



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

INAUGURATION OF
17TH PRAVASI
BHARATIYA DIVAS

10:30 hrs | JANUARY 9, 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

- Keynote Address by Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India
- Address by Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh
- Address by Special Guest of Honour, Chandrikapersad Santokhi, President of the Republic of Suriname
- Special Address by Chief Guest, Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana

Inauguration of Exhibition by Prime Minister of India on theme
“Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav - Contribution of Diaspora in Indian Freedom Struggle”

Plenary Sessions :
Role of Indian Diaspora in promoting Indian Healthcare Eco-system in Amrit Kaal : Vision@2047
Leveraging the soft power of India - Goodwill through craft, cuisine & creativity

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Capital colder than many European cities

Mercury down to 1.9 degrees Celsius in city

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The ongoing severe cold wave and dense fog sweeping the north India, including the national Capital, continued unabated for the fifth consecutive days on Sunday with the mercury plummeted to 1.9 degrees Celsius in Delhi, matched with the lowest in past decade, degrees Celsius was recorded in 2013. The national Capital is now colder than many European cities.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) data showed that this is the second lowest temperature in January since 2013. Earlier, the minimum temperature was recorded 1.1 degrees Celsius on January 1, 2021.

Dense fog has affected the movement of over 480 trains and dozens of flights across the country. However, the maximum temperture in the city settled at 18.2 degrees Celsius, lower than the normal for this time of the year, said IMD.

The IMD has issued an "orange" alert for certain parts of north India, including Delhi, for Monday, warning that dense fog, cold day and cold wave



Vehicles ply on a road on a cold and foggy winter morning in New Delhi on Sunday



RANJAN DIMRI | PIONEER

conditions would persist. The IMD advised to stay indoor during cold wave conditions. With frosty winds from the snow-clad mountains pounding northwest India, the weather stations at Lodhi Road, Ayanagar, Ridge and Jafarpur logged a minimum temperature of 2.8 degrees, 2.6 degrees, 2.2 degrees and 2.8 degrees Celsius, respectively. The Safdarjung

observatory had logged a minimum temperature of 2.2 degrees Celsius on Saturday, 4 degrees Celsius on Friday, 3 degrees Celsius on Thursday and 4.4 degrees Celsius on Wednesday. A senior IMD meteorologist said short-term relief is likely after a couple of days under the influence of back-to-back western disturbances. When a Western dis-

turbance -- a weather system characterised by warm moist winds from the Middle East -- approaches a region, the wind direction changes. Hence, the chilly northwesterly winds from the mountains will stop blowing for a few days leading to an increase in temperatures, he said. "Cold wave and cold day conditions over northwest India (are) likely to abate after 48

hours. Dense to very dense fog conditions over many parts of Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (are likely) during the next 48 hours and decrease in intensity and distribution thereafter," the IMD said in a statement. "Around 335 trains have been delayed, 88 cancelled, 31 diverted and 33 short terminated due to foggy weather," a railway official said.

Around 25 flights were delayed and two diverted Sunday morning, officials at the Indira Gandhi International Airport said. The cold snap is also straining power grids and posing challenges to the homeless and animals.

The IMD warned of an impact on agriculture, livestock, water supply, transport and the power sector at some places. The weather office also said frostbite can occur due to a prolonged exposure to cold and that one should not ignore shivering -- the first sign that the body is losing heat -- and should stay indoors. "Eat vita-

min C-rich fruits and vegetables and drink sufficient warm fluids to maintain adequate immunity. Avoid or limit outdoor activities," it said in an advisory.

It was the fifth day on the trot that the national capital's minimum temperature was lower than most of the hill stations in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, including Chamba (8.2 degrees), Dalhousie (8.2 degrees), Dharamshala (6.2 degrees), Shimla (9.5 degrees), Hamirpur (3.9 degrees), Manali (4.4 degrees), Kangra (7.1 degrees), Solan (3.6 degrees), Dehradun

(6 degrees), Mussoorie (9.6 degrees), Nainital (6.2 degrees), Mukteshwar (6.5 degrees) and Tehri (7.6 degrees), according to the IMD.

The mercury dropped to 1.4 degrees Celsius in Haryana's Hisar, 2.8 degrees Celsius in Punjab's Adampur, minus 0.5 degree Celsius in Churu and 1.5 degrees Celsius in Pilani in Rajasthan; 3.2 degrees Celsius in Prayagraj and 3.8 degrees Celsius in Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh; 2.9 degrees Celsius in Gaya in Bihar; minus 1 degree Celsius in Nowgong and 1.5 degrees Celsius in Umaria in Madhya Pradesh, the IMD said.

Schools' winter break extended till Jan 15

New Delhi: Winter vacation in Delhi's private schools have been extended till January 15 in the wake of a cold wave in the national Capital, a circular from the Delhi Government's Directorate of Education said. Private schools were slated to reopen after winter break on January 9.

"In continuation to the DOE's (Directorate of Education) earlier circular, all private schools of Delhi are advised to remain close till January 15, 2023, in the wake of cold wave prevailing in Delhi," the circular read. Earlier in the day, Delhi BJP



working president Virendra Sachdeva also urged Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia to extend winter vacations in Government Schools and also ask private schools managements to keep schools closed till further orders. Sachdeva said that on one hand the national capital is facing a cold wave on the other pollution is at its peak, the govern-

ment itself has taken steps against pollution.

Therefore the government should review its decision to open schools in Delhi from Monday. "Large number of students in government schools come from poor families and they don't have sufficient woollens and it will be uncomfortable for them to come to schools," Delhi BJP working president said Meanwhile, the Delhi Government had issued a circular last month stating that all Delhi government schools will remain closed for two weeks from January 1 for winter vacation.

Kejriwal praises NCC for contribution during Covid



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday praised the National Cadet Corps (NCC) for its vital contribution during the tough times of Covid-19 and urged everyone to believe in Nation First ideology to make India progress socially and econom-

duly accompanied by the DG NCC. Post inspection of the guard, he returned to the dais to witness band display by NCC bands.

Thereafter, Kejriwal visited the Flag Area which represents different themes presented by 17 State NCC Directorates. On inspection of the Flag Area, he visited 'Hall of Fame' and further moved to Auditorium to witness the Cultural Programme.

Once the Cultural Programme was over, the CM addressed the audience. Speaking at the NCC Republic Day Camp 2023 in Delhi Cantonment on Sunday, Kejriwal assured the NCC of continued support. "At the outset, let me congratulate NCC upon completing 75 Golden years. Every step of this journey by NCC is steeped

in rich heritage and tradition. NCC has literally evolved and transformed itself along with our nation which celebrated its 75th year of Independence last year," he said. Kejriwal urged everyone to always remember the ideals of NCC.

"I request everyone of you to always remember the ideals of NCC, no matter what path you take or destiny you select for yourself. I say this because as a citizen we must always believe in Nation First ideology and be responsible and committed to it. It is only then that we will progress as a nation, both socially as well as economically," he added. Noting that the NCC training imbibes cadets with discipline, camaraderie, a secular outlook, the spirit of adventure and the ideals of selfless service to the society, he said the nation

needs these values in the present times. "Your stellar contributions during the challenging times of COVID-19 have been acknowledged by all. Your most recent initiative- Puneet Sagar is a commendable step taken by you all to rid our water bodies, rivers and beaches of plastic waste. It gladdens me to know that our NCC cadets were to the forefront in honouring our martyrs as part of the nation's 75 year of independence celebrations," he said.

The chief minister said that the NCC RDC Camp is a "microcosm of our country, with representation of cadets from every State and Union Territory". "Therefore, it can be stated that the NCC RDC Camp presents a shining example of the diversity but unity of our varied cultures and traditions," he said.

LG has appointed BJP workers as aldermen, alleges AAP

New Delhi: The AAP on Sunday alleged that the Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has appointed BJP workers as aldermen instead of those with experience in municipal administration.

The AAP has urged the Lt Governor to consider Neema Bhagat as presiding officer as per selection criteria cited by him. The AAP also criticised the Congress decision to boycott the Mayor's election is a ploy to help the BJP.

Addressing a press conference, AAP MLA Saurabh Bhardwaj said that as per the Lieutenant Governor's selection criteria, Neema Bhagat should have been the presiding officer of the Corporation instead of Satya Sharma according to Lt Governor's selection criteria,



but here too there was a planned fraud". "Article 243R of the constitution says that aldermen should be experts with special knowledge of municipal administration. L-G, the Central Government's nominee in Delhi, made a plan to bypass the elected government so he could make BJP leaders members and Chairman of Standing Committee through fraud," said Bhardwaj. SR

City Govt to soon provide national Common Mobility Card to Delhiites

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Sunday announced that it will soon provide National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) compliant digital ticketing solutions across all its Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System (DIMTS) operated buses.

The Delhi Transport department has issued a notice inviting an e-Tender for this on January 8 2023. The NCMC-compliant digital ticketing solution will enable public transport in Delhi, beginning with buses, to move away from manual ticketing.

According to a senior transport official, on average 40 lakh people travel in buses daily. It is of utmost importance that a record of each trip is maintained for better planning of the number of buses across 500+ bus routes in Delhi.

"The digital ticketing solution is also part of the Route Rationalisation study conducted by the Transport department whose pilot phase is in progress since October 2022," he said.

"The Tender floated by the Transport department includes the supply and operation of Electronic Ticketing Machines (ETMs) for 7,500 buses in Phase 1. In addition, it also includes the provision of Smart cards or NCMC cards for buying the tickets rather than paying in cash," he stated.

A transport official said that the feature of the mobile app to enable buying of Online tickets and concessional daily or monthly passes has also been included to be provided by bidder. "This is a complete Digital solution to remove any chances of pilferages in process.

AAP leaders should have recalled nominated aldermen in 2017: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Limbasting the AAP leader L-Saurabh Bhardwaj, Delhi BJP on Sunday said that AAP leaders should have recalled the Aldermen nominated in the three MCD Houses of 2017-22 by them who were associated with AAP before criticising the Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena.

Delhi BJP Spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said that as per the constitutional provisions in 2017, the Delhi government had the right to appoint ten Aldermen in the then three municipal corporations, and then 30 workers of AAP were appointed as Aldermen. "The proof of asso-

ciation of each one of them with the AAP can be found from their social media accounts, but we are personally giving some today as well through media," alleged Kapoor.

"Not only that the AAP had got its workers appointed, but also made a big constitutional scam and nominated its two-party spokespersons Ghanendra Bhardwaj and Captain Shalini living in the South Delhi Corporation area in the East Delhi Municipal Corporation respectively.

On which there was a big controversy but Kejriwal government did not accept the mistake," claimed BJP Spokesperson.

Delhi Prisons Dept transfers officers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Prisons department has transferred 19 Deputy Superintendents and over 30 Assistant Superintendents, including the one who had complained against jailed minister and Aam Aadmi Party leader Satyendar Jain of "intimidation and threat".

"A total of 19 Deputy Superintendents, 35 Assistant Superintendents and three head warders were transferred," the order, which was issued on Saturday after the approval of Director General (Prisons) Sanjay Baniwal, said.

Top officials of Tihar Jail had accused jailed Delhi minister and AAP leader Jain of "threat and intimidation" and lodged a complaint against him with the Director-General (Prisons).

‘Slight traffic congestion on roads leading to Sarai Kale Khan, Jama Masjid, AIIMS’

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has issued a traffic advisory suggesting alternate routes for commuters since the Ashram flyover has been closed for traffic for the construction of a connecting road.

Meanwhile, the commuters, who have been feeling hassled by the snail-paced traffic in the national Capital and NCR region due to the closure of Ashram flyover, heaved a sigh of relief on Sunday morning. Real time data showed slight traffic congestion on roads leading to Sarai Kale Khan, Jama Masjid and AIIMS at 6.50 am on Sunday.

The traffic snarls on key routes were less compared to previous days on Sunday, giv-

ing some relief to commuters who have been facing a harrowing time due to the closure of Ashram flyover.

In continuation to the previous advisory on December 30 about the linking of the Ashram flyover with the DND flyway, the Delhi police has been suggested that commuters coming from C V Raman Marg take a right turn at Taimur Nagar cut, Ring Road to reach Sarai Kale Khan, NH-24, Ghaziabad and Noida.

Those coming from New Friends Colony, Sukhdev Bihari, Shaheen Bagh, Sarai Julena, and Jamia have been advised to follow Mathura Road, Modi Mill Flyover, Outer Ring Road, Lala Lajpat Rai Marg to reach Lajpat Nagar Market, AIIMS and Dhaulakuan. Commuters

from Lajpat Nagar, Defence Colony, Jangpura, Bhogal, and CGO Complex have been advised to follow Lala Lajpat Rai Marg, Outer Ring Road, Modi Mill Flyover, Mathura Road, Sarita Vihar, Badarpur and Faridabad, the advisory said.

For the past few days, commuters crossing or reaching the south Delhi from east or central continued to struggle for routes as long traffic jams continued in several areas. Massive traffic snarls have been witnessed in and around the Ashram flyover, including in Noida, mainly during the peak office hours.

The Ashram Chowk is a key connector between south and central Delhi as well as Faridabad.

Traffic diverted due to procession of 811th ‘urs-e-mubarak’

New Delhi: Commuters in Delhi reported massive traffic jams in several parts of the city's central and south districts on Sunday as the police set up diversions due to a procession related to the 811th 'urs-e-mubarak' of renowned Sufi saint, Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti of Ajmer Sharif.

Traffic has been diverted near ITO, parts of the Ring Road and Mathura Road, Matia Mahal Road, Netaji Subhash Marg, Delhi Gate, BSZ Marg, and other areas. SR

‘65% less migratory birds arrived in Okhla’

SAURAV GUPTA ■ NEW DELHI

The Okhla Bird sanctuary wetland witnessed 62 per cent less arrival of long distant winter migratory water birds in the month of December 2022 contrary to the previous year due to the complete drying of the bird sanctuary for over a month from October 18 to November 20 by the concerned departments.

"Approximately more than 1500 winter migratory water birds of 10 different species arrived at the wetland in the wetland while in December 2021, more than 4000 birds of more than 20 migratory species

reached the wetland during this time," said a senior ecologist and environmentalist TK Roy, after field monitoring of the wetland. Roy said that the reason behind the least arrival of the birds is that Bird Sanctuary was completely dried over a month from October 18 to November 20 in the peak migration period due to completely releasing water from the dam kept open six barrage gates by the Head Works, Agra Canal, UP Irrigation Department and always repeated vague excuse of dried the wetland due to repairing barrage whereas the entire main barrage gates were replaced in 2014 and further no



negotiable coordination or memorandum of understanding between these two public departments for sustainable solution.

Giving the details of the species that reached the wetland

this year, he said that the small number of two species of geese that is Bar-headed Geese and Graylag Geese sighted in the middle in hazy weather at Okhla. "Apart from this, smaller mix flocks of the duck species as Northern Shoveler which usually used to be in large number here, Northern Pintail, Common Teal, Common Pochard, Tufted Duck, Ruddy Shelduck with smaller unstable flock of apx 200 Black-headed Gulls sometimes, few Great Cormorants and no wader species arrival record at the wetland," Roy said.

"According to my observation the birds further move away

in day time due to disturbance of the amusement visitor's activities, movement along the wetland, while the smaller flocks of Black-headed Gulls that arrive from Yamuna during the day time do not stay longer, might be due to shortage of food, unfavorable habitat," he said.

Senior ecologist stated that the birds are recognized as one of the most important indicators of the state of the environment because they are sensitive to habitat, climate change and water birds are one of the key indicators of the wetland's health and provide four kinds of ecological services.



People take part in a candle light vigil against the attack on Christian Adivasis of Chhattisgarh, at Sacred Heart Cathedral Catholic Church in New Delhi, Sunday. PTI

OPINION 6

YAKS: THE LIFELINE OF
MONPAS IN NE

WORLD 9

PRINCE HARRY INTERVIEWS SET TO
RAISE HEAT ON ROYAL FAMILY

MONEY 10

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DJOKOVIC AND
SABALENKA WIN
ADELAIDE TITLE
11 SPORT

Joshimath declared sinking zone

60 families moved; 600+ houses cracked; PM assures U'khand CM of help



(L) Worried residents stand outside their cracked homes in the landslide-affected area of Joshimath. (R) A building tilts following the landslides at Joshimath in Chamoli district, on Sunday. PTI

PNS ■ CHAMOLI/NEW DELHI

Joshimath is sinking, and sinking fast. By Sunday, more than 600 houses developed cracks as a result of land subsidence. According to local media reports, the number of such damaged houses was 561 on Friday. Joshimath has been declared a 'landslide-subsidence zone' and over 60 families have already been evacuated to temporary relief centres. Ninety more families are likely to be shifted on Monday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and assured him of all possible help to save Joshimath.

On Sunday, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Dr PK Mishra, too, held a high-level review of building damage and land subsidence in the region. Cabinet Secretary, Home Secretary; senior officials of Government of India; and members of National Disaster Management Authority, Chief Secretary and DGP of Uttarakhand, DM and Officials of Joshimath; Senior officers of Uttarakhand; and experts from

IIT Roorkee, National Institute of Disaster Management, Geological Survey of India, Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology also attended the review through video conference.

As per the PMO's statement, Chief Secretary Uttarakhand said that State and district officials with the support of central experts have assessed the situation on the ground. He informed that a strip of land with a width of around 350 meters is affected. One team of the NDRF and four teams of the SDRF have reached the

Himalayan town.

"The district administration is working with the affected families to evacuate and relocate them to safer places with adequate arrangements for food, shelter and security. The SP and Commandment of SDRF are stationed at the site. Residents of Joshimath are being informed of the developments and their cooperation is being sought," said the statement.

Also, advice of experts is being sought to formulate the short-medium-long term plans.

Further, Secretary, Border Management and all four mem-

bers of NDMA will visit Uttarakhand on Monday to assess the situation and will undertake a detailed assessment on the findings of the technical teams (NDMA, NIDM, NDRF, GSI, NIH, Wadia Institute, IIT Roorkee) that have just returned from Joshimath.

They will accordingly advise the State Government on immediate, short-medium-long-term actions to address the situation.

Dr PK Mishra stressed that the immediate priority for the State should be the safety of the people living in the affected area.

Continued on Page 5

TTP's lust for
power in Pak a
threat to J&K

War between terror groups a worry as Pak Taliban sets up shadow Govt in FATA, POK fidayeen camps

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

The move by the Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) or the Pakistani Taliban to declare a shadow Government in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the neighbouring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region and establish fidayeen (suicide) camps in Gilgit-Baltistan regions of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), could have a bearing on the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

The outfit has stationed 12,000 to 14,000 fighters/suicide bombers in POK. The Pakistani security forces are planning a major operation, including an airstrike, to establish their writ in the region. This could also lead to a humanitarian crisis and have a spillover effect on India, particularly in J&K, according to security experts.

The TTP has passed a resolution to attack the Pakistan Army and State-Patronised



Terrorist (SPT) groups like the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Tayabba (LeT).

Both the LeT and JeM have been actively involved in terrorist actions in J&K and the Indian hinterland. Counter-terrorism expert and security analyst Dr Rituraj Mate said, "The State Patronised Terrorist groups have been exposed when it comes to countering groups like TTP. The LeT and JeM have proved to be a white elephant."

Sources in the security establishment said JeM boss Maulana Masood Azhar, who has been ill for several years, is incapable of taking up the challenge posed by the TTP.

"The ascendance of the TTP could also lead to an internecine war with the global terrorist group ISIS that is also seeking to gain a foothold in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region under TTP's control.

Continued on Page 5

CAPSULE

1ST LOT OF TRAVELLERS
REACHES CHINA

Beijing: For the first time in three years, China on Sunday opened its borders and welcomed international travellers and returning residents without the need for them to go under quarantine, even as infections continue to surge after Beijing scrapped its stringent zero-Covid policy. The first flights under China's new "no quarantine" rules for international travellers landed at the airports in Guangzhou and Shenzhen in southern Guangdong province on Sunday morning, the State-run CGTN TV reported. P9

MP LOSES 34 BIG CATS,
RIVAL K'TAKA 15

Bhopal: Facing the challenge of retaining the status of India's "tiger state", Madhya Pradesh lost 34 big cats in 2022 as compared to just 15 in Karnataka, its nearest competitor in housing the number of tigers in the country, according to official data.

DANGRI TERROR ATTACK
TOLL 7 AS 1 MORE DIES

Jammu: Prince Sharma (23), critically injured in the Dangri terror attack in Rajouri on January 1, succumbed to his injuries in the Government Medical College hospital, Jammu in the wee hours of Sunday taking the total death toll to 7. Several other injured were still undergoing treatment in the Rajouri and Jammu hospitals. P5

DUE TO COLD DELHI'S PVT
SCHOOLS EXTEND HOLS

New Delhi: Winter vacations in Delhi's private schools have been extended till January 15 in the wake of a cold wave in Delhi, a DoE circular said. P3

'AI's response should
have been swifter'

Pilots rally behind captain, crew in pee-gate spat even as Tata chairman expresses regret

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Sons chairman N Chandrasekaran on Sunday admitted that the airline's response should have been much swifter in the ghastly urination incident on a November 26 New York-Delhi flight.

Meanwhile, the pilot fraternity has rallied behind the Air India crew and the captain who has been de-rostered over the urination incident, saying it is a clear attempt by the airline to "deflect and dissipate" culpability.

In a statement, which came days after the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) pulled up the Tata Group-owned full-service carrier, Chandrasekaran also said that "we fell short of addressing this situation the way we should have." "The incident on Air India flight AI102 on November 26, 2022, has been a matter of personal anguish to



me and my colleagues at Air India. Air India's response should have been much swifter. We fell short of addressing this situation the way it should have been," Chandrasekaran said. "The Tata Group and Air India stand by the safety and well-being of our passengers with full conviction. We will review and repair every process to prevent or address any incidents of such unruly nature," he added in the statement.

On Saturday, Air India's CEO and Managing Director Campbell Wilson issued a statement in which he said that four cabin crew and one pilot have been issued show cause notices and de-rostered pending investigation. Wilson, in his statement, hasn't specified any reason for taking action against all five of them.

Continued on Page 5

Sukhu inducts 7 new
Mins in Government

Son of ex-Himachal CM Virbhadrha gets berth in Cabinet

PNS ■ SHIMLA

The Himachal Pradesh Cabinet headed by Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu was expanded on Sunday with the induction of seven Ministers, including Vikramaditya Singh, the son of former Chief Minister Virbhadrha Singh. With the induction of seven members, the strength of the Cabinet rose to nine.

Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar administered oath to the newly-inducted Ministers in a simple ceremony at the Raj Bhawan.

Shimla district with seven MLAs has been given a lion's share in the Cabinet with three Ministers and one Chief Parliamentary Secretary (CPS), while Bilaspur, Mandi and Lahaul and Spiti failed to get any representation. Besides the post of Deputy Speaker, three berths are still vacant as the maximum number of Ministers, including the Chief Minister cannot exceed 12.

The newly-added Ministers are Dhani Ram Shandil, former Minister and three-time MLA from Solan;



Chander Kumar, former Minister and six-time MLA from Jawali in Kangra district; Harshwardhan Chauhan, six-time MLA from Shillai in Sirmaur district; Jagat Singh Neg, former Deputy Speaker and five-time MLA from the tribal Kinnaur district.

Four-time MLA Rohit Thakur, three-time MLA Anirudh Singh, and two-time MLA Vikramaditya Singh from Jubbal-Kotkhai, Kasumpti and Shimla (Rural) respectively were also among those inducted. Chief Minister Sukhu and Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri were sworn in on December 11 and the expansion of the Cabinet was delayed by 28 days.

The Council of Ministers comprises five Rajputs, one Brahmin and one member each from Schedule Tribe, Scheduled Caste, and OBC categories. *Contd on Page 5*

Racer dies in
crash at MRF
national c'ship
in Chennai

PTI ■ CHENNAI

KE Kumar, a well-respected racer, died on Sunday following a crash in the second round of the MRF MMSC FMSCI Indian National Car Racing Championship at the Madras International Circuit in Chennai. He was 59. The incident occurred when Kumar's car came in contact with that of a competitor during the saloon cars race. The car slid across the track and landed on the roof after slamming into a fence. The race was immediately stopped (red flag).

Continued on Page 5

100 Africans clash with cops
after 3 held for overstaying

1 detainee escapes in Neb Sarai melee over deportation of people with expired visas

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a shocking turn of events, a mob of around 100 African nationals clashed with a police team in the Neb Sarai area of South Delhi and released a few Nigerians who were detained for visa expiration and were being taken to the police station. The incident occurred after a Narcotics Cell team landed at Raju Park in Neb

Sarai at 2.30 PM for initiating deportation proceedings of overstaying foreign nationals.

Suddenly, around 100 African nationals gathered there and hampered the police operation. Amid chaos, two of the three detainees managed to flee the scene. The police caught one of them, 22-year-old Philip, again.

According to police, five African nationals have been detained for overstaying in India despite the expiry of their visas.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) South, Chandan Chaudhary, said around 150-200 people from African countries had tried to stop the police team from detaining

those who were living here despite the expiry of their visas.

"A police team reached Raju Park for deportation proceedings of overstaying foreign nationals. At about 2:30 PM the team apprehended three African nationals whose visas had expired," the DCP said.

Videos shot by bystanders showed the police forming a human barricade along with a thick rope while people from the mob shouted animatedly at them.

Later, a joint team from the Neb Sarai Police Station and the Narcotics Squad visited Raju Park again at 6.30 PM, and detained four Nigerians, including one woman.

Continued on Page 5

Son of ex-Himachal CM Virbhadrha gets berth in Cabinet

PNS ■ SHIMLA

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LIC/PI/2022-23/23/Eng

Rahul invokes Gita, says Cong is party of tapaswis

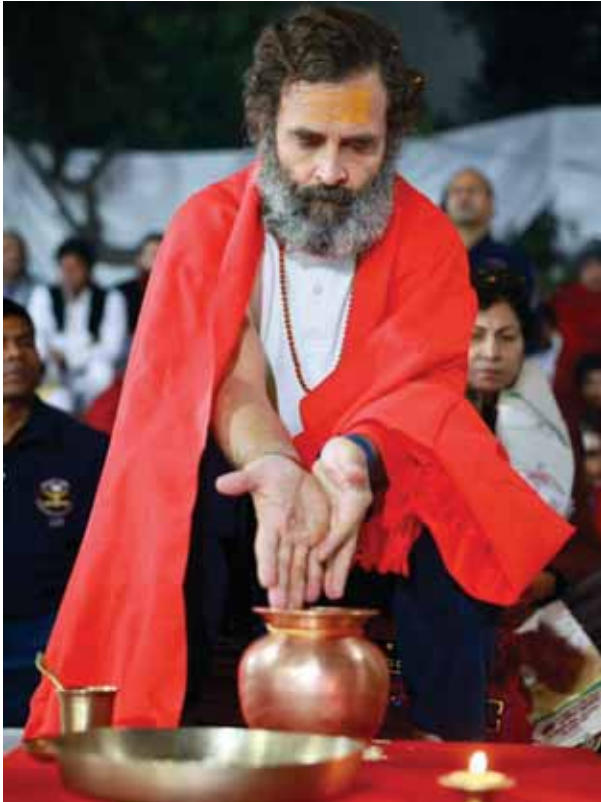
‘A section is more concerned about my T-shirt’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/KURUKSHETRA

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Sunday said Congress was a party of tapaswis and he was doing his work much like what has been mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita without bothering about the result. “The Congress is the party of ‘tapaswis’, that is why the symbol of Congress is palm which is ‘Abhyamudra’ of Shankar, he said.

“RSS-BJP wants them to be forcibly worshipped. Modi also wants this... They have captured all institutions, use money (power) and instill fear in people. They are telling people not to do ‘tapasya’,” Rahul said addressing a press conference at Kurukshetra on the sidelines of Bharat Jodo Yatra during which he invoked sermons of Gita like “Jaisa Karma Karega... Waisa Ful Dega...” “That is why the Prime Minister does not meet you (media). He is scared of those media which is doing tapasya and seeking truth,” Rahul said.

Emphasising that the RSS-BJP doesn't want others to respect only those who do their ‘puja’ should be respected, he asked whether demonetisation respect the ‘tapasya’ of the poor. “Certainly not. It was an attack on ‘tapasya’,” he said. He said a



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi offering prayers at the Brahm Sarovar in Kurukshetra during his Bharat Jodo Yatra now crossing Haryana

PNS Photo

section is more concerned about his T-shirt while some others wonder how many kilometres he has walked while emphasising these are non-issues.

“Nobody asks how many kilometres farmers, labourers have walked. You will not see any farmer or labourer who have not walked more than myself. We don't respect ‘tapasya’. This land is of tapasvis

and not pujaris,” he said. He said the fight against the BJP-RSS has ceased to be a political fight and has turned into an ideological fight or a question on religion after the present ruling dispensation has captured institutions.

“One thing which I have understood is that this fight is actually not political, superficially it is political fight. When we fight BSP or TRS, then it is

a political contest. But there has been change in the country. The day when the RSS controlled the institutions of this country, the fight did not remain political. Now, this has become a different fight. You may call it a fight of ideology, fight of religion, or you can give it any framework, but this is not a political fight,” Rahul said. Responding to a question, Rahul said he did not get affected by what others say about him. “Whatever is said about me, whether positive or negative, doesn't affect me and I am doing my work.”

“When Arjun took aim at fish eye he did not say what he will do next, in Gita also it is said do your work... However, there are programmes of the party which will continue after the Bharat Jodo Yatra ends.”

The Bharat Jodo Yatra is entering its last leg. It will end in January in J&K's Srinagar after moving through Punjab and Himachal Pradesh.

Rahul said the Bharat Jodo Yatra led by him has received an overwhelming response everywhere in the country, asserting that the foot march is against hatred and fear being spread in society as well as against unemployment and inflation.

Former Army chief Gen Deepak Kapoor and many retired top officers of the defence services joined the Yatra' on Sunday passing through Haryana.

In an attack on the critics of the Yatra, Rahul said when it was started, “people said the response which we got in Kerala, we won't get that in Karnataka, which is a BJP-

ruled state. But we got an even better response there. Then they said the Yatra got a response in south India, but when it reaches Maharashtra, it won't get that response. When we reached Maharashtra, we got even better response than the south”.

“Then it was said we will not get a good response when the Yatra passes through the Hindi belt, but in Madhya Pradesh there was even more improvement to the response. When we reached Haryana, it was said it is a BJP-ruled state, but here too the response was overwhelming. As we are moving forward, the response is improving,” he said. Scores of people joined the Yatra as it passed through Karnal in the morning, which is also the home constituency of Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar. Senior party leaders Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Randeep Singh Surjewala and Kumari Selja are part of the Yatra in its Haryana leg.

The march covered over 130 km in its first leg in Haryana from December 21 to 23, passing through Nuh, Gurugram and Faridabad districts. It re-entered Haryana's Panipat Thursday evening from Uttar Pradesh.

The yatra, which started from Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu on September 7, will end after reaching Srinagar by January 30 with Gandhi hoisting the national flag there. The march has so far covered Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh.

NIA files chargesheet against 14 in Kolkata communal violence case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed chargesheet against 14 accused in the Mominpur (Kolkata) communal violence case. The chargesheet was filed at the NIA Special Court, Calcutta on Friday in the case relating to the clash between members of two communities who engaged in brick batting, stone-pelting, and hurled bombs at each other.

The accused also deterred police personnel from discharging their official duties by physically assaulting them, damaging vehicles parked nearby, and also attacked police personnel in the jurisdiction of Ekbalpur police station in Kolkata.

The case was initially registered as FIR No. 482/2022 dated October 10 last year at Ekbalpur police station in Kolkata and re-registered by the NIA on October 18.

Investigations revealed that accused Md. Fakruddin Siddique alias Fakru, Md Salauddin Siddique, Md Sahabuddin Siddique, Md Idul Siddique, Md. Ziauddin, Badrul Hossain alias Dabbu, Ohab Hossain alias Vicky, Gholam Md Izhar alias Izhar, Mustafa Hussain alias Sharafat, Zakir Hossain, Md Faiyaz, Sunny, Raju alias Raju Ahmed and Imamul Haque alias Inam hatched a criminal conspiracy, gathered into an unlawful assembly with the intention to attack dwelling houses/shops of people of a particular community at Gali No. 8, Bhukailash Road, Kolkata.

The accused allegedly used crude bombs, petrol bombs, wooden sticks, bricks and stones.

Chargesheet filed against 5 in Ludhiana court bomb blast case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has filed a chargesheet in the Ludhiana court complex bomb blast case against five accused. The chargesheet was filed before the NIA Special Court, Mohali.

The case relates to a bomb blast at the Court Complex Ludhiana on December 23, 2021, in which one person was killed and six others were injured.

The case was initially registered as FIR No. 446/2021 dated December 23, 2021, at Police Station Division -5, Ludhiana Commissionerate, Punjab and re-registered by the NIA on January 13 last year.

“During Investigations, it has been revealed that Lakhbir Singh Rode, Pak-based ISYF/KLF terrorist handler, had planned to execute IED blasts at various locations in Punjab.

In order to execute this plans, he, in association with Pakistan-based smugglers, recruited India-based operatives to smuggle IEDs and to carry out blasts to cause maximum casualties and to strike terror among the general public,” the NIA said in a statement.

To execute the conspiracy to carry out IED blasts in Punjab, Rode along with



Zulfikar alias Pehalwan, a Pakistan-based cross-border arms-explosives-narcotics smuggler, Harpreet Singh alias Happy Malaysia, Surmukh Singh alias Sammu, Dilbagh Singh and Rajanpreet Singh, formed a terror gang to carry out blasts and smuggle weapons into India, the NIA alleged in the chargesheet.

Rode used the smuggling channels of Pakistan-based smuggler Zulfikar and his associates - Surmukh Singh and Harpreet Singh to deliver the IED to Gagandeep Singh who planted it to cause the blast in Ludhiana Court Complex and lost his life in the process.

The accused persons have been chargesheeted under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code including criminal conspiracy and murder besides provisions of the Explosive Substance Act, 1908, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984.

‘Identity of diaspora derived from how closely it is connected to its roots’



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/INDORE

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday praised the Indian youth for connecting the country with the world and said the identity of a diaspora is very much derived from how closely it is connected to its roots and India's efforts have been to encourage easier exposure to its culture and traditions.

Underlining that India has the largest diaspora in the world, he said many of them are the most talented. “Whether it is the startup of technology, the younger generations are at the forefront of connecting India to the world.

Our endeavor is to maximize our support for the diaspora. We aim to focus on the redressal of grievances through online mechanisms. I am confident that Indian youth at home and abroad will propel the growth of this country to greater heights. We strive to create a better workplace and non-discriminatory approach.”

Addressing the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) programme in Indore as part of the three-day PBD convention, Jaishankar said, “So what is perhaps unique about us is the intensity of the bonding between the community abroad and the motherland.”

Jaishankar also recalled Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the diaspora on a previous occasion where the latter had said “hamara to khoon ka rishta hai, passport ka nahi” (we have a blood relation and not that of passport). The Prime Minister will inaugurate the 17th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas on Monday in Indore. Meanwhile, the external affairs minister said “Today, we are here because of this relationship. This one phrase, I think captures the

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with President of Suriname Chan Santokhi at the 17th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention, in Indore, on Sunday

PTI Photo

entire complexity of relationships that we have today with 34 million people of Indian origin and Non-Resident-Indians (NRIs) and that is what brings us all here (India) every two years,” he said.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Union Information and Broadcasting and Youth Affairs Minister Anurag Thakur and Australia's Member of Parliament Zaneta Mascarenhas, who was the guest of honour on the occasion, also addressed the event.

Jaishankar said the youth living outside India have many more opportunities than before to stay connected with the country.

“It is a matter of pride for us that centres of faith are growing abroad and serve the purpose of inculcating values, promoting culture and nurturing traditions. I think the one in Abu Dhabi has attracted particular attention of the people,” he said.

The minister said the identity of a diaspora is very much derived from how closely it is connected to its roots. “Our efforts have been to encourage easier exposure (for diaspora) to Indian culture and traditions.

Many of our embassies, in fact most of them, offer yoga, dance and music classes and we have asked them to support and facilitate community functions and collective activities,” he said.

Jaishankar said they have also gathered here as India marks the 75th year of Independence and prepares for the next 25 years. “This is an era where we are increasingly confident about our prospects and when we seek to connect with the Indian

community and international community,” he said. “And that is why I am particularly glad to see the guest of honour (Zaneta Mascarenhas) today is from our own Indo-Pacific partner Australia,” he said.

The External Affairs Minister also said the government is joining hands with different countries to ensure the youth of Indian origin get a safer and non-discriminatory environment abroad and better workplaces are developed for them. He said the government recently partnered with Germany, Denmark, Portugal, France and the UK on migration and mobility to provide a better environment to Indian youth abroad.

The government has recently signed a “working holiday” programme with Austria and the Australian government has offered a more liberal environment for Indian professionals, he added. Jaishankar expressed hope that in the coming days, some more countries will liberalise the provisions for granting visas to Indians and ensure better working conditions for them.

He said country's younger generation is at forefront of connecting India to the world and this generation is strengthening India's relations with other countries through studies, jobs and travel.

The minister said India recognises the tremendous response that it got from the PIO NRI community during the difficult moments of its own community.

“So as we meet today, I can say our bonds have become stronger despite all the trials and tribulations that we went through in the Covid-19 (period),” he said. Jaishankar said people coming to India after a gap surely notice the many changes that have taken place in the last eight years, and especially in the last three years.

Notable among them is the extraordinary scale of digital delivery that has made possible access to the social benefits. And that too without leakage.

Jaishankar also said it is the government's expectation that the new education policy will create more pathways for the deeper involvement of the diaspora.

Within the country, the prime minister has urged all to focus on the ‘Amrit kaal’, the period leading the people to a century of India's Independence. It is important that the Indian community abroad does the same, he said.

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chronic skin disorder severely affects the physical and psychological well-being of patients, said a study conducted by Indian doctors from AIIMS-like institutions at Kalyani, Patna, and Bhubaneswar.

The doctors noted that the impact of psychological burden ranges from low self-esteem and stress to anxiety and depression. Acne, rosacea, psoriasis, eczema, and hair loss are just a few of the skin disorders that have been associated with increased rates of depression, anxiety, and reduced quality of life, more so because these are visible to others to see. This urgently calls for tailored psy-

chiatric consultation and appropriate counseling for such patients at the OPD itself while being treated for their ailment, said the doctors after assessing the mental health of around 101 patients suffering from the chronic skin disorder.

In the present study ‘Psychosocial Distress and Quality of Life Among Patients With a Chronic Skin Disorder at a Tertiary Care Hospital in Eastern India: A Hospital-Based Case-Control Study’ published in Cureus platform, 45.54% and 41.58% of patients had clinically significant (moderate to severe) depression and anxiety, respectively. “Depression and anxiety scores were found to be significantly high in unmarried persons

and more in unemployed people. This might be because in the Indian scenario, both categories consist more of a younger age group of people, and they are more likely to have depression and anxiety.

That's because chronic skin disease affects their QoL, future career options, social life, etc,” said the authors. The team included, Dr Pratyush R. Behera, Dr Arvind K Singh and Dr Chandra S. Sirka, all from AIIMS, Bhuvneshwar, Dr Sarika Palepu from AIIMS, Kalyani, and Dr Rajeev Ranjan and Dr Swetalina Pradhan, both from AIIMS, Patna.

Females had a lower prevalence of depression and anxiety as compared to males, but the results were not statistical-

ly significant. Also, depression and anxiety were higher in patients with skin lesions involving exposed body parts like the head, neck, hand, and foot. Out of 101 patients in this study, 67% were males, and 33% were females. The most

common diseases in the study were tinea (22.7%), acne (18.8%), and vitiligo (14.85%). In the present study, 76.24% of the patients were taking treatment at the time of study, and 74% had visible skin lesions on the exposed body parts.



50,000 women conclude financial literacy training

New Delhi: UNICEF (YuWaah) and CSC Academy and recently completed training 50,000 young women in financial literacy through a blended learning program using the Passport to Earning (P2E) e-platform.

The young women were trained across the country with outreach and support from Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs), who are part of the Common Service Center (CSC) Academy network.

The training helped young women gain knowledge of critical financial concepts such as budgeting, saving, borrowing, investing, digital payments, digital safety, complaints & redressal mechanisms.

“Young people, especially women, need the skills to become independent. Financial Literacy is a very important part of these skills, and we are delighted to work with UNICEF to take this program across India.

This is just the start to a much larger implementation” said ex-IAS Sanjay Kumar Rakesh, now Managing Director at CSC e-Governance SPV, an institution under the Ministry of Information Technology.

Speaking on occasion, Dhruwarakha Sriram, Chief of Generation Unlimited (YuWaah), Youth Development and Partnerships at UNICEF India, said, “Passport to Earning aims to equip our young with key 21st-century skills for employability and future readiness.

‘Withdraw UGC move to allow foreign varsities in India’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Left parties CPI(M) and CPI have opposed the UGC's decision to allow foreign universities to set up campuses in India. The CPI on Sunday said that the regulatory framework of such a move should be framed and discussed in Parliament.

Echoing same sentiments, the CPI(M) has urged Government and UGC to rescind such moves as this will lead to a hike leading to distortion in higher education in the country.

CPI(M) polit bureau said that the operational details of setting up such campuses provide that they can evolve their own admission process and criteria to admit domestic and foreign students. I t will also have the autonomy to decide its fee structure and will face no caps that are imposed on Indian institutions.

Foreign higher education institutions will also be allowed cross-border movement of funds and maintenance of Foreign Currency Accounts, mode of payments, remittance and repatriation, said the



party in a statement on Sunday. “The proposed move is not going to enable the country to address the current challenges that face higher education.

The polit bureau strongly urges that the UGC and the government rescind this draft proposal and initiate consultations with organizations of teachers, students, and all those who are vitally concerned in the future of higher education. The UGC is also not statutorily entitled to unilaterally initiate moves without consulting the state governments. The polit bureau appeals to all democratic and patriotic

forces to act to make the UGC and the government to stop this unilateralism forthwith,” said CPI(M). “he party said that time allotted by the government to make suggestions is grossly insufficient.

The policy will harm, dilute and destroy the Indian higher education system leading to commercialization, it said. “This decision will make education expensive and Dalits, advasis, minorities and poor will be adversely affected.

The decision is a reflection of government's pro-rich approach in background of statement made in Parliament by Education minister that Indians should stop depending on idea that universities should be funded by government.

The fact is that government is spending less than three percent of its budget on education when more allocation is needed.

The policy of reservation and principle of social justice will be harmed in a big way. The imposition of such policy on states is anti-federal and encroachment on powers of state governments,” said CPI's national secretariat in a statement.

A-I pee-gate: ‘Drunk man not in senses, buck stops with pilot’

PTI ■ NEW YORK

A drunk person may not be in his senses but the flight crew showed no compassion and failed in their responsibility, said a US-based doctor seated next to the man who urinated on a woman in an inebriated state on an Air India flight from New York to Delhi.

In an interview to PTI, Dr Sugata Bhattacharjee narrated the sordid events in the business class cabin of Flight AI102 on November 26, which have become front page news after they came to light last week. Bhattacharjee, who is based in

New Hampshire state, wrote an elaborate complaint to Air India immediately after the flight landed, detailing his experience with his co-passenger Shankar Mishra and his interactions with the cabin crew. He told PTI he is speaking out now to elaborate on the complaint because of claims by Mishra's father that his son is innocent and may have been a victim of extortion.

“It was a moral call for me, it was morality and I thought it was my moral obligation to stand and make a complaint and I did,” he said. The buck stops with the pilot, the US-

based doctor said, recounting that Mishra had four stiff drinks through lunch. He had also alerted a male crew member about Mishra having one too many and to keep an eye on him.

Pointing to multiple failures in the “procedural part”, the US-based audiologist, who made a handwritten complaint to the airline, told PTI that to make the woman talk to Mishra after the incident was a “no no because indecent exposure is a crime.” “It's a sexual assault. And once that happens, nobody should take a mediation route,” he said. “I was

angry. I don't care about what a drunk man did because he's not in his senses and that's why he does it.

But people who had the power and the authority, they showed no compassion. In a plane, the pilot is the chief person and the buck stops with him.”

While Bhattacharjee was in seat 8A, Mishra was in seat 8C in business class. Mishra, 34, who was missing for a few days after the incident came to light has been arrested from Bengaluru and sent to judicial remand for 14 days by a Delhi court.

Too early to link 2024 Opp unity to Cong yatra: Parties

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Non-Bharatiya Janata Party political parties, including Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party and Rashtriya Lok Dal, are distancing from the Bharat Jodo Yatra of Rahul Gandhi, saying no political inference should be drawn from their leaders welcoming the yatra in the state.

The non-BJP parties maintain that it would be premature to link the Bharat Jodo Yatra with Opposition unity ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

Leaders of SP and BSP had wished success to the yatra in Uttar Pradesh through separate tweets, while the RLD had joined the yatra in the state after receiving an invitation for participation. RLD workers were seen in the yatra which traversed through western region of the state, the stronghold of the party. However, RLD president Jayant Chaudhary was missing as he was out of the

country at that time.

"The workers of the RLD welcomed the Bharat Jodo Yatra as Rahul Gandhi has set out to strengthen brotherhood against communal politics and RLD president Jayant Chaudhary also is convening 'bhaichara sammelans' all over UP for the same purpose," RLD spokesman Anil Dubey said.

He added, "No political significance should be attached to their decision to welcome Rahul Gandhi."

"There is no link of the yatra with politics. Akhileshji had extended moral support to the yatra, a sentimental support.

It has nothing to do with opposition unity. The yatra is not an issue of political polarisation," said Samajwadi Party spokesman Rajendra Chaudhary.

"Politically, we are with the SP and in 2024 will fight in alliance. With whom we have to join hands is an important decision which will be taken by



the national presidents of the RLD and the SP. Political decisions are taken by the high command," Dubey said.

He added, "We already have a strong alliance in UP with the SP to defeat the BJP and both are working together,"

Interestingly, BSP MP from Jaunpur, Shyam Singh Yadav, participated in the yatra in Delhi and termed it as his personal decision.

"I got a personal invitation from Rahul Gandhi and it was

my personal decision to go. It had nothing to do with the party," the BSP MP had said.

"There was no instruction from the party to go nor did I ask for permission from the party. The aim of the yatra is good; all understand that the chasm being created between different religions and sections should be turned into love,"

Yadav stressed and said that his participation should not be viewed as a sign that he was moving to another party.

Ex-Army chief Gen Deepak Kapoor, retired top officers join Rahul's Yatra

PTI ■ KURUKSHETRA

Former Army chief Gen Deepak Kapoor and many retired top officers of the Defence services joined the Rahul Gandhi-led 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' on Sunday which is passing through Haryana.

Amid severe cold and fog, the march resumed in the morning from Dodwa in Karnal's Nilokheri region and entered the Kurukshetra district later in the day. In the evening, Gandhi offered prayers on the banks of holy Brahma Sarovar here.

For most of the prayer, Gandhi was seen in a red shawl over his white T-shirt which he has been sporting during the yatra. Later, he also took part in the evening 'aarti'. He was accompanied by former chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Haryana Congress chief Uday Bhan and senior party leaders Kumari Selja and K C Venugopal.

Team Yogi in Chennai to attract investments

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A group of Ministers and senior officials of the Yogi Adityanath government reached Chennai on Sunday on a three-day visit to invite entrepreneurs to invest in Uttar Pradesh and contribute towards making the State an 'Uttam Pradesh' as well as a \$ 1-trillion economy.

The team, including Cabinet Minister Suresh Khanna, Minister of State (Independent Charge) Nitin Agarwal, Minister of State Asim Arun, Minister Narendra Kashyap and senior



officials, Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor chief Nodal officer RKS Bhadauria, Additional Chief Secretary (MSME) Amit Mohan Prasad, UPPCL Chairman M Devaraj, IIDD

Principal Secretary Anil Sagar, Excise Commissioner Senthil Pandian and Chief Minister Yogi's advisor KV Raju will have one to one business to government (B2G) meetings with 25 industrialists.

The meetings will start at a dinner on Sunday and conclude with breakfast on Tuesday. Besides, more than 150 industrialists will attend the roadshow in which Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's team will inform these industrialists about investment opportunities in Uttar Pradesh and encourage them to invest in the state.

No place for goons in UP, says Maurya

SP leader arrested for 'indecent' remarks on social media

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya slammed Akhilesh Yadav and his supporters for obstructing legal action being taken against Samajwadi Party's Twitter handle operator, who made indecent comments on women leaders of Bharatiya Janata Party, constitutional bodies like Election Commission of India and journalists.

Maurya, on Sunday, said that the SP chief along with his supporters wanted to do hooliganism at the police headquarters to save the people who were doing hooliganism on social media. "However, they have forgotten that this is Yogi Adityanath's government and no one can stop the law from taking its course here. There is no place for goons in the State. Be it social media or any field, no one will be allowed to violate the rights of common citizens," the deputy chief minister said.

Two infiltrators neutralised along LoC in Poonch

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Two heavily armed infiltrators were neutralised by the alert troops of the Indian army along the line of control in Balakot sector of Poonch on Saturday.

This is the second incident in the last 10 days in the same sector when infiltrators attempted to breach the line to control before sneaking inside the Indian territory.

A similar infiltration bid was foiled by the alert troops in the Krishna Ghati sector on December 29, 2022. Taking advantage of the adverse

weather conditions the three member group of infiltrators had retreated into the forests instead of crossing the LoC.

Briefing media persons in Rajouri on Sunday Brigadier P Acharya, Commander 13 Sector Rashtriya Rifles said, "after observing the suspicious movement of two infiltrators around 7.00 p.m on Saturday near the line of control in Balakot sector of Poonch the alert troops of the Indian kept a tight watch on their movement".

"Around 7.45 p.m a loud explosion was heard, possibly a mine blast. Soon after, troops saw the movement near the fence and engaged the ter-

rorists by bringing aimed fire onto them".

The 13 sector RR Commander said, "troops present on ground zero readjusted the cordon to prevent their escape. The troops also relied on night-enabled Quadcopter and other surveillance devices to keep a strict vigil on the cordoned area". During searches which were launched around 2.00 a.m the troops recovered two bodies with weapons, magazines, ammunition and other war like stores. "One AK 47 Rifle with two magazines and 21 rounds, one modified AK 56 Rifle, One Chinese Pistol with one magazine and five rounds,



two Chinese hand grenades and two high explosive IEDs and a mobile phone was recovered by the troops.

Meanwhile, the operations to nab terrorists involved in the Dhangri attack were still going

on in the frontier districts of Rajouri and Poonch. Both Indian Army and jawans of the other security forces have been conducting these search operations to track down their footprints

Dangri terror attack: Youth succumbs to his injuries

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Twenty-three-year-old Prince Sharma, critically injured in the 'ghostly' Dangri terror attack in Rajouri on January 1, succumbed to his injuries in the Government Medical College hospital, Jammu in the wee hours of Sunday taking the total death toll to 7. Several other injured were still undergoing treatment in the Rajouri and Jammu medical college hospitals.

Deepak Sharma, elder brother of Prince, had earlier fallen to the bullets of terror-



ists on day one of the New Year. Only their mother, Saroj Devi survived the attack. The duo had lost their father in 2019 due to a chronic illness.

Soon after the mortal

remains of Prince Sharma were shifted from Jammu to his native village in Rajouri a large number of local residents and others assembled there to pay their last respects.

TMC cutting mangrove forests for fisheries: Adhikari

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari has written to the Union Government asking it to send a Central team to inquire into the systematic destruction of mangrove forests of Sunderbans that form the first line of defence against cyclonic storms in the coastal areas of the State.

In his letter written to the Union Minister of Environment and Forest Bhupendra Yadav the Bengal Opposition Leader has said that alleged that the ruling Trinamool Congress leaders had been "uprooting" and "destroying" the "ecologically sensitive Sunderbans

Mangrove forest ..the 1st wall of defence against cyclones battering the fragile coastline" of Bengal.

Adhikari alleged that though the State government "dubiously claimed planting 5 crore mangrove trees ... in reality the ruling party leaders are destroying mangrove forests for commercial reasons"

He said that the TMC leaders were investing hugely in fisheries for which they were cutting down mangrove forests for their personal gains. "They claimed Mamata Banerjee claimed that her government would plant 5 crore mangrove trees but in reality they have destroyed several thousands of them ... they have employed

tens of payloaders to clean up the area and dig large ponds for fisheries," Adhikari said on Sunday adding he has asked for a probe into the matter.

A World Heritage Site; the Sunderbans is the largest contiguous mangrove forest in the world. It significantly facilitates an on-going ecological process of delta formation. It needs to be protected for the sake of lives & livelihood and the coastal area from immeasurable damage.

Situated in a unique bioclimatic zone; mangrove flora & fauna both on land & water support exceptional biodiversity in terrestrial, aquatic & marine habitats. "Land mafia supported by local ... leaders



are uprooting the mangroves & converting the area into fish farming ponds," he said.

TMC MP Shantanu Sen quickly reacted to the allegations leveled by Adhikari saying, "political traitors like Suwendu are out to malign the Mamata Banerjee Government

and humiliate Bengal for their own narrow interests... He has no information that Mamata Banerjee has ordered planting of 7.5 thousand mangrove forests on 4.5 acres of land and the work is in progress ... he should stop defaming Bengal."

'What if it's poisoned?' Says ex-CM Akhilesh refusing tea at police station

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi party president Akhilesh Yadav, on Sunday, refused tea at the Uttar Pradesh Police headquarters here, expressing his doubts whether he would be given poison there.

Akhilesh said, "We will not have tea here. We'll bring ours (tea), take your cup. We can't drink, you will give poison? We don't trust you. We'll get it from outside."

He reached the police headquarter in Lucknow in protest against the arrest of sp worker and operator of the party's Twitter handle.

Samajwadi Party workers came face-to-face with police as they protested outside the police headquarters in Lucknow over the arrest of SP media cell leader Manish Jagan Agarwal.

Hazratganj police arrested the operator of the SP media cell Twitter, Manish Jagan Agarwal on Sunday for making indecent comments targeting different persons from the political arena on social media for quite some time.

A brawl on Twitter had broken out between Bharatiya Janata Party and the Samajwadi Party and it was going on for some time. Abusive and chosen invectives were hurled at the BJP from the SP Twitter handle.



Akhilesh Yadav argued with the police officers inside the police headquarters, while SP workers led by former minister and MLC Swami Prasad Maurya staged a protest outside gate number two of the DGP office, seeking the release of Manish Jagan Agarwal.

Police had to use mild force to disperse the unruly cadres of the SP.

After visiting police headquarters in Lucknow, Akhilesh Yadav reached the district jail in Gosaiganj to meet Manish Agrawal. Manish Jagan Agarwal was arrested by the Lucknow police after three cases were registered against him at Hazratganj police station allegedly for making objectionable remarks on Twitter

through the party's social media handle.

The party condemned the arrest of Manish Jagan Agarwal on Twitter. "Arrest of Samajwadi Party worker Manish Jagan Agarwal by Lucknow Police is condemnable and shameful! Police should release him immediately" (sic), said the SP on Twitter.

Manish Jagan Agarwal hails from Sitapur district in Uttar Pradesh. He claims to be the family member of Jagannath Prasad Agarwal, who had been an MLA twice and served as a member of parliament for three terms. Jagannath Prasad was also a Rajya Sabha member during the tenure of India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

'AI's response should have been swifter'

From Page 1

In fact, his statement further shows that the airline was aware of the incident just a day after it took place on November 26 as he wrote, "Upon receipt of the complaint on November 27, Air India acknowledged receipt and commenced engaging in correspondence with

the affected passenger's family on November 30".He didn't disclose if the complaint came through the flight crew and the captain or someone else.

However, sources in Air India confirmed that when the flight in question AI1102 landed in Delhi, the cabin crew in charge filled in a detailed report of what happened and was counter-signed by the captain.

"According to the laid down procedure, after every flight, the cabin crew in charge fills out a report of what happened in the cabin during the flight. It is read and counter-

signed by the captain," Captain S S Panesar, ex-pilot and former director of flight safety and training of erstwhile Indian Airline, said.

"If the cabin crew department and Air India did not read or react promptly to the report, how can they blame the captain now? De-rostering and giving the captain a show cause notice is absolutely unfair and ridiculous," Captain Panesar added.He strongly believes that Air India is making the crew members and the captain a scapegoat just to avoid embarrassment and their own fault.

"Officers such as Director Inflight services & other higher-ups in the organisation who sat on the report or tried to broker a deal between the accused and the victim should be punished rather," he said.

"The management was made aware of the incident by the crew via a written report on landing. The management could have asked for more details if the report was not clear. Instead, the airline tried to bury the issue by negotiating with passengers concerned," Captain Ajay Ahlawat, an air force veteran, said.

100 Africans clash with cops after 3 held for..

From Page 1

But, once again 150 to 200 people of African origin surrounded the police team and tried to help the detainees escape, police said. This time, though, the police somehow managed to control the escalating situation and brought the offenders to the Neb

Sarai Police Station. "The police team was trying to bring the Nigerian nationals to the police station. Suddenly, about 100 African nationals gathered there and obstructed the team. In the meantime, two of the detained people escaped", Chaudhary added.

The other Nigerians are Igwe

Emmanuel Chimezie(33), Aziegbie John(24) and Queen Godwin(26) were held in the second round of visit. A case under section 420/120B of IPC read with 14 Foreigners Act has been registered against the accused at Crime Branch, and passports have also been seized there.

Joshimath declared...

From Page 1

"The State Government should establish a clear and continuous communication channel with the affected people. Immediate efforts should be to arrest the deterioration in the situation through practical measures that may be feasible," he said according to the statement.

An interdisciplinary investigation of the affected area should be undertaken. Experts from a range of central institutions— National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), NIDM, GSI, IIT

Roorkee, WIHG, National Institute of Hydrology (NIH) and Central Building Research Institute (CBRI) should work closely with the state of Uttarakhand in the spirit of "Whole of Government" approach, said the statement.

A clear time-bound reconstruction plan must be prepared. Continuous seismic monitoring must be done. Using this opportunity, a risk sensitive urban development plan for Joshimath should also be developed, the statement said, quoting the Principal Secretary to the PM.

Racer dies in crash at MRF national...

From Page 1

Within minutes, Kumar was extricated from the wreckage and transferred into an ambulance before being shifted to a nearby hospital after a preliminary examination at the track's medical centre. Despite the best efforts of the hospital's doctors, he succumbed to his injuries.

Chairman of the Meet Vicky Chandhok said: "It is a most unfortunate incident. Kumar was an experienced racer. I have known him for several decades as a friend and competitor. The MMS&A and entire racing fraternity mourn his passing away and convey heartfelt condolences to his family."

TTP's lust for power in Pak a threat...

From Page 1

"This could have implications for India as Indian interests and investments could be hurt in Chabahar port in Iran," Dr. Mate said.

Security analyst Dr Arvind Sahu concurred with the emerging scenario saying, "The likely Pak military strikes against the TTP in FATA, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and POK could trigger a humanitarian crisis and in such a situation thousands of people from the region could be displaced and become a cause of concern for India-friendly countries like Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan."

That sinking feeling

Politicians & people ignored geological facts of Joshimath, and now it is fire-fighting mode

In a way, the crisis of ‘sinking town’ of Joshimath in Uttarakhand is quintessentially Indian: a grey rhino event about which a great deal was known for years, decades actually, but nobody did anything about it. And now that the problem has acquired catastrophic proportions, everyone is talking about it. It is good that at all levels efforts are being made to salvage the situation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised all possible help to save Joshimath, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami said on Sunday. The latter had a tele-conversation with the Prime Minister. Dhami tweet-ed, “The situation in Joshimath is being analysed. We’ll also see if other mountainous towns have achieved their toleration limit.” At the Central level, the Prime Minister’s Office is actively monitoring the ground situation. Officials of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the State Government are part of deliberations. All this is comforting, but the discomfoting questions are: Why do we have to wait for the situation to become alarming to take action? Why are the powers that be reactive rather than proactive? It was almost half a century ago that the Mishra Committee Report had warned (in 1976) against such an eventuality. One of the recommendations of the report was: “For road repairs and other construction, it would be advisable not to remove boulders by digging or blasting the hill side... The trees are to be nurtured like children.”



In fact, it was not just the authorities and politicians who ignored the committee’s report but even the local people living there. Some of them even reportedly abused committee members, but now they are repenting their own carelessness. Headed by MC Mishra, the then Garhwal commissioner in the erst-while State of Uttar Pradesh (Uttarakhand was part of UP at that time), it comprised 18 members, including from the Army, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, the Border Road Organisation, the Shri Kedarnath-Badrinath Temple Committee, and the local administration. It said, “Joshimath lies on an ancient landslide.” The root cause of the problem and the report’s recommendations were ignored, but the facts of geology and geography are stubborn; we may ignore them but they have ways of making their presence felt; and that’s happening now. Cracks are appearing in houses, roads and on the ground; the administration has declared Joshimath a landslide-subsidence zone; more than 60 families living in damaged houses have been evacuated to temporary relief centres; 90 more families may have to be moved out. The Chamoli District Magistrate reportedly went door-to-door, assessing the damage caused and urging people to evacuate. In short, the authorities are in fire-fighting mode. Again, this is very typical of India: politicians and officials ignore problems till these hit us hard, and then start acting like fire-fighters. A nation that wants to emerge as an economic power and a political force on the world stage ought to have a more responsive and imaginative administration.



People feed pigeons at Marina beach, in Chennai

Pilgrim’s progress?

The Jain community is appalled by the move to take over their pilgrimages for commercial exploitation

An avoidable controversy has erupted over the commercialisation of a Jain pilgrimage site in Jharkhand. The appalled community is protesting against the move centred around Sammed Shikharji. They are also concerned about such moves being on the anvil in Gujarat. The protesters want the notification issued by the Centre for acquiring the sacred mountain of Sammed Shikharji taken back. The move was initiated by the previous Raghuraj Das-led BJP Government. It is not just Sammed Shikharji but several other sites could be open for commercialisation to fill the State coffers like Sammed Shikharji, Palitana’s Shatrunjaya hills and Mount Girnar (in Gujarat). The previous BJP Government of Jharkhand and the Modi Government jointly declared Giridih, the “Nirvana Bhoomi” (salvation site) of 20 Jain Tirthankaras and the most important pilgrimage centers of Jainism — Sammed Shikharji and ‘Parasnath hill’ — as eco-sensitive zone.



The Jain community feels that the move is a “malicious attempt to pollute the sanctity of two pilgrimage sites”; a concerted effort to strip the community from its hold over the sites. The apprehensions are not ill-founded, though. In the Palitana’s Shatrunjaya hills near Bhavnagar, RSS-VHP members have been persistently demanding a change of management of 900-year-old 865 Jain temples and pilgrimage centres. This site is considered the most sacred pilgrimage center of the Shvetambara Jain community, and any attempt to disrupt their prayers in any way is bound to recoil. The mining mafia is also eyeing these sites. Incidents of vandalisation and threatening the clerics have also come to light. This is happening under the patronage of the BJP leaders who are supporting illegal mining in the Shatrunjaya hills. Recently, some anti-social elements also vandalised the ancient Charan Paduka in the ancient 3 Gauki holy pilgrimage route in Rohishala, Shatrunjay. This has indeed hurt the Jain community which is now on the streets. The Constitution guarantees religious rights to minorities and therefore it is the utmost duty of the government to restore their faith and protect them from any threat to their way of life. The government would do well to assuage the fears and apprehensions of the Jain community sooner than later before the issue becomes a full-blown crisis. The start could be made by withdrawing the notification declaring Parasnath Hills and holy Shikharji as eco-sensitive zone and converting it into a tourist destinations to restore their faith in the Government.

Yaks: The lifeline of Monpas in NE

For the people of Arunachal Pradesh, Yak is indispensable. Human life here depends on it but its population is dwindling, which needs to be corrected

Arunachal Pradesh is the largest among North Eastern states of India having an area of 83,743 km and is divided into 20 administrative districts of which highlanders (3000-4000 meters above MSL) are Tawang and West Kameng districts. It borders the states of Assam and Nagaland to the South and shares International borders with Bhutan in the East and Tibet (China) in the North. The state is the home tract of Arunachali Yak. Usually found at elevations 3,000-6,000 meters above MSL, Arunachali Yak sustains themselves up to a temperature of -40 to 10 degrees centigrade. Arunachali Yak is one of the purest Yak populations in the world. It is considered a remarkable domestic animal as it thrives in conditions of extreme cold and hypoxic conditions of hardness and deprivation while providing livelihood to people living in the remote high altitude hilly terrain of Tawang and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh. These two districts are rich in agro-biodiversity having the origin of several plants. The socio-diversity of these districts adds more colour to this field of biodiversity. The average density is about 11-13 people per km, but, the concentration of population is more at lower elevations and plains rather than at high altitude regions where Yaks are available. Although no written literature and breed synonyms exist about Yak, the oral history indicates that this animal belongs to the Bisontine group under the subfamily Bovidae which was first tamed by the ancient Qiang people of the Tibetan-Qiang plateau in China. Given its grass-eating nature and having specific anatomical and morphological differences from other Bovids, the nomenclature (Poephagus) was given after a thorough investigation and discussion. According to the evolutionary consequences, it is presumed that the domestic Yak (Poephagus grannies L.) of Arunachal Pradesh probably originated from its wild counterpart (Poephagus mutus). The Arunachali Yak is living in a transhumance pastoral structure and



exists in semi-migratory systems. Few animals are also found in the organized farm. Monpa community, which is the majority population in West Kameng and Tawang districts, is responsible for developing the Arunachali Yak breed. Yak has been closely associated with the culture, religion, and social life of the Monpa people who can trace their history of Yak with great care since time immemorial. It is treated as an asset of the rural economy. The Yak rearers, also called the Brokpa, make their herds migrate during the summer season, along the mountain ridges for grazing. One full-time attendant stay at the pasture land all along, attending the herds, milking and preparing butter, ghee, and churpi (fermented butter) for home consumption as well as for commercial purposes. The entire herd is brought back to the nearby homestead during the winter season when there is heavy snowfall. Agriculture is the mainstay of the Yak farmers and about 80 percent population depends on it. Shifting (Jhum) cultivation is practiced by Monpa Community settled in the Yak rearing region. Due to the availability of varied agro-climatic and topographic conditions, diverse varieties of crops

IT IS A MATTER OF CONCERN THAT OVER THE YEARS, THE POPULATION OF ARUNACHALI YAK HAS BEEN STEADILY DECLINING

are found. Other crops like chili, soybean, potato, cabbage, pumpkin and ginger are also grown. Major fruit production is kiwi, apple and orange as well as some citrus fruits. The houses of Yak rearers, the Monpas, are the traditional style of dwellings made from locally available materials. The house size and area depends on the family patterns. The average family members household consist of six members and 50 percent of them are literate and 50 percent are involved in Yak husbandry. In Arunachal Pradesh, landholding is community-based: the average agriculture landholding is 4500 acres and the annual income of Yak farmers is ₹55,000. It is a matter of concern that over the years, the population of Arunachali Yak has been declining. The main reasons are increased emphasis on crossbreeding, a shift in profession from agriculture to other sectors, threats from predators and diseases, reduction in the availability of fodder, and a reduced enthusiasm among young herders although it is still believed that rearing Yak is the social status of Brokpa. This decline can be curbed through the introduction of selection and mating programmes that could encourage both productivity

and the maintenance of biodiversity as well as distribution of unique germplasm through AI-semen, high altitude pasture management, adopting new technology in villages near border areas where Yak is only animal providing livelihood and economic sustainability. Regular training on the latest technology for Yak husbandry for a veterinarian, veterinary field assistants, as well as Yak farmers, boosts the Yak husbandry in the region. Another area of concern is that there is no proper documentation of the Yak population because no serious efforts have been done to survey population of Yak. In this context, systematic documentation is needed for the interpretation of earlier sources and where possible be cross-checked against pastoralists’ accounts. Efforts for the conservation of the Arunachali Yak as well as to increase their productivity within the given environment need urgent attention. Heterotic effects are evident in the crosses, but these need to be further classified and exploited for the conservation and multiplication of Arunachali Yak. (The writer is a senior journalist. The views expressed are personal. This is the second part of the three-part series on the northeast; to be concluded.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MADHYA PRADESH READY FOR THE SHOW
Sir — Madhya Pradesh is fully prepared. The arrival of guests for the Pravasi Bharatiya Sammelan in Indore continues. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan is himself monitoring everything. It can be understood that this is a very proud moment for Madhya Pradesh. This is an unforgettable occasion when the State can showcase its achievements and plans to the NRIs. It is also an opportunity to enrich the State Government’s image and boost its confidence. This is an opportunity to showcase Madhya Pradesh to people of the outside world.

It should also be remembered that the overseas guests are connected to our land, that is why they have come here and are participating in this conference. In the changing times, be it the country or the region, he has to leave his mark in every field. This investment, employment and business all are necessary for everything. Opportunities are also hidden in the event, especially for the youth, and there should be no hesitation in capitalising on it. The reputation that Indore has made in the field of cleanliness in India and abroad is the result of the leaders going to the trenches and observing the cleanliness system.

Divyansha Sharma | Ujjain

THE MENACE OF DEFECTION

Sir — It has been reported that the Congress has lodged a police complaint on the defection of its 12 MLAs into TRS. K Chandrashekar Rao had accused BJP of attempting to poach four of its MLAs with bribes to topple his government. Now he has not been mincing words about defections into his party. But what can the police do? The anti-defection law is not so effective in preventing defections. If two-thirds of MLAs cross over to other parties, it will be treated as merger. Single-member defection or mass defection, both should be treated alike if the defection menace has to be curbed.

The Speaker must be vested with the powers to disqualify such errant MLAs

Why turn a blind eye?



Former 103 civil servants want Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to Act Against Pragma (accused in the 2008 blast that killed six people in Malegaon, Maharashtra) Singh Thakur for ‘fomenting hate’. Though a senior and law-abiding citizen, I strongly feel that the Speaker will not take any action against her because in the Modi era it’s not possible. He made Anurag Singh Thakur, who addressed a gathering in support of a BJP candidate in Delhi and led the crowd

and MPs. No party is willing to do away with defection because at one time or the other, defection is useful to every party. If Chandrashekar Rao is really serious against defections, he should admit no turncoat to his party. In doing so, he will set a good precedent. Defection anyway amounts to betraying the trust of the voters. These days, politics is more to subserve the political interests of parties.

KV Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE NOT ONLY EVIL

Sir — Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think like humans and mimic their actions. The term may also be applied to any machine that exhibits traits associated with a human mind such as learning and problem-solving. The ideal characteristic of artificial intelligence is its ability to rationalise and take actions that have the best chance of achieving a specific goal. The digital revolution has already

changed how people live, work and communicate. And it’s only just getting started.

But the same technologies that have the potential to help billions of people live happier, healthier and more productive lives are also creating new challenges for citizens and Governments. The term may also be applied to any machine that exhibits traits associated with a human mind such as learning and problem-solving. The common fear is that AI will replace human jobs, leading to mass unemployment and economic depression. That paints a very dystopian and frightening future, but extensive evidence suggests a more hopeful and utopian future. AI focuses on saving human time and energy, thus leading humans to focus their efforts on passion projects or making the world better for all beings.

CK Subramaniam | Navi Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

My being in T-shirt is not a real question, the real question is why are the farmers, poor labourers of the country and their children in torn clothes, T-shirts, and without sweaters.

Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi

Russia plans to ‘exhaust’ Ukraine with prolonged attacks.

Ukraine President — Volodymyr Zelenskyy

I want to talk about this hashtag that’s going on — ‘Boycott Bollywood’. It can stop if you (Yogi Adityanath) say something about it. We are doing good work.

Actor — Suniel Shetty

The signing of a player the size of Cristiano Ronaldo is extraordinary and contributes to the development of

Saudi football AI Nasser coach — Rudi Garcia

India has emerged as a stable economy even amid the global slowdown. You must be glad to know that India has surpassed the UK to become the 5th largest economy in the world. It is a great feat as people who ruled us for 200 years are now falling behind.

BJP president — JP Nadta

FIRST COLUMN

DIVERSITY IN CLINICAL TRIALS IS ESSENTIAL

Clinical studies must draw subjects from a diverse cross-section

KRUTIKESH AGE

The results of clinical research should be generalised for the population, because of the ethical reasons and providing treatment that appeal to people all over the world. The importance of including diversity is that the results obtained from the study benefit the entire population.

Before trying to understand the importance of diversity in clinical research, one should know the meaning of “diversity” in the context of clinical research. Diversity in clinical research means including people from various backgrounds and experiences in a study.

Factors like age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, and economic conditions are included for classifying a group of people for the research. The reason for introducing diversity in the research is to provide results that are beneficial for the population as a whole, and are not biased toward a particular section of society.

Diversity plays an important role in making sure that the results of clinical research are universal. The study should include people from all race and ethnic groups. This maintains the generalization and the findings from this study benefits everyone.



However, if a single category of population based on age or race is considered, then this will not benefit the other sections of the population. Besides the universal benefits of diversity in clinical research, it is also necessary for ethical reasons. The advantage and dangers of the study should be equitably divided among the population.

For example, a study done on a particular gender will benefit only them and will restrict the benefits of other genders. Diversity is important because it helps in analyzing how treatment influences people of different groups. A medicine suitable for children might not effectively work on adults.

Another issue is that the clinical researchers might belong to a similar background and do not have any idea about other groups of people and their experiences. This situation can affect the outcome of the study and it might incline the group of the people that designed it. For example, if the group of researchers is a group of men, the result will be inclined towards men and vice versa.

Various ways can help deal with the challenges and will encourage diversity in clinical research. Initially, the depreciated group of people should be enlisted in the study, and efforts for their benefit should be conducted. Next, an awareness programme should be launched for the clinical researchers — where they should learn about the diversity, needs, and experiences of people from different groups and perform their studies accordingly.

At last, the diversity in clinical research should be monitored and evaluated regularly and deal with any challenges that might occur.

In community-based participatory research (CBPR), all the members of the community are involved in the research. It develops understanding and trust among researchers and people from different communities. This creates a relationship and increases the engagement of people in clinical research and their understanding.

Finally, diversity is necessary for clinical research, because it secures the results that constitute all the groups of people in the world. The generalisation of the result is important, and ethical, and should be able to find the different ways in which treatment might affect the people of all groups. A lot of challenges might make diversity a difficult task to include in clinical trials, but there are many ways through which diversity can be promoted and provide benefits to all sections of society.

(The author is Co-founder, DPHS Pvt. Ltd)

Debt burden is rising; industry must share it

The industry, with the motive of cashing in on its profits the maximum, wants the Government to bear the expenses that it should ideally have done itself



SHIVAJI SARKAR

The year 2023 ushers in the most eventful year with one-third of the country seeking to form new governments in states. The Union Budget to be unveiled on February 1 would be virtually the last full annual budget of the Narendra Modi-led National Democratic Alliance government in its second term, which may get many colourful touches ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

In February 2024, it would be only a partial Budget in line with the convention since the general elections would be held in March-April next year. A massive public spending programme was announced last year with a spending of Rs 5.5 lakh crore and by the close of the year it has taken additional sanctions to spend Rs 7.5 lakh crore – an increase of 35.4 per cent.

Over Rs 2 lakh crore goes into the free-food dole that has emerged as a new bartering system for cash, keeping a large number of the under-privileged smiling as it changes their lives. The inflation index is stabilising but the prices are zooming. It is politically and economically tightrope walking through international uncertainties fueled by the Russia-Ukraine War, globally, particularly European, energy crisis and projected slowdown.

Budget making is not easy as the nation moves on to the election mode with the Tripura polls in February, while the people across the country are facing a difficult job scenario, and not so comfortable consumer demand is hitting manufacturing and core sector growth. The industry bodies like the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) are demanding raising the income-tax threshold to Rs 5 lakh, cut in the GST for most items to less than 28 per cent and thrust on rural infrastructure for facilitating employment generation and sales with an opposition sharpening its teeth.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is likely to agree to some of these demands. Industry is not worried about the government finances. Each of the above suggestions has bearing on revenue collections. The deficit is about 6+ per cent, says the government, but the International Monetary Fund (IMF) finds it at 10 per cent.

Market borrowings are projected at Rs 11.6 lakh crore, about one-third of the budgetary expenses, which are likely to shoot up as till September itself as it reached Rs 8.45 lakh crore. The burgeoning public debt rises to 89.1 per cent. The IMF is concerned that 84.16 per cent of Indian GDP comprises borrowings.

Life for a Finance Minister is not a bed of roses as current account deficit and external borrowings are increasing with an unstable dollar. These acute problems are apparently not the priority of the industry.

That the industry has not moved out



THE BURGEONING PUBLIC DEBT RISES TO 89.1 PER CENT OF THE GDP. THIS CANNOT BE THE NORMAL PRESCRIPTION. INDUSTRY HAS TO SHARE THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND OTHER EXPENSES AND CAN'T ALLOW THE COUNTRY TO SLIDE ON HEAVY REPAYMENTS

(The author is a senior journalist)



of the 1950s mindset is evident with their suggestions to cut employer contribution to the National Pension Scheme to 10 per cent from 14 per cent, a move that hits the workers hard. And from an unhappy worker they want higher productivity and a better market!

The CII, Ficci, the PHDCCI, and ASSOCHAM should have given more constructive suggestions to the Finance Minister. Wonder why they did not draw the attention of the government to the expensive, highly polluting fruitless exercise of scrapping cars. Similarly, they should have told the FM that after Rs 2.6 lakh crore petrol-road-building cess a year, abolition of highway toll is beneficial for bringing down prices drastically, making budgeting process easier and help the Reserve Bank of India keep interest rates low.

Infra spending adds to glittering activities of project expenses. It is often forgotten that infrastructure is also a drain and most developed countries have done it not with gusto in a short period but over long spans of time. That is prudent. Despite that today the US needs \$58 billion for repairing 220,000 bridges and immediate reconstruction of 79,500 bridges.

The Indian industry with its profit motive wants the government to bear the expenses that it should have done itself. Infrastructure needs investment and also provisioning at a high level for refurbishing and replacement. Industry bodies, professing

infrastructure investment, want that the concessions should bolster companies through government efforts, which may not be sustainable for long.

Inappropriate priorities can land the country, fewest in the world that still is on a growth trajectory, to an undesirable tract. The world is looking at how the existing infrastructure could be maintained for a longer time. Somehow, many economists want a review of the spree of demolitions of office buildings in Delhi and elsewhere. The western world capitals pride in refurbishing these heritage structures to continue with it for centuries.

High-speed trains should not be a fad. Better management with less investment can speed up many trains. Abandoning of stations and creating new ones can be avoided. It would give more leeway to the FM. The country needs to rethink building massive rail stations with fences and security. The richest countries try to keep the rail stations simple, with adequate facilities but keep their expenses low.

Industry even did not suggest replacing loss-making Metros in smaller towns like Jaipur or Lucknow with simple but efficient trams. They would not as many of them are beneficiaries of ill-placed priorities.

The burgeoning public debt rises to 89.1 per cent of GDP. This cannot be the normal prescription. Industry has to share the infrastructure and other expenses and can't allow the country to slide on

heavy repayments. Total debt is estimated at Rs 152 lakh crore in March 2023, while accounting for Rs 17 lakh crore rise in a year.

About 20 per cent or one-fifth of the budgetary allocation, Rs 7.88 lakh crore of a budget of Rs 39.44 lakh crore, go in the repayment of interest payments.


Industry should have suggested to the government how to keep the debt low. Instead, it wants the government to borrow more to bolster their profits. It has to take a call to resist pressure on increasing capital expenditure. Let the private sector mull how it should help in keeping the fiscal deficit low to match a low revenue growth.

The government is not in a position to raise tax rates. For fiscal prudence, it has to give up a bit. It is a tough year and such innovation away from extravaganza would help the nation. The industry cannot expect the government to burden the people particularly in a year when world growth as per IMF, UNCTAD and World Bank would be slower. The IT majors are under pressure from global economic troubles and would be squeezing more.

The IMF sees India growing at 6.1 per cent in 2023-24, a little less than 6.8 per cent estimates of RBI. It's indeed challenging for the government to give more jobs, manage finances, and be the world engine of growth. The RBI finds India capable but prudence, sagacity and tough steps needed to sail through in a stormier world in 2023-24.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

MAKING SUCH COMMENTS AGAINST THE PERSON WHO IS LEADING THE GRAND ALLIANCE GOVERNMENT IN BIHAR IS SIMPLY SUPPORTING THE BJP AND ITS POLICIES. — BIHAR DEPUTY CM TEJSHWI YADAV



NITISH KUMAR'S NAME WILL NOT BE THERE IN HISTORY. HE WILL NOT BE REMEMBERED AT ALL. HE IS LIKE 'SHIKHANDI', WHO HAS NO STANDING OF HIS OWN. — RJD LEADER SUDHAKAR SINGH

‘Commonality’ mindset hinders Greek studies

Should India study, if at all, solely those aspects of Greece that have a clear Indian connection?

Two decades ago, the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), with an endowment from the Government of Greece and additional financial support from the AG Leventis Foundation, instituted a Greek Chair. The Chair is named after Dimitrios Galanos (1760-1833), a Varanasi-based Greek Indologist and translator of Sanskrit texts into Greek.

Its mission pertains to the teaching of the Greek language and civilisation vis-à-vis Indic expositions on politics and ethics in the form of certificate courses. Prof Vasileios Syros, a Greek historian of political thought, has lately been appointed to the Chair. Since 1998, on the lines of Hebrew and Turkish, Greek has been offered at JNU's School of



PRIYADARSHI DUTTA

(The author is an independent researcher based in New Delhi)

Language, Literature & Culture Studies as an optional language at BA, MA and PhD levels.

However, there is no full-fledged centre or programme dedicated to it on the lines of Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Russian, Spanish, etc.

Despite the fact that two Greek poets, viz. Giorgos Seferis and Odysseas Elytis, were awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1963 and 1979 respectively, and many other Greek writers, including Kostis Palamas, Angelos Sikelianos, Nikos Kazantzakis and Yiannis Ritsos, were unsuccessfully nominated for the same, the appeal of Greek as a modern language has been limited.

Indians came to know about Greece in the 19th century through their exposure to

English language and literature. Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831), the radical Eurasian teacher at Hindu College (later Presidency College) in Kolkata, composed heroic poems like *The Greeks at Marathon* (1825), *Address to the Greeks* (1826), and *Greece* (1827) cheering the Greeks in their war of independence against the Ottoman Turks.

In 1833, Khetramohan Mookerjee, wrote the first textbook on Greek history in any Indian language. Written in Bengali as *Greek Desher Itihas*, it was an abridgement of Oliver Goldsmith's *History of Greece* (1809). Phiroze Vasunia, a rare Indian classicist, who teaches at University College London, describes this phenomenon as Athens in Calcutta in his book *The Classics and Colonial India* (2013). Apart from Derozio, Vasunia mentions Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873), the poet of the Bengal Renaissance, who wrote the *Hector-badh* (Slaying of Hector) based on the *Iliad*.

Britain is a recognisable leader in Hellenic/Greek studies. One of the reasons is that they have cultivated that language since the 16th century. It was being taught, alongside Latin, in their grammar schools and universities.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, India created her own classical background. It comprised the Vedic era, 16 Mahajanapadas, the Maurya, Sunga, Gupta, Chola and Vijayanagara empires. It was the age of Indian nationalism, and the historical work com-

plemented this political venture. Porus, who fought against Alexander, and Chandragupta Maurya, who defeated Seleucus I Nicator and founded the first pan-Indian Empire, became inspiring figures.

Thankfully, however, a common ground came to light. It was the lineage of Indo-Greek kings, i.e., the Greeks who had accompanied Alexander to India and subsequently established kingdoms in Bactria (Afghanistan), Punjab and Sindh. The Indo-Greek period (326 BC and 400 AD) witnessed confluence of Indic and Hellenic thoughts in the form of the Greco-Buddhist Gandhara school of art that produced the first series of Buddha statues.

The Pali text *Milindapanha* records spiritual conversations between Bactrian king Menander (c 158-138 BC) and Buddhist monk Nagasena. The Garuda Column raised by Heliiodorus, who was an ambassador of Antialcidas, the Indo-Greek king of Taxila, and styled himself as a devotee of Krishna in Besnagar, near Vidisha, MP, is a good example of how certain Greeks adopted Hinduism.

More than a century ago, Gauranga Nath Banerjee registered a number of Hellenic influences on India in his book *Hellenism in Ancient India* (1920). However, this “commonality” mindset also became a hindrance. Serious work on Hellenism in India gets hampered by an obsession with affinities and physical encounters. In the *Oxford Handbook of Hellenic Studies*

(2009), for which Phiroze Vasunia served as co-editor, there was not a single contributor from South Asia. Should India study, if at all, solely those aspects of Greece that have a clear Indian connection?

The Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Rohilkhand University in Bareilly might not be counted as one of India's premier institutions. However, during the 1990s, under historian Prof Uday Prakash Arora, it launched a new initiative in historical research on Greece. Prof Arora was subsequently invited to occupy JNU's Greek Chair, a post he has now retired from. While the Dimitrios Galanos Chair is a laudable and promising project, India should prepare for a more independent scholarship on Greek civilisation.

2 killed in east Ukraine; Russia claims deadly hits on barracks

AP ■ KYIV, UKRAINE

Officials said at least two people were killed during fighting in eastern Ukraine, as Russia claimed Sunday that it carried out deadly missile strikes on barracks used by Ukrainian troops in the war. Donetsk governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said one person was killed in strikes on Bakhmut, and eight others in the region were wounded. He also reported rocket attacks on Kramatorsk and Konstantynivka. In the Kharkiv region, the town of Merefa was hit during the night, killing one person and two other settlements in the region were shelled, Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said.

The Russian military said missiles launched at Kramatorsk had struck barracks used by Ukrainian troops, killing 600 people. There was no comment from Ukrainian officials, and it wasn't immediately possible to independently verify it.

The claim comes almost a week after Ukraine forces fired rockets at a facility in the eastern Donetsk region where Russian soldiers were stationed, killing dozens of them in one of the deadliest attacks on the Kremlin's forces since the war



began more than 10 months ago.

Russian defense ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said the missile strikes were retaliation for Ukraine's attack in Makiivka, in which at least 89

Russian soldiers died.

"Over the past day, Russian intelligence means detected and reliably confirmed through various independent channels some temporary bases of Ukrainian

servicemen in Kramatorsk," he said. "As a result of a massive rocket strike on these temporary bases of Ukrainian units, more than 600 Ukrainian servicemen were killed."

The latest developments come after Russian forces ended a partially observed, unilateral cease-fire timed to coincide with Orthodox Christmas celebrations on Saturday.

Ukrainians honour fighter at outdoor funeral in capital

AP ■ KYIV, UKRAINE

Ukrainian soldiers, family and mourners gathered in frigid weather in Kyiv on Sunday to pay tribute to a soldier killed fighting against Russian forces in Bakhmut, the strategic city under siege on the eastern front.

An open casket, outdoor service was held in Kyiv's Independence Square for Maj. Oleh Yurchenko who was killed in Bakhmut on Jan. 2. Fellow soldiers carried the coffin while others knelt on the ground. A bugle played and later a male quartet sang solemn hymns as an Orthodox priest conducted the service attended by about 200 people.

Yurchenko, 45, nicknamed "Happy," volunteered for the army after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began on Feb. 24. He had been head of security for TIU Canada, an energy company operating in Ukraine, according to a Facebook post.

Yurchenko was well-known as a Ukrainian patriot as he had been a participant in pro-democracy demonstrations in 2004-2005 and later in 2014 which ousted Viktor Yanukovich as president. Kyiv's Independence Square was the center of both demonstrations so it was fitting as the site for the religious ceremony for Yurchenko.



"He was the best Ukrainian, a kind father, a very responsible person," said Yuri Zhukovskiy, a Ukrainian soldier. "It is a very heavy loss, because these are the best people in Ukraine, and they are dying. It is a great pity. And no matter how many enemies are killed, we are sorry for (the death of) one such person."

Another fellow soldier, Ruslan Boyko, praised Yurchenko's positive outlook.

"He was a very brave, very cheerful person who always tried to help everyone, to be ahead in any situation," Boiko said. He said that Yurchenko was always ready "to take on more

responsibility, more tasks and protect everyone as much as possible."

Olesia Yurchenko, the fallen soldier's 22-year-old daughter and eldest child, said the family is grieving his death but trying to live by his principles.

"It is about everyone cherishing their virtues: hard work, kindness, honesty, loyalty to their country, their family," she said. "Because this is what my father taught me. Not to give up, not to retreat."

She said that her father "always said that we still have to build the country ... build Ukraine."

Ukrainian startups bring tech innovation to CES 2023

AP ■ LAS VEGAS

The past year has been difficult for startups everywhere, but running a company in Ukraine during the Russian invasion comes with a whole different set of challenges.

Clinical psychologist Ivan Osadchyy brought his medical device, called Knopka, to this year's CES show in Las Vegas in hopes of getting it into U.S. hospitals.

His is one of a dozen Ukrainian startups backed by a government fund that are at CES this year to show their technology to the world.

"Two of our hospitals we operated before are ruined already and one is still occupied. So this is the biggest challenge," Osadchyy said.

"The second challenge is for production and our team because they are shelling our electricity system and people are hard to work without lights, without heating in their flats," he said.

He came up with the device after spending a year with his own grandmother in the hospital and finding that he had to track down nurses when she needed something.

The system works by notifying nurses when a patient has an abnormal heart rate, is due for treatment or otherwise needs help. The nurse can't turn off their button until they've dealt with the issue.

"We are still working and operating because hospitals are open and we need to support them and provide efficiency



and safety for patients as well," he said.

Karina Kudriavtseva of the government-backed Ukrainian Startup Fund, says that, like Knopka, all of the country's startups have kept going since Russia's invasion almost a year ago.

"The times have changed, their conditions have changed, but it can only make them stronger because all of the startups are working on the thing that to save the company, save the team, save the business, and save their lives, of course," she said.

The invasion forced Valentyn Frechka to relocate to France, but he says his Releaf paper company has never stopped production.

When he was 16, Frechka

decided to study alternative sources of cellulose in order to decrease deforestation. He's now developed a technology that uses fallen leaves and recycled fibre to make paper.

The company's main product is paper shopping bags, but they also make food packaging, egg trays and corrugated boxes.

Frechka says the conflict has forced the company to become more flexible and more open to opportunities.

"When this conflict happened and we located our company to France, we have found a lot of new partners and we have raised fundraising. We have raised the money for our needs," he says. "So it really makes us more open for the world."

Борис Владимирович Путин



Bosnian Serbs award Putin with medal of honour

AP ■ SARAJEVO (BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA)

The Bosnian Serb separatist leader on Sunday awarded Russian President Vladimir Putin with the highest medal of honour for his "patriotic concern and love" for the Serb-controlled half of Bosnia.

"Putin is responsible for developing and strengthening cooperation and political and friendly relations between RS (Republika Srpska) and Russia," the Bosnian Serb president, Milorad Dodik, said at the awards ceremony in the Bosnian Serb stronghold of Banja Luka. Dodik, who visited Putin in September in Moscow, has maintained close ties with the Russian president despite Russia's war in Ukraine. The medal will be presented to Putin during the next meeting between the two.

Moscow has often been accused by the West of seeking to destabilize Bosnia and the rest of the Balkans through its proxies in Serbia and Bosnia. Dodik has openly advocated tearing away the Serb-controlled half of

Bosnia from a Bosniak-Croat federation to join it up with neighboring Serbia.

A US-brokered peace deal in 1995 ended a war in Bosnia that left at least 100,000 people dead and millions homeless, but left the country deeply divided between its three main ethnic groups. Moscow has been exploiting the divisions by tacitly supporting Dodik's separatist policies.

Dodik awarded Putin on the occasion of "the day of Republika Srpska," which has been deemed illegal by Bosnia's constitutional court. It marks the day when Bosnian Serbs proclaimed they were splitting from Bosnia in 1992 with the aim of separating the Serb-populated regions of the Balkan state and join them up with Serbia.

Tensions were running high in Bosnia as the Serbs planned to hold their main celebrations on the outskirts of Sarajevo on Monday, the town they held under siege for three years during the war. Thousands of people were killed in the relentless shelling and sniping of the Bosnian capital.

Mayor: Teacher shot by 6-year-old 'red flag for USA'

AP ■ RICHMOND

A Virginia teacher who was critically injured when she was shot by a 6-year-old student in Newport News is showing signs of improvement as authorities struggle to understand how a child so young could be involved in a school shooting, the city's mayor said Saturday.

Newport News Mayor Phillip Jones said the condition of the teacher, a woman in her 30s, is "trending in a positive direction" as she remains hospitalized. Police Chief Steve Drew met with the teacher and her family Saturday morning. "She has improved and is currently listed in stable condition," police said in a news release.

The boy shot and wounded the teacher with a handgun in a first-grade classroom on Friday at Richneck Elementary School, according to authorities. Drew said the shooting was not acci-

dental and was part of an altercation. No students were injured.

Police on Saturday declined to describe what led to the altercation or any other details about what happened in the classroom, citing the ongoing investigation. Jones also declined to reveal details of the shooting, or say how the boy got access to the gun or who owns the weapon.

"This is a red flag for the country," Jones said. "I do think that after this event, there is going to be a nationwide discussion on how these sorts of things can be prevented." Virginia law does not allow 6-year-olds to be tried as adults. In addition, a 6-year-old is too young to be committed to the custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice if found guilty.

A juvenile judge would have authority, though, to revoke a parent's custody and place a child under the purview of the Department of Social Services.



Jones would not say where the boy is being held. "We are ensuring he has all the services that he currently needs right now," Jones said. Experts who study gun violence said the shooting represents an extremely rare occurrence of a young child bringing a gun into school and wounding a teacher.

"It's very rare and it's not something the legal system is really designed or positioned to deal with," said researcher David Riedman, founder of a database that tracks U.S. school shootings dating back to 1970.

He said Saturday that he's only aware of three other shootings caused by 6-year-old students in the time period he's studied.

Those include the fatal shooting of a fellow student in 2000 in Michigan and shootings that injured other students in 2011 in Texas and 2021 in Mississippi.

Riedman said he only knows of one other instance of a student younger than that causing gunfire at a school, in which a 5-year-old student brought a gun to a Tennessee

school in 2013 and accidentally discharged it. No one was injured in that case.

Daniel W. Webster, a professor at Johns Hopkins University who studies gun violence, agreed that a 6-year-old shooting a teacher at school is extremely unusual. But he said his research shows that instances of young children accessing loaded guns and shooting themselves or others unintentionally in homes or other settings are rising. "A 6 year old gaining access to a loaded gun and shooting him/herself or someone else, sadly, is not so rare," he said in an email.

In the Newport News case, Drew said Friday that the shooting didn't appear to be an accident and that it was isolated to the single victim. He said the student and teacher had known each other in a classroom setting. "We did not have a situation where someone was going around the school shooting,"

Drew told reporters.

Investigators were trying to figure out where he obtained the handgun. Parents and students were reunited at a gymnasium, Newport News Public Schools said via Facebook.

The police chief declined to discuss what contact investigators have had with the boy's parents. "We have been in contact with our commonwealth's attorney (local prosecutor) and some other entities to help us best get services to this young man," Drew said. Newport News is a city of about 185,000 people in southeastern Virginia known for its shipyard, which builds the nation's aircraft carriers and other U.S. Navy vessels.

Richneck has about 550 students who are in kindergarten through fifth grade, according to the Virginia Department of Education's website. Jones said there will be no classes at the school Monday and Tuesday.

Public can see Pope Benedict tomb at St Peter's Basilica

AP ■ VATICAN CITY

The public can now visit the tomb of Pope Benedict XVI in the grottoes under St. Peter's Basilica.

The pontiff was buried on Jan. 5 immediately following a funeral in St. Peter's Square. Benedict's tomb lies in the grottoes under the basilica's main floor.

The Vatican announced on Saturday that the public could visit the tomb starting Sunday morning.

Benedict had lived since 2013 as pope emeritus, following his retirement from the papacy, the first pontiff to do so in 600 years. He died on Dec. 31 at the age of 95, in the Vatican monastery where he spent his last years.

On Thursday, his longtime secretary, Archbishop Georg Gaenswein, imparted a final blessing after Benedict's body, contained inside three coffins — the cypress one displayed in the square during the funeral presided over by Pope Francis, a zinc one and an outer one hewn from oak — were lowered into a space in the floor.

The remains were placed in the former tomb of Benedict's predecessor, St. John Paul



II. John Paul's remains were moved up to a chapel on the main floor of the basilica following his 2011 beatification.

Some 50,000 people attended Benedict's funeral, following three days of the body's lying in state in the basilica, an event which drew nearly 200,000 viewers.

The name of Benedict, the Catholic church's 265th pontiff, was engraved on a white marble slab, the Vatican said.

The Vatican didn't say whether Pope Francis had privately visited the completed

tomb of Benedict before public viewing was permitted, or might do so at some other time.

On Sunday morning, Francis was leading a ceremony for the baptism of 13 babies in the Sistine Chapel. The chapel, frescoed by Michelangelo, is the traditional setting for the baptisms, an event which closes out the Vatican's year-end ceremonies.

Later, greeting pilgrims and tourists gathered in St. Peter's Square for his Sunday noon blessing, Francis quoted from a 2008 homily by Benedict, in which the late pontiff spoke about salvation.

Drawing inspiration from his predecessor's words, Francis said that the faithful when judging others, including in the Catholic church, should apply not harshness but mercy, "sharing the wounds and the fragilities" and avoiding divisions.

Francis has been criticized in some quarters by those who favored Benedict's more conservative stances because his funeral homily made only a mere mention of the late pontiff. While Benedict and Francis had openly spoken of each other with respect, tensions festered for years between loyalists of both men.

Thousands of Israelis protest new Govt's policies

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Thousands of Israelis took to the streets Saturday evening to protest plans by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's new government that opponents say threaten democracy and freedoms.

The protesters gathered in the central city of Tel Aviv days after the most right-wing and religiously conservative government in the country's 74-year history was sworn in.

"The settler government is against me," read one placard. Another banner read, "Housing, Livelihood, Hope." Some protesters carried rainbow flags.

The protest was led by left-wing and Arab members of the Israeli parliament, the Knesset. They contend that proposed plans by the new Cabinet will hinder judicial system and widen societal gaps.

The left-wing protesters slammed Justice Minister Yariv

Levin, who on Wednesday unveiled the government's long-promised overhaul of the judicial system that aims to weaken the country's Supreme Court.

Critics accused the government of declaring war on the legal system, saying the plan will upend Israel's system of checks and balances and undermine its democratic institutions by giving absolute power to the new governing coalition.

"We are really afraid that our country is going to lose the democracy and we are going to a dictatorship just for reasons of one person which wants to get rid of his law trial," said Danny Simon, 77, a protester from Yavne, south of Tel Aviv. He was referring to Netanyahu, who was indicted on corruption charges in 2021, allegations that he has denied.

Protesters also called for peace and co-existence between Jews and Arab residents of the country.

Biden to get a firsthand look at US-Mexico border situation

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden is heading to the US-Mexico border on Sunday, his first trip there as president after two years of hounding by Republicans who have hammered him as soft on border security while the number of migrants crossing spirals.

Biden is due to spend a few hours in El Paso, Texas, currently the biggest corridor for illegal crossings, due in large part to Nicaraguans fleeing repression, crime and poverty in their country. They are among migrants from four countries who are now subject to quick expulsion under new rules enacted by the Biden administration in the past week.

The president is expected to meet with border officials to discuss migration as well as the increased trafficking of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids, which are driving skyrocketing numbers of overdoses in the U.S.

Biden will visit the El Paso County Migrant Services Center and meet with nonprofits and religious groups that support migrants arriving to the U.S. It is not clear whether Biden will

talk to any migrants.

"The president's very much looking forward to seeing for himself firsthand what the border security situation looks like," said John Kirby, White House national security spokesman. "This is something that he wanted to see for himself."

Biden's announcement on border security and his visit to the border are aimed in part at quelling the political noise and blunting the impact of upcoming investigations into immigration promised by House Republicans. But any enduring solution will require action by the sharply divided Congress, where multiple efforts to enact sweeping changes have failed in recent years.

Republican Sens. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and John Cornyn of Texas offered faint praise for Biden's decision to visit the border, and even that was notable in the current political climate.

"He must take the time to learn from some of the experts I rely on the most, including local officials and law enforcement, landowners, nonprofits, U.S. Customs and Border Protection's officers and agents,



and folks who make their livelihoods in border communities on the front lines of his crisis," Cornyn said.

From El Paso, Biden will continue south to Mexico City, where he and the leaders of Mexico and Canada will gather on Monday and Tuesday for a North American leaders summit. Immigration is among the

items on the agenda.

In El Paso, where migrants congregate at bus stops and in parks before traveling on, border patrol agents have stepped up security before Biden's visit.

"I think they're trying to send a message that they're going to more consistently check people's documented status, and if you have not been processed

they are going to pick you up," said Ruben Garcia of the Annunciation House aid group in El Paso.

Migrants and asylum-seekers fleeing violence and persecution have increasingly found that protections in the United States are available primarily to those with money or the savvy to find someone to vouch for

them financially.

Jose Natera, a Venezuelan migrant in El Paso who hopes to seek asylum in Canada, said he has no prospects for finding a U.S. Sponsor and that he's now reluctant to seek asylum in the U.S. Because he's afraid of being sent to Mexico.

Mexico "is a terrible country where there is crime, corruption, cartels and even the police persecute you," he said. "They say that people who think about entering illegally won't have a chance, but at the same time I don't have a sponsor. ... I came to this country to work. I didn't come here to play."

The numbers of migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border has risen dramatically during Biden's first two years in office. There were more than 2.38 million stops during the year that ended Sept. 30, the first time the number topped 2 million. The administration has struggled to clamp down on crossings, reluctant to take hard-line measures that would resemble those of the Trump administration.

The policy changes announced this past week are Biden's biggest move yet to contain illegal border crossings

and will turn away tens of thousands of migrants arriving at the border. At the same time, 30,000 migrants per month from Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti and Venezuela will get the chance to come to the U.S. Legally as long as they travel by plane, get a sponsor and pass background checks.

The U.S. Will also turn away migrants who do not seek asylum first in a country they traveled through en route to the U.S. The changes were welcomed by some, particularly leaders in cities where migrants have been massing. But Biden was excoriated by immigrant advocate groups, which accused him of taking measures modeled after those of the former president.

"I do take issue with comparing us to Donald Trump," said White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, pointing to some of his most maligned policies, including the separation of migrant children from their parents.

"This is not that president," she said.

For all of his international travel over his 50 years in public service, Biden has not spent much time at the U.S.-Mexico

border.

The only visit that the White House could point to was Biden's drive by the border while he was campaigning for president in 2008. He sent Vice President Kamala Harris to El Paso in 2021, but she was criticized for largely bypassing the action, because El Paso wasn't the center of crossings that it is now.

President Barack Obama made a 2011 trip to El Paso, where he toured border operations and the Paso Del Norte international bridge, but he was later criticized for not going back as tens of thousands of unaccompanied minors crossed into the U.S. From Mexico.

Trump, who made hardening immigration a signature issue, traveled to the border several times. During one visit, he crammed into a small border station to inspect cash and drugs confiscated by agents. During a trip to McAllen, Texas, then the center of a growing crisis, he made one of his most-often repeated claims, that Mexico would pay to build a border wall.

American taxpayers ended up footing the bill after Mexican leaders flatly rejected the idea.

China welcomes first batch of int'l travellers after scrapping quarantine norms

PTI ■ BEIJING

For the first time in three years, China on Sunday opened its borders and welcomed international travellers and returning residents without the need for them to go under quarantine, even as infections continue to surge after Beijing scrapped its stringent zero-Covid policy.

The first flights under China's new "no quarantine" rules for international travellers landed at the airports in Guangzhou and Shenzhen in southern Guangdong province on Sunday morning, the state-run CGTN TV reported.

Officials said 387 passengers were aboard two flights from Toronto and Singapore on the day the country ended its strict Covid-19 restrictions for travellers.

On Sunday, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region resumed cross-border travel with the Chinese mainland.

Many other Chinese borders also saw cross-border trav-



el.

At the Shanghai Pudong International Airport, a man nicknamed Jiang, who was the first to complete the immigration procedures, told reporters that "It is very convenient all the way from exit hatch to border inspection and clearance".

Last month, China announced it was lifting Covid-19 restrictions that mandated international arrivals undergo nucleic acid tests and quarantine.

Inbound travellers only need to take a PCR test within 48 hours before departure, and they no longer need to apply for a health code from Chinese diplomatic and consular missions.

The Chinese government on Saturday ordered the release of people detained over a host of coronavirus-related incidents.

The scrapping of the travel rules comes at a time when China is grappling with a sud-

den spurt in coronavirus infections fuelled by the Omicron variants, after the government relaxed its stringent zero-Covid policy last month in the wake of a wave 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.

Ahead of the complete relaxation of Covid rules, the Chinese government ordered the release of the people detained for Covid-related 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.

There was no direct mention of whether the order is applicable to scores of people held during last month's rare protests against the zero-Covid policy, some of which called for the end of Chinese President Xi Jinping's continuation in power. The videos of protests in

Shanghai posted on social media showed people openly shouting slogans such as 'Xi Jinping, step down' and 'the Communist party, step down'.

Observers say last month's protests also mark the first such open dissent against the leadership of Xi, who in October last year was elected for an unprecedented third five-year term by the once-in-a-five-year-congress of the ruling Communist Party of China.

Hundreds of people have been arrested in the last three years for resisting the lockdowns of their apartments and dragging people out of their flats to take them to quarantine centres.

While the announcement of scrapping all quarantine rules was widely welcomed at home, the timing of the opening also fuelled concerns abroad as it comes ahead of the country's annual Spring Festival on January 22 during which millions of Chinese will travel to destinations all over the world.

France's Macron opens up about love to autistic interviewers

AP ■ LE PECQ (FRANCE)

The president about his teenage romance with a teacher at his high school was so close to the bone, so eye-popping in a country where politicians largely keep their private lives to themselves, that the interviewer couldn't quite rustle up the courage to ask it.

So he got Emmanuel Macron to pose it to himself.

"He is the president," the French leader said, reading the question out loud from a piece of paper his interviewer handed to him.

"He should set the example and not marry his teacher." Ouch.

A group of interviewers on the autism spectrum, described by their publication as "atypical journalists," got France's 45-year-old president to talk about himself with unusual and illuminating candor in a televised interview this weekend, with frank but fair no-filter questions that professional journalists mostly don't dare ask of the French leader.

The interviewers from Le Papotin, a journal founded in 1990 in a Paris-region day care center for young people with autism, playfully grilled Macron about his marriage to Brigitte, his friends (he said he doesn't have many), Russian President Vladimir Putin and



other matters in his heart and thoughts.

In the process, they winked out some remarkably intimate details and gave Macron a platform to show a more personal side at a critical juncture in his second term as president. His government is embarking on a high-risk effort to push back France's retirement age, a promised reform of the pension system that is infuriating critics and threatens to bring protesters onto the streets.

Le Papotin's interviewers have over the years questioned numerous people of note, including former Presidents Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, and actor Vincent Cassel ("Ocean's Twelve," "Black Swan"). Their Macron interview was filmed in Paris in November and broadcast by France Televisions, which said the only rule was: "Anything

can be said to the Papotin but, most of all, anything can happen!"

Macron responded gamely, even to the probing about his romance with Brigitte, 24 years his senior. She was Brigitte Auziere, a married mother of three children, when they met at the high school where he was a student and she was a teacher. She later moved to the French capital to join Macron and divorced. They married in 2007. "It's not about setting an example or not, you see? When you're in love, the choice isn't yours," Macron said in his defense.

"She wasn't really my teacher. She was my drama teacher. It's not quite the same," he additionally ventured, a wiggle-round that Macron himself chuckled at and which provoked peals of laughter and a teasing "he's crafty!" from one of the interviewers sat beside him.

To another delicate question — "Do you have a lot of dough?" — the former banker said he earns less now as president, without divulging figures.

PUBLIC NOTICE

[This is to bring to the notice of the General Public that the following original below mentioned document pertaining to the Third Floor of Plot No. 9/01, Tihar -1, Subhash Nagar, New Delhi, have been lost / misplaced.

a) Original Sale Deed dated 11.04.2013 executed by Mr. Harpreet Singh Chawla & Mrs. Ruby Sikka in favour of Mrs. Saroj Bangia which is duly registered with the office of concerned Sub-Registrar of Assurances, as Document No. 7544, Book no.1, Vol. No. 20825, on Pages 108-114 on 12.04.2013. In case the same is found, it may be returned immediately to the following address:-

Mrs. Pushpa Devi
9/01, Third Floor,
Tihar-1, Subhash Nagar,
Pin code: 110027

PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Mahesh Kumar Gupta S/o Late Sh. Binda Singh Gupta aged 68yrs, R/o Flat No. E-702, Dwarka Dham Apartment, Plot No. 13, Sector-23, Dwarka, New Delhi-110075 have disowned my Elder Son Shalender Gupta & his wife Mrs. Neha of my free will from all my movable and immovable properties due to their abusive, violent behaviour, misconduct and temperament. He and his wife shall have no claim against me and my younger son & his family now and in future also. So, I sever all relations with them and disowns them absolutely.

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

R.O. No. 25 CORRIGENDUM-02 Dt. 07.01.2023

In reference to e-NIT Nos. 09/EE(E&M)/Asan Barrage/2022-23, invited by the office of the Executive Engineer (E&M), Asan Barrage, Dhalpur Jal Shakti Bhawan Dhakrani, Dehradun, the amended Tender Document has been uploaded on the e-Procurement portal <https://uktenders.gov.in>.

Other Terms & Condition will remain same. Information regarding Addendum/Corrigendum/Cancellation etc. of tender may be obtained from the website. Full & Further Details of tender can be seen from the e-procurement portal "https://uktenders.gov.in".

Executive Engineer (E&M)
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

China's new envoy vows to enhance ties with Nepal

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

China is willing to work with Nepal to stay true to their original aspirations, join forces to seek common development and build a closer community with a shared future in the new era, the new Chinese ambassador here said on Sunday. Ambassador Chen Song, one of the senior diplomats in China, also vowed to work to write a new chapter of the strategic partnership between the two countries.

Chen was appointed as ambassador to Nepal in November. However, Chen's arrival in Nepal was delayed after he and his wife got infected with Covid-19. He replaces Hou Yanqi, who returned to China after completing her four-year tenure in October.

"I stand ready to work closely with Nepali friends from all walks of life, gather



wisdom and pool strength to bring more benefits to the two peoples, and jointly write a new chapter of the China-Nepal strategic partnership of cooperation featuring everlasting friendship for development and prosperity," Chen was quoted as saying by The Kathmandu Post newspaper.

Speaking to journalists at the Tribhuvan International Airport, Chen said China will always firmly support Nepal in safeguarding state sovereignty and national dignity, exploring a development path suited to its national conditions, and pursuing independent domestic and foreign policies.

Over 150 Rohingya refugees taken ashore in Indonesia



AP ■ BANDA ACEH (INDONESIA)

More than 100 weak and hungry Rohingya Muslim refugees were among the latest group to reach ashore in Indonesia on Sunday after a long and dangerous journey aboard a wooden boat. The group of 184 people, including a pregnant woman and children, landed at the Kuala Gigieng beach in Indonesia's northernmost province of Aceh, which has already received more than 500

Rohingya last year. The refugees say they're seeking a better life than in overcrowded camps in Bangladesh, where they fled military persecution across the border in Myanmar.

"In Bangladesh, there are no opportunities for Rohingya refugees. So we come here to Indonesia," said Faisal, one of the refugees who uses only one name. Fahmi Irwan Ramli, Banda Aceh city police chief, said the refugees appeared generally in good condition, but

there was a pregnant woman and four were sick and being treated by doctors. The U.N. Refugee agency said it will determine their status in coordination with Indonesia's government.

Fishermen on Saturday reported seeing three boats suspected to be carrying refugees, but only one landed on Sunday. The United Nations reported that 26 refugees died last month of dehydration and exhaustion after weeks at sea.

More than 700,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled from Buddhist-majority Myanmar to refugee camps in Bangladesh since August 2017. Myanmar security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and burning thousands of Rohingya homes. Most of the refugees leaving the camps by sea attempt to reach Muslim-dominated Malaysia, but end up in Indonesia along the way.

Prince Harry interviews set to raise heat on royal family

AP ■ LONDON

Prince Harry is expected to lob more criticism at the UK royal family in broadcast interviews to promote his soul-baring new memoir, which has generated incendiary headlines even before its official release.

A prerecorded interview with Britain's ITV is scheduled to air Sunday evening. CBS show "60 Minutes" is set to run a conversation with the prince later, and he is appearing on "Good Morning America" and "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert."

In extracts released in advance, Harry tells ITV journalist Tom Bradby that he cried only once after his mother, Prince Diana, died in 1997 — at her burial. He said he feels guilt about not showing emotion when he and his brother Prince

William greeted crowds of mourners outside Kensington Palace, Diana's London home.

In the book, "Spare," Harry blames his family's stiff-upper-lip ethos, saying he had "learned too well ... the family maxim that crying is not an option."

"There were 50,000 bouquets of flowers to our mother and there we were shaking people's hands, smiling," Harry told ITV. "I've seen the videos, right, I looked back over it all. And the wet hands that we were shaking, we couldn't understand why their hands were wet, but it was all the tears that they were wiping away."

"Everyone thought and felt like they knew our mum, and the two closest people to her, the two most loved people by her, were unable to show any emotion in that moment."

"Spare" is the latest in a



string of public pronouncements by the prince and his wife Meghan since they quit royal life and moved to California in 2020, citing what they saw as the media's racist treatment of Meghan, who is biracial, and a lack of support from the palace. It follows an interview with Oprah Winfrey and a six-part Netflix documentary released last month.

The Associated Press purchased a Spanish-language copy of the book in advance of its publication around the world on Tuesday.

In the ghostwritten memoir, Harry, 38, describes the couple's acrimonious split from the royal family in 2020, after their suggestion of a part-time royal role was rejected. Harry contrasts the withdrawal of the couple's taxpayer-funded security with the case of his uncle, Prince Andrew, who was removed as working royal over his friendship with the U.S. Sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Last year, Andrew settled a lawsuit from a woman who accused him of sexually abusing her while she traveled with financier Epstein when she was 17. Andrew paid an undisclosed sum as part of the settlement, but didn't admit wrongdoing. Harry alleges that no one

considered removing Andrew's security despite the "shameful scandal."

The book also explores Harry's grief at the death of his mother and his long-simmering resentment at the role of royal "spare," overshadowed by the "heir" — older brother William. He recounts arguments and a physical altercation with William, reveals how he lost his virginity (in a field) and describes using cocaine and cannabis.

He also says he killed 25 Taliban fighters while serving as an Apache helicopter pilot in Afghanistan — a claim criticized by both the Taliban and British military veterans.

Royal officials haven't commented on the allegations, though allies have pushed back on the claims, largely anonymously.

Chief Engineer, Uttarakhand Rural Roads Development Agency,
First Floor, Directorate of Panchayatiraj, Opp-IT Park, Sahastradhara Road, Dehradun

Ref. No.:2512/I1-02(xix)-2/ITCO/URRDA/22 Date: 07.01.2023

PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY)
e-Procurement Notice-16/2022-23

The Chief Engineer, URRDA on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand invites the item rate bids in electronic tendering system for construction of Bridges under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in the Districts of **Uttarkashi** for **01** number of Packages with estimated cost totaling to **Rs. 3.94 Crore** including their maintenance for five years from the eligible contractors registered with PWD/CPWD or equivalent*.

Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 08-01-2023

Availability of Bid Documents and mode of submission: The bid documents are available online and should be submitted online in www.pmgstyendersuk.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of the bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities.

The bidders are required to submit original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4 B (ii) of ITB with **CONCERNED CIRCLE OFFICES, mentioned in SBD/MBD, only up to or before the time and date of the submission of the Bids (for World Bank funded works) and on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the bid (for Regular PMGSY Works)**, either by registered post or by hand, failing which the bids shall be declared non-responsive. No physical documents will be accepted after the closing date and time of submission of bids.

Last Date/Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement 23-01-2023 01:00 PM.

For further details please log on to www.pmgstyendersuk.gov.in

Chief Engineer, URRDA, Dehradun.

* Non Registered bidders may submit bids, however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.
Note : For e-Procurement for any sort of queries 0135-2608125 number may be contacted 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM.

FPIs begin new year in sell-off mode

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors offloaded nearly Rs 5,900 crore from the Indian equity markets in the first week of January on growing concerns over the re-emergence of Covid in some parts of the world and recession worries in the US.

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have been adopting a cautious stance toward Indian equity markets for the past few weeks.

Going forward, FPIs flow is expected to remain volatile amid GDP growth concerns, high global interest rates, and muted earnings expectations in the third quarter, Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail) at Kotak Securities Ltd, said.

According to data with the depositories, FPIs have made a net pull out of Rs 5,872 crore from the Indian equity markets during January 2-6.

In fact, foreign investors have been selling for 11 consecutive days, taking the cumulative selling to Rs 14,300

crore.

This came following a net inflow of Rs 11,119 crore in December and Rs 36,239 crore in November.

Overall, FPIs have made a net withdrawal of Rs 1.21 lakh crore from the Indian equity markets in 2022 on an aggressive rate hike by the central banks globally, particularly the US Federal Reserve, volatile crude, rising commodity prices along with Russia and Ukraine conflict.

This was the worst year for the FPIs in terms of flow and withdrawal from equities comes following a net investment in the preceding three years.

The latest outflow in January could be attributed to the concerning cues emanating from both global as well as domestic quarters.

"Increasing concerns over re-emergence of Covid in some parts of the world and recession worries in the US have been keeping FPIs away from emerging markets like India," Himanshu Srivastava, Associate



Director - Manager Research at Morningstar India, said.

Also, in the midst of the ongoing uncertainty, many investors would have also chosen to book profits with Indian markets, touching all-time highs in the recent past.

The money taken out from India is being invested in the underperformers of last year like China and Europe, which are doing well now. Clearly, FPI money is chasing lower valuations by selling in overvalued markets like India, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.

If the FPI selling continues,

it will open up opportunities for investors. FPIs will sell in stocks in which they are sitting on profits, like the banking segment, he said.

Last year, too, selling by FPIs in banks turned out to be an opportunity for domestic investors.

In addition to equities, FPIs have offloaded debt securities to the tune of Rs 1,240 crore during the first week of January.

Apart from India, FPI flows were negative for Taiwan and Indonesia so far this month, while it was positive for the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand.

Discoms' outstanding dues to gencos nearly halved to ₹62,681 cr in Jan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Total outstanding dues owed by electricity distribution companies (discoms) to power producers almost halved to Rs 62,681.68 crore in January, compared to Rs 1,21,030 crore in same month in 2022.

Experts said this substantial reduction in the discoms' total outstanding is mainly due to various steps taken by the government, like implementation of late payment surcharge rules and providing facility of equated monthly installments (EMIs) to utilities.

According to the portal PRAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators), the total outstanding dues of discoms stood at Rs 62,681.68 crore in January, 2023, which included Rs 25,526.42 crore overdue amount, that was not cleared even after 45 days of grace peri-



od offered by generators.

In January 2022, the total outstanding dues of discoms stood at Rs 1,21,030 crore, which included the total overdue amount of Rs 1,01,357 crore.

Power producers give 45 days to discoms to pay bills for electricity supply. After that, outstanding dues become overdue and generators charge penal interest on that in most

cases.

The PRAPTI portal was launched in May 2018, to bring in transparency in power-purchase transactions between generators and discoms. The portal has been revamped recently.

Earlier in November, 2022, the power ministry had stated that with the implementation of Electricity (LPS and Related Matters) Rules, 2022, remark-

able improvement has been seen in recovery of outstanding dues of Suppliers including Generating Companies, Transmission Companies and Traders.

The total outstanding dues of States which were at Rs 1,37,949 crore as on June 3, 2022, have been reduced by Rs 24,680 crore to Rs 1,13,269 crore with timely payment of just four EMIs, it had stated.

Allow deductions, hike threshold for levying peak 30% tax to make optional tax regime attractive: Experts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investments in PPF and other tax savings schemes should be allowed as deductions, and the threshold for 30 per cent tax should be raised to Rs 20 lakh under the concessional income tax regime in Budget 2023-24 to make it attractive for middle-income taxpayers, experts said.

The government in Budget 2020-21 brought an optional income tax regime, under which individuals and Hindu Undivided Families (HUFs) were to be taxed at lower rates if they did not avail specified exemptions and deductions,

like house rent allowance (HRA), interest on the home loan, investments made under Section 80C, 80D and 80CCD. Under this, total income up to Rs 2.5 lakh will be tax-exempt.

A 5 per cent tax is levied on total income between Rs 2.5 lakh and Rs 5 lakh, 10 per cent on Rs 5 lakh to Rs 7.5 lakh, 15 per cent on Rs 7.5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh, 20 per cent on Rs 10 lakh to Rs 12.5 lakh, 25 per cent on Rs 12.5 lakh to Rs 15 lakh, and 30 per cent on above Rs 15 lakh.

The scheme, however, has not gained traction as in several cases it resulted in a higher tax burden.

Experts believe that Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman should look at including certain popular tax deductions claimed by individuals, in addition to increasing the basic exemption limit and hiking the threshold for peak tax rate, in the optional tax regime to make it attractive for taxpayers.

Nangia Andersen India Chairman Rakesh Nangia said the government should rationalise the tax rates further in the optional tax regime to make it commensurate with the deductions/exemptions that the taxpayer is foregoing.

"The biggest drawback of

the optional tax regime is that, for the lower and middle-class taxpayers, tax rates provided under the optional tax regime struggle to compete with the normal tax regime, if the available deductions and exemptions are pressed into service. Investments and social security linked deductions should be made available even in case of the optional tax regime," Nangia said.

Deloitte India Partner Sudhakar Sethuraman expressed a similar opinion saying that the government could consider allowing certain deductions, which are traditionally claimed by individuals

and at the same time without complicating the process.

These deductions, he said, could be those which qualify for life insurance premiums, home loan repayment and deduction for home loan interest payments, among others.

"Capping the peak tax rate at 25 per cent, from the existing 30 per cent, would make the regime more attractive. This peak rate of 25 per cent would make it somewhat comparable to the tax rates in neighbouring countries, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, etc," Sethuraman said.

EY Tax Partner and India Mobility Leader Amarpal S

Chadha suggested that the standard deduction of Rs 50,000 and certain other deductions up to Rs 2.5 lakh should be made part of the optional tax regime.

Chadha also suggested that the basic exemption limit should be increased to Rs 5 lakh from Rs 2.5 lakh at present and revise the current income slabs to make them more tax efficient.

The 30 per cent tax rate should be levied only on income above Rs 20 lakh against Rs 15 lakh currently.

AKM Global Partner-Tax Sandeep Sehgal said the highest rate of 30 per cent income



tax should be levied only on total income exceeding Rs 20 lakh and introduce a rebate for total income below Rs 5 lakh.

"As of now, in case any assessee missed the original return filing deadline, he/she is

ineligible to avail the new tax regime. Therefore, the appropriate amendment should be made in section 139 (1) allowing such a concessional regime to be opted while filing the belated return," Sehgal said.

Loans worth ₹2,500 cr disbursed to street vendors, small scale entrepreneurs in Raj

PTI ■ KOTA

Loans worth Rs 2,500 crore were given in a single day to street vendors, small scale entrepreneurs and cattle rearers at a credit outreach program here on Sunday.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla handed over the cheques to some beneficiaries.

Officials said others will receive their loan amounts during the course of the day.

The loans were given under schemes like Pradhan Mantri Svanidhi Yojana, Mudra Yojana and Pashupalak Kisan Credit Card.

Addressing the event at Dusshera Ground here, Sitharaman said the prime

minister himself has given guarantee for loans under the Pradhan Mantri Svanidhi Yojana, so one does not need to produce any document for guarantee.

Loans of at least Rs 68 crore are going to be distributed among cattle rearers (Pashupalaks), she added.

Many others are being given credit sanction for various business and agriculture purposes, she said.

The finance minister also urged women to form Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) in their respective areas and avail bank loans to develop storage and processing units in their villages.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, who is also the MP from Kota-Bundi, called upon street



vendors, small scale entrepreneurs and cattle rearers to avail the loans under various government schemes to expand their work.

"The engine of our country is the poorest man of India... In times to come, India would be leading in economic growth and it would be because of street vendors, women, cattle

rearers..." Birla said, adding "we want to build a new economic structure (aarthik tantra) and make the poorest the strongest one."

Earlier in the morning, the finance minister held an interaction with coaching students in Allen Career Institute in Jawahar Nagar area of the city.

Gautam Adani says regrets not completing college education

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

He dropped out of formal education at the age of 16 in 1978 to take a train to Mumbai to try his luck and three years later made his first killing -- a Rs 10,000 commission doing a diamond trade with a Japanese buyer.

That marked the beginning of the entrepreneurial journey of Gautam Adani, now Asia's richest man. He, however, regrets not finishing college, saying early experiences made him wise but formal education rapidly expands one's knowledge.

Speaking at the 75th year celebrations of Vidya Mandir Trust Palanpur in Gujarat, Adani recounted his phenomenal journey that has made his

group the world's largest solar power company, largest airport and sea port operator in India, nation's largest integrated energy player, country's second largest cement manufacturer and a conglomerate with market capitalisation of over USD 225 billion -- all in a span of four-and-a-half decades.

"One question I often get is if I have any regrets that I did not go to college. Reflecting on my life and the different turns it took, I - now - do believe that I would have benefitted if I had finished college. While my early experiences made me wise, I now realize that formal education rapidly expands one's knowledge," said Adani, who largely spoke in Gujarati, with a sprinkling of English.

"To acquire wisdom, one



must experience but to acquire knowledge, one must study," he added.

These, he said, are complementary. "And although I will never really know, I do reflect at times that the expansion in my abilities may have been faster had I gone to college."

Adani, 60, started off as a trader and has been on a rapid diversification spree, expanding an empire centered on ports and coal mining to include airports, data centers and cement as well as green energy.

India needs to attract investors exiting China, says Fadnavis

PTI ■ AURANGABAD

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday said India should be ready to attract industries exiting China, as global investors have realised they "cannot put all eggs in one basket".

Addressing the valedictory session of the Advantage Maharashtra Expo here, Fadnavis said there was an "exodus" of industries from China, which was the "factory of the world", with about 40 per cent of manufacturing globally done there.

Fadnavis also said that the Eknath Shinde-led Maharashtra government has cleared investment proposals worth Rs 90,000 crore in the last six months.

"Global investors have decided to leave China now, and the only country which has the capacity to digest this exodus is India. We need to attract them, as investors have realised they can't put all their eggs in one basket," the deputy chief minister said.

This is an opportune time and "we have to be ready," he said.

Despite recession, India is growing at 7 to 8 per cent because of the Rs 20 lakh crore package announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make India self-



reliant, Fadnavis said.

He further said since the Eknath Shinde-led government took over in Maharashtra, there has not been a single day that they have not interacted with potential investors.

Investors are interested in Maharashtra because of the "pro-industry approach and political stability," he said.

"A government has to be approachable. The previous regime did not hold a meeting of the cabinet committee on investment for 15 months. While in the last six months, we have held two meetings and cleared investment proposals worth Rs 90,000 crore," Fadnavis said.

In order to attract investors coming out of

China, the government and industries should come together to create the right ecosystem, he said.

The deputy CM said the future of Aurangabad Industrial City (AURIC) is the Aurangabad-Jalna belt and in six months, it will have connectivity to Mumbai and the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT).

For manufacturing to grow and be a part of the global supply chain, port connectivity is necessary, he said.

At least 100 plots are reserved in AURIC for micro, small & medium Enterprises (MSMEs), he said, adding that a policy will be unveiled soon for extra incentives for industries which are away from the port.

Indo-US Trade Policy Forum to meet on Jan 11 in Washington

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The India-US Trade Policy Forum (TPF), a forum to resolve trade and investment issues between the two countries, will hold a meeting in Washington on January 11, the commerce ministry said on Sunday.

The TPF has five focus groups -- Agriculture, Investment, Innovation and Creativity (intellectual property rights), Services and Tariff and Non-Tariff Barriers.

The meeting will be co-chaired by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai.

Goyal will be on an official visit to New York and

Washington DC from 9-11 January, the ministry said.

The 12th TPF meeting was held on November 23, 2021, after a gap of four years here.

"Working groups were re-activated after the last ministerial. TPF is a platform for continuous engagement between two countries in the area of trade and to further the trade and investment relations between the two countries. Both countries are looking forward to the meeting and confident of making progress on the trade issues," the ministry said.

The meeting was deferred earlier in November last year due to local elections in both countries.

In last year's meeting, India

had asked for the restoration of GSP (Generalised System of Preferences) benefits to Indian exporters on which the US side had stated that this could be considered.

To further promote trade, the two sides had expressed an intent to continue to work together on resolving outstanding trade issues as some of these require additional engagement to reach convergence in the near future.

The bilateral trade between the countries has increased to USD 119.5 billion in 2021-22 from USD 80.5 billion in 2020-21. India received USD 55.61 billion in foreign direct investment from the US between April 2000 and June 2022.

In the first leg of the visit,



Goyal will interact with CEOs of reputed multinational enterprises, join round table meetings with business leaders and think tanks and visit industries in New York.

The two countries are also collaborating under the QUAD

(Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), I2U2 (India-Israel/UAE-USA) and IPEF (Indo-Pacific Economic Framework).

The I2U2 - comprising India, Israel, the UAE and the US - was established in October 2021.

Coal-based power generation rose 15% in Dec: Official data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Country's coal-fired power generation increased by 15.03 per cent to 98,443 million units (MU) in December, as per official data.

Coal-based power generation -- which accounts for 76.59 per cent of the total power generation in the country -- stood at 85,579 MU in the corresponding month of the previous fiscal.

According to the monthly statistics (provisional) of December, 2022 of the coal ministry, both coal-based power generation and overall power generation has registered a year-on-year increase in December 2022.

"Coal-based power generation has registered a growth of 15.03 per cent in December 22 as compared to December 21 and overall power generation in



December 22 has been 13.65 per cent higher than the power generated in December 21," it said.

Similarly, total power generation advanced in December, last year to 1,28,536 MU from 1,18,029 MU in November, 2022 and registered a growth of 8.90

per cent.

However, lignite-based power generation in the month of December dropped marginally to 2,227 million units, against 2,272 MT in the corresponding month of previous fiscal.

The electricity generation through hydroelectric power last month increased by 5.94 per cent to 9,132 MU, over 8,620 MU in the year-ago period.

NTPC, which supplies one-fourth of the electricity in the country, had earlier said that coal-based electricity generation is the backbone of power supply in the country and it is going to stay this way for the next two-three decades.

The company had said that instead of talking about phasing out coal-based thermal power plants, India needs to focus on dispatchable renewable energy.

DJOKER SHRUGS OFF INJURY SCARE, WINS ADELAIDE TITLE

AP ■ ADELAIDE

Novak Djokovic showed no signs of an injury that might derail his Australian Open campaign when he beat unseeded American Sebastian Korda 6-7 (8), 7-6 (3), 6-4 Sunday to win the Adelaide International.

Djokovic worried Open organizers when he said after his semifinal in Adelaide against Daniil Medvedev that he had been troubled by a tight hamstring. He said the injury eased as the match progressed.

If there had been any lingering issue, it likely would have been exposed in Sunday's marathon final that stretched over more than three hours and finished with Djokovic claiming his 92nd career singles title.

He also took his second Adelaide title 16 years after his first; he won the tournament in 2007, aged 19.

Djokovic had to save a match and chamionship point at 5-6 in the second set Sunday and was fully stretched by the 22-year-old Korda,

son of 1998 Australian Open champion Petr Korda.

The match turned on a handful of points. Djokovic held serve to love in his first four service games of the final set and then held serve after being taken to deuce by Korda in his fifth service game.

Djokovic then rallied from 15-40 down at 5-4 in Korda's next service game to win four-straight points and take the set in 51 minutes — and the match in 3 hours, 9 minutes.

"I hope everyone enjoyed the show tonight, it's been an amazing week," Djokovic said. "Seb's had an amazing tournament and put in an amazing effort today.

"I think he was closer to victory at times today than I was. It was only a couple of shots, a couple of points."

Djokovic at times showed irritation with this coach Goran Ivanicevic who supported him from a court-side box or remonstrated with himself after a wasted point.

"I'd like to thank my team for handling me, tolerating me in the good and bad times today. I'm sure



they didn't have such a blast with me going back and forth with them but I appreciate them being here."

His serve was reliable at the start of the first set and he didn't concede a point on first serve until Korda broke him to lead 5-4. Djokovic immediately broke back and took the set to a tiebreaker.

Korda had an early lead and five set points but Djokovic saved them all and leveled the tiebreaker at 6-6. Djokovic framed a forehand that sailed into the crowd and gave Korda another advantage, allowing the American to take the tiebreaker 10-8.

Djokovic saved a match point at 5-6 on serve in the second set, then forced the set into another tiebreaker that he took comfortably.

Korda produced some outstanding service games and troubled Djokovic at times with the kick of his serve. But he was broken for only the second time in the match in the 10th game of the deciding set, with only a couple of points making the difference.

Coco clinches Auckland Classic title

AP ■ AUCKLAND

Top seed Coco Gauff mixed patience with her trademark power to win the final of the rain-hit Auckland Classic against Spain's Rebeka Masarova on Sunday, ahead of the Australian Open.

American teenager Gauff negotiated two lengthy stoppages before seeing off Spanish qualifier Masarova 6-1, 6-1 to complete a dominant week in which she was barely challenged.

The world number seven didn't drop a set at the tournament and effortlessly cast aside 130th-ranked Masarova to clinch her third WTA title and her first for nearly two years.

Osaka pulls out of Australian Open

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Two-time Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka on Sunday pulled out of the opening Grand Slam of the year just over a week before it starts, organisers said.

"Naomi Osaka has withdrawn from the Australian Open. We will miss her at AO2023," the tournament said on Twitter. No reason for the Japanese star's withdrawal was given.

It was another big blow for the tournament after US Open champion and world number one Carlos Alcaraz also withdrew on Friday with a right leg problem.



Veteran American Venus Williams will also be a no-show after picking an injury at last week's Auckland Classic.

The champion in Melbourne in 2019 and 2021, Osaka has not played a competitive match since pulling out of a tournament in Tokyo in September with abdominal pain and has slumped to 42 in the world rankings.

The four-time Grand Slam winner has previously talked about struggles with her mental health and spent all of 2022 outside the top 10, enduring first-round defeats at both the French and US Opens. She withdrew from Wimbledon with an Achilles' injury.

Speaking at the Pan Pacific Open in September, she admitted she had gone through "more down than up" in 2022.

"This year has been not the best year for me but I've learned a lot about myself," she said.

"Life is ups and downs, and this year was more down than up, but overall I'm pretty happy with where I am now."

Reports in Australia last week said Tennis Australia had been unable to verify Osaka's whereabouts.

Her social media accounts indicated that she had been travelling in Europe with her on-again off-again boyfriend rapper Cordae.

Sabalenka sends Aus Open warning with Adelaide triumph

AP ■ ADELAIDE

Aryna Sabalenka fired an Australian Open warning shot on Sunday by winning her first title since 2021 at the Adelaide International, beating rising Czech teenager Linda Noskova 6-3, 7-6 (7/4).

The world number five ended a slump of three consecutive defeats in WTA finals with victory in 1hr 43min in torrid 36 Celsius (96.8 Fahrenheit) conditions at Memorial Drive.

The Belarusian double-



faulted on the first of three match points but sent over a serve winner on the second to wrap up the afternoon.

World number 102 Noskova, the 2021 Roland Garros junior champion, will rise towards the top 50 with her run to the final.

Second seed Sabalenka, a holder of 10 titles, added one more to her career total as she put her veteran's experience to good use, ending the week without the loss of a set. She had last lifted a trophy at the Madrid Masters in May, 2021.

USA win inaugural United Cup



AP ■ SYDNEY

World number nine Taylor Fritz battled past Italian Matteo Berrettini with a powerhouse performance to steer the United States to the inaugural mixed teams United Cup title in Sydney on Sunday.

Frances Tiafoe and Jessica Pegula both won their singles rubbers to give their country a 2-0 lead with Fritz delivering victory by winning 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (8/6).

Madison Keys made it a clean-sweep 4-0 with a 6-3, 6-2 win over Lucia Bronzetti.

"It's amazing for the team to win this event, we came in with really high hopes," said Fritz.

"Really happy to be in the position to clinch the match. The emotions when you win are amazing.

"We had a lot of team bonding this week," he added. "When we combine the guys and girls from the US we are so deep through the rankings it just makes team so much stronger."

The dominant United States crushed the Iga Swiatek-led Poland 5-0 to make the decider of the new tournament — which began with 18 nations playing

round robin matches in Perth, Brisbane and Sydney — while Italy outgunned Stefanos Tsitsipas's Greece 4-1.

Fritz constantly put pressure on the Berrettini serve, earning four break points on his first two service games, but all were saved.

Despite the American being in charge from the baseline, it went to a first set tiebreak where he got two decisive early breaks to move 3-0 ahead before closing out the set.

Fritz again created a series of break points in the second set, but Berrettini hung on and it again went to a tiebreak where he once more prevailed.

Women's world number three Pegula, who burst into the top 10 in 2022 by winning the WTA 1000 Guadalajara tournament, stormed home 6-4, 6-2 against Martina Trevisan.

"Definitely very relieved, first match of the day, first match of the final," said Pegula.

"Martina is playing great, she's a fighter, I feel like she's thriving on the atmosphere with the fans and her team and really hard to beat someone like that.

"Glad I was able to play well enough to get the win."

Trevisan stunned world number six Maria Sakkari in a gripping three-hour encounter on Friday, and her confidence was high.

But Pegula was also in red-hot form, toppling world number one Swiatek for the first time in the semi-finals.

Tiafoe picked up where Pegula left off, surged through the first set 6-2 against Lorenzo Musetti before the Italian retired due to a right shoulder injury.

Liverpool avoid FA Cup scare vs Wolves

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Premier League high-flyers Newcastle suffered a shock FA Cup exit against Sheffield Wednesday and holders Liverpool rode their luck in a draw with Wolves, while Nottingham Forest and Bournemouth crashed out on a day of third round surprises.

Elsewhere on an enthralling afternoon of FA Cup action, Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney, the Hollywood actors who co-own Wrexham, led the celebrations on social media after their non-league side's surprise 4-3 victory at second tier Coventry.

But it was Wednesday, second in League One, who stole the show on Saturday with their impressive 2-1 victory at Hillsborough against a Newcastle team sitting third in the Premier League. Eddie Howe's side were unbeaten in 15 games, but Wednesday have now gone undefeated in 10 matches after Josh Windass's double stunned the Magpies.

Wednesday went ahead in the 52nd minute when Windass, who looked in an offside position, diverted Dennis Adeniran's ball across from close-range.

Windass scored his second 13 minutes later, coolly converting after being put through by Michael Smith.

Newcastle reduced the deficit in the 68th minute when Bruno Guimaraes poked home from close-range, but Chris Wood squandered a golden opportunity to equalise as he fired over from 10 yards.

"It was a disappointing result for us. We are aware that we don't have the deepest squad of



any team in the Premier League," Howe said.

At Anfield, a difficult week for Liverpool that started with a Premier League loss at Brentford, concluded with a fortuitous 2-2 draw against Wolves.

Liverpool keeper Alisson Becker was guilty of a woeful error when his pass was intercepted by Goncalo Guedes, who slotted Wolves' 26th minute opener. Darwin Nunez cushioned a superb volley past Matija Sarkic to equalise on the stroke of half-time and Mohamed Salah's deft finish in the 52nd minute put Liverpool ahead.

But the Reds, who gave a debut to Netherlands forward

Cody Gakpo after his move from PSV Eindhoven, were pegged back in the 57th minute through Hwang Hee-chan's composed effort.

It could have been even worse for Liverpool, as Toti's goal was disallowed for offside in the final minutes as the Reds survived for a replay. "The first goal should not happen, but we all know how often Ali saves our backsides," Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp said.

"I'm not sure about their disallowed goal. We have one picture where it may look offside, but I can understand why they are angry about it."

Wolves manager Julien

Lopetegui was furious with the decision and also claimed Salah's strike should have been ruled out. "We have seen it, the offside doesn't exist, I'm sorry. It's impossible. The decision is wrong," he said.

"Then Mohamed Salah was offside before Toti touched the ball, so he got an advantage."

Sam Dalby, Elliot Lee, Thomas O'Connor and Paul Mullin scored for National League side Wrexham as they swept into a 4-1 lead at Coventry.

Despite a late fightback from 10-man Coventry, Wrexham reached the fourth round for the first time since 2000, sparking a celebratory Instagram

post from Reynolds laced with profanity.

Forest boss Steve Cooper named an entirely different starting team for the match at Blackpool after his side's mid-week win against Southampton, which lifted them out of the Premier League relegation zone.

The plan backfired badly as the Championship team won 4-1 at Bloomfield Road, with goals from Marvin Ekpiteta, Ian Poveda, CJ Hamilton and Jerry Yates.

Two goals each from Anass Zaroury and Manuel Benson put Championship leaders Burnley on course for a 4-2 win at Bournemouth.

'Ronaldo clear for Saudi debut on January 22'

AP ■ RIYADH

Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo could make his Saudi Arabian debut on January 22 after he was successfully registered by new team Al Nassr, a club source said on Saturday.

Ronaldo, who was unveiled to fans this week, joined the squad list after Al Nassr terminated Manchester United-linked striker Vincent Aboubakar to stay within the maximum eight foreign nationals stipulated by the Saudi league.

He will now be available for the January 22 home game against Ettifaq after completing a two-match ban issued in November for smashing a fan's mobile phone while playing for Manchester United.

"Al Nassr terminated Vincent Aboubakar's contract by mutual consent and he received all his financial rights," the club source said, adding that Ronaldo



was registered before Al Nassr's game against Al Ta'ee on Friday.

"So now he served one game from the ban and will

serve the other one against Al Shabab" on January 14, the source said.

The official did not address

reports that Aboubakar, 30, could be on his way to Manchester United, saying he was now a free agent and could negotiate with any team.

Ronaldo, 37, joined Al Nassr in a deal believed to be worth around 200 million euros that has shone an unprecedented light on the Saudi Pro League.

It comes as Saudi Arabia, which watched as neighbour Qatar hosted the World Cup in November and December, considers a joint bid for the 2030 tournament with Greece and Egypt.

The deeply conservative kingdom is snapping up sports assets as part of a drive to soften its harsh image, attract foreign interest and diversify its oil-reliant economy.

Critics have accused the Saudis of "sportswashing" — using sport to deflect attention from human rights controversies.

RoundGlass Punjab FC remain unbeaten at home

PTI ■ PANCHKULA

RoundGlass Punjab continued their unbeaten run at home, beating NEROCA FC 3-1 in the I-League here on Sunday.

Luka Majcen, Brandon Vanlalremdika and Krishnananda Singh scored for the winners while Yumnam Gopi Singh scored the consolation goal for NEROCA FC.

RGPF have maintained their second position in the table below Sreenidi Deccan FC who have played a match more than them. RGPF started the half with more intent and deployed their usual high press strategy giving no time on the ball for the opponents. Juan Mera and Pranjal Bhumij were lively on the wings.

RGPF took the lead in the 12th minute. Pranjal played an inviting ball into the box which found a free Luka Majcen who jumped high to deposit a thumping header past NEROCA keeper to give the home side the lead. It is Luka's fifth goal of the season.

Juan Mera dispossessed the ball from the NEROCA wing back and found Luka Majcen just outside the box. Luka played a perfect ball to the on rushing Brandon



Vanlalremdika who poked the ball past Shubham Dhas to double the lead in the 15th minute. NEROCA halved the deficit against the run of play in the 44th minute. A ball from the middle from Tangva was half cleared by the RGPF defence but fell to Yumnam Gopi Singh who struck a first time shot which left keeper Kiran Kumar Limbu helpless.

RGPF put the game beyond NEROCA in the 77th minute through a goal from Krishnananda Singh. Substitute Maheson Singh played a brilliant through ball for Krishnananda who rounded the rushing NEROCA keeper and tapped into the empty net. RGPF have 17 points from nine matches while NEROCA FC have 7 points from 10 games.

DELAYED DEBUT, STRUGGLES MADE ME HUNGRIER: SURYA

PTI ■ RAJKOT

Suryakumar Yadav was well past 30 when he made his India debut, but the swash-buckling batter says his belated selection had only strengthened his resolve and made him even hungrier to succeed in top-flight. Surya produced yet another incredible knock in the shortest format — a 51-ball 112 not out — as India outplayed Sri Lanka by 91 runs in the third T20I to secure a memorable 2-1 series win here on Saturday.

"It does make me even more hungrier (sic) now," Surya told India head coach Rahul Dravid when asked if the long wait has taught him to value his success a lot more.

"I mean the amount of domestic cricket I have played, I have always enjoyed playing that for my state side Mumbai and I always try to put up a show. "Enjoyed batting even there as well. Yes it was a little challenging in the last few years but kept telling myself this is why you play this game, enjoy it, the passion for this game kept me driving so I just kept going."

The interaction between the two was organised by BCCI TV. "It is lovely to have someone here with me who, as a young kid growing up, did not watch me bat. And I hope you didn't, I am sure you didn't," Dravid



started the chat on a lighter note, to which Surya replied, "No, I did watch (you bat)."

Surya's batting is a stark contrast to the way Dravid played his cricket, and the former India captain was alluding to that only.

Dravid then asked if he could pick one or two knocks that he feels are his best.

"It is actually difficult for me to pick any one innings... I enjoyed batting in all the difficult situations where I went into bat. I just enjoyed myself, whatever I did in the last one year. I have been doing the same thing again."

"As I said before as well, I just try to enjoy and express myself as much as possible. In

those difficult situations, teams try to pull the game off. I try to take the game on. If it works well for me and the team, I'm happy," said Surya.

The middle-order batter's century was his third in the format in just seven months, making him the first player in the history of the game to score three T20I hundreds when not

opening the batting.

So how many shots from his bat are pre-determined?

"I mean obviously in this format you have to be a little bit pre-determined, and at the same time you have to have another stroke as well if the bowler is a step ahead of you during that time. But yes, I try to play to the field what fielders are in, what

bowler can bowl at that time and it works out."

"If I am meeting the ball really well or I mean I try and set the field for myself whenever any left-arm spinner or leg-spinner or fast bowler is bowling and just try and time the ball as much as possible."

Surya also credited his family for his immense success in recent times and Dravid, who was in charge when the batter was finding his feet at the India A level for years, lauded the role played by his folks.

"I mean the role of the family has been most important in my cricketing journey till now. When I started playing cricket, they were the ones who helped me out of the box. Because my dad is an engineer, so in my family there is no history of sports. I had to be a little different for him to see a spark in me and push me."

"They have sacrificed a lot and obviously my wife. After we got married she's been pushing me really hard in terms of nutrition and in terms of staying fit."

"We have been talking about cricket a lot when I go back home and we discuss how we can do better, how we can be one step ahead at this level and we really enjoy doing that."

Dravid concluded the interaction by saying, "Long it may continue."

The more pressure you put, the better you can play: Surya

PTI ■ RAJKOT

India's swashbuckling batter Suryakumar Yadav says he prefers putting himself under pressure while preparing for a match.

The 32-year-old on Saturday smashed an unbeaten 51-ball 112 against Sri Lanka in the third T20I to pave the way for India's 91-run win and a 2-1 series verdict in favour of the home team.

"It is really important to put pressure on yourself when you are preparing for the game. The more pressure you put, the better you can play. There is a lot of hard work involved. Some quality practice sessions are also involved," Suryakumar said after his blazing knock.

His knock, laced with seven fours and nine sixes, powered India to an imposing 228 for five, a total that proved to be too good for the visitors.

Surya played shots in all parts of the ground and credited head coach Rahul Dravid for allowing him to play his natural game.

"The boundaries behind were 59-60m, so I tried to clear them. There are a few shots that are pre-determined but you have to be ready for

other strokes as well.

"Most of the time, I try to find the gap, and use the field to my advantage, Dravid lets me enjoy, and tells me to express myself," he said.

The middle-order batter's century was his third in the international format in just seven months, making him the first player in the history of the game to score three T20I hundreds when not opening the batting.

Surya also became the fastest batter to reach the 1500-run mark in T20Is in terms of balls faced.

In 45 T20Is, the Mumbai-born cricketer has scored 1578 runs at an average of 46.41 and a strike-rate of 180.34 with three hundreds and 13 half-centuries to his name.

"I'm really happy with the way the innings went," Yadav said after his latest knock.

"A few of my shots are pre-determined, but these are the shots I've been playing over the last year and I'm not doing anything different."

"Most of the time, I try to find the gap, and use the field to my advantage."

"So nothing new. It's a fresh start in 2023 and I hope to continue doing well."

Just ensured the youngsters they belonged at this level: Pandya



PTI ■ RAJKOT

Captaining a young side could be tricky but Hardik Pandya, who led India to a 2-1 series win over Asian champions Sri Lanka, feels it was not that difficult as he just had to ensure that they "belong at this level."

The three-match T20I series against Sri Lanka saw the Indian set-up begin a new era under the leadership of Pandya.

"It's actually not that difficult. My life becomes very easy, when the experienced players are there, I don't say much to them because they are here because they have done a lot of good things in their lives," Pandya said after leading the team to a series win in Rajkot here on Saturday.

The Indian team had none

of the three senior batters in Rohit Sharma, KL Rahul, Virat Kohli, while the likes of Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant, Ravindra Jadeja, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, R Ashwin, Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah were also not there for various reasons.

Backing his young group, the new India skipper said they would make mistakes but it's about accepting and learning from them.

"Managing is not difficult, but yes it's a young group. They will make mistakes, they will learn from it, something that we have emphasised that once you make a mistake you make sure that you learn from it. Acceptance is very important in this sport. If you don't expect it, things go very far."

"But when a young team is

there, the only thing I can help them is about giving them confidence, how to make sure they are at a level, when they are playing here, they feel that they belong here."

"That is very important in international cricket. In this group, it's a very good journey. Youngsters are willing to learn and it makes my journey very easy."

All praise for Suryakumar's explosive century, Hardik said: "Today, it felt like Sri Lanka against Surya. It makes my life very easy. I always mention that someone like Surya is so important for us in white-ball cricket."

"The way he plays some shots, the way he changes the game, it actually breaks the morale of the bowler and which kind of helps the other batter as

well."

Asked if he had any special word for Surya with the way he batted, Pandya said: "You don't tell him anything. Surya, the kind of form he's playing and the clarity he has you don't really need to speak to him."

"He is always very clear about his plans and that's the reason he's successful in this format. He doesn't doubt his ability. Wherever he's in double minds, he always comes and have a chat. I don't think anyone has to say anything to him."

"Special mention to Rahul Tripathi as well, the kind of intent he showed that is something which is so natural to him. It can change the momentum of the game."

"If you see the first couple of overs the ball was doing something, and people from the outside thought there's something there in the wicket."

"But because of his intent all of a sudden the ball stopped moving, they changed their length, and then it was all about as if they were chasing the game. Overall, it was terrific from Surya and Tripathi."

On Team India's aggressive approach, he said: "It's not always that we will play aggressive in terms of hitting. There might be a case where we do the same thing but we end up scoring 150."

"But what is important is the intent, you look for a boundary but when a good ball is there you respect that ball. But if you have a defensive mindset, even if a bad ball is there, you are not able to put that away."

"The wicket was suitable for the batters once it got old. But it's more about the intent and signs of aggression that we showed that was important on a tricky wicket. It just makes a difference of 10 runs which can be decisive overall," he concluded.

Nehra made a big difference to my captaincy at GT: Pandya

PTI ■ RAJKOT

There has been no looking back for Hardik Pandya since he led Gujarat Titans to an IPL triumph in their maiden appearance last year, and the new Indian T20I skipper credits his franchise coach Ashish Nehra for making "a big difference" to his captaincy.

Coming back from a long injury layoff, the premier all-rounder was made the Gujarat skipper in a bold move by the first-timers.

But Pandya, who had led



only once at senior level in a tour game against Australia, proved his detractors wrong

and led by example.

"What has been very important from Gujarat point of view is the kind of coach I worked with. Ashish Nehra made a big difference in my life, because of our mindsets. We might be two different personalities, but we have very similar cricketing thoughts," Pandya said after leading India to a 2-1 series win over Sri Lanka here on Saturday.

"Because I was with him, it added value to my captaincy. It helped me to get exactly what I know. It was just about getting

that assurance, once I got that... The awareness of this game I always knew. It was all about knowing and backing what I knew already. It has definitely helped me," he added.

Before the home series against Sri Lanka, the Indian selectors overhauled the side after the Rohit Sharma-led team failed to win the T20I World Cup in Australia, losing to eventual champions England in the semifinal.

Prior to this series, Pandya had led India's T20I side whenever Rohit was unavailable.

Cummins wants all bases covered in 'big series' against India

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia skipper Pat Cummins wants everything at his "disposal" for the "big" series in India next month and besides frontline spinner Nathan Lyon, he feels Ashton Agar and Travis Head too will be vital to the team's bowling plans.

Australia are gearing up for the four-match Border-Gavaskar series, starting in Nagpur on February 9.

"I think our squad will have basically all possibilities. It's a big series, so we want everything at our disposal," Cummins said.

Agar had been called up for the final Test against South Africa keeping in mind the Indian tour. However in the 22 overs he bowled, the 29-year-old gave away 58 runs and remained wicketless in the drawn Test.

But being a left-arm spinner, he could prove effective against the Indian top order that is dominated by right handers in the absence of southpaw Rishabh Pant, who will miss the series due to injuries sustained in a car accident last month.

While Nathan Lyon will spearhead the spin department in India, Cummins feels Head will also be vital.

"Trav is a slightly different off-spin bowler to Nath (Lyon), a bit flatter which could be really helpful over there. I've been really happy with how he (Head) has bowled, and probably under-bowled him even in this game."

"So he'll be a big part of our team over there."

The skipper is also counting on the likes of part-time spinners Marnus Labuschagne and Steve Smith to pitch in the slow bowling department.

"Over there, if you're picking two spinners you think it's going to be quite a spinning wicket and Travis Head, Marnus, Smudge (Smith), they all come into it a bit more."

"Generally, if you're picking two spinners you're not expecting it to be a really long five-day game, and we've got some other resources there anyway."

All-rounder Cameron Green, who missed the Sydney Test due to a fractured finger, is expected to recover in time for the India tour.

SA hold out for rare draw to deny Oz series sweep

AP ■ SYDNEY

South Africa were untroubled as they batted out for their first draw in almost six years on the final day of the third Test in Sydney on Sunday, denying Australia a series whitewash.

Australia went into the fifth day of the rain-ravaged Test requiring 14 wickets for an improbable victory, but the Proteas comfortably negotiated their way through to earn a first draw in their last 47 Tests going back to New Zealand in 2017.

The teams shook hands with five overs left and South Africa at 106 for two in their second innings with Sarel Erwee unbeaten on 42 and Temba Bavuma 17. Australia enforced the follow-on after Josh Hazlewood led the way with four wickets to dismiss the Proteas for 255 — 21 runs short of their target, but their highest innings total of a dismal series.

"We tried different things, kept putting balls in good areas and hoped the luck would turn," Australia skipper Pat Cummins said.

"We were up against it, we had 150 overs to take 20 wickets on a good surface." Australia could only muster two wickets in South Africa's second innings with skipper Dean Elgar yet again failing along with Heinrich Klaasen.

Elgar fell for the fourth time in the series to a leg-side catch by wicket-keeper Alex Carey for 10.

Cummins peppered him with a rising delivery and targeted Elgar's technical batting flaw off his hips for yet another cheap dismissal.

Elgar finished a miserable series with just 56 runs from six innings at an average of 9.33, raising yet more questions about his future as South Africa's Test skipper.

"Touring Australia is never easy," Elgar said. "The message to the group



yesterday was to fight it out on day five."

"Only three or four guys have played here before, so there are a lot of learnings. It is a tough place to tour, maybe the toughest in the world."

"Test cricket teaches you resilience. When things aren't on your side, you still have to wake up and try again."

Australia opener Usman Khawaja was named man-of-the-match for his unbeaten 195 in Australia's first innings declaration of 475-4.

Fellow opener David Warner was man-of-the-series, based largely on his double century in Melbourne.

Asked about his feelings on being stranded short of his first Test double-century by the declaration, Khawaja said: "I would have loved to get a double ton."

"But this is what cricket is about. You play for milestones but you also need to do the best for the team."



Mom Deepika back at training 20 days after giving birth to daughter

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Exactly a month ago, Deepika Kumari, the most decorated Indian archer, became a mother. Twenty days later, the 28-year-old was back on the field at SAI, Kolkata with her 44-pound bow and arrows, leaving the newly-born daughter with her "really supportive" in-laws.

It's a routine Deepika has been following for the past 10 days to make up for her lost time and pave the way for an India comeback through the upcoming Open Senior National trials slated here from January 10-17.

In a career spanning more than a decade, the two-time former world number one has virtually won everything save an Olympic medal.

And this being the penultimate year before Paris 2024, Deepika is well aware that it's a "now-or-never" moment for her. "Kya karein koi aur option hi nahin hai (I've no other option left)," the three-time Olympian said.

"Of course, I will be there. If I don't appear for trials, I will be out of the team for the whole year."

So she has no other option but to hit the training ground with her husband and India number one Atanu Das who too

was axed from the Indian team after the Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

The couple failed to make the cut for the World Cup and Asian Games trials last year.

But after the Hangzhou showpiece was postponed to 2023, Deepika made a comeback at World Cup Stage 3 in Paris in June last year, winning a team silver before going into maternity break.

She's confident of making the top-16 which is the cutoff mark in the first Open selection trials.

The 16-member side will be pruned to eight players who will represent India at the World Cups, World Championships (July 31-August 6) and Asian Games (September 23-October 8).

"I'm not changing the bow. Somehow, I'm managing. I'm sure I'll make it to top 16 and then we will see how it goes from there," adds Deepika.

The seven-day selection trials will see about 176 men's and 94 women's archers fighting it out in the recurve section.

The compound section has a tentative entry list of 157 male and 89 female archers including the Indian top two -- Abhishek Verma and Jyothi Surekha Vennam.