mr A, a patient of Psoriasis reminds himself he's not alone. He advises the fellow Psoriasis that most important in such a situation is to take charge, keep calm and be sure that 'this too shall pass' before you could imagine. He shares what helps him feel his best.

What patients need to know:

- 1) Psoriasis is completely manageable and it is for you to experience yourself by taking the right steps away from numerous medical prescriptions.
- 2) Self counseling is a key to root-out psoriasis.
- 3) As stress, by far, is known to be one of the reasons to aggravate symptoms of psoriasis — first De-stress yourself by:



a) Yogic breathing exercises: Deep involvement in Kapal Bhati ,Anulom Vilom and Bhramari.

b) Asanas: Pawan Muktasana, Bhujangasana, trikon asan Butterfly, Mundook asan, Sas-hank asan, Hasth padasan and vipreetkarni (morning & evening).

These and other small everyday exercises would activate blood flow, oxygen and generally calm down the body and mind when the patient is physically and mentally distressed by psoriasis scion, scaling and itching.

c) Deep meditation (Listen to various audio meditative practices available in YouTube - the one suits your mood and temperament) would de-stress and in a large way resolve your sleep issues like irritation and mental distress.

4) Food: Firstly, the patients need to detoxify by taking a vegan diet and be gluten free.



a) Juices: Take beetroot and carrot. Strict No to all citrus fruits and juices.

b) Salad: Cucumber, carrots, radish, small quantity of beetroot (after slight boiling)

c) Completely avoid meat, dairy products, nightshades (brinjal, bell pepper- 'Shimla mirch'-) and citrus food.



d) Avoid: All refined and processed food including sugar. Substitute: jaggery, raisin and dates

e) Include millet in your diet.

f) For protein: Include leafy vegetables, beans, lentils, tofu and all kinds of nuts and seeds including flaxseeds, white til and sunflower seeds, almond and walnut.



g) Millet fermented food: Ambli' would provide a holistic cure providing B 12 vitamins. More so, because psoriasis weakens gut health and liver, 'Ambli' will be of great help.

h) Include Omega enriched food and seeds as supplements.

5) Sunlight exposure helps mitigate the condition. Go out in the open in the sun for 30 minutes.

6) Epsom salt bath for psoriasis scales only twice a week.

7) Don't take frequent baths as it dries your skin. Avoid soap.

8) Coconut oil application on body and scalp to loosen dry scales. Dry skin could cause body discomfort.

9) Completely avoid alcohol, smoking, coffee and tea.

10) Most important: Take charge, keep calm and be sure that 'this too shall pass' before you could imagine.

11) Regular treatment: Non-conventional 'Ayurveda treatment' or homeopathy. Choose an authentic doctor who has treated psoriasis earlier.



TYPES OF PSORIASIS

PLAQUE PSORIASIS (PSORIASIS VULGARIS): Patches of psoriasis on someone's arm. Plaque psoriasis is the most common form of psoriasis. The plaques can be itchy or sore, or both. In severe cases, the skin around your joints may crack and bleed.

SCALP PSORIASIS: It is a type of plaque psoriasis. It can occur on parts of your scalp or on the whole scalp. It causes patches of skin covered in white scales. Some people find scalp psoriasis extremely itchy, while others have no discomfort. In extreme cases, it can cause hair loss, although this is usually only temporary.

NAIL PSORIASIS: In about half of all people with psoriasis, the condition affects the

nails. Psoriasis can cause your nails to develop tiny dents or pits, become discoloured or grow abnormally. Nails can often become loose and separate from the nail bed. In severe cases, nails may crumble.

GUTTATE PSORIASIS: Guttate psoriasis causes small (less than 1cm) drop-shaped sores on your chest, arms, legs and scalp. There's a good chance guttate psoriasis will disappear completely after a few weeks, but some people go on to develop plaque psoriasis.

This type of psoriasis sometimes occurs after a streptococcal throat infection and is more common among children and teenagers.

INVERSE (FLEXURAL)

PSORIASIS: This affects folds or creases in your skin, such as the armpits, groin, between the buttocks and under the breasts. It can cause large, smooth patches of skin in some or all these areas. Inverse psoriasis is made worse by friction and sweating, so it can be particularly uncomfortable in hot weather.

PUSTULAR PSORIASIS: It is a rarer type of psoriasis that causes pus-filled blisters (pustules) to appear on your skin. Different types of pustular psoriasis affect different parts of the body.

Generalised pustular psoriasis or von Zumbusch psoriasis: it is a rare and serious form of psoriasis that usually needs emergency treatment. It causes

pus-filled blisters (pustules) to appear on a wide area of skin. The pus consists of white blood cells and is not a sign of infection.

PALMOPLANTAR PUSTULOSIS: This causes pustules to appear on the palms of your hands and the soles of your feet. The pustules gradually develop into circular, scaly spots that then peel off. Pustules may reappear every few days or weeks.

ERYTHRODERMIC PSORIASIS: Erythrodermic psoriasis is a rare form of psoriasis that affects nearly all the skin on the body. This can cause intense itching or burning. Erythrodermic psoriasis can come on suddenly and may need emergency medical treatment.

Good Hydration Linked to Healthy Aging: Study

Adults who aren't sufficiently hydrated may age faster, face a higher risk of chronic diseases and be more likely to die younger than those who stay well-hydrated, according to a new study from the National Institutes of Health. The Health Pioneer shares the details of the study

NIH findings based on data collected over 25 years from more than 11,000 adults in the U.S may provide early clues about increased risks for advanced biological aging and premature death. The participants attended their first medical visits at ages 45 to 66, then returned for follow-ups through at ages 70 to 90.

The researchers looked at levels of sodium in the participants' blood as a proxy for hydration, because higher concentrations are a sign that they most likely weren't consuming enough fluids. The researchers found that the participants with high blood-sodium levels aged faster physiologically than those

with lower levels, which was reflected in health markers associated with aging, like high blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar.

The study participants all had blood-sodium concentrations considered to be within the normal range: 135 to 146 millimoles per liter. But the findings suggested that people with levels at the higher end of that normal range - above 144 millimoles per liter - were 50% more likely to show signs of physical aging beyond what would be expected for their years compared to people with lower blood-sodium levels. They also had a roughly 20% increased risk of premature death.

Even people with blood-

sodium levels above 142 millimoles per liter had elevated risks of developing certain chronic diseases, including heart failure, stroke, chronic lung disease, diabetes and dementia, the study found.

"Risk to develop these diseases increases as we age and accumulate damages in various tissues in the body," one of the study's authors, Natalia Dmitrieva, a researcher at the NIH's National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute said.

Dmitrieva's previous research similarly found that higher blood sodium may be a risk factor for heart failure.

Just as regular physical activity and proper nutrition are considered part of a healthy



lifestyle, she said, "emerging evidence from our and other studies indicate that adding consistent good hydration to

these healthy lifestyle choices may slow down the aging process even more."

She noted that most people

can safely increase their fluid intake to meet recommended levels, which can be done with water as well as other fluids, like

juices, or vegetables and fruits with a high water content. The National Academies of Medicine, for example, suggest that most women consume around 6-9 cups (1.5-2.2 liters) of fluids daily and for men, 8-12 cups (2-3 liters).

Others may need medical guidance due to underlying health conditions. "The goal is to ensure patients are taking in enough fluids, while assessing factors, like medications that may lead to fluid loss" said Manfred Boehm, a study author and director of the Laboratory of Cardiovascular Regenerative Medicine. "Doctors may also need to defer to a patient's current treatment plan, such as limiting fluid intake for heart fail-

ure." The authors also cited research that finds about half of people worldwide don't meet recommendations for daily total water intake, which often starts at 6 cups (1.5 liters).

"On the global level, this can have a big impact," Dmitrieva said. "Decreased body water content is the most common factor that increases serum sodium, which is why the results suggest that staying well hydrated may slow down the aging process and prevent or delay chronic disease."

But the study authors cautioned that more research is needed to determine whether good hydration can help slow aging, prevent disease or lead to a longer life.

Emergence of a leader in slumbering Cong

“Great men are not born great, they grow great”
— Mario Puzo, *The Godfather*

Amid massive public support for Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra, the Congress on January 6 sprung two surprises for the political observers — 17 leaders from Ghulam Nabi Azad's party in Jammu & Kashmir returned to the Grand Old Party; and the Congress allegedly entered into a tacit understanding with its arch-rival BJP in the mayoral election in Delhi to weaken the AAP, which has snatched its vote bank in the national Capital. While *ghar vapsi* by the leaders of the Azad's party is an indication of the Congress' organisational building under Rahul's de facto leadership, his *tapsya* — a term in Hinduism Rahul employs for his Bharat Jodo Yatra — has shattered the tarnished image of him and his party whose prospect of electoral revival was written off. That Rahul has shed the perception that he is not cut out for the rough and tumble of politics, and that the Congress is waking up after a long slumber are now understood even by the BJP.

For the BJP and non-UPA parties, Rahul has been a convenient lightning rod for voters' discontent with the directionless Congress in the past nine years, but with his spectacular march and structured dialogue with the civil society, he has survived epithet “Puppu” — coined by the BJP and secretly peddled by some within the Congress — to prove his mettle as a leader to reckon with. The last eight years have seen the emergence of new leader in Rahul as he has traversed a wide spectrum of political path since May 2014 poll drubbing which plunged the Congress to just 44 seats in the Lok Sabha, and William Dalrymple had described Rahul as “tongued and uncharismatic on campaign, conceited and slow witted in private; in short, the complete electoral prophylactic.”

Since then, the former



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with supporters during 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' in Delhi on January 3

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Congress chief has learnt many lessons. Besides building his public image, he is honing his leadership skills to steer a national party to regain its glory. His skill in striking a balance between the old guard Ashok Gehlot and the Young Turk Sachin Pilot spared the Congress blushes it had encountered by mismanaging the Jyotiraditya Scindia affair in Madhya Pradesh. It is another

matter that the Rajasthan fire has yet not been put out completely. Nevertheless, his strategy of balance is likely to scuttle the chances of spawning of G23 like groups, and thus bring more cohesion in the weak organisational structure of the Congress.

The yatra has further consolidated his position as the de facto leader of the Congress under whose stewardship the

party can make strategy to take on the mighty BJP, which hurriedly launched “Jan Sankalp Yatra” in poll-bound Karnataka to undo the damage it incurred from Rahul's march. The way Rahul has manoeuvred the Bharat Jodo Yatra from Kanyakumari to UP till now, it seems he is not targeting the bullseye of electoral dividends at the moment.

An analysis of his political

conduct produces, to my mind, a fixed trajectory of targets. The first being to bring an order in the organisational set-up in the Congress. Second, avoiding direct attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi as the 2014 experience for the Congress is bitter. Sonia Gandhi's “*maut ka saudagar*” slur on Modi had boomeranged and helped him capitalise on the barb, giving impetus to the BJP's poll

prospects. Instead, he has taken a leaf from Modi's book: No rest or post-poll holidays.

Third, Rahul has tweaked his tactics on the “secular” politics of the Congress. He has espoused soft Hindutva. During the yatra, Rahul has not missed hopping to temples. In the national Capital also, he resumed his second phase of the yatra from Hanuman temple. However, this soft

Hindutva of Rahul is not going to cost him Muslim votes as their vote is certain for a formidable political force which can stop the BJP's juggernaut in 2024.

Fourth, on the emotional front and connecting with the masses also, Rahul has not lost any opportunity. Although the public display of affection is considered scheming, with a sole aim to buffing one's reputation, his locking of hands with those of co-marchers, irrespective of their gender, kissing sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and hugging mother Sonia Gandhi in public, have looked spontaneous, producing the desired high impact.

Fifth, Rahul has set eyes to gain the ground lost to non-BJP parties. This is the real challenge for him. The Congress needs regional parties' support to turn the tables on the BJP and at the same time wants to wrest its vote bank back from them. It is like running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. Rahul's reiteration that the Congress is the only alternative to the BJP as the regional parties lack “a national vision” has not gone down well with the regional parties.

For a fact, political yatras have been turning points in history if they tried and achieved consciousness about a subject that affects the masses. From the historic Dandi March by Mahatma Gandhi and Mao Zedong's Long March, to LK Advani's Rath Yatra, all achieved their targeted aims as those were able to develop a heightened political consciousness.

While the Bharat Jodo Yatra has certainly launched Rahul in a new avatar in the political map of India, keeping up the tempo and transforming the march of the multitude into electoral dividends is an acid test of his calibre as we don't know how long this historical window will remain open.

(The writer is Associate editor & News Editor, The Pioneer)

From earning the disparaging epithet ‘Puppu’ — coined by the BJP and secretly peddled by some within the Congress — to proving his mettle as a leader to reckon with, Rahul Gandhi has traversed a wide spectrum of political path. While the Bharat Jodo Yatra has launched him in a new avatar, keeping up the tempo and transforming the march of the multitude into electoral dividends is an acid test of his calibre as we don't know how long this historical window will remain open



SWARN KUMAR ANAND

PERSPECTIVE

China silences virtual critics as Covid surges

China has suspended or closed the social media accounts of more than 1,000 critics of the Government's policies on the Covid-19 outbreak, as the country moves to roll back harsh anti-virus restrictions.

The popular Sina Weibo social media platform said it had addressed 12,854 violations including attacks on experts, scholars and medical workers and issued temporary or permanent bans on 1,120 accounts.

The ruling Communist Party had largely relied on the medical community to justify its tough lockdowns, quarantine measures and mass testing, almost all of which it abruptly abandoned last month, leading to a surge in new cases that have stretched medical resources to their limits. The party allows no direct criticism and imposes strict limits on free speech.

The company “will continue to increase the investigation and cleanup of all kinds of illegal content, and create a harmonious and friendly community environment for the majority of users,” Sina Weibo said in a statement dated Thursday.

Criticism has largely focused on heavy-handed enforcement of regulations, including open-ended travel restrictions that saw people confined to their homes for weeks, sometimes sealed inside without adequate food or medical care. Anger was also vented over the requirement that anyone who potentially tested positive or had been in contact with such a person be confined

for observation in a field hospital, where overcrowding, poor food and hygiene were commonly cited.

The social and economic costs eventually prompted rare street protests in Beijing and other cities, possibly influencing the party's decision to swiftly ease the strictest measures. As part of the latest changes, China will also no longer bring criminal charges against people accused of violating border quarantine regulations, according to a notice issued by five government departments on Saturday.

Individuals currently in custody will be released and seized assets returned, the notice said. The adjustments “were made after comprehensively considering the harm of the behaviours to society, and aim to adapt to the new situations of the epidemic prevention and control,” the official China Daily newspaper website said in a report on the notice.

China is now facing a surge in cases and hospitalisations in major cities and is bracing for a further spread into less developed areas with the start of the Lunar New Year travel rush, set to get underway in coming days. While international flights are still reduced, authorities say they expect domestic rail and air journeys will double over the same period last year, bringing overall numbers close to those of the 2019 holiday period before the pandemic hit.

The Transportation Ministry on Friday called on travelers to reduce trips and gatherings, particularly if they involve elderly people, pregnant



A man pushes his relative in pain on a wheelchair as patients receive intravenous drips in the emergency ward of a hospital in Beijing. Patients, most of them elderly, are lying on stretchers in hallways and taking oxygen while sitting in wheelchairs as Covid-19 surges in Beijing

AP

nant women, small children and those with underlying conditions.

People using public transport are also urged to wear masks and pay special attention to their health and personal hygiene, Vice Minister Xu

Chengguang told reporters at a briefing. Nonetheless, China is forging ahead with a plan to end mandatory quarantines for people arriving from abroad beginning on Sunday.

Beijing also plans to drop a requirement for students at

city schools to have a negative Covid-19 test to enter campus when classes resume February 13 after the holiday break.

While schools will be allowed to move classes online in the event of new outbreaks, they must return to in-person

instruction as soon as possible, the city education bureau said in a statement Friday.

However, the end to mass testing, a highly limited amount of basic data such as the number of deaths, infections and severe cases, and the

potential emergence of new variants have prompted governments elsewhere to institute virus testing requirements for travelers from China.

The World Health Organization has also expressed concern about the lack of data from China, while the US is requiring a negative test result for travelers from China within 48 hours of departure. 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.

Authorities say since the Government ended compulsory testing and permitted people with mild symptoms to test themselves and convalesce at home, it can no longer provide a full picture of the state of the latest outbreak.

On Saturday, the National Health Commission reported 10,681 new domestic cases, bringing the country's total number of confirmed cases to 482,057. Three new deaths were also reported over the previous 24 hours, bringing the total to 5,267. The numbers are a fraction of those announced by the US, which has put its death toll at more than 1 million among some 101 million cases. But they're also much smaller than the estimates being released by some local governments. Zhejiang, a province on the east coast, said Tuesday it was seeing about 1 million new cases a day.

China has said the testing requirements being imposed by foreign governments — most

recently Germany and Sweden — aren't science-based and has threatened unspecified countermeasures. Its spokespeople have said the situation is under control, and reject accusations of a lack of preparation for reopening.

Despite such assertions, the Health Commission on Saturday rolled out regulations for strengthened monitoring of viral mutations, including testing of urban wastewater. The lengthy rules called for increased data gathering from hospitals and local government health departments and stepped-up checks on “pneumonia of unknown causes.”

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

Since the pandemic started, China has shared 4,144 sequences with GISAIID, a global 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.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong also plans to reopen some of its border crossings with mainland China on Sunday and allow tens of thousands of people to cross every day without being quarantined.

The semi-autonomous southern Chinese city has been hard-hit by the virus and its land and sea border checkpoints with the mainland have been largely closed for almost three years. Despite the risk, the reopening is expected to provide a much-needed boost to Hong Kong's tourism and retail sectors.

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