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

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Don't usurp Parliament power: VP to judiciary

Dhankhar tells judges to refrain from public posturing and one-upmanship

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAIPUR

In an unprecedented attack on the judiciary by a senior constitutional functionary, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday asked the judges to refrain from "one-upmanship and public posturing" from judicial platforms and also frowned at the power allegedly usurped by the judiciary to review laws passed by Parliament.

Addressing the 83rd All India Presiding Officers Conference in Jaipur, Dhankhar, who is the Rajya Sabha chairman, said, "Today this one-upmanship and public posturing from judicial platforms are not good. These institutions must know how to conduct themselves."

The Vice President also hit out at the judiciary for scrapping the NJAC Act and maintaining the supremacy of the Collegium in appointment of judges.

Dhankhar also travelled in the past and picked up the landmark 1973 Kesavananda



Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot at the 83rd All India Presiding Officers' Conference in Jaipur on Wednesday PTI

Bharati case verdict, claiming that in its verdict the Supreme Court set a wrong precedent and diluted the lawmaking power of Parliament.

In the 1973 Kesavananda Bharati case, the court in a 7-6 decision said it could strike down amendments to the Constitution that were in violation of the fundamental architecture of the

Constitution. It means that he disagrees with the Supreme Court ruling that Parliament can amend the Constitution but not its basic structure.

Dhankhar said as presiding officers of legislatures, they cannot have an Ostrich-like stance on judiciary-legislature relations. Parliamentary sovereignty cannot be permitted to be diluted or compromised by

the executive or the judiciary, he said in his strongest remarks yet against alleged judicial interference in the working of Parliament.

"If any organisation strikes down a law by Parliament, then it is not good for democracy. And it would be difficult to say we are a democratic nation," he said.

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CAPF eligible for old pension scheme: HC

Court junks NPS for them, says CAPF part of armed forces

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a major decision, the Delhi High Court on Wednesday ordered implementation of the old pension scheme in the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) terming the paramilitary forces as the "armed forces of the Union of India".

The decision came in response to the writ petition by one Srinivas Sharma seeking implementation of the old pension scheme.

In its order, the High Court held that the CAPF is also included in the armed forces of India and new pension scheme (NPS) is not applicable to them. Whether a person is recruited in CAPF today, has been in the past or will be in future, he will be eligible for the old pension scheme, according to the order.

The old pension scheme for the paramilitary forces was scrapped for personnel who joined the forces after 2004 as the Centre was ambivalent on the status of the paramilitary forces' personnel.

However, the old pension scheme was retained for the defence forces which too are



An injured CRPF jawan is rushed to a hospital after being airlifted from the site of an IED blast triggered by CPI(Maoist) in the dense forest of Chaibasa in Ranchi on Wednesday PTI

armed forces of the Union under the command of the Defence Ministry.

The paramilitary forces, according to the respective Acts of Parliament, are also armed forces of the Union under the command of the Union Home Ministry.

Trashing the new pension scheme for the paramilitary forces, the court recognised these forces as 'armed forces of the Union of India'.

The ambivalence in recognising the paramilitary forces as armed forces of the Union led to the adoption of the new

pension scheme for the CAPE.

After January 1, 2004, all personnel recruited in Central Government jobs were excluded from the purview of the old pension, including the CAPE. However, the Government then contended that the Army, Navy and Air Force were the only armed forces of the Union Government.

The BSF Act, 1968, states that the force was constituted as an armed force of the Union of India. Similarly, the rest of the CAPFs have also been constituted as the armed forces of the Union of India.

CAPSULE

AAP MP SANJAY SINGH SENTENCED TO 3-MTH JAIL

Sultanpur: A special court awarded three-month imprisonment and a fine of ₹1,500 to AAP MP Sanjay Singh and five others on Wednesday in a case registered against them in 2001 over a protest against frequent power cuts in the Uttar Pradesh town. The sentence was awarded to Singh, former Samajwadi Party MLA Anup Sanda, former corporator Kamal Srivastava and three others. The case was registered against them under IPC sections 143 (unlawful assembly) and 341 (wrongful restraint). All the accused were given bail on an application of their lawyers for appeal.

PRO-MONARCHY MARCH BY THOUSANDS IN NEPAL

Kathmandu: Thousands of people held a rally in Nepal's national capital on Wednesday during which pro-monarchy slogans were chanted. The protesters gathered around the statue of former King Prithvi Narayan Shah, who unified and built modern Nepal some 255 years ago, and chanted pro-monarchy slogans. The monarchy was abolished in 2008 in Nepal.

CABINET OKs ₹2,600 CR TO PROMOTE RUPAY

New Delhi: The Cabinet on Wednesday approved a ₹2,600 crore scheme for promoting RuPay debit cards and low-value BHIM-UPI transactions. Under the scheme, banks will be provided financial incentives for promoting Point of Sale (PoS) and e-commerce transactions using RuPay and UPI.

Man, girl found dead in Delhi hotel; murder, suicide suspected

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A young man and a woman were found dead in a hotel room in outer north Delhi's Bawana area on Wednesday. The police suspect that the man first killed the woman and then died by consuming sulphas tablets recovered.

According to the police, the woman had an injury on the neck while foam marks and a foul smell were noticed in the mouth of the man. There was also some vomit on the side of the man's body, Deputy Commissioner of Police Devesh Kumar Mahla said.

A black liquid was found in the bathroom which seemed to be vomit, the officer said.

The man and woman checked in at hotel around 10 am on Tuesday and went into their room, police said. On checking with the reception, it was found that both the deceased were 21 years old. A blood-stained knife and sul-

phas powder were found at the spot, police said.

Prime facie, it looks like the man killed the woman and later consumed sulphas tablets leading to his death, the DCP said. CCTV footage was checked but no one could be seen entering the room after they checked in, police said.

A case has been registered in the matter and an investigation is underway, the police officer said, adding that address details are being verified. The duo were colleagues and worked in a shoe manufacturing factory in the Bawana industrial area. They knew each other for the last six to eight months, police said.

When family members of the deceased were contacted, they told police that they were aware that both knew each other and were friends. However, family members maintained that they did not know the depth of their relationship, police said.

Cong invites Opp leaders to join Bharat Yatra in Srinagar on concluding day

Your presence will strengthen voice of truth, compassion, Cong tells leaders

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a major outreach to political parties, the Congress has invited leaders of 21 Opposition parties to join the concluding function of the Bharat Jodo Yatra in Srinagar on January 30, saying their presence would strengthen the yatra's message of truth, compassion and non-violence.

The list of leaders includes Congress' current allies in State Governments JD(U), RJD, JMM, DMK besides Trinamool Congress, Shiv Sena, TDP, SP, BSP, Left parties, RLSP, NCP, National Conference among others. RJD chief Lalu Prasad and Bihar Deputy CM Tejashwi Yadav have been invited.

Separate invitations have also been shared to NC leaders



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi offers prayers at Fatehgarh Sahib Gurdwara, during the party's 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', in Fatehgarh Sahib on Wednesday PTI

Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah. Farooq, representatives from Shiv Sena, NCP, DMK have already marked their presence at different occasions en route the Bharat jodo Yatra.

In a letter to the presidents of the parties, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said from the beginning of the yatra, the Congress has sought the participation of every like-minded party and on the invitation of Rahul Gandhi, MPs of

several political parties have joined it at different stages.

"I now invite you to personally join the concluding function of the Bharat Jodo Yatra to be held in Srinagar on January 30 at noon. The function is dedicated to the memory of Mahatma Gandhi, who lost his life on this day in his tireless struggle against the ideology of hatred and violence," Kharge wrote.

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Thousands of flights in US grounded after system glitch

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Normal air traffic operations are resuming gradually across the US on Wednesday following a technical failure of a key pilot notification system that resulted in the grounding of thousands of flights for several hours.

The Federal Aviation Administration announced earlier in the morning that it suffered an outage of its Notice to Air Missions or NOTAMs, which alerts pilots and other personnel about airborne issues.

The FAA ordered airlines to delay all domestic departures early Wednesday morning, but lifted the ground stop just before 9 am after several hours.

"Normal air traffic operations are resuming gradually across the US following an overnight outage to the Notice to Air Missions system that provides safety info to flight crews. The ground stop has been lifted. We continue to look into the cause of the initial



Travelers stand in the departures hall of Terminal B at LaGuardia Airport in New York on Wednesday AP

problem," FAA said in a tweet.

According to FlightAware, a flight tracking company, more than 3,700 flights within, into or out of the US were delayed and more than 600 were cancelled due to the system failure.

More than 21,000 flights were scheduled to take off in the US on Wednesday, mostly domestic trips, and about 1,840 international flights expected to

fly to the US, AP reported, citing aviation data firm Cirium.

The FAA earlier said it is making progress in restoring its Notice to Air Missions system and departures are resuming at the Newark Liberty International Airport and Atlanta International Airport due to air traffic congestion in those areas.

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Joshimath anti-razing stir rages on



People affected by the gradual 'sinking' of Joshimath gather at Tehsil office after cracks appeared in their houses on Wednesday PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ DEHRADUN

Protesters demanding adequate compensation once again stalled the demolition of unsafe structure in the subsidence-hit Joshimath town on Wednesday.

In a bid to end the protest, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami visited

the town, announced interim assistance for the affected people, and said the Government will provide compensation according to the market rate.

He clarified that only two hotels were going to be mechanically demolished and not the houses marked as unsafe.

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Disaster-proof town planned for displaced

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Building Research Institute (CBRI) has proposed to develop a disaster-resilient model town to rehabilitate people displaced from the sinking Uttarakhand town of Joshimath.

The Roorkee-based institute of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), has also suggested a three-pronged action plan for Joshimath that envisages demolition of tilted buildings, safety assessment of existing 4,000 buildings and providing intermediate shelters to the displaced people, CBRI Director R Pradeep Kumar said.

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'Naatu Naatu' waltzes back home with Golden Globe

PTI ■ LOS ANGELES

'Naatu Naatu', the irrepressible, fun track from the blockbuster "RRR", danced its way to a Golden Globe as the "best original song-motion picture" — at a star spangled awards ceremony here.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday congratulated the "RRR" team and said the Golden Globe honour had made every Indian proud.

The song, which beat the likes of numbers by Taylor Swift, Rihanna and Lady Gaga, to win the coveted award is the first time an Indian production has won a Golden Globe.

Organised by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, the prestigious awards, which mark the beginning of the Hollywood season that ends with the Oscars in



March, were presented here on Tuesday night. "RRR" had also been nominated in the 'best picture-non English' category and lost out to Argentina's historical drama "Argentina, 1985".

But there was compensation aplenty. "And the Globe

goes to 'Naatu Naatu' 'RRR', actor Jenna Ortega announced on stage to loud cheers from the "RRR" team.

The track has been composed by veteran music director MM Keeravaani and voiced by singers Kala Bhairava and Rahul Sipligunj. Keeravaani thanked director S S Rajamouli for his "vision" as he accepted the award. "It has been an age-old practice to say that this award actually belongs to someone else. So I was planning to not say those words when I get an award like this, but I'm sorry to say that I'm going to repeat the tradition because I mean my words.

"This award belongs to, in order of priority, my brother and the director of the movie, SS Rajamouli for his vision. I thank him for this constant trust in my work and support," Keeravaani said.

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Auto, taxi fares rise up to 20% in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Auto and taxi fares went up by nearly 15-20 per cent in the national Capital from Tuesday.

According to the new fares, the metre down charge (minimum fare) for the initial 1.5 kilometre for auto rickshaws has been increased from Rs 25 to ₹30, while the per kilometre charge afterwards has been hiked from ₹9.50 to ₹11. The revised rates came into force from January 9.

The Delhi Cabinet took the decision to hike the fares in October last year, the new fares were notified on Tuesday after the Lieutenant Governor cleared the proposal. The hike in fares will be applicable to black and yellow taxis and all auto rickshaws.

There has been no increase in waiting charges and night charges for auto rickshaws,

while the charges for extra luggage have been hiked from ₹7.50 to ₹10.

For taxis, the existing charge for the first km was Rs 25 for both AC and non-AC types. This will go up to ₹40. The per kilometre charge after metre down will increase to ₹17 for non-AC and ₹20 for AC taxis. Before the revision, they were ₹14 for non-AC and ₹16 for AC.

The 25 per cent night charges will remain unchanged. The waiting charge, which is currently ₹30, will be charged by ₹1 per minute after 15 minutes stay. The extra luggage charge has been hiked from ₹10 to ₹15. The last revision in the auto-taxi fares was done in 2020, while that for taxis, which includes black-and-yellow taxis, economy taxis and premium taxis, happened nine years back in 2013.

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Anil Sharma of Amrapali, 6 others booked for murder

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Wednesday booked the Managing Director of the erstwhile Amrapali Group, Anil Sharma, and six others besides two unknown persons in a case of murder of a man in Bihar that took place seven years ago.

The victim Dr Sharad Chandra, then a secretary of Balika Vidyapeeth in Lakhisarai, was shot dead at his home in the campus in August 2014, the CBI alleged in its FIR.

The CBI which took over the investigation on the order of the Patna high court said the motive was to take over the land and assets belonging to the educational institution.

"Anil Sharma, MD of



Amrapali Group had usurped the trust of Balika Vidyapeeth with the help of Rajendra Prasad Singhaniya, Dr. Praveen Kumar Sinha, Shyam Sunder Prasad and Shambhu Sharan Singh," the agency has alleged in the FIR.

The accused have been booked under various Sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

relating to murder, common intention and criminal conspiracy.

Besides Sharma, Dr Praveen Sinha, Dr Shyam Sunder Singh, Rajendra Singhaniya, Anita Singh (Principal, Balika Vidyapeeth, Lakhisarai), Shambhu Sharam Singh and Radheyshyam Singh have been booked.

Chandra was allegedly shot while he was reading a newspaper at his residence on August 2, 2014 at 6.30 AM.

The secretary, the CBI said, was targeted earlier too as he had raised questions about the way the school was run.

He was threatened and attacked earlier. His house was damaged and he was shot at, the agency alleged.

Dense fog cover lowers visibility to 50 m in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A dense cover of fog on Wednesday lowered visibility to just 50 metres in the national Capital, as the minimum temperature in the city stood at 5.9 degree Celsius, a notch lower than the average for this time of the year.

The Capital witnessed the maximum temperature of 20.2 degree Celsius, which is normal for this season, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The relative humidity in the weather was recorded 100 percent at 8:30 am and 67 percent at 5:30 pm, it said.

According to a senior IMD scientist, dense to very dense fog very likely to continue in some parts during night & morning hours over Uttar Pradesh and Bihar during next

24 hours and in isolated pockets for subsequent four days.

"Dense fog very is likely in isolated pockets during night and morning hours over Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi, West Madhya Pradesh during next 24 hours," he said.

He said that dense fog is very likely to continue in isolated pockets over Sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura during next 48 hours.

"A fresh spell of dense to very dense fog is very likely in isolated pockets during night and morning hours over Punjab and Haryana, Chandigarh and Delhi during January 14 to 16," he added.

The Palam observatory near the Indira Gandhi International Airport recorded a visibility level of 50 metres.

Twenty trains were delayed



by an hour to 10 hours due to the foggy weather, a Northern Railways spokesperson said.

The Delhi International Airport Limited tweeted that low-visibility procedures were in progress at the IGI airport.

Passengers have been

advised to contact the airline concerned for updated flight information. According to the weather office, very dense fog is when visibility is between 0 and 50 metres, between 51 and 200 metres is dense, between 201 and 500 metres

moderate, and between 501 and 1,000 metres shallow.

"The minimum temperature in the capital is likely to rise to 9 degrees Celsius on Thursday amid cloudy weather and light rain," weatherman predicted.

AAP convening 3-day Assembly session completely illegal: Bidhuri

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP dispensation convening a three-day session of the Delhi Assembly is "completely illegal" and the lieutenant governor should prorogue the House and instruct the government for holding a full-fledged winter session, Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said on Wednesday.

The three-day session will begin from January 16, the Assembly secretariat has informed.

Bidhuri said under rules, it is necessary to call three full-time sessions, a budget session, a monsoon session, and a winter session in a calendar year.

"However, the Kejriwal government did not convene the winter session this time. This rule is made by Parliament and applies to the Delhi Legislative Assembly too. Not calling the winter session of the



Delhi Assembly is a violation of the rules of the Parliament," said the Leader of Opposition.

He requested the lieutenant governor to prorogue the previous session and instruct the government to convene a full-time winter session of the Assembly.

Also, he said, the government should be instructed that 15 days' notice should be issued for the winter session and there should be a question hour in accordance with other constitutional arrangements so that the rules and traditions of democracy can be properly followed.

BSP draws anger over song praising Maya as a goddess

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Close on the heels of controversy over Congress leader Salman Khurshid calling former party president Rahul Gandhi as Lord Ram during a press conference recently, now the Bahujan Samaj Party has drawn ire over a song to be released on party's president Mayawati birthday on January 15.

The song states that Indians consider Mayawati as their goddess. This time, on Mayawati's birthday, the theme of the song which will resonate in everyone's ears and the song on which the workers will dance will be "Incarnation of sakshat devi and Gautam Buddha". Mayawati will be presented as a big leader through this song.

The beginning of the song goes something like this



"Among all the leaders of the country, Behanji is in first place, and her name is among the great leaders of the world. Because of her courage and bravery, she is called Iron Lady, the people of India consider her as a goddess".

Interestingly, according to BSP leaders, they do not know who has written the lyrics of this song. A senior party leader said that there was a team in Delhi which got the song writ-

ten and sung by noted Bollywood singer Kailash Kher.

On the other hand, Laxman Singh, president of BSP's Delhi unit, said that no one was involved in getting this song written or prepared on behalf of his unit. "Yes, I have also received this song from Mayawati's office and have been asked to play it on her birthday," he disclosed before the local media persons.

Bahujan Samaj Party spokesperson Dharamveer Chowdhary, when asked about the song comparing Mayawati with a goddess, said that the song was the voice of Bahujan Samaj and Sarva Samaj.

"Mayawati is the form of god in human form. People of Bahujan Samaj worship her. Mayawati also helps in the same way as Lord Ram helped the poor, downtrodden and backward section of the soci-

ety," he said.

Sources said that while the song was sent to all party units, the central unit of the party in New Delhi has also instructed to play it especially in Dalit hamlets and rural segments during celebration of former Uttar Pradesh chief minister Mayawati's birthday on January 15.

Party activists will celebrate BSP supremo's birthday as 'Jan Kalyankari Diwas' (Public Welfare Day). On Mayawati's birthday, party leaders and workers try to show her in a different light. Sometimes she is depicted as Iron Lady on the posters and sometimes as the messiah of Dalits. This time the workers will celebrate BSP supremo Mayawati's birthday with great fanfare on January 15, and preparations have started for this.

UP Govt distributed 1,79,740 blankets to needy in last 10 days



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To ensure that no one in the state suffers due to the cold wave sweeping across the state, the Uttar Pradesh government, following instructions from Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, has distributed more than 1,79,740 blankets to the needy in the last 10 days.

The chief minister personally visited the night shelters on January 8 during his

visit to Kashi and gave food and blankets to those in need. Even in Gorakhpur, the chief minister personally distributed blankets and food.

A total of 4,66,201 blankets have been delivered to the needy so far by the government in this cold wave. The blanket distribution programme is still being carried out by the people's representatives in all 75 districts of the state.

'Naatu Naatu' waltzes...

From Page 1

As Indian cinema fans woke up on Monday to the news, Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the "RRR" team and said it was a very special accomplishment.

"This prestigious honour has made every Indian very proud," the prime minister tweeted.

Rajamouli said he was

"speechless".

"Music truly knows no boundaries," the director tweeted with a behind-the-scenes video of the team celebrating the win during the ceremony.

"Sir just woke up and started dancing to Naatu Naatu celebrating your win at Golden Globes. Here's to many more awards & making India so proud!!" Shah Rukh Khan said

on Twitter.

As congratulatory messages poured in, Keeravaani expressed gratitude to one and all on social media.

"Overwhelmed by the response from all over for the Golden Globe. Thank You for all your wishes," the newly-minted Golden Globe winner tweeted.

"What is 'Naatu Naatu'?" was the question many asked

about the song that celebrates the inclusive spirit of dance and bonhomie and had them matching steps to its catchy rhythm ever since its release in March last year.

"Naatu Naatu", filmed on Ram Charan and Jr NTR, translates to bucolic in Telugu and demonstrates the spirit of fun in country music over 4.35 breathless minutes of song and dance. Choreographed by Prem Rakshith, it has legions of followers still trying to master its steps.

Sipligunj, one of the voices behind the song, said he cel-

ebrated the team's Golden Globe win by treating with the famous Hyderabad biryani at his home.

"Naatu Naatu' has received Golden Globe Awards. I feel happy and emotional, it makes me think about the past journey," the 33-year-old singer told PTI in Hyderabad.

The song, which became a sensation across social media as users took to their own version in viral Instagram and Tik-tok videos, has been short-listed for the best original song, along with 14 others, in the Oscars.

In his tweet, Rajamouli addressed Keeravani as "Pedanna" (big brother).

"Congratulations & thank you PEDANNA for giving me #NaatuNaatu. This one is special. I thank each & every fan across the globe for shaking their leg & making it popular ever since the release. #GoldenGlobes," the director tweeted. The veteran music composer also thanked the team behind the track, including lyricist Chandrabose.

"And NT Rama Rao Jr and Ram Charan for dancing with full stamina for the song."

In 2009, A R Rahman became the first Indian to win a Golden Globe for 'best score-motion picture' for the British film "Slumdog Millionaire". The Danny Boyle directed film went on to win eight Oscars, including two for Rahman (one of which he shared with veteran lyricist Gulzar for best song winner 'Jai Ho') and one for Resul Pookutty (sound mixing).

The Oscar-winning composer reacted to "RRRs" win with enthusiasm on social media.

"Incredible ..Paradigm

shift Congrats Keeravani Garu from all Indians and your fans! Congrats @ssrajamouli Garu and the whole RRR team!," Rahman said.

"RRR" follows a pre-Independence fictional story woven around two real-life Indian revolutionaries - Alluri Sitarama Raju (Ram Charan) and Komaram Bheem (Jr NTR) - in the 1920s. It also stars Alia Bhatt and Ajay Devgn in key roles.

Jr NTR said he has danced to many songs throughout his career but "Naatu Naatu" will forever stay close to his heart.

Disaster-proof town planned...

From Page 1

Kumar, along with senior CBRI scientists D P Kanoongo and Ajay Chourasia, visited Joshimath on Monday to assess the situation in the town nestled in Himalayan mountain ranges in Kumaon region and deliberated the matter with officials from the National Disaster Management Authority and the Uttarakhand Government.

"It is proposed to develop a disaster resilient model town, using cost effective building technology i.e. Confined masonry, along with urban planning on a safe identified site," he said.

Kumar said the CBRI shall provide habitat planning, design, and construction advice, based on the inputs from the Uttarakhand Government regarding number of houses and topography survey at a selected safe identified site.

"The advantages of the technology are — it makes use of locally available construction materials, skills, compatible to local conditions, disaster resilient and affordable," he said.

The CBRI will commence a detailed study for safety assessment of 4,000 buildings from Thursday to have a deeper understanding about

the buildings' configuration, construction practice, building typology, condition, distress assessment, if any, and monitoring of cracks, he said.

"The field observation shall lead to possible causes for structural damage and comparison with the baseline data, and to decide further strategies for its usage," Kumar said.

Crack meters shall be installed at different locations to monitor the cracks in identified houses, he said, adding that based on the progressive crack width measurements, the building vulnerability shall be classified into various classes.

Joshimath anti-razing stir rages...

From Page 1

The two adjacent hotels —the seven-storied Malari Inn and the five-storied Mount View — stand precariously in the subsidence zone posing a threat to more than a dozen houses.

"We stand with the people of Joshimath. The Prime Minister is personally monitoring the situation. I have his full support. Their (affected people) interest will be taken care of," he told reporters on his arrival in Joshimath.

Asserting that compensation will be given as per the market rate, the CM said the Government will take stakeholders into confidence. The

CM visited houses that have developed cracks more recently and spoke to the affected people.

The State Government has provided interim assistance of Rs 1.5 lakh to the affected people.

Expressing his dismay over alleged attempt to create an impression that the whole of Uttarakhand was in danger Dharni said the State will host the international winter games in Auli in February and Char Dham yatra will also begin in a few months. "This kind of wrong impression should not be created," he said.

Meanwhile, even as

protests continued in the town 18 more affected families were shifted to temporary relief centres. A total of 145 families have been evacuated so far from the danger zone in Joshimath.

Disaster Management Authority, Chamoli said.

The authorities wanted to demolish the two hotels with the help of Roorkee-based Central Building Research Institute (CBRI), but the exercise hit a hurdle when owners of the two hotels supported by locals sat on a protest.

The CBRI was involved in the demolition of Noida's twin towers

The hotel owners are

demanding compensation along the lines of what was offered to those displaced by the Badrinath renovation masterplan.

Earlier, Meenakshi Sundaram, Secretary to the CM, met the protesting people and assured them that adequate compensation according to market rates will be given.

"The market rate will be decided after taking suggestions of the stakeholders in public interest. The interests of the local people will be taken care of," he said.

"I want to clarify one thing. Only two hotels are to be dismantled... Houses in the dan-

ger zone are not going to be demolished. The red cross marks put on them is only to have them vacated," Sundaram, who is also the nodal officer for the land subsidence-hit town, said. Agitated locals continued to sit on dharna and refused to allow authorities to raze the hotels.

"We want compensation along the lines of Badrinath. But the Secretary to the CM said it was not possible. He said compensation as per market rate could be given. But when we asked what would be the market rate, he said he did not know," Thakur Singh Rana, the owner of Malari Inn, told reporters.

Don't usurp Parliament power: VP to...

From Page 1

Speaking in the same vein, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said the judiciary is expected to follow the principle of separation of powers as defined in the Constitution.

"Legislatures in our country have always respected the powers of the judiciary. The judiciary is also expected to follow the principle of separation and balance of powers conferred by the Constitution," Birla said.

Dhankhar, who has criticised in the House and outside the striking down of the National Judicial Appointments Commission

(NJAC) Act by the apex court, said it was "a scenario perhaps unparalleled in the democratic history of the world".

"The executive is ordained to be in compliance with the constitutional prescription emanating from Parliament. It was obligated to adhere to the NJAC. Judicial verdict cannot run it down," he said.

His statement comes in the backdrop of a raging debate on the issue of appointment to the higher judiciary with the government questioning the current Collegium system and the Supreme Court defending it.

Referring to a bench of the Supreme Court asking the Attorney General to pass on the message to constitutional authorities to refrain from making statements on the collegium system, Dhankhar said, "I declined to entertain the Attorney General on this point. I cannot be a party to emasculate the powers of the legislature."

Observing that comments made on the Supreme Court collegium by the Government functionaries are "not well taken", a bench headed by Justice S K Kaul had on December 8 asked Attorney

General R Venkataramani to advise the government about it.

A day earlier, Dhankhar had, in his maiden speech in the House, slammed the judiciary for scrapping the NJAC Act, describing it as an instance of "severe compromise of parliamentary sovereignty", and said the government's three organs should respect the "Laxman Rekha".

Addressing presiding officers on Wednesday, Dhankhar asserted that parliamentary sovereignty and autonomy are quintessential for the survival of democracy and cannot be permitted to be compromised by the executive or judiciary.

"The basis of any basic structure has to be the supremacy of the mandate of people.

Dhankhar said no institution can wield power or authority to neutralise the mandate of people. He told the presiding officers at the conference that Parliament and legislatures must protect the sovereignty of the people.

On disruptions in the House, Dhankhar said there is "disappointment and anguish" among people at the lack of decorum and discipline in proceedings in Parliament and legislatures.

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Thousands of flights...

From Page 1

"We expect departures to resume at other airports at 9 a.m. ET," it said.

"All flights currently in the sky are safe to land. Pilots check the NOTAM system before they fly. A Notice to Air Missions alerts pilots about closed runways, equipment outages, and other potential hazards along a flight route or at a location that could affect the flight," FAA said.

It earlier said that operations across the National Airspace System are affected.

President Joe Biden was briefed by Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg on the FAA system outage.

"There is no evidence of a

cyberattack at this point, but the President directed DOT to conduct a full investigation into the causes. The FAA will provide regular updates," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said in a tweet.

Transportation Secretary Buttigieg said that he is in touch with the FAA and monitoring the situation.

"I have been in touch with FAA this morning about an outage affecting a key system for providing safety information to pilots. FAA is working to resolve this issue swiftly and safely so that air traffic can resume normal operations, and will continue to provide updates," he said in a tweet.

Auto, taxi...

From Page 1

The AAP-led Delhi Government had sent the file for notifying revised auto rickshaw and taxi fares in the national Capital to Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena on December 17.

Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot had received many representations from autorickshaw and taxi associations and unions on the issue of fare hike. A committee of 13 members was formed in May last year to review and recommend the fare in the wake of increasing rate of CNG, cost and maintenance of auto rickshaw and taxi, and various other issues, affecting the drivers' net earnings.

Delhi Govt to resolve all woes related to water bills: Sisodia

One-time settlement scheme in one week to resolve all issues related to inflated water bills, promises Deputy CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government on Wednesday announced that they will bring a one-time settlement scheme within a week for complaints related to wrong/inflated water bills to clear pendency.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said that in the last meeting of the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), it was decided that those who did not pay dues in time because of the bills being wrong/inflated will not have to pay the late surcharge.

"There are 26 lakh water connections in DJB, of which owners of 18 lakh connections have no issue with their bills. But the bills of eight lakh connections have been pending for various issues. In a previous DJB meeting it was decided that a 100 per cent late surcharge will be waived on pending bills to clear pendency.



A whopping 4.5 lakh consumers have taken advantage of the Late Payment Surcharge Scheme (LPSC) and the DJB received Rs 252 crore through this.

The deadline to take benefit of LPSC is till January 31," the Deputy CM said. "The Government has been receiving complaints from residents, MLAs and others regarding inflated water bills.

To resolve the matter it has been decided that within a week's time, DJB will come up with a one-time settlement scheme for people who are facing issues, which will then be implemented," Sisodia said.

He said several key deci-

sions were taken during DJB's meeting on Wednesday. "Earlier, if someone had to install a new meter for an old connection, they would have to approach the Government. They used to apply to the DJB but it couldn't replace their meters due to some issues. From now on, people can either approach the DJB to replace their old meter for an existing connection or they can get it installed themselves. People will have the right to do so," Sisodia said.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has a dream that Delhi should get a 24-hour water supply. Many key decisions have been taken to turn that

KEY DECISIONS BY DJB

▲New sewer pipeline of 280 kms will be laid across Delhi to connect unauthorised colonies to main sewerage network

▲Residents need not wait for DJB to get water meter installed, they can get them installed on their own

▲10 underground water reservoirs will be built to strengthen the base for 24x7 water supply in Delhi

▲300 kms water pipeline will be laid and 84 kms pipeline will be renovated by DJB

into reality, he said.

"The DJB approved several projects, including setting up of 10 underground reservoirs. Under this, four old underground reservoirs will be upgraded while six will come up at new locations.

"The Government will lay a 300-km pipeline while 84 kms of the old pipeline will be upgraded. It will lay new sewer lines in 44 unauthorised colonies and 14 villages of Karawal Nagar, Burari and Narela," Sisodia added.

MCD fixes Jan 30 for Mayor election

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The MCD has proposed January 30 as the date for holding the mayoral election in the national Capital and a report on this was sent to Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena on Tuesday.

The mayoral election was due on January 6, when the first meeting of the municipal House was held, but the proceedings were marred by chaos as BJP and AAP Councillors jostled and exchanged heated words over administering of oath to 10 aldermen (nominated members).

This resulted in adjournment without election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor. According to MCD officials, it was for the first time in the history of the civic body that a newly-elected House had failed to elect a Mayor and Deputy Mayor in its maiden meeting.

"We have proposed a new date for holding the new session of the House during which the mayoral election is to be carried out," an official source said. After this, a war of words broke out between the BJP and AAP. The ruling party accused the BJP and L-G of "illegally" appointing the aldermen who were members of the BJP in the Corporation House by "bypassing the Council of Ministers." AAP also said that the BJP was conspiring to get the aldermen's

vote in the mayoral election to aid the BJP's victory.

The AAP alleged that the decision to administer oath to aldermen before elected Councillors was the BJP's ploy to get them voting rights. The AAP had earlier also accused the L-G of appointing BJP men as aldermen instead of experts on civic matters.

"Article 243R of the Constitution clearly debars nominated members from voting in the House. An attempt to get them to vote in the House is unconstitutional," Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had tweeted.

Even though the AAP has a clear majority in the 250-member House, some BJP leaders have claimed that an intense contest could be witnessed for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's posts since the anti-defection law does not apply to the MCD and floor-crossing could be possible. The Mayor's election is held through a secret ballot and Councillors are free to vote for any candidate.

The AAP ended the BJP's 15-year rule in the MCD, by winning 134 of the 250 wards in the civic polls. The BJP managed to win 104 wards. Later, Gajendra Daral, the Independent Councillor from Mundka, joined the BJP.

The electoral college for the election of Mayor comprises the 250 elected Councillors,

Jan 6 poll was marred by chaos as AAP accused BJP, L-G of illegally appointing aldermen



seven Lok Sabha and three Rajya Sabha MPs from Delhi and 14 MLAs. The Delhi Assembly Speaker has nominated 13 AAP and one BJP member to the House. The total votes in the mayoral polls are 274. The numbers game favours the AAP, which has 150 votes against the BJP's 113.

Though the Delhi BJP is unlikely to bag the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's posts, it will try to win three posts of members of the crucial Standing Committee, party leaders said. There are 18 members in the Standing Committee, of which 12 are elected from the zones and six from the House.

CM announces ₹1 cr aid for kin of ASI Dayal killed by snatcher

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday announced an ex-gratia of ₹1 crore for the family of Delhi Police Assistant Sub Inspector Shambhu Dayal, who died after being stabbed by a snatcher in Mayapuri area.

The entire country is proud of him, the CM noted. The Delhi Commission for Women will honour the family at its International Women's Day awards ceremony in March.

"Defending the people ASI Shambhu Dayal did not care for his own life. He was martyred. We are proud of him. There is no price for his life still we will provide ₹1 crore ex-gratia to his family in his honour," Kejriwal tweeted. The Chief Minister later posted a video message to announce the ex-gratia relief.

"ASI Shambhu had accompanied a woman, whose husband's mobile phone had been snatched, after she went to the local police station. When they reached the area, she pointed out to the snatcher. ASI Shambhu arrested him and was taking him to the police station, when he was repeatedly attacked by the accused with a knife. Later, he succumbed to injuries," he said.

Kejriwal further stated that no amount can compensate for the loss of a loved one's life, but

we will provide his family with a Samman Rashi as a mark of honour and respect. "For the safety of the society and Shambhu Dayal ji fulfilled his duty by risking his life, now it is our duty to take care of the family of such a brave policeman," he added.

Dayal, who was posted at the Mayapuri police station, was allegedly stabbed by the snatcher on January 4. He was seriously injured and admitted to a hospital where he succumbed to injuries. A video of the incident showed the ASI trying to overpower the snatcher despite being stabbed.

"The Delhi Commission for Women salutes the bravery of ASI Shambhu Dayal and stands with his family in this tough time. The commission shall be honouring the bravery of Late Shambhu Dayal on the occasion of its Annual International Women's Day Award Ceremony in March," the panel said.

DCW chief Swati Maliwal, in a tweet in Hindi, said, "Displaying a great deal of bravery, Delhi Police ASI Shambhu Dayal was martyred while trying to control the accused. He kept fighting till his last breath.

"It could be seen that at least 50 people were standing there but no one came to his aid. We salute him. This year, DCW will honour his family."

Govt to build elevated corridor in Najafgarh to ease traffic congestions

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government will construct an elevated corridor in Najafgarh to ease traffic congestions in the area. Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot, who is also the MLA from Najafgarh, held a high-level meeting with the senior Public Works Department (PWD) officials on Wednesday.

According to a senior Delhi Government official, the upcoming Najafgarh Elevated Corridor is spread over 4.8 kilometres and will benefit lakhs of people every day.

"After the construction of the elevated corridor, vehicles plying on Najafgarh-Phirni Road, Kapashera Road, Dhansa Road, Bahadurgarh Road and Nangloi Road will be able to use this elevated road and commuters will get relief from long traffic jams," he said.

Informing about the feature of the project, a senior official said that there will be seven up-down ramps at the elevated road with a one-way carriageway, the total length of the ramps will be 1.68 km, Commuters travelling between Najafgarh to Kapashera Road, Dhansa Road, Bahadurgarh Road and Nangloi Road will be able to take the direct route instead of entering the

Najafgarh area.

"After the construction of the elevated road, people from more than 200 colonies including Prem Nagar, New Gopal Nagar, Gopal Nagar Extension, and Lokesh Park will get relief from traffic jams," he added.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that the Najafgarh-Phirni Road which is one of the main routes followed by people commuting between Delhi and Haryana gets heavily jammed during peak hours.

"But after this new elevated corridor is completed commuters will not have to enter Najafgarh to cross the city. They can use the elevated corridor and save their travel time," Sisodia added.

Delhi's Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot said that the project will be a boon for everyone commuting through Najafgarh to Bahadurgarh or Jhajjar or other parts of adjoining states. This 4.8 km of the radial elevated corridor will be another landmark road stretch that will help in decongesting Najafgarh city.

"In addition, it will help reduce the commuting time of travellers between Delhi and Haryana by half. Delhi government is committed to providing good road infrastructure across the city for its citizens and making their life more convenient," Gahlot added.

MCD House fracas: BJP holds banner campaign against AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday led a banner campaign at 16 intersections in Delhi against the ruling AAP for allegedly disrupting the maiden meeting of the MCD last week.

The protest at ITO Chowk was led by Delhi BJP working president Virendra Sachdeva. Scores of BJP workers staged a protest against the alleged "insult to the Constitution" by the Councillors of the AAP inside the MCD House and also raised slogans against Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

"The AAP leaders who have tried to tarnish the dignity of the Constitution inside the MCD House, should be identified and suspended from the House," demanded Sachdeva. "The banner campaign is being held to protest the unruly behaviour of the newly-elected MCD Councillors of the AAP who did not allow the Councillors to take oath," Sachdeva said.

Sachdeva said that Kejriwal's party has reached the MCD House with 134 Corporators, so what is he afraid of? "Delhi CM also knows that his party is divided because two mayoral candidates and two deputy mayor candidates are from his party. To save that split and defeat, hooliganism was done in the House," he alleged. The protest



BJP workers protest against AAP over clashes during Mayoral elections, at ITO in New Delhi on Wednesday, RANJAN DIMRI | PIONEER

at Moti Bagh Chowk was led by Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramveer Singh Bidhuri and former State party president Satish Upadhyay.

State General Secretary Harsh Malhotra led the protest in Krishna Nagar in coordination with State General Secretary of OBC Morcha Ravindra Singh Ravikant, while State Minister and Councilor Neema Bhagat was seen in the protest on Vikas Marg in coordination with the District President of OBC Morcha Virendra Dedha.

Perception that LG does everything in Delhi is wrong, Centre tells SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday told the Supreme Court the perception that the Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) does everything in the national Capital and the AAP Government is a "symbolic figure" is wrong.

Terming "collective responsibility, aid and advice" as "bedrocks" of democracy, the top court on Wednesday said it will have to find a balance and decide whether the control over services in Delhi should be with Centre or the Delhi Government or a median has to be found.

A five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, while resuming the hearing on the vexatious Centre-Delhi government row over control of services, also inquired about the legal position and asked whether AAP Government will have the power over the posting of an officer who has been allocated the Union Territory cadre. Advancing



arguments Solicitor-General Tushar Mehta submitted the constitutional structure came into force in 1992 (when Article 239AA containing special provisions with respect to Delhi was inserted in the Constitution) and everything was moving in harmony. The law officer said right from 1992 till date, only seven matters have been referred to the President citing differences.

"The Capital of a country always has a unique position. I agree that collective principle must be respected. I must point out that we're dealing with a matter of perception and not Constitutional law,"

Mehta told the Bench, also comprising Justices MR Shah, Krishna Murari, Hima Kohli and PS Narasimha.

Referring to an apex court judgment, Mehta said Article 239AA also applies to Delhi. "How will your Lordships decide whether the Secretaries are acting as per directions of Ministers? The person writing the Annual Confidential Report is the Chief Minister. The power is given to the Council of Ministers. The L-G has no role," he said.

Mehta said whenever the Ministers approach the L-G saying transfer this man from here, they can and he always listens.

"We are dealing with a perception, not a real issue. Nothing can be a better proof than the fact that only in seven cases there have been differences of opinion. People in Delhi have reposed faith in the GNCTD. Delhi is a part of the country. The scheme has harmoniously functioned since 1992," he said.

₹50K, jewels 'stolen' during airport X-ray, Oz woman files FIR against CISF guards

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

First information report (FIR) has been lodged against unnamed Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) employees after an Australian woman claimed that her jewels and foreign currency worth Rs 50,000 were stolen from her handbag during an X-ray check while transferring from the international to the domestic area of Delhi airport.

An FIR has been registered against unidentified CISF personnel after an Australian woman alleged that her jewellery and foreign currencies worth Rs 50,000 were stolen from her handbag during an X-ray check when she was transferring from the international

to the domestic section at Delhi airport. Akeshini Singh Gour, 40, flew from Sydney to Delhi on an Air India flight and took a connecting flight of the airline to Hyderabad on August 11 when she met with this untoward incident.

She travelled to India to attend her father-in-law's funeral. "The whole thing was an act that involved a number of officials who knew what they were doing and they took advantage of my vulnerability of knowing a mother travelling alone with two very little children (aged 3 and 7) who were both exhausted from a 15-hour flight," reads the FIR, registered on January 4. Speaking to PTI on phone from her Sydney home, Gour said she

realised the theft after she reached Hyderabad and the strong suspicion of involvement of security personnel was due to the fact that throughout the whole journey, the only time her backpack containing valuables was out of her sight was when she went through the screening.

"I wrote to every authority, starting from Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia to airport security, Delhi Police, CISF etc, in the last six months but it was only on December 30 I received an e-mail from SHO IGI Airport to join the investigation," Gour said, adding she travels to India once in a while and this trip was first in six years.

Responding to a PTI query, the office of Apoorv Pandey, Public Relations Officer of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), said they are looking into the matter. The woman said, "On October 11, 2022, I received an e-mail from Arun Singh, AIG/Airport Security, who asked me to pursue matter with local police." She also shared a copy of letter with PTI.



Al pee-gate: Court denies bail to Mishra

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court on Wednesday denied bail to Shankar Mishra, who is accused of peeing on a woman co-passenger onboard an Air India flight in November last year.

Metropolitan Magistrate Komal Garg dismissed the bail application of the accused, saying it was not appropriate to release him on bail at this stage. A magisterial court had sent Mishra to 14-day judicial remand on Saturday, denying police his custody.

Metropolitan Magistrate Komal Garg said the act has shocked the civic consciousness of people and needed to be deprecated. "The alleged act of accused of relieving himself

upon the complainant is utterly disgusting and repulsive. The alleged act in itself is sufficient to outrage the modesty of any woman. Egregious conduct of the accused has shocked the civic consciousness and needs to be deprecated," the judge said.

The alleged act in itself prima facie reflects the intention of the accused, she said, while declining the relief to Mishra. The judge noted that as per the record, the accused had failed to join the investigation even after a notice was issued to him under section 41A CrPC and his presence could be secured only upon the execution of the non-bailable warrant. "Therefore, the conduct of the accused does not inspire

confidence. It has also come on record that accused has tried contacting the victim and the possibility of accused influencing the witnesses cannot be ruled out," the judge noted.

"Considering the above facts and circumstances, the Court does not deem it appropriate to release the accused on bail at this stage. Accordingly, the present application stands dismissed," the judge said in the order.

The complainant was represented by advocates Ankur Mahindro and Rohan Taneja. They also told the Court that Mishra's father has been sending unwarranted WhatsApp messages to the complainant. "The father of the accused is sending me messages in

WhatsApp.

He says Karma will hit me and then deletes the message. On the date of arrest he writes this message," her counsel submitted. "How did your number get to him?" the Court queried.

"That is Air India's fault. They made me sit across from the offender and at that time my number was exchanged," the complainant's counsel replied.

They're sending her messages and deleting it. This needs to stop... Air India instead of separating the accused and complainant, tried to mediate the crime," the counsel said. "Nobody should have to go through something like that. It was revolting. I feel bad for the poor lady.

Drunk traveller urinates in front of IGIA Terminal 3

New Delhi: In a bizarre incident reported from national capital, a man was urinating publicly in front of departure gate 6 at IGI Airport Terminal 3 on Jan 8. He was scheduled to depart for Dammam in Saudi Arabia. The man was identified as Jauhar Ali Khan.

According to the passengers around, Khan seemed to be inebriated, also abused other passengers. "He was arrested and later released on a bail bond, said Delhi Police. The incident comes amid uproar over Air India urination case in connection with which Shankar Mishra, a Mumbai-based businessman, was arrested.



PM to flag off Ganga cruise on Jan 13

Modi to lay foundation for ₹1K cr inland waterways projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on January 13 flag off the world's longest river cruise, MV Ganga Vilas, and inaugurate a 'Tent City' on the banks of the Ganga river in Varanasi. He will also inaugurate and lay the foundation stones for several other inland waterways projects worth more than Rs 1,000 crore on the occasion via video conferencing.

MV Ganga Vilas will begin its journey from Varanasi and sail around 3,200 km in 51 days to reach Dibrugarh in Assam via Bangladesh, traversing across 27 river systems in the



Luxury Cruise MV Ganga Vilas ahead of its flagging off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in Varanasi, on Wednesday PTI Photo

two countries, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said. The 51-day river cruise is a unique opportunity to connect with India's cultural roots and discover beautiful aspects of its diversity. The cruiser has three decks, 18 suites on board with a capacity of carrying 36 tourists and having all luxury amenities. The maiden voyage has 32 tourists from Switzerland signing up for the entire length of the journey, it noted. The PMO said the cruise has been curated to bring out the best of the country to be showcased to

the world. The cruise is planned with visits to 50 tourist spots, including world heritage sites, national parks, river 'ghats' and major cities like Patna in Bihar, Sahibganj in Jharkhand, Kolkata in West Bengal, Dhaka in Bangladesh and Guwahati in Assam. The journey will give the tourists an opportunity to embark upon an experiential voyage and indulge in the art, culture, history, and spirituality of India and Bangladesh.

In line with the PM's endeavour to boost river cruise tourism, the service will help

unlock the huge untapped potential of the sector and herald a new age of tourism for India, it said.

The 'Tent City' at Varanasi has been conceptualised on the banks of the River Ganga to tap the potential of tourism in the region, the PMO said. The project has been developed opposite city ghats which will provide accommodation facilities and cater to the increased tourists influx in Varanasi, especially since the inauguration of the Kashi Vishwanath Dham. It has been developed by the Varanasi Development Authority in PPP mode. The tourists will reach the 'Tent City' by boats from different ghats situated in the vicinity. The 'Tent City' will be operational from October to June every year and will be dismantled for three months due to rise in river water level in the rainy season.

Among other projects, Modi will inaugurate Haldia Multi Modal Terminal in West Bengal. Developed under Jal Marg Vikas Project, it has a cargo handling capacity of around over three Million Metric Tonne Per Annum

(MMTPA) and the berths are designed to handle vessels up to around 3000 Deadweight tonnage (DWT). Modi will also inaugurate four floating community jetties at Saidpur, Chochakpur, Zamania in Ghazipur district and at Kanspur in Ballia district in Uttar Pradesh. Besides, foundation stone will be laid for the five community jetties at Digha, Nakta Diyara, Barh, Panapur in Patna district and Hasanpur in Samastipur district in Bihar by Modi.

More than 60 community jetties are being constructed along Ganga across UP, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal to boost economic activities and improve the livelihood of local communities, the PMO said. Modi will also inaugurate Maritime Skill Development Centre for North East at Guwahati. It will help in honing rich talent pool in North Eastern region and will provide for better employment opportunities in burgeoning logistics industry. Inauguration of a ship repair facility and an elevated road at Pandu Terminal in Guwahati will also be done.

Modi greets Netanyahu for becoming PM of Israel; both agree to deepen ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Signifying the fast growing ties between the two countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday discussed the entire gamut of relationship with Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a telephonic conversation. Modi also congratulated his counterpart for becoming Prime Minister for the sixth time recently.

Incidentally, Netanyahu had sent a condolence message when Modi's mother passed away on December 30. In his talks with Netanyahu on Wednesday, the two leaders agreed on the potential for further strengthening bilateral strategic cooperation in a variety of areas. It was the first phone conversation between Modi and Netanyahu after the veteran Israeli leader was sworn in as the prime minister for a sixth term around two weeks back. "Was a pleasure to speak with my good friend,



@netanyahu.

Congratulated him for his impressive election win and for becoming Prime Minister for a record sixth time. Delighted that we will have another chance to advance the India-Israel Strategic Partnership together," Modi tweeted.

During the talks, Modi invited Netanyahu to visit India at an early date, according to a statement by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

"The prime minister conveyed his warm congratulations to Netanyahu for his election as the Prime Minister of Israel for a sixth time, and wished him a

very successful tenure," it said.

The PMO said the two leaders expressed satisfaction at the rapid progress in the India-Israel strategic partnership in recent years.

"The two leaders expressed satisfaction at the rapid progress in the India-Israel Strategic Partnership in recent years, and agreed on the potential for further strengthening strategic cooperation in a variety of areas," the statement said.

The ties between India and Israel have been on an upswing in the last few years in a range of sectors, including defence, agriculture and water.

Lakhimpur case may take 5 years, session court tells SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Sessions Judge, who is conducting trial in the Lakhimpur Kheri violence case in which Union Minister Ajay Kumar Mishra's son is an accused, on Wednesday, informed the Supreme Court that it might take around five years to conclude the trial in normal course.

In a letter sent to the apex court, the Judge said there are 208 prosecution witnesses, 171 documents and 27 forensic science laboratory (FSL) reports in the case. "He (Sessions Judge) says in normal course, it may take five years," said a Bench of Justices Surya Kant and V Ramasubramanian.

The top court had last month asked the sessions court how much time in normal course it is likely to take to conclude the trial, without compromising with the schedule of other pending or prioritised matters in that court.

The Bench is hearing a plea filed by Ashish Mishra seeking bail in the case of mowing down of protesting farmers in October 2021 in Lakhimpur Kheri.

During the hearing, the Bench asked the counsel appearing for the Uttar Pradesh Government to confirm whether the four accused in a separate case lodged over the killing of three occupants of the SUV, which allegedly mowed down farmers in the incident, are still in custody. The bench

Top court agrees to hear petition of Google against NCLAT order

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to hear a plea of US tech giant Google against an order of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) refusing an interim stay on the competition regulator imposing a Rs 1,337 crore penalty on it.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice P S Narasimha took note of the submissions of senior advocate A M Singhvi, appearing for the US firm, and said that it will list the plea for hearing on Monday.

The senior lawyer said that extraordinary directions have been passed by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) and the order has

to be complied by January 19. "There is no finding of abuse of dominance," he said.

The NCLAT, on January 4, had refused an interim stay on an order of the competition regulator imposing a Rs 1,337 crore penalty on Google and had asked it to deposit 10 per cent of the amount.

The NCLAT admitted the search giant's challenge to the CCI slapping a Rs 1,337.76 crore fine for abusing the dominant position of its Android smartphone operating system in the country.

The CCI in October last year had asked Google to allow smartphone users on the Android platform to uninstall apps and let them select a search engine of their choice. That order was to become effective from January 19.

3 multi-State co-ops for organic products, seeds, exports soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday decided to establish three new national-level multi-state cooperative societies to promote organic products, seeds and exports. The national-level cooperative organic society, cooperative seed society and cooperative export society will be registered under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002.

"The cooperatives sector plays a pivotal role in creating a stronger economy and furthering rural development. In this context, the Cabinet has taken a crucial decision which will further our vision of 'Sahakar Se Samridhhi'" (prosperity through cooperatives) by boosting rural growth and farmers income, he added.

The Minister said cooperatives societies, including primary societies, district, state and national level federations, multi-state cooperative societies and Farmers Producer Organisations (FPOs) can become members of these new cooperatives.



enacted in 1984. It was in 1987, TRIFED (Tribal Co-Operative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd) was established under this law as a national-level cooperative body.

After 35 years, three new multi-state cooperative societies will be established. They will play a key role in realising the goal of 'Sahakar Se Samridhhi' (prosperity through cooperatives) by boosting rural growth and farmers income, he added.

The Minister said cooperatives societies, including primary societies, district, state and national level federations, multi-state cooperative societies and Farmers Producer Organisations (FPOs) can become members of these new cooperatives.

"All these cooperatives will have their elected representatives in the Board of the society as per its bye-laws," Yadav said, adding that there are about 8.5 lakh registered cooperative societies in the country with 29 crore members. The setting of these three national-level cooperative societies will bring rural growth, he said.

Sharing the role of the proposed export society, the Cooperative Ministry said it will provide thrust to exports from the cooperative sector by acting as an umbrella organisation for carrying out and promoting exports.

It will also help cooperatives in getting benefits from various export-related schemes and policies of different ministries of the central government in a focused manner. Basically, it will help unlock the export potential of Indian cooperatives in the global market.

According to the ministry, the proposed cooperative organic society will help in unlocking the demand and consumption potential of organic products in domestic as well as global markets.

ED conducts raids in Mangaluru bomb blast case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday conducted searches at some locations in Mangaluru as part of a money laundering probe linked to a cooker bomb blast there last year. The money laundering case is based on an FIR of the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

The ED officials conducted searches at a building in Mangaluru, where a Congress party office is also located, apart from some other locations as part of gathering documents and evidence in the case filed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), officials said.

The agency searched an office in that building and no raids were conducted in the premises of any political party. Searches were also undertaken at some other places, they said.

A bomb blast took place in an auto rickshaw in the outskirts of Mangaluru on

November 19 last year and the man who was allegedly handling the explosives in the three-wheeler, Mohammed Shariq, is the main suspect in the case.

He suffered 40 per cent burns in the blast, and, according to police, Shariq and his accomplices were allegedly inspired by the terror outfit Islamic State and were in touch with it through the Telegram messaging application. Police also said their handlers outside India had sent a document to guide them in making a bomb.

Using the document, they made a bomb and carried out a trial on the banks of Tunga river near Shivamogga district in Karnataka. The state police had said there was a plan to unleash large-scale destruction across Karnataka.

Due to violence on August 15 last year over the Hindutva ideologue V Savarkar in Shivamogga, the police had unearthed an IS-inspired terror module, but Shariq had given the police the slip.

Lakshadweep MP, 3 others get 10 yrs' jail

PTI ■ KAVARATTI (LAKSHADWEEP)/

A court in Lakshadweep on Wednesday sentenced four people, including Lakshadweep MP Mohammed Faizal to 10 years jail in connection with an attempt to murder case.

Lawyers associated with the case said the District and Sessions Court in Kavaratti



also imposed a fine of ₹1 lakh each on the convicts in the attempt to murder case registered against them in 2009.

According to the lawyers, the MP and others attacked Padanath Salih, son-in-law of former Union Minister P M Sayeed, when they had reached their neighbourhood for intervening in a political issue during the 2009 Lok Sabha polls. Speaking to PTI, Faizal said it was a 'politically motivated' case and he would file an appeal in the higher court soon.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hailing RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's remarks on Muslims, former Minority Affairs Minister and senior BJP leader Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Wednesday said the spirit of partnership and not the battle to dominate leads to the path of development.

Naqvi's assertion follows Bhagwat's remarks that Muslims have nothing to fear in India, but they must abandon their "boisterous rhetoric of supremacy".

"The simple truth is this, Hindusthan should remain Hindusthan. There is no harm to the Muslims living today in Bharat... Islam has nothing to fear. But at the same time, Muslims must abandon their boisterous rhetoric of supremacy," Bhagwat said in an interview to Organiser and Panchjanya. "We are of an exalted race; we once ruled over this land, and shall rule it

again; only our path is right, rest everyone is wrong; we are different, therefore we will continue to be so; we cannot live together; they (Muslims) must abandon this narrative.

In fact, all those who live here whether a Hindu or a communist must give up this logic," the RSS chief said. Speaking with media persons on Bhagwat's remarks, Naqvi said, "The spirit of participation and not the battle to dominate leads to the path of development and trust. The result of this is that out of every 10 Muslims in the world, one is living in India.

His social, economic and educational rights are completely secure and strong." "But the problem is not of common Muslims, it is of the 'contractors' vying for Muslim votes. These people do not want Muslims to be a part of inclusive development and society," he said in an apparent swipe at the Opposition.

Comments a call for violence against minorities, says Left

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Left parties, CPI(M) and CPI, condemned the controversial comment of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's controversial comment on Muslims that they will have to give up the idea of supremacy to remain safe.

The CPI(M) polit bureau in a statement said that Bhagwat's comments were atrocious and virtually a call for violence against minority communities. CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said that the RSS Chief's atrocious comments in an interview to RSS weeklies, constitutes an open and blatant

challenge to the Constitution of India, to equal rights of all citizens and to the rule of Law.

"Bhagwat's statements are an update of the hate filled communal writings of RSS icons like Hegdewar and Golwalkar that Muslims can live in India only if they accept a subordinate position," said Yechury.

"He has threatened the Muslim minority community that they will have to give up ideas of 'supremacy' to remain safe. He justifies the aggression of 'Hindu society' in the name of perceived historical wrongs, stating that Hindus are 'at war'.

He has virtually given a call for violence against a sec-

tion of Indian citizens on the basis of religious affiliation," added Yechury.

CPI general secretary D Raja said that Bhagawat is acting like a self appointed custodian of Indian society and breached the walls of Constitution and legality.

"Bhagwat's remark 'war is not against an enemy outside but against an enemy within' exposed RSS' divisive agenda. Such provocations must be resisted and defeated through unity," said Raja.

CPI(M) polit bureau said that RSS chief's statements are an open and blatant challenge to the Constitution of India, to equal rights of all citizens and to the rule of Law.

CBI launches 'Operation Kanak' to check graft in FCI procurement

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Wednesday launched a crackdown on alleged corruption in the Food Corporation of India (FCI), conducting searches at 50 locations in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi after arresting a DGM-rank officer and seizing Rs 80 lakh in cash.

The agency on Wednesday launched 'Operation Kanak' on alleged "channelized corruption in the FCI procurement, storage and distribution".

It conducted searches at 50 locations in Punjab, Haryana and Delhi after arresting a DGM-rank officer from Chandigarh, officials said. The CBI booked as many as 74 accused in the FIR, including FCI Executive Director Sudeep



Singh after a six-month-long undercover operation to identify suspects in the syndicate of officials, rice mill owners and middlemen, among others who were allegedly indulging in corrupt practices, they said.

Deputy General Manager (DGM) of FCI Rajiv Kumar

Mishra was arrested for allegedly receiving a bribe of Rs 50,000 from one Ravinder Singh Khera, the CBI said. The role of senior officers of Punjab government is also under scrutiny for running 'benami' godowns outsourced to the FCI.

Among the 74 accused, 34 are serving officials, three are retired, 17 private persons and 20 entities, the officials said. The agency has recovered Rs 60 lakh in cash, including Rs 10 lakh from a female officer which was hidden in a washing machine.

The agency has launched the operation against an "unholy nexus of corruption" in the FCI involving a chain of officers, rice mill owners and grain merchants among others, engaged in the procurement,

storage and distribution of food grains, sources said. The accused officials were allegedly receiving bribes from silos operators and rice millers in extending favours during the tendering process as well.

Their illicit actions cheated farmers by forcing them to sell products through syndicate, leading to delivery of sub-standard grains under the Public Distribution System, the CBI alleged.

The agency also alleged officials showed more procurement on paper than what was available in godowns. The role of officials from technical assistants to executive directors in the FCI is underagency's scanner, officials said, adding operation is spread across multiple cities in Punjab, Haryana and two locations in Delhi.

Overuse of antibiotics can cause IBD: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Frequent use of antibiotics may increase the risk of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) — Crohn's disease (CD) and ulcerative colitis (UC)—in people over the age of 40, according to a study published in the journal Gut. The IBDs are chronic inflammatory disorders of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract.

It said, the risk appears to be cumulative and greatest 1-2 years after use, particularly for antibiotics used to treat gut infections. In the study, more than 6.1 million people were included, and just over half of

them were female. The study found that at least 91 per cent in total, 5.5 million were prescribed at least one course of antibiotics between 2000 and 2018. During this period, some 36,017 new cases of ulcerative colitis and 16,881 new cases of Crohn's disease were diagnosed.

Moreover, compared with no antibiotic use, the use of these drugs was associated with a higher risk of developing IBD, regardless of age, but older age was associated with the highest risk.

The study also reveals that those aged 10-40 were 28 per cent more likely to be diagnosed with IBD, 40-60 year-

olds were 48 per cent more likely to do so, while those over the 60s were 47 per cent more likely to do so. However, the risks were slightly higher for Crohn's disease than they were for ulcerative colitis —40 per cent among 10-40 year-olds, 62 per cent among 40-60 year-olds, and 51 per cent among those over the 60s.

As per the age band, the risk seemed to be cumulative, with each subsequent course adding an additional 11 per cent, 15 per cent, and 14 per cent heightened risk, said the study. The highest risk of all was observed among those prescribed 5 or more courses of antibiotics — 69 per cent

heightened risk for 10-40 year-olds, a doubling in risk for 40-60 year-olds, and a 95 per cent heightened risk for those over the 60s.

Among 10-40 year-olds IBD risk was 40 per cent higher 1-2 years after taking antibiotics compared with 13 per cent 4-5 years later. The equivalent figures for 40-60 year-olds were 66 per cent vs 21 per cent and for those over the 60s were 63 per cent vs 22 per cent.

In terms of antibiotic type, nitroimidazoles and fluoroquinolones, which are commonly used to treat gut infections, were associated with the highest risk of IBD, the study mentioned.

3 soldiers killed after falling into J&K gorge



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

A Junior Commissioner Officer along with two other jawans made a supreme sacrifice in the line of duty after they slipped into a deep gorge late Tuesday evening in Machhal sector of North Kashmir's Kupwara district. According to a Srinagar based Defence Spokesman, "a routine operational task was undertaken on 10 Jan 2023 at about 5:30 p.m in Machhal Sector, along a narrow winter track. While moving towards the forward post, snow along the



narrow track broke, leading to slipping of one JCO and two Jawaans into a deep gorge". Immediately a search and rescue operation was launched with troops from the nearest post. "In spite of adverse weather condition and rough terrain, sustained efforts of the search party led to the recovery of mortal remains of the three brave soldiers today morning between 4:15 to 4:45 am," the Defence spokesman said. The three slain have been identified as Naib Subedar Parshotam Kumar, 43, Havaladar Amrik Singh, 39 and Amit Sharma, 23.



Kumar a resident of village Majua Uttami, Bishnah Jammu in J&K had joined Army in 1996. He is survived by his wife and two children. Hav Singh had joined the Army in 2001. He belonged to Village Mandwara, Una in Himachal Pradesh. He is survived by his wife and one son. Amit Sharma had joined the Army in 2019. He belonged to Village Talasi Khurd, Hamirpur in Himachal Pradesh. The braveheart is survived by his mother. The mortal remains of the deceased soldiers will be dispatched to their native villages for performing the last rites.

Eligibility criteria for JEE relaxed

Top 20 percentile students in each Board will now be eligible to seek IIT, NIT admissions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a major move that would provide a breather to thousands of students, the eligibility criteria for JEE (Advanced) has been relaxed following constant demand from IIT aspirants in this regard. The Ministry of Education on Wednesday said the top 20 percentile students of each education Board will now be eligible to seek admission in IITs and NITs and appear for JEE Advanced even if they have not scored 75 per cent marks in Class 12. The decision comes against the backdrop of constant demands for relaxing the eligibility criteria for JEE (Advanced), which requires at least 75 per cent marks in aggregate in the class 12 exam-



ination conducted by the respective education boards. "The 20 percentile criteria will help those candidates who are short of 75 per cent aggregate in their Class 12 boards. Discussions were held and since many of the top 20 percentile candidates in a number of state boards score below 75 per cent marks or 350 marks, the Ministry decided that if a candidate is in the top 20 percentile he or she is eligible," official sources said. The online registration for the first edition of JEE-Main will end on January 12. The exam will be conducted between January 24 and 31.

According to the JEE (Main) 2023 information bulletin, admission to BE/BTech/BArch/BPlanning programmes in the NITs, IIITs, and CFT via central seat allocation board will be based on all India rank with the additional eligibility of at least 75 per cent in aggregate in the class 12 examination conducted by the respective education boards. For Caste/Scheduled Tribe candidates, the qualifying aggregate is 65 per cent in Class 12 board exams. The eligibility criteria was kept in abeyance during the pandemic (2020, 2021 and 2022).

Silvassa: Minor boy beheaded, chopped for human sacrifice

PTI ■ SILVASSA

A nine-year-old boy was kidnapped and decapitated as part of a "human sacrifice" ritual in Dadra and Nagar Haveli district of the Union Territory and his body was chopped into pieces, police said on Wednesday. Police arrested two men and detained a teenage boy last week after the headless body of the boy, belonging to a tribal community, was found in the Damanganga canal near Vapi town in Valsad district of neighbouring Gujarat. The boy went missing from Sayli village in the Dadra and Nagar Haveli (DNH) district of the UT on December 29 last year, following which a case of kidnapping was registered at the Silvassa police station on December 30, police said in a release. While multiple teams were found to trace the boy, a headless body matching his description was found at Vapi, located around 30 km away from Silvassa, the headquarters of the DNH district, police said. While the body was found in a canal in Vapi, parts of the body, suspected to be of the victim, were found in Sayli village where the ritual was performed, an official said. The body parts have been sent for forensic examination, he added. "The investigation led the police to a juvenile. He revealed he had kidnapped the victim on December 29, 2022, from Sayli village and murdered him as a human sacrifice with the help of his accomplice," the police said.



TMC ignores Cong invite to Srinagar; takes dig at Rahul

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress is not giving much importance to an invite it has received from the Congress to attend the closing ceremony of Bharat Jodo Yatra which is likely to take place in Jammu and Kashmir. Side tracking questions on whether the party would send representatives to Srinagar party spokesperson and MP Dr Shantanu Sen on Wednesday said that instead of making a spectacle out of the much hyped Yatra apparently aimed at uniting India the Congress leadership should have tried to unite their own rank and file. "Firstly TMC is a disciplined party and all decisions are taken by our party president Mamata Banerjee and commander and national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee so it is upon them to decide whether to go to Srinagar or not ... but for me I can only say that instead of embarking on a Bharat Jodo Yatra Rahul Gandhi and the Congress leadership should have first tried to unite their own party ... the way leaders like Ghulam Nabi Azad and Kapil Sibal are quitting the party there is a big question about the Congress internal unity itself," Sen said. The TMC leadership, which has never cloaked Mamata Banerjee's prime ministerial ambitions, had not joined the Yatra in earlier phases when invited to do so by



Janpath. Wondering whether the Congress would be able to hold together the party even after the Yatra Sen said the "A 137-year-old party, the Congress has failed even to keep its flock together even after winning in certain States ... where most of their elected representatives have quit the party ... this is a poor reflection on their leadership." Again he accused the Congress of perpetrating corruption when it was in power leading to its defeat in the 2014 general elections. "They had come back to power in 2009 but failed to retain it on account of large scale corruption ... they will have to take care of this also." Taking a dig at Rahul Gandhi the TMC MP said that he should first indicate that he was a full time politician. "Yatra is all right but what is the guarantee that their leader will once again not go abroad in holiday trip leaving the party and the politics to its own fate ... so the Congress leadership should first take care of such drawbacks before talking big on unity etc," he said.

ED attaches 'luxurious' house of sextortionist



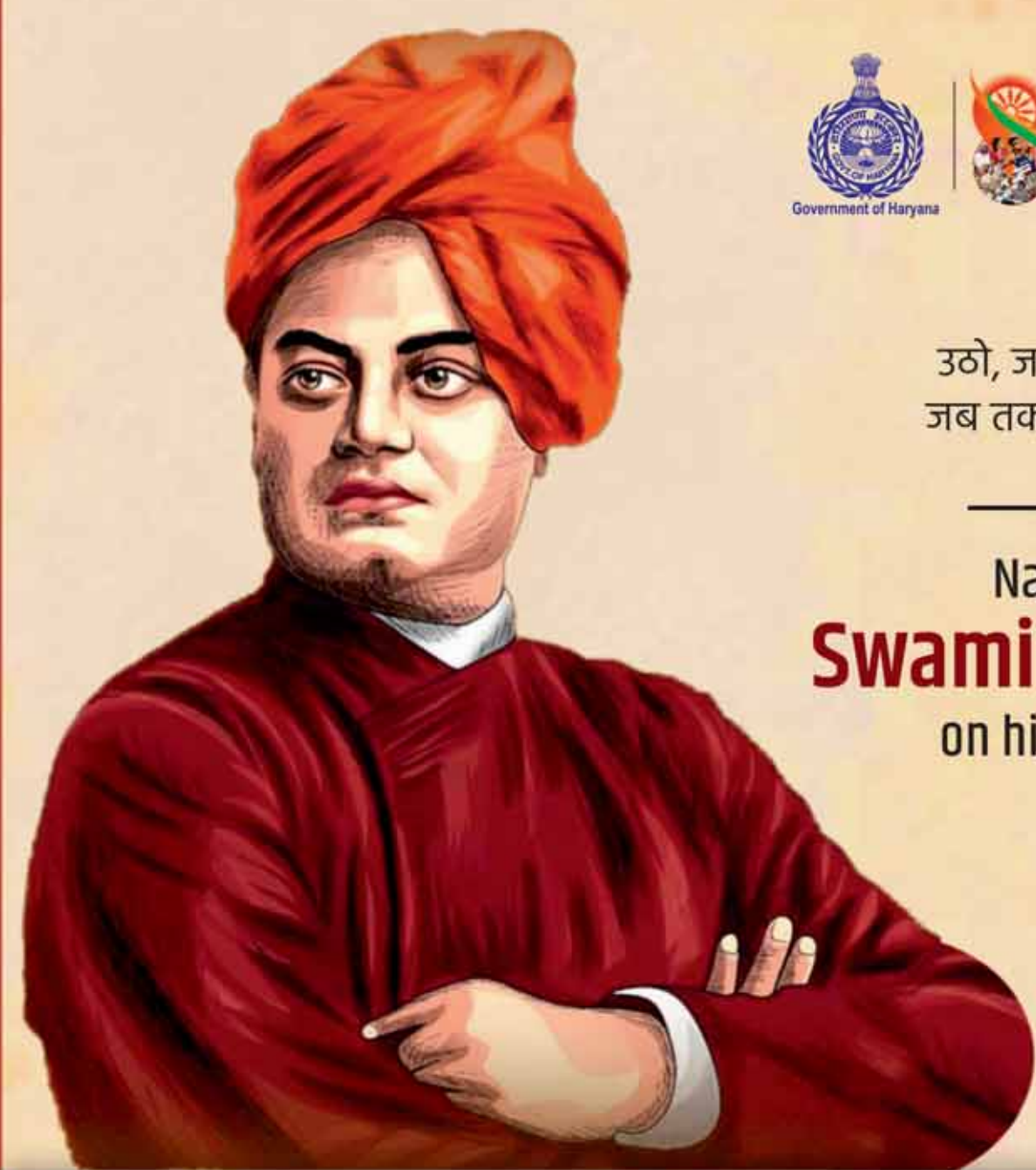
PNS ■ NEW DELHI




The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday attached a 'luxurious' house of the prime accused Archana Nag worth Rs 3.64 crore in connection with ongoing money laundering investigation into the high-profile sextortion racket being run in and around the city of Bhubaneswar. Earlier, the ED had seized two high end vehicles worth Rs 56.5 lakh under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The ED had registered a case under PMLA against the lady 'blackmailer' Archana Nag, her husband Jagabandhu Chand, Shradhanjali Behera, and Khageswar Patra on the basis of two separate FIRs registered by the Bhubaneswar Police.

Case registered against 14 men for doing stunt on 3 bikes in Bareilly

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Fourteen people riding three motorcycles and performing stunts have landed in trouble in Bareilly district after their video went viral on social media. The police have registered a case in this connection and are making investigations to initiate legal proceedings. In the video clip which went viral, as many as 14 men are seen riding three motorcycles - six on one and four each on two - in Deorania police circle of Bareilly. They can be seen performing a dangerous stunt on a section of Bareilly-Nainital highway. The video is reported to have been shot on Sunday. As per reports, police also saw them performing the stunt, but the men fled the spot before the police could act. A police action has been initiated against the men involved in the stunt and all the motorcycles have been seized. Senior Superintendent of Police of Bareilly, Akhilesh Kumar Chaurasia, said, "Once the information was received, the bikes were seized. Further action is being taken."






उठो, जागो और तब तक मत रुको जब तक लक्ष्य की प्राप्ति ना हो जाये



Nation remembers
Swami Vivekananda Ji
on his Birth Anniversary

National Youth Day


January 12, 2023



“This day is a day of great inspiration for every Indian youth; it is a day for taking new resolutions. On this day, India had received such a zealous entity in the form of Swami Vivekananda that is still energizing our country, constantly inspiring us and showing us the way forward.”
- Narendra Modi



Information, Public Relations, Languages and Culture Department, Haryana

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Unwise

Govt should refrain from seeking more money from Union Carbide for the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy

Why is the Government seeking additional compensation from Union Carbide for the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy? Way back in 1989, there was an agreement which stipulated a payment of \$470 million (Rs 715 crore at that time) by the American company. That was supposed to be the final settlement. If over three decades after reaching a settlement, India makes additional demands, what sanctity would be left in the pacts we make with other countries, big companies, or multilateral agencies? What impact would it have on the foreign direct investment that our leaders arduously seek? In fact, there are the questions someone in the Government must have raised when a decision was made to seek an amendment to the mutually agreed 1989 deal with Union Carbide; apparently, no one did. But the apex court asks questions and flags issues (this is the main reason why the Government is at loggerheads with the judiciary, but that's another story). So, it was left to the five-judge Bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Sanjiv Khanna, Abhay S Oka, Vikram Nath, and JK Maheshwari to remind the Government about the far-reaching ramifications of the proposed move, one of which would be the impact on prospective investments by multinational corporations. The Bench is hearing a curative petition filed by the Centre. Saying that populism cannot be the basis of judicial review and the "sanctity of the settlement" would go away if the case is reopened, it also said that a Rs



50-crore sum of the compensation which remains unutilised even after so many years. The Government's move brings to mind the unedifying episode of retrospective taxation which brought a lot of embarrassment to the nation. The sordid saga of retrospective taxation began with the famous Vodafone case. Vodafone bought Hutchison's mobile telephony business and other assets in India in 2007, on which the Indian tax officials demanded Rs 7,990 crore in capital gains and withholding tax from Vodafone. Vodafone legally challenged the demand notice, and won the case in the Supreme Court in 2012. The matter should have ended there, but taxmen managed to convince the then finance minister, Pranab Mukherjee, to disregard the highest court of the land and undo its ruling by bringing in an ordinance — which he did. Retrospective taxation was widely opposed, including by those within the ruling dispensation. Prime minister Manmohan Singh was convinced that the proposed amendment in the IT Act would impact FDI inflows into the country, Mukherjee wrote in his memoir, adding that Sonia Gandhi, Kapil Sibal, and P Chidambaram also expressed the apprehension that the retrospective amendments would create a negative sentiment for FDI. When the Bharatiya Janata Party came to power, it also continued with retrospective taxation; the Government did a somersault only when its position became absolutely untenable in the international arena. It should not do anything that brings more embarrassment to India.



Snow-covered Rasheel village after fresh snowfall in Lahaul-Spiti district

Lunatic Asylum

Pseudo-intellectuals hit a new low by forcing a caterer to serve non veg dishes in Kerala student festival

Swami Vivekananda described Kerala as a lunatic asylum when he visited South India as part of his Bharat Yatra during the latter half of the nineteenth century. What made the Hindu saint express his disgust was the apartheid in vogue in the region at the instance of certain caste leaders who had made it a symbol of royalty and feudalism. The modern-day royalty and feudalism in the State are epitomized by certain political goons and pseudo-intelligentsia who want Kerala to remain as a communal cauldron. It is an accepted policy that arts and culture should unify people who follow myriad religious beliefs. Kerala is home to Asia's biggest cultural jamboree of school children, the State Schools Youth Festival. Nearly 10,000 school students from across the State participate in arts and cultural events spread over five days. The event assumes more significance than any other festival in the State thanks to the innocence of the teenage participants. Noted caterer Pazhayidam Mohanan Nampoothiri, whose cooking and serving of foods was the one who has been feeding the participating children with quality vegetarian dishes for the last 25 years. Nampoothiri dedicates a month every year to cook and feed the child participants.



Media reports about the school youth festival would not be complete without features about the daily delicacies served by him. But Nampoothiri shocked Kerala with his announcement that he would not be there with his kitchen from next year as a section of the self-styled intelligentsia took umbrage over the fact that he serves only vegetarian stuff during the event. The fact that Nampoothiri serves a non-vegetarian menu during the annual Kerala Schools Sports Meet was hidden from society. The statement was like opening a Pandora's Box in a State which stands polarised on communal lines. Things reached an alarming level this time as Nampoothiri and his staff had to sit on guard round-the-clock in the kitchen as well as the storeroom because of threats by certain elements that they would put poison in the food. They demanded that beef delicacies be served and described the ace caterer as emblematic of communalism and fascism. They were silent about dozens of people getting killed in the State after consuming non-vegetarian dishes from eateries. Let the children enjoy their favorite dishes. Communalism and Fascism have no space in kids' worlds. One cannot be blamed if he doubts whether Kerala is an Animal Farm visualized by George Orwell.

Let love permeate life and living

For human survival, love is the panacea. It must essence of human life else we are bound to end up fighting and annihilating everything around

Human survival on the planet earth is unthinkable without the presence of love. It needs no elaboration on how critically significant is the presence of love amongst living beings. In a rare instance in contemporary history, hatred, violence prolonged incarceration only helped purify the stream of love within an enlightened individual, Nelson Mandela. He presented a shining example of how love could overcome even the most ferocious inflictions of hatred: "People are not born to hate. They are taught to hate. They can be taught to love. No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite." It is also a stark reality that people suffer burgeoning levels of hate, distrust, terror, violence, and wars. And this is happening in our civilized world in the third decade of the 21st century!

Never before have human beings been familiar with the secrets of nature today. Never before governments, and global organizations were as well-equipped as today to annihilate human suffering anywhere on the planet earth. Then, why are people suffering on one count or the other? Love flourishes in peace, in righteous conduct, in nonviolence, in truth! All these five — truths, peace, nonviolence, righteous conduct, and love — constitute the ultimate prescription for a totally humane world. Interestingly, each one of these is organically linked to the other four! This perfect five is also an expression of ultimate human aspiration. It would be a goal that subsumes spirituality, the essence of faith and manifestation of the essential unity of all human beings, and the eternal search for truth. The very survival of the planet earth; and hence humanity; is at stake. The world before us; and emerging before generations ahead; was comprehensively articulated by the secretary general of



the UN Antonio Guterres at the COP-15, representatives from 190 countries met in Montreal in December 2022 to take a final call on global biodiversity framework for years ahead: "With our bottomless appetite for unchecked and unequal economic growth, humanity has become a weapon of mass destruction. We are treating nature like a toilet. And ultimately, we are committing suicide by proxy." Obviously, the survival of humanity on the planet earth requires a two-fold long-term strategy that could give lasting impetus to the process of learning universal values and internalization of humane elements by every citizen and every human being. This process - of moving ahead in the direction of a humane world - would require the participation of every individual citizen and human being in two major initiatives: restoration of the sensitive man-nature mutuality on one hand, and reinventing the man-man relationship to a level where every person treats every other person 'as he himself would like to be treated by everyone else'. It is not something like two agenda items in a plan or program; it would cover every aspect of human life and living, it would require

NEVER BEFORE, HUMAN BEINGS WERE FAMILIAR WITH THE SECRETS OF NATURE AS OF TODAY. NEVER BEFORE GOVERNMENTS, AND GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONS WERE AS WELL-EQUIPPED AS TODAY TO ANNIHILATE HUMAN SUFFERINGS ANYWHERE ON THE PLANET

high-level intellectual churning, and acceptance of the reality that 'learning to live together' and 'Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam' are no more clichés, but a basic approach and skill that is as essential to human survival as are air, water, and food. As one contemplates the existing and emerging shape and situation of our planet, attention invariably shifts to the process of growing up of human beings, the manner each innocent and unaware child is taught to love. Let the child witness love all around in family, schools, and society let him observe love connecting people. Let this environment transform him from a 'person to a personality'. Education policies deserve fresh thinking and let humanistic and ethical values develop around the fulcrum of love. Educational institutions, particularly teacher preparation establishments, could set examples. One has personally observed how national and regional level educational institutions nurture love across all diversities. These need to remain conscious of external elements that would be interested in disturbing the symphony of national unity and integrity. Teaching learning materials are undergoing serious transformations, and this is the


time to ensure that no opportunity is ignored that could reemphasize the need to internalize love for others, and the desire to help and serve the needy. Rapid technological advancements are threatening to downgrade human ingenuity and intelligence. These could lead to neglect of the human element in the process of growing up, and also in professional life. It has to be taken note of in the preparation of textual materials. The objective of education must be cautiously woven around humane values. It must particularly lay emphasis on the equality of all religions, and comprehension of universal human values drenched in love. These form part of every faith and religion. In a cohesive world, human life must remain a quest for the secrets of nature; it must persistently strive to understand man, nature, and the beauty that makes every initiative and effort worthwhile. The future world must appear beautiful to its inhabitants. Recall the lines of Keats: "Beauty is truth, / Truth beauty — that is all / ye know on earth, / and all ye need to know." (Professor Rajput works in education, social cohesion, and religious amity. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

VIVEKANANDA WAS NOT COMMUNAL
Sir — While the child Narendranath experimented with hookahs used by different communities to experience how one "loses" his caste or religion, the matured Swami Vivekananda advocated for universal brotherhood and equality of all human beings.

Though Vivekananda was a proud Hindu as well as Indian, that did not deter him from pointing out the vices that had plagued the religion and the nation. Neither did he paint an imaginary story revolving "glory" of ancient India by "discovering" a test-tube baby, plastic surgery with Ram's arrows being "missiles" and Kubler's Pushpak Rath an "aircraft" nor tried to impose his religious belief upon other communities by projecting Hinduism and India as superior to others; rather his true love for his own religion and country got translated into love and respect for all religions and humanity as a whole. It is indeed a disgusting sight when the rabid orthodox pseudo-nationalist merchants of hatred, who have emerged as the self-declared "guardians" of Hindus and "holy cows" and can't hold a candle to the liberalism of the great sage, dare to project the humanitarian harmony-personified Swami Vivekananda as one of their "icons"! Had Vivekananda been alive, he would have got ashamed to witness the communal environment in his country. Lastly, the Bhakts and their leaders are earnestly requested to not invoke the name of Swami Vivekananda in their divisive lips and pen on the occasion of his birthday! This humanitarian started the ritual of Kumari Puja by worshipping a 4-year-old Kashmiri Muslim girl in Kheer Bhavani in 1898! Yes, this all-embracing sage used to see the Divine Mother in all female entities irrespective of religion. So instead of paying lip service to Vivekananda at the drop of a hat, they should try to learn his values and treat all citizens and human beings on an absolutely equal pedestal irrespective of their origin-birth-caste-religion-language-race-region.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata
KOHLI'S TON

Joshimath disaster

603 buildings have developed cracks and more than 68 families are shifted to safe locations. The historic recurrence of Uttarakhand 2013 is a corollary of incessantly ignored alarming bells by nature and experts. Rampant infrastructure development, improper drainage system, and unprecedented changes in climate have made the area more fragile and paved the way for disaster. The localities are paying the price of someone else's greed by evacuating their hometown. Safety negligence is leading to accidents. Amplified landslides and cracks in the house symbolises not only the need for strict rule and regulations but also the forced and timely implementation of these rules. Moreover, the need of the hour is also to stop the hydropower projects in order to pause further destruction. Also, bring Dam Safety Law into effect, especially for places like Himachal where almost 97% of the area is prone to landslides.

Tashi Baheti | Ujjain
Sir — Congrats to Emperor Kohli on his achieving the milestone of the 73rd international century and his 45th ODI century. He needs just 5 more to beat Sachin Tendulkar's world record of 49 ODI centuries. Now that more ODIs and T20s are being played, Virat has more opportunities to achieve 100 international centuries. Should Virat play IPL (to gain more practice) or quit IPL (to avoid overplay and exhaustion)? He should decide with medical experts and cricket experts and coaches. Emperor Kohli also has new records for most ODI centuries (9) against any single nation (Sri Lanka). Also most ODI centuries (20) on the home (Indian) soil, from 102 matches. (Whereas Sachin Tendulkar has 20 ODI tons on home soil, from 164 games). Hope the best of Virat is yet to come and he will be on the ground for many more years.



Madhu Nivriti PS | Secunderabad
GOVERNOR WALKOUT NOT CALLED FOR
Sir — By staging an unprecedented walkout from the Assembly after intentionally skipping a few key portions of the approved text over his customary address, Tamil Nadu Governor R. N. Ravi has brought a new low to the House.

SOUND BITE
Today, the world listens to India. It can become the engine of development of the world.


Prime Minister — Narendra Modi
.....

We salute the Iranian citizens who are heroically fighting for their freedom. They are sacrificing their lives for basic human rights.

Prime Minister of Israel — Benjamin Netanyahu
.....
Indian cinema should stop such nudity content on big and small screens. Showing things against our culture and tradition will definitely cause conflicts among the people.


Actor — Anant Nag
.....

It's rare to see someone strike this way. I have seen amazing players like AB de Villiers, Vivian Richards, Sachin Tendulkar, Virat Kohli, and Ricky Ponting but few can hit the ball as cleanly as Suryakumar. Hats off to him!

Former cricketer — Kapil Dev
.....
I have killed the Rahul Gandhi that exists in your mind. I have no interest in my image.


Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi

FIRST COLUMN

STRESS CAN CAUSE MENTAL ILLNESSES

Try to open your heart to someone you can trust to relive stress



JYOTI KAPOOR

Everyone experiences stress, which gives you an unpleasant feeling, but it's not a disease in itself. However, there are links between stress and mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and psychosis. It is a reaction to a real or perceived event that acts as a stressor.

In other words, how stressed one feels depends on how much stress one perceives in a given situation. Stress causes a chemical response in the brain with several physical and psychological effects. Acute stress can trigger anxiety, and long-term stress, even if it is of low intensity, can cause permanent changes. Your heart, muscles, nervous system, and immunity all get affected. Fatigue, lethargy, muscle aches and pains, lack of enthusiasm, irritability, and sleep disturbances may occur.

Lifestyle malfunctions are the result; social and interpersonal health suffers. Mental illnesses, like any illness, are vulnerable to stressful events. Here the stress chemical acts as a trigger, which activates an underlying vulnerability.



Acute stress associated with the sudden death of a loved one can trigger mood disorders like depression and bipolar disorder. Psychotic disorders associated with hallucinations and delusions can become prominent after severe stressful events like death or an accident.

Loss of sleep can trigger the onset of manic or depressive episodes in known or high-risk cases of bipolar disorder. Similarly, in patients with OCD or Observed Compulsive Personality Disorders, stress exacerbates obsessive-compulsive symptoms.

Long-term stressful situations that go untreated manifest as psychosomatic conditions or somatoform disorders. Anxiety disorders and health-related anxieties are often caused by prolonged life stressors in biologically vulnerable individuals. Physical or surgical stress is also known to cause anxiety episodes and sometimes psychosis in individuals with limited stress-coping abilities.

The signs and symptoms of stress may be thinking-related, emotional, or physical. This can vary from person to person. Thinking-related symptoms may include feeling difficulty, concentrating or thinking, memory-related problems, facing negativity or lack of self-confidence, feeling constant worrying, and difficulty making decisions.

Emotional symptoms may include the likes of feeling moodiness, low morale, irritability, feeling hopeless or helpless, apprehensive, anxious or nervous, feeling depressed, being unhappy or guilty, agitated or unable to relax.

Physical symptoms may include headaches, muscle tension or other physical pain or discomfort, stomach problems, loss of sex drive, rapid heart rate, high blood pressure and fatigue.

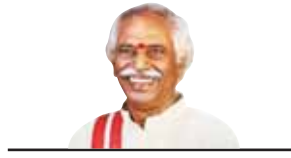
To deal with stress, one should start making a stress diary and identify what causes stress, while also asking why it causes stress; is it a negative presumption about the event or a reality that is bothering you? One must figure out ways to deal with stress and figure out the alternatives in cases of failures. If you are not able to do this exercise by yourself, consult a psychotherapist.

Some healthy ways to deal with stress may include—regular breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including those on social media; eating healthily and practicing good hygiene; exercise, get plenty of sleep; and give yourself a break if you feel stressed out.

Taking part in other activities could also be helpful. Talking to others is also a way out of stress. Try to open your heart to someone you can trust. Ask when you need more help. If problems continue or you are thinking about committing suicide, talk to a psychologist, social worker, or professional counsellor regarding the same.

(The author is founder and senior psychiatrist, Manasthali)

Swami Vivekananda: true icon for youths



BANDARU DATTATRAYA

During Amrit Kaal, let's make the most of the teachings of Swami Vivekananda to make an Atmanirbhar Bharat

Swami Vivekananda was an incredibly versatile personality with a vast knowledge of different subjects, including Western philosophy. He was the first Hindu monk of India, who spread the message of Hinduism and 'Sanatan Dharma'. He established the supremacy of 'Sanatan' values, culture and Hinduism in a decisive manner.

It was a great achievement as this was done by Swami Vivekananda, born on January 12, 1863 in Kolkata, at a time when the whole world used to look down upon us.

Blessed with a yogic temperament, he used to practice meditation even from his boyhood. Inquisitive to the core, his life underwent a sea change ever since he came into contact with Sri Ramakrishna Paramhans, which later on developed into a unique guru-disciple relationship with fewer parallels in the history of spiritual masters. He once asked Shri Ramakrishna Paramhans one day in November 1881: "Sir, have you seen God?" He replied: "Yes, I have. I see Him as clearly as I see you, only in a much intenser sense."

Under divine guidance of Shri Ramakrishna Paramhans, Swami Vivekananda made strides on the spiritual path. His speech at the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago, on September 11, 1893 left an indelible mark on the gathering comprising religious and spiritual personalities of different faiths from across the world. He started his speech by addressing the gathering from the core of his heart as 'sisters and brothers of America' which was followed by thunderous applause from the audience.

He said: "It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of the mother of religions; and I thank you in the name of the millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects."

Swami ji went on to add: "I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true ... I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations on earth." Swami ji was of the firm opinion that all paths lead to the one true God, as is also mentioned in Rig Veda that 'Ekam Sat Vipra Bahuda Vadanti' (Truth is one; the wise call it by various names.)

His views of modern Indian secularism were based on equal respect for all faiths. He supported religious tolerance as a part of public culture, as he wanted harmony and peace. It was not a mere hollow proposition but a strong intent to serve the people with compassion and



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA WAS AN INSPIRATIONAL PERSONALITY. FOR HIM, YOUTH WAS THE HARBINGER OF HOPE AND THE FULCRUM OF CHANGE. HIS CLARION CALL—ARISE AWAKE AND STOP NOT UNTIL THE GOAL IS REACHED—STILL REVERBERATES IN OUR HEARTS AND MINDS

(The author is Governor, Haryana)



without any discrimination either on the basis of caste or religion. There was no place for appeasement in his views on secularism. It was all inclusive, which he preached in the US and the UK, the two countries he visited extensively after delivering the historic lecture at Parliament of the World Religions in 1893.

Swami Vivekananda's concept of potential divinity of the soul, principle of morality and ethics, and being a bridge between the East and the West, and sense of unity, pride in the past, and the sense of mission are real assets for us. He defined and strengthened the sense of unity for us as a nation, giving a proper understanding of our country's great spiritual heritage. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose wrote: "Swamiji harmonized the East and the West, religion and science, past and present. And that is why he is great. Our countrymen have gained unprecedented self-respect, self-reliance and self-assertion from his teachings."

In the words of eminent British historian A L Basham, in centuries to come, he will be remembered as one of the main moulders of the modern world. ...!"

Swami Vivekananda was an inspirational personality. For him, youth was the harbinger of hope and the fulcrum of change. His clarion call - Arise awake and stop not until the goal is reached - still reverberates in our hearts and minds. He said that he wanted youths with muscles of iron, nerves

of steel and gigantic hearts. He wanted the youth of the country to have strong will power to serve the motherland and masses. He once said: "Go, all of you, wherever there is an outbreak of plague or famine, or wherever the people are in distress, and mitigate their sufferings" by serving the country.

During his travels all over India, Swami Vivekananda was deeply moved to see the appalling poverty and backwardness of the masses, in particular the down-trodden. He was the first religious leader in India to understand and openly declare that the real cause of India's downfall was the neglect of the masses. They had lost their faith in their capacity to improve their lot due to centuries of oppression. He realized that despite poverty, 'the masses clung to religion, but they had never been taught the life-giving, ennobling principles of Vedanta and how to apply them in practical life.'

He saw education as the only means to improve their economic condition, and spiritual knowledge to infuse in them faith in themselves and strengthen their moral sense. What was education for him? In his own words: "The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion — is it worth the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs." That is

self-confidence!

As a divine soul, Swami Vivekananda visualized the role of science and technology in improving the life of human beings. So when he met Jamshedji Tata on a ship, he asked his help in creating human capital dedicated to sciences. Jamshedji Tata, inspired by the words of Swami Vivekananda, established the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru! Swami ji wanted to "bring the best aspects of both the traditional Hindu and Western systems of education".

During Amrit Kaal, let's make the most of the teachings of Swami Vivekananda, a great philosopher, thinker, orator, poet, and the greatest patron of the youth, to make an Atmanirbhar Bharat! We celebrate January 12, the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, as the National Youth Day, to draw inspiration from the 'philosophy of Swami ji and the ideals for which he lived and worked could be a great source of inspiration for the Indian Youth.' The dream of Ek Bharat, Sarvshrestha Bharat and making India Vishwa Guru can be realized by following the path shown by Swami Vivekananda, which is at the centre of the governance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji. Let us resolve today to assimilate the essence of teachings of Swami Vivekananda—national spirit, patriotism, unity in diversity, inclusivity and purity! This will be the real tribute to Swami Vivekananda.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

WHATEVER APPLIES TO THE ENTIRE COUNTRY, TAMIL NADU SAYS NO. TRUTH MUST PREVAIL. THAMIZHAGAM IS A MORE APPROPRIATE WORD. — TAMIL NADU GOVERNOR RN RAVI



HE MAKES STATEMENTS THAT ARE FACTUALLY INCORRECT AND POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS. — DMK LEADER TR BAALU

Gamosa, cultural symbol of Assam, gets GI tag

If Indian states do not apply for the GI tags for their specialised products for commercial use, other countries can do that

The government has recently granted Geographical Indication (GI) tag to various products, including Gamosa of Assam, Tandur Redgram of Telangana, and an apricot variety of Ladakh. Gamosa, a significant cultural symbol and identity of Assam, has received the Geographical Indication tag from the Central Government.

The Gamosa, a symbol of the culture and identity of Assam, is traditionally a hand-woven rectangular cotton piece of cloth with red borders and different designs and motifs, is offered to elders and guests as a mark of respect and honour. It is similar to 'Khata', a silken scarf, presented to guests in Sikkim and Tibetans as a mark of respect. Gamosa tag has been received by Assam after



(The author is a retired senior professor of international trade)

five years of scrutiny by the Controller General of Patents.

A Geographical Indication (appellation of origin) is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicraft and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory. There is a proper process of registration of GI products, which includes filing of application, preliminary scrutiny and examination, show cause notice, publication in the geographical indications journal, opposition to registration, and registration. Any association of persons, producers, organisation or authority established by or under the law can apply. The applicant must represent the interest of the producers.

Geographical indications are generally related to tradi-

tional products, produced by rural communities over generations that have gained a reputation on the markets for their specific qualities. Such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness.

Geographical Indications protection is granted through the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). On the one hand, it is granted through sui generis law (public law), e.g., in the European Union. In other words, GI protection should apply through ex-officio protection, where authorities may support and get involved in the making of GI collective dimensions together with their corresponding GI regulatory council, where ongoing dis-

course with the government is implied for effective inspection and quality control.

On the other hand, it is granted through common law. In other words, it is similar to the protection afforded to trademarks as it can be registered through collective trademarks and also through certification marks. A geographical indication is a name or sign used on products, which corresponds to a specific geographical location or origin (e.g. a town, region, or country).

The Controller-General Patents, Designs and Trade Marks who is also the Registrar of Geographical Indications and is based in Chennai to administer this Act. It is a sui generis Act of Parliament for protection of geographical

indications in India. This country, as a member of the WTO, enacted the Act to comply with the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).

The GI tag ensures that none other than those registered as authorised users (or at least those residing inside the geographical territory) are allowed to use the popular product name and others have to pay at commercial rates for their use like patents. Darjeeling Tea became the first GI tagged product in India in 2004-05.

The top five states holding maximum number of GIs are Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra and Kerala. Recently, the government has supported the promotion of

GIs by approving an expenditure of Rs 75 crore for three years for promotion of awareness programmes.

The commerce and Industry ministry said on 13 December that the total number of GI has reached 432. The famous goods, which carry GI tag, include Alphonso Mango from Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg and other adjoining areas in Maharashtra, Basmati rice, Darjeeling Tea, Amritsari fish, Phulkari of Punjab, Chanderi Fabric, Mysore Silk, Kullu Shawl, Kangra Tea, Thanjavur Paintings, Allahabad Surkha, Farrukhabad Prints, Lucknow Zardozi and Kashmir Walnut Wood Carving.

Some other products which have been granted GI tag include Mahabaleshwar Strawberry, Blue Pottery of

Jaipur, Banarsi Sarees, Triputi Laddus, Kangra Paintings, Nagpur Oranges, Kashmir Pashmina, Rasagulla of Odisha, Phulkari of Punjab and manufactured goods like Pochampalli Ikat, Kancheepuram Silk, Sholapur chadars Bagh Prints, Madhubani paintings, etc.

Himachal Pradesh can easily get the GI tag for its Kinnaur apples and so on. Other states should also try to get GI tags for their specialised products so that the farmers and other genuine experts get their well-deserved income from their hard work and research. If Indian states do not apply for the GI tags for their specialised products for commercial use, other countries can get the certification as their own products.

Mining town holding out against Russian assault: Ukraine

AP ■ KYIV

The fate of a devastated salt-mining town in eastern Ukraine hung in the balance on Wednesday as Ukraine said its forces were holding out against a furious Russian onslaught in what has become one of the fiercest and most costly battles in the almost 11-month war.

Though unlikely to provide a turning point in the war, Soledar's fall to Russian forces after months of Ukrainian defense would be a prize for the Kremlin, which has been starved of good news from the battlefield amid Ukraine's counteroffensive in recent months.

It would also offer Russian troops a strategic springboard for their efforts to encircle the nearby city of Bakhmut.

The spokesman for Ukraine's Eastern Group of Forces, Serhiy Cherevaty, said on Wednesday that Russian claims

it had conquered Soledar were "untrue", Ukrainian news outlet Suspilne reported.

Cherevaty offered no further details, saying only that Ukraine's General Staff would provide more information later.

The General Staff in its Wednesday morning update only listed Soledar among cities and towns that continue to be shelled by Russian forces.

Late on Tuesday, Yevgeny Prigozhin, the head of the Wagner Group — a Russian private military contractor — claimed in audio reports posted on his Russian social media platform that his forces had seized control of Soledar, though he also said that battles were continuing in a "cauldron" in the city's centre.

The Associated Press was unable to verify that claim.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday that Russian forces had "positive dynamics in advancing" in



Soledar, but he stopped short of declaring its capture when asked about the claims that it has come under Russian control.

"Let's not rush and wait for official statements," he said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said this week that "everything is com-

pletely destroyed" in the area due to relentless shelling and weeks of close, house-to-house combat.

"The whole land near Soledar is covered with the corpses of the occupiers and scars from the strikes," Zelenskyy said. "This is what madness looks like."

Soledar, known for salt mining and processing, lies in the Donetsk region and has little intrinsic value. But it lies at a strategic point 10 kilometres (6 miles) north of Bakhmut, which Russian forces are aiming to surround.

Taking Bakhmut would dis-

rupt Ukraine's supply lines and open a route for Russian forces to press toward Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, key Ukrainian strongholds in Donetsk.

Soledar's fall would make "holding Bakhmut much more precarious for Ukraine", Michael Kofman, the director of Russia Studies at the CAN nonprofit research organisation in Arlington, Virginia, noted on Wednesday.

The costly war of attrition, with expected heavy casualties, may make Russia's victory as costly as a defeat, however.

"I don't think the outcome at Bakhmut is that significant compared to what it costs Russia to achieve it," Kofman said in a tweet.

The Wagner Group, which now reportedly includes a large contingent of convicts recruited in Russian prisons, has spearheaded the attack on Soledar and Bakhmut.

Western intelligence has

estimated that the Wagner Group constitutes up to a quarter of all Russian combatants in Ukraine.

A success in Soledar and Bakhmut would help Prigozhin, who has openly criticised Russia's military leadership, to increase his clout at the Kremlin.

Russia illegally annexed Donetsk and three other Ukrainian provinces in September, but its troops have struggled to advance. After Ukrainian forces recaptured the southern city of Kherson in November, the battle heated up around Bakhmut.

The Institute for the Study of War says Russian forces are up against "concerted Ukrainian resistance" around Bakhmut.

"The reality of block-by-block control of terrain in Soledar is obfuscated by the dynamic nature of urban combat ... And Russian forces have largely struggled to make significant tactical gains in the

Soledar area for months," the think tank said.

An exceptional feature of the fighting near Bakhmut is that some of it has taken place around entrances to disused salt mine tunnels which run for some 200 kilometers (120 miles), according to western intelligence reports.

Several front-line cities in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk provinces have witnessed intense fighting in recent months.

Together, the provinces make up the Donbas, a broad industrial region bordering Russia that Putin identified as a focus from the war's outset and where Moscow-backed separatists have fought since 2014.

Russia's grinding eastern offensive captured almost all of Luhansk during the summer. Donetsk escaped the same fate, and the Russian military subsequently poured manpower and resources around Bakhmut.

Ukrainian troops to train on Patriot system

AP ■ WASHINGTON

About 100 Ukrainian troops will head to Oklahoma's Fort Sill as soon as next week to begin training on the Patriot missile defense system, getting Kyiv closer to obtaining the long-sought protection against Russia's missile attacks.

Ukraine for months requested that the U.S. provide the Patriot surface-to-air guided missile defense system because it can target aircraft, cruise missiles and shorter-range ballistic missiles. During his late December visit to the U.S., Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the battery would make a significant difference in bolstering Kyiv's defenses against Russia's invasion.

The number of Ukrainians coming to Fort Sill is approximately the number it takes to operate one battery, and they will focus on learning to operate and also maintain the Patriot, Pentagon spokesman Air Force Gen. Pat Ryder said Tuesday.

Kyiv's decision to take troops off the battlefield to train across the Atlantic in the U.S. is unusual, although Ukraine has sent forces for short-term training



at European bases for other complex systems it has received, such as on the longer-range High Mobility Artillery Rocket System.

Patriot training normally can take several months, but "the longer those troops are off the line, they're not actually engaged in combat," Ryder said, so

the training will be shortened.

Fort Sill was selected because it already runs Patriot training schools, Ryder said. The U.S. pledged one Patriot battery in December as part of one of several large military assistance packages it has provided Ukraine in recent weeks. Last week Germany pledged an additional Patriot battery.

Each Patriot battery consists of a truck-mounted launching system with eight launchers that can hold up to four missile interceptors each, a ground radar, a control station and a generator. The Army said it currently has 16 Patriot battalions.

The Patriot batteries will complement a variety of air defense systems that both the U.S. and NATO partners have pledged to Ukraine, as it faces an evolving barrage of missiles and drones against its civilian population and infrastructure from Russia in the nearly 11-month-old conflict. In the last few months Germany has pledged four IRIS-T air defense systems; the U.S. has also pledged eight mid-range National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems, or NASAMS, and Avenger air defense systems.



Buildings impacted by Russian missile shelling are seen in Kyiv, Ukraine on Wednesday

(AP Photo)

Russia's war in Ukraine threatens students daily

THE CONVERSATION ■ WASHINGTON

Svitlana Popova's students didn't realize she was leading their online math class while outside the charred remains of her home in Ukraine until they saw a news video about it on social media.

Her students were in their own difficult circumstances, too — seeking refuge away from their homes, some in other countries. Popova is a mathematics teacher in the town of Borodyanka, in the Kyiv region of Ukraine. Her school was seized as a headquarters by Russian military forces and heavily damaged before their retreat. After her classroom transitioned to online instruction, Russian tanks fired on her house and burned it down. Yet this dedicated teacher continued to lead virtual lessons from a small umbrella-covered table in the yard.

Ordinary Ukrainians have been hailed for their heroism since Russia's full-scale invasion. "There are no small mat-

ters in a great war," Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy affirmed in an emotional New Year's address. "Each of us is a fighter," Zelenskyy stated. "Each of us is the basis of defense."

Listing the tools of war — ship's helms, steering wheels, weapons, scalpels — Zelenskyy ended with an unexpected inclusion: the teacher's pointer. This passing remark highlights an often hidden front in Ukraine's defensive struggle — the fight by countless teachers and parents to keep more than 8 million children educated, even as their worlds have been thrown into upheaval.

Educational efforts

Like Ukraine's stunning resistance itself, local educators are rising to the occasion despite enormous challenges. Viral videos show teachers continuing to instruct their small pupils in bomb shelters during active bombardments, or conducting lessons inside a post office after schools lose electricity. Gas stations and grocery stores, powered by generators long after homes and schools



lose power, are being transformed into hubs for filming virtual lessons.

One Kyiv teacher spent hours crouching on a snowy sidewalk outside a store, determined to finish sharing the day's homework assignment despite rolling blackouts. Other teachers now bring their pets for online lessons, lifting spirits and providing psychological support. Many teachers, like Popova, comfort their students despite their own traumatic losses.

Long-term displacement

As an anthropologist working in Ukraine since 2015, I have long observed the effects of armed conflict on Ukrainian children. After Russia first invaded in 2014, regular bomb threats to schools have been attributed by Ukrainians to Russian governmental efforts to sow fear.

Between that first invasion and the second in February 2022, armed conflict with Russia internally displaced 1.5 million Ukrainians and damaged 740 schools. I have

analysed the impact of this warfare on children for trauma healing since Russia's invasion began nine years ago. Still, these earlier challenges pale in comparison with what the Ukrainian educational system faces today.

Russia's nationwide offensive against Ukraine in early 2022 led to the largest refugee flows in Europe since World War II. In the weeks following the invasion, nearly 16 million Ukrainians were driven from their homes to seek refuge abroad and elsewhere in Ukraine. Many of these were women and children, exacting a heavy toll on Ukraine's female-majority teaching corps, as well as their students.

With large numbers of Ukraine's young people at least temporarily resettled in primarily European countries, some teachers reported a surge in their students' motivation linked to the structure of returning to their online Ukrainian schooling. "The children missed it (school) ... because most of them were on

the road for a long time. It was very emotionally draining, and when they returned to school, it was something they were used to," one teacher told a Ukrainian reporter.

Teaching online, again

Teachers around the world developed remote-teaching skills during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that war had driven their classes apart again, Ukrainian teachers adapted those skills to teach students across Europe and the world.

Some private online schools like Optima made their materials available free of charge. This step allowed Ukrainian students to study at home if they could not otherwise access schooling because of the war. It also provided a way for Ukrainian refugee children to retain access to school materials in their native language. Still, new obstacles emerged.

Many countries that took in Ukrainian refugees required the children to attend local schools, even if they didn't speak the local language.

Russia to launch new capsule to return space station crew



AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian space corporation Roscosmos said Wednesday that it will launch a new spacecraft to take some of the International Space Station's crew back to Earth after their capsule was damaged and leaked coolant.

Russian cosmonauts Sergey Prokopyev and Dmitri Petelin and NASA astronaut Frank Rubio arrived at the station in September on board a Soyuz MS-22 and planned to use the capsule to return to Earth. But it leaked coolant last month, resulting in higher cabin temperatures.

After analysing the situation and discussing it with NASA, Roscosmos decided to launch a new Soyuz MS-23 capsule in crewless automatic mode on February 20 that the trio will use to come back, Roscosmos chief Yuri Borisov told reporters.

The mission of Prokopyev, Petelin and Rubio will be extended, Borisov said without specifying for how long. He emphasised that Roscosmos had discussed the move with NASA, which agreed with the plan.

The Soyuz MS-23 was initially scheduled to be launched in March to carry two Russian cosmonauts and a US astronaut into orbit.

Borisov said Russian space officials had explored the option of launching the new Soyuz with one crewmember but decided against it because it would

require longer preparations. He added that the Soyuz MS-23 will also ferry some supplies to the International Space Station.

In case of an emergency on the International Space Station that would require the evacuation of the entire crew before the new capsule arrives, space officials will consider whether the Soyuz MS-22 could be used safely, Borisov said.

The leak from the Soyuz MS-22 was spotted in December when the Russians were about to venture outside the station on a planned spacewalk and ground specialists saw a stream of fluid and particles emanating from the Soyuz on a live video feed from space.

Borisov said Wednesday that the analysis confirmed the leak was caused by a micrometeoroid. He said that the Soyuz MS-22 eventually would be sent back to Earth without a crew.

Roscosmos and NASA both have said the incident hasn't posed any danger to the station's crew. Officials from the Russian and US space agencies were scheduled to speak jointly about the current plans later Wednesday.

Along with Prokopyev, Petelin and Rubio, four other crew members are currently on the space outpost: NASA astronauts Nicole Mann and Josh Cassada; the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency's Koichi Wakata; and Anna Kikina of Roscosmos.

PUBLIC NOTICE	
My Husband Late Sh. Manoj Kumar S/O Chandradev Kushwaha R/o-205, Maghi Kothilwa, Kushinagar, U.P.-274304, Booked a Flat No.- A4-1410, in Project called SuperTech Eco Village-1 situated at Plot No-08, Sec-1, Greater Noida- 201303. After his Death on 03.09.2021, I Requested to M/s Supertech Limited to transfer this flat in the name of Mrs. Suman Devi W/o Late Sh. Manoj Kumar R/o 285, Maghi Kothilwa, Kushinagar, U.P. 274304. If anybody has any objection, He/She may contact to M/s Supertech Limited office at Plot No C-2, Sector-96, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201303 within 15 days of the Published notice Mrs. Suman Devi	
Dilwakar Jha (Advocate)	
M:- 9711299949	

PUBLIC NOTICE	
My Son Late Sh. NITIN AGARWAL S/O SH. SHYAM AGARWAL R/o A-205, Pocket A, Sarta Vihar, Delhi -110076, booked a flat No: 3602 Tower NOVA WEST in project called SUPERTech SUPERNOVA Plot no. 03, Sector-94, Noida, After his death on 18.11.2022 I requested to M/s Supertech Realtors Pvt Ltd to transfer this flat in the name of SH. SHYAM AGARWAL S/O SH. SHYAM AGARWAL R/o A-205, Pocket A, Sarta Vihar, Delhi -110076 If anybody has any objection, he/she may contact to M/s Supertech Realtors Pvt Ltd office at Plot No C-2, Sector 96, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201303 within 15 days of the Published notice SHYAM AGARWAL	
DIWAKAR JHA (ADVOCATE)	

PUBLIC NOTICE	
My Husband Late Sh. Arif Zafar Siddiqi S/O Late Sh. Zafar Ahmed R/o 98, Doctor Apartments, Vasundhara Enclave, New Delhi -110096, booked a flat No: 105 Tower CM-3 in project called Supertech Cape Town Plot no. GH/01A, Sector-74, Noida, After his death on 25.04.2021, I requested to M/s Supertech Limited to transfer this flat in the name of Mr. Uwais Siddiqi S/o late sh. Arif Zafar Siddiqi And Mrs Ghazala Siddiqi w/o Late Sh. Arif Zafar Siddiqi R/o 98, Doctor Apartments, Vasundhara Enclave, New Delhi -110096. If anybody has any objection, he/she may contact to M/s Supertech Limited office at Plot No C-2, Sector 96, Noida, Uttar Pradesh 201303 within 15 days of the Published notice Ghazala Siddiqi.	
DIWAKAR JHA (Advocate)	

UNITED LEASING & INDUSTRIES LTD.	
Regd. Office: Plot No.66, Sector-34, EHTP, Gurugram, Haryana-122001. CIN: L17100HR1983PLC033460, Phone: 011-26258237, 49075251 Email. Id: investorrelations@uliltd.com, website: uliltd.com. Date: 11th January 2023	
COMPANY NOTICE	
Regulation 29 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, notice is hereby given that 05th /2022-23 meeting of the Board of Directors of the United Leasing & Industries Ltd. will be held on Tuesday 17th January, 2023 at 1:00 PM. Through Zoom Meeting. To consider and take on record amendment of Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association. Any other matter with the permission of chairman.	
For United Leasing & Industries Limited Sd/- Shashi Shekhar Company Secretary Membership No ACS 30145	
Place: New Delhi Date: 11th January, 2023	


Report: Oil price cap takes small slice of Russia's revenue

AP ■ FRANKFURT, GERMANY

A price cap and European Union embargo on most Russian oil have cut into Moscow's revenue from fossil fuels, but the Kremlin is still earning substantial cash to fund its action in Ukraine because the \$60-per-barrel cap was "too lenient," researchers said Wednesday.

The combination of the cap by the Group of Seven major democracies and the EU ban are costing Russia an estimated 160 million euros (\$171.9 million) per day, the Helsinki-based Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air said in a study of the first weeks of the sanctions, which took effect Dec. 5.

But the group's figures showed that Russia was still taking in 640 million euros a day from fossil fuels, down from 1 billion euros daily from March to May 2022 just after the Kremlin sent troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24.



Office of the Superintending Engineer

3rd Circle, Public Works Department Pithoragarh

E-Mail: sepwdpth@rediffmail.com

Letter No. : 177/208C(Yata 'D')-03/2023

Dated : 10/01/2023

E-Tender Notice

The Superintending Engineer, 3rd Circle, Public Works Department Pithoragarh invites tender through E-Tendering (Two Bid System) in anticipation of Sanction on behalf of Hon'ble Governor of Uttarakhand for following works. All other information will be available from date 20-01-2023 at 5.00 Pm & onward on website <http://www.uktenders.gov.in>

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Earnest Money (in Lac)	Cost of Tender (in Rs.)	Validity of Tender (day)	Period of Completion (months)	Contractor's Category of Registration
1	Improvement and bituminous work of Sukhidhang Danda Minar Motor Road in Km. 6.00 to 29.85 (length 24.85 km) in Champawat constituency of district Champawat under Honorable Chief Minister's announcement no.- 226/2022 under State Sector including three years maintenance work.	30.78	5000.00 + 18% GST	120	17	Category "A" and Above for Road works in any State Govt./ Govt. of India/ Govt. Undertaking

G20 NORTHEN RAILWAY 75 Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav	
TENDER NOTICE (Through E-Tendering)	
Name of Work with Its Location	(i). Provision of fuse failure monitoring system with automatic changeover over Delhi Division. (ii) provision of LED based A marker/AG marker in signals for improving signal visibility over Delhi Division.
App. Cost of the work (₹) Earnest Money Deposit (₹)	₹ 33,83,951/- only ₹ 67,700/- only
Address of the Office	Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annexe-1, DRM Office, New Delhi-110055.
Date & Time for upload the tender/ closing of tender	Tender uploading / closing date & time - 01.02.2023 up to 15.00 hrs.
Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc.	See the Northern Railway website www.reps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DRM Office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055.
Tender No.: 558-Sig-16-M-TENDER-1387 Dated:10.01.2023	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 119/23	

UK, Japan sign defence deal Amid rising concern about China



AP ■ LONDON

The leaders of Britain and Japan are signing a defence agreement on Wednesday that could see troops deployed to each others' countries. The two countries are strengthening military ties amid growing concern about China's increasing military assertiveness and designs toward Taiwan, which it considers a renegade province. The British government said the defence agreement "cements our commitment to the Indo-Pacific" region. It is due to be signed by Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and UK leader Rishi Sunak during a meeting in the symbolic setting of the Tower of London fortress. The deal has been in the works for years,



AP ■ LONDON

and was discussed when Kishida visited Sunak's predecessor, Boris Johnson, in London in May. The Reciprocal Access Agreement — Japan's first with a European nation — allows the two countries to hold joint military exercises. The British government said it will allow the armed forces of the two Group of Seven countries "to plan and deliver larger and more complex military exercises and deployments". It reflects a new "Indo-Pacific tilt" in Britain's foreign policy following the country's departure from the European Union in 2020. Britain sees Japan as its key East Asian ally. "In this increasingly competitive world, it is more important than ever that demo-

cratic societies continue to stand shoulder to shoulder as we navigate the unprecedented global challenges of our time," Sunak said. The two leaders were meeting at the Tower of London, a 1,000-year-old former palace and prison that houses the Crown Jewels. Sunak's office said they will view Japanese armor presented to King James in 1613 by Shogun Tokugawa Hidetada of Japan to mark the first-ever trade agreement between England and Japan. Japan has joined Western nations in condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine and imposing sanctions against Moscow. Japan also has supplied Ukraine with helmets and other non-lethal military aid. Japan is concerned Russia's invasion of Ukraine could have an impact in East Asia, where China's military has grown increasingly assertive and threatened to unite with Taiwan by force if necessary. Concerned about rapid weapons advancement in China and North Korea, Japan in December adopted key security and defence reforms, including a counterstrike capability that makes a break from the self-defence-only principle it has maintained since its defeat in World War II. Japan holds the presidency of the G-7 this year, and Kishida is on a weeklong trip to visit allies including Italy, France, Canada and the United States, where he is due to meet President Joe Biden at the White House on Friday.

Lanka summons Canadian diplomat over sanctions on Rajapaksa brothers

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday summoned Canada's top diplomat here and expressed its displeasure over his country's decision to impose "unilateral sanctions" on its four citizens, including two former presidents. Canada on Tuesday imposed sanctions on four Sri Lankans, including former presidents Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Mahinda Rajapaksa, for committing what it called "gross and systematic violations of human rights" during the country's civil war. Sanctions were also imposed on Staff Sergeant Sunil Ratnayake and Lt Commander Chandana P Hettiarachchithe. Reacting to the sanctions, the foreign ministry summoned Canada's Acting High Commissioner in Colombo and expressed the government's displeasure over the move. "Foreign Minister Ali Sabry summoned the Canadian Acting High Commissioner Daniel Bood to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," the foreign ministry said in a tweet. He "expressed the deep regret of the Government on the announcement of unilateral sanctions brought against

four individuals including two former Presidents of Sri Lanka by the Government of Canada based on unsubstantiated allegations," it added. "Foreign Minister Sabry emphasised that such unilateral action by the Canadian Government, motivated by domestic political compulsions in Canada, sets a dangerous precedent and is inimical to Sri Lanka's interests, especially when national unity and reconciliation are of paramount importance," the statement said. "It was also stressed that the announcement by Canada is detrimental to the Government's ongoing efforts towards national unity, reconciliation, and stability," it said, adding that the foreign minister asked Canada to review the decision and engage constructively with Sri Lanka. This is the first time that Rajapaksa brothers have been banned by any country despite long held accusations of rights abuses and corruption. In a separate statement, the Foreign Ministry said it is "unfortunate that this action by the Canadian Government could polarise communities and have a detrimental impact on ongoing processes in place to secure socio-economic sta-

bility." Earlier, State Minister of Foreign Affairs Tharaka Balasuriya said that the sanctioning of former presidents was "untimely" and was intended to pacify domestic elements in Canada. He said Canada's decision to impose sanctions on the Rajapaksa brothers came at a time when Sri Lanka was attempting to take forward the post-war reconciliation process. "This shows who our friends really are and who are not," he was quoted as saying by the Colombo Gazette newspaper. The sanctions target former president Gotabaya, who resigned in July last after a massive protest against his government, and his elder brother Mahinda, who has held the titles of president and prime minister. Gotabaya temporarily fled his country last summer after mass protests over the country's economic crisis, while Mahinda resigned from his post as prime minister last spring. Sri Lanka's majority Sinhalese population had praised the brothers for defeating Tamil separatists after a 26-year civil war, which took place from 1983 to 2009.



Father of peace deal that ended Lebanon's civil war dies

AP ■ BEIRUT

Hussein Husseini, Lebanon's former parliament speaker and the father of the 1989 Taif Agreement that ended the country's 15-year civil war, died on Wednesday after days of illness. He was 85. Husseini was admitted to Beirut's American University Medical Centre on January 3, after suffering from a strong flu, the state-run National News Agency said. NNA added that Husseini remained in the intensive care unit until his death on Wednesday morning. Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati declared a three-day mourning period in the crisis-hit Lebanon while Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri postponed a session that was scheduled to take place on Thursday to elect a new president. Husseini was elected to parliament representing the north-eastern Baalbek-Hermel region in 1972 and remained a legislator until 2008. He was elected as parliament speaker in 1984, a job that he kept until 1992. The politician was a harsh critic of Lebanon's sectarian-based political system that divided top posts in the country of 5 million between Christian and Muslim communities. Husseini was also a strong vocal opponent of the country's financial policies, including heavy borrowing, that started in the 1990s and eventually led to Lebanon's ongoing three-year economic meltdown.

Thousands rally in Nepal to seek restoration of monarchy

AP ■ KATHMANDU

Thousands of supporters of Nepal's former royal family held a rally on Wednesday demanding the restoration of monarchy in the Himalayan nation. They gathered around the statue of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, who started the Shah dynasty in the 18th century. The last Shah king — Gyanendra — was forced to step down and the monarchy abolished in 2008, making Nepal a republic. There are still many supporters who seek to bring the monarchy back and rally every year on the birth anniversary of

Prithvi Narayan. Some previous rallies have turned violent with clashes between demonstrators and police. Wednesday's rally was peaceful and police in riot gear kept a close watch on the event that included participants waving flags, playing music and chanting slogans to praise the monarchy. Nepal's new government led by Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal declared Wednesday a public holiday to mark Prithvi Narayan's birthday. Dahal led Maoist communist rebels between 1996-2006 seeking to abolish the monarchy in Nepal. Gyanendra became the king after his elder brother was assassinated in a palace massacre



in 2001 but remained unpopular. Political parties teamed up with the Maoist insurgents to organise protests forcing him to give up power in 2006. Two years later, Parliament voted to abolish the monarchy. Gyanendra, 75, remains a common citizen and is not politically active. The protesters welcomed the government's declaration of a public holiday and allowing them to hold the rally. "The monarchy needs to return to Nepal. We are seeking a ceremonial king and we are fine with an executive prime minister but need a ceremonial king," said Ram Prasad Upreti, a retired medical doctor.

Report: UK, US supplied arms, killed civilians, in Yemen

AP ■ CAIRO

Weapons supplied by the United Kingdom and the United States and by a Saudi-led coalition fighting in war-torn Yemen killed at least 87 civilians and wounded 136 others in just over a year, a new report said Wednesday. The report by the Oxfam charity found that the Saudi-led coalition used weapons supplied solely by the UK and the US in hundreds of attacks on civilians in Yemen between January 2021 to the end of February 2022. Britain is the sec-

ond-biggest supplier of weapons to Saudi Arabia, after the US. Yemen's war began when the Iranian-backed Houthis seized the country's capital in September 2014 and forced the internationally recognised government into exile. A Saudi-led coalition armed with US weaponry and intelligence entered the war on the side of Yemen's exiled government in March 2015. Oxfam's report comes ahead of a legal challenge in the Campaign Against Arms Trade, or CAAT, against the UK government on supplying weapons.

Bolsonaro eyes return to Brazil as US stay pressuress Biden

AP ■ MIAMI

The Biden administration is under growing pressure from leftists in Latin America as well as U.S. lawmakers to expel Jair Bolsonaro from a post-presidential retreat in Florida following his supporters' brazen attack on Brazil's capital over the weekend. But the far-right ex-president may pre-empt any plans for such a stinging rebuke. On Tuesday, he told a Brazilian media outlet that he would push up his return home, originally scheduled for late January, after being hospitalized with abdominal pains stemming from a 2018 stabbing. "I came to spend some time away with my family but these weren't calm days," Bolsonaro told CNN's Portuguese-language affiliate in Brazil. "First, there was this sad episode in Brazil and then my hospitalization."



Bolsonaro arrived in Florida in late December, skipping the Jan. 1 swearing-in of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who became the first elected Brazilian president not to receive the presidential sash from his predecessor since democracy was restored in the 1980s. Bolsonaro is reportedly staying at the Orlando-area home of Brazilian mixed martial arts fighter Jose Aldo, a fervent supporter. His visit to the Sunshine state went largely unnoticed in the U.S. Until Sunday's attack by

thousands of die-hard supporters who had been camping for weeks outside a military base in Brasilia, refusing to accept Bolsonaro's narrow defeat in an

October runoff. Their invasion of Brazil's congress and presidential palace left behind shattered glass, smashed computers and slashed artwork.

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed that Mrs. Kashmiri W/o Mr. Bhandari is the owner of Plot area measuring 50 Sq. Yards i.e. 41.80 Sq. Metres, comprised in Khassa No. 463, situated at Mohalla Indrapur Modinagar, in the area of Village Shri Khur, Pargana Jaisiabad, Tehsil Modi Nagar, District Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, by virtue of Sale Deed dated 20.05.2015 regd. Vide Doc. No. 6051 and the same is to be financed & mortgaged with my client i.e. M/s. DMH Housing Finance Pvt. Ltd. The Original Sale Deeds d. 31.07.2022, regd. vide doc. No. 4654 & Original Sale Deed d. 24.10.2020, regd. vide doc. No. 11861, pertaining to the aforesaid property has been lost and complaint has been registered on 03.01.2023 vide N/A No. 2022001004366 with U.P. Police. Any person(s) found in possession of aforesaid original sale deed, then kindly contact the undersigned along with original property document, within 15 days from date of this notice on below address, failing which, the claim as per aforesaid sale deed shall be treated as null and void in respect of the subject property.
Raghav Tiwari (Advocate)
Ch. 830, Patilsha House Courts, New Delhi-110027
Mob. +91-9871618526

PUBLIC NOTICE
General public is hereby informed that Mr. Raj Kumar S/o Mr. Hans Rai is intending to sell Portion of Property No. A-43, Old Plot No. A-30, area measuring 82 Sq. Yds., i.e. 68.32 Sq. Mtrs., out of total area measuring 164 Sq. Yds., out of Khassa No. 4912, Old Khassa No. 367, situated in the revenue estate of Mundka, now Colony known as P & T Block, Radhwan Park, Mundka, Agawala Colony, Delhi State Delhi-110041, to Smt. Shakuntla W/o Sh. Jyoti Datta Ram, to be financed & mortgaged by my client i.e. M/s. DMH Housing Finance Pvt. Ltd. The Original Notarized GPA, ATS & Will dated 02.02.1984 and Notarized GPA, ATS & Will dated 18.10.1996, pertaining to the aforesaid property have been lost and complaint bearing LR No. 2559/2023 was registered on 11.01.2023, with Delhi Police. Any person(s) found in possession of aforesaid original GPA, ATS & Will, then kindly contact the undersigned along with original property document, within 7 days from date of this notice on below address, failing which, the claim as per aforesaid sale deed shall be treated as null and void in respect of the subject property.
Raghav Tiwari (Advocate)
Ch. 830, Patilsha House Courts, New Delhi-110027
Mob. +91-9871618526

ICICI Bank
Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd, 3rd Floor, Plot No.-23, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005
PUBLIC NOTICE: Builder Cancellation
This is to bring to your notice that **RAM KISHOR/ REENA PAL (borrowers)** has availed Home loan facility vide facility agreement number **LBNO00004901191** located at **UNIT NO. LG-408H, LOWER GROUND FLOOR, GAUR CITY CENTRE, PLOT NO C1 A /GH 01, SECTOR 4, GREATER NOIDA, NOIDA**. The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement. The Bank has informed the same to the borrower through letter dated January 09, 2023 informing that **GAURSONS HI-TECH INFRASTRUCTURE PRIVATE LIMITED** has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication. Please take further notice that post cancellation of the allotment of the said property ICICI Bank shall not be bound and/or responsible for any other allotment done by the builder.
Dated: January 12, 2023 **For ICICI Bank Limited**
Place: Delhi/ NCR

कार्यालय उप महाप्रबन्धक (सिविल), निर्माण खण्ड-दुतीय उपग्रो राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण देहिएस सिटी, गुजरात। E-Mail- cd3@upsidc.com			
अत्यकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना			
एतद्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि प्राधिकरण के विभिन्न जनपदों में स्थित औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों में सिविल कार्यों, विकास एवं अनुसंधान रख-रखाव के कार्यों हेतु सरकारी/सार्वजनिक उपकरण/निर्माण/प्राधिकरणों/परिचर्या/नगर निकायों में पंजीकृत फर्म/ठेकेदारों से अत्यकालीन ई-निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती है।			
क्र.सं.	कार्य का नाम	मिनिमम का प्रकार	बिड की राशि का अनुमान
1.	Special Repair & Maintenance of Administrative Building at I.A. Baghat.	अत्यकालीन	37.87
2.	Special repair & Maintenance of Administrative Building in apparel park (P-2) at I.A. Trans Delhi Signature City, Ghaziabad.	अत्यकालीन	39.29
3.	Repair & Maintenance of Administrative Building at I.A. Trans Delhi Signature City, Ghaziabad.	अत्यकालीन	23.92
4.	Construction of Public Toilets in I.A. Baghat Distt- Baghat.	अत्यकालीन	16.45
5.	Construction of Toilet block at I.A. Trans Delhi Signature City, Ghaziabad.	अत्यकालीन	17.96
उपरोक्त निविदा 12.01.2023 से 19.01.2023 को 18.00 बजे तक अपलोड की जा सकती है जिसके दिनांक 20.01.2023 को 11.00 बजे या इसके पश्चात खोला जायेगा। निविदादाताओं द्वारा शायकपत्रों की मूल प्रतियां दिनांक 23.01.2023 को 17.00 बजे तक पंजीकृत डाक/व्यक्तिगत रूप से कार्यालय में जमा की जा सकती है। नोट:- 1. निविदादाता अपनी निविदाओं में समस्त कर एवं जीएसटी सहित दरें अंकित करें। अलग से कोई कर देय नहीं होगा। 2. निविदा सम्बन्धी विस्तृत जानकारी वेबसाइट www.upsidc.com पर स्थापित लिंक यूएएससी की वेबसाइट http://etender.up.nic.in पर देखी जा सकती है। उप महाप्रबन्धक (सिविल), उपग्रो राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण, प्लॉट नं.-3, गुजरात।			

Japan, S Korea protest China visa stoppage amid Covid spat



AP ■ TOKYO

Japan and South Korea defended public health restrictions on travellers from China on Wednesday, a day after China stopped issuing new visas in both countries in apparent retaliation. Chinese embassies stopped issuing new visas for South Koreans and Japanese on Tuesday. It wasn't clear whether China would expand the visa suspensions to other countries that have imposed stricter virus testing on passengers from China following its COVID-19

surge. South Korean Foreign Minister Park Jin said Wednesday he finds it "significantly regrettable" that China stopped issuing short-term visas to South Koreans and called for China to align its pandemic steps with "scientific and objective facts." According to South Korea's Disease Control and Prevention Agency, about 17 per cent of the 2,550 short-term travellers from China from January 2 to Tuesday have tested positive. South Korea has stopped issuing most short-term visas at its consulates in China through the end of January while also requiring all passengers from China, Hong Kong and Macau to submit proofs of negative tests taken within 48 hours of their arrival in addition to COVID-19 tests at the airport.

UJVN LIMITED
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006, Telephone: 0135-2763508, Fax: 0135-2763508, CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvn.com
e-Tender Notice दिनांक 11.01.2023
Office of the Executive Engineer, Project Civil Maintenance-Dakpathar, UJVN Ltd., Dakpathar (Dehradun) invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:
Tender No.22/EE/PCM-DKP/TN/2022-23
Name of work : Renovation and modernization of Khodri Power House complex at Khodri.
Estimated cost : 1.84,34,924.66 (GST Extra)
Date of availability of bid document on website : From 17:00 hrs of 12.01.2023
Last date for submission of bids on website : Up to 17:00 Hrs of 03.02.2023
For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal "https://uktenders.gov.in"
Executive Engineer(PCM)
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"
UJVN Limited
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006 Telephone: 0135-2763508, Fax: 0135-2763507 CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website : www.ujvn.com
RO No. 38 **Tender Notice** Dated : 11/01/2023
Office of Executive Engineer (M) Ramganga Power Station, UJVN Limited, Kalagarh, Distt. Pauri Garhwal invites sealed tender from interested parties. Detail of tender is given below.
T.No. 23/EE(M)/RPSK/2022-23
Name of work/supply/ services etc. - Annual operation & upkeeping of Erector Hostel and Canteen at Ramganga Power Station, Kalagarh.
Estimated cost : Rs. 82,92,971/- GST Extra
Date of availability of bid document on website : 12/01/2023
Last date for submission of tender : 03/02/2023 up to 16.00 Hrs.
For fuller & further details, kindly visit our website. The tender documents can be downloaded from the Nigam's website "www.ujvn.com"
EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (M)
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER, CONSTRUCTION WING, UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL NIGAM
E-32, JUDGE FARM, HALDWANI, DISTT.- NAINITAL (PIN 263139)
Letter No.: 114/Nivida-Anubandh/Lohaghat/19 **Date : 11-01-2023**
E-Tender Notice
1.Name of the work:- CONSTRUCTION OF PARKING AT NAGAR PALIKA PARISHAD, LOHAGHAT, DISTRICT - CHAMPAWAT.
2.Estimated Cost:- Rs. 87.24 Lakh
3. Period of Completion:- 12 Months
4.Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal:- 12-01-2023 (10.00 hrs)
5.Online Bid submission: End date :- 25-01-2023 (17.00 hrs)
6.Date & Time of Technical bid Opening :- 28-01-2023 (11.00 hrs)
7.Name and Address of the Officer inviting bid:- General Manager (Kumaon), Nirman Wing, Uttarakhand Pey Jal Nigam, Haldwani.
8.For further details, details of subsequent Amendment/ correction documentation etc. may be obtained from the e-Procurement portal www.uktenders.gov.in
GENERAL MANAGER

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Tender Notice
The Dy. Chief Engineer/TMC/Line, Northern Railway, State Entry Road, New Delhi for and on behalf of the President of India invites **Open E-tender** under One Packet System for the under noted work:-
1. Name of work and location : Conversion of 09 Nos. BG Coaches into Camping Coaches (Workshop cum Rest Van) for Track Machine Staff of Northern Railway at TMMD/BTI.
2. Completion period of the work : 06 Months
3. Approx. Cost of work : Rs. 1,77,37,521.32
4. Earnest Money amount (to be deposited Online) : Rs. 2,38,700.00
5. Cost of Tender Document (to be deposited Online) : Rs. Nil.
6. Date & Time for submission of E-tender and opening of tender : Tender document remain available on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 13.01.2023 upto 15:00 Hrs. on 09.02.2023. Tender Bids may be uploaded from 26.01.2023 & upto 15:00 hrs. on 09.02.2023 in IREPS website. The tender will be opened soon after 15:30 hrs. on 09.02.2023.
7. Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Document : The detailed tender document is available on www.ireps.gov.in. Above tender document will be available for online submission of offer on IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in from 26.01.2023 to 09.02.2023. All other terms and conditions in respect of above tenders are given in tender document. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office.
No.: 1-W-DyCETMCL-CC-15-22-23 **Dated: 10.01.2023** **105/2023**
Serving Customers with a Smile

DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT AGENCY OF GUJARAT
An Autonomous Society promoted by Tribal Development Department, Govt. of Gujarat (Phone No. 079-232-52253)
E-Tender Notice No: VKY/ 2023/3049/D-SAG
TENDER NOTICE
Development Support Agency of Gujarat (D-SAG) invites e-tender from intending bidders for "Engagement of Design and Technical Agency for Preparation of Design DPR for Civil and Curation Part and Project Management Consultancy Services for The 'National Museum of Tribal Freedom Fighters' at Garudeshwar, Gujarat". The tender document can be downloaded from the website www.dsag.gujarat.gov.in and www.nprocure.com from 12/01/2023, 12:00 PM hours onwards.
Important Dates:-

Pre Bid Meeting Date & Time	Dt. 20/01/2023 Time 11.30 hours
Last Date & Time for Submission of Bids	Dt. 01/02/2023 by 18:00 hours
Technical Bid Opening Date & Time	Dt.02/02/2023 by 11:30 hours

Interested bidders are requested to download the tender document from the above mentioned websites.
Further details can be obtained from the office of Chief Executive officer, Development Support Agency of Gujarat, 3rd Floor, Birsu Munda Bhavan, Gandhinagar, Gujarat-382010. Phone:- (079) 23252253, Email- ceodsaag@gujarat.gov.in
Sd/-
Chief Executive Officer
Development Support Agency of Gujarat
Gandhi Nagar
No/INF/VPN/2022/G/2227

India to grow by 6.6% next fiscal: World Bank

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's economic growth rate will slow to 6.6 per cent in next financial year from an expected 6.9 per cent in 2022-23, the World Bank said in its latest economic update.

India however is expected to be the fastest growing economy of the seven largest emerging-market and developing economies (EMDEs), it said.

The growth rate of 6.9 per cent in current fiscal year (April 2022 to March 2023) compares with 8.7 per cent in the previous year. For 2024-25, the growth rate is projected at 6.1 per cent.

"The slowdown in the global economy and rising uncertainty will weigh on export and investment growth," it said.

The government has increased infrastructure spending and various business facilitation measures. However, it will



crowd-in private investment and support the expansion of manufacturing capacity.

"Growth is projected to slow, to 6.6 per cent in FY2023/24 before falling back toward its potential rate of just above 6 per cent," it said.

The GDP expanded by 9.7 per cent on an annual basis in the first half of fiscal year 2022-23, reflecting strong private consumption and fixed investment growth.

Consumer inflation in most of the last year was above

the Reserve Bank's upper tolerance limit of 6 per cent, prompting the policy rate to be raised by 2.25 percentage points between May and December.

India's goods trade deficit has more than doubled since 2019, and was USD 24 billion in November, with deficits for crude petroleum and petroleum products (USD 7.6 billion) and other commodities (for example, ores and minerals at USD 4.2 billion) accounting for the widening.

Markets end on flat note in highly choppy trade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

In a highly volatile trade, Equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty ended on a flat note on Wednesday amid unabated foreign fund outflows and a weak trend in index heavy-weight Reliance Industries.

Continuing its previous day's decline, the 30-share BSE Sensex dipped 9.98 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 60,105.50. During the day, it fell 309.7 points or 0.51 per cent to 59,805.78.

The broader NSE Nifty skidded 18.45 points or 0.10 per cent to end at 17,895.70.

From the Sensex pack, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever, Titan, Reliance Industries, Nestle, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finserv and NTPC were the major laggards.

Sun Pharma, UltraTech Cement, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consultancy



Services, HDFC Bank and Tata Motors were among the winners.

"The biggest drag on the market in the near-term is the sustained selling by FIIs for 13 continuous sessions, which has taken the cumulative cash market selling to Rs 16,587 crore," said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.27 per cent, while smallcap index ended marginally higher by 0.02 per cent.

Startup funding in India drops 33 per cent to USD 24 bn in 2022: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Funding for Indian startups dropped by 33 per cent to USD 24 billion in 2022 as compared to the previous year though it was nearly double the amount recorded in 2019 or 2020, said a PwC India report on Wednesday.

Global investors were still positive about the Indian start-up ecosystem despite the global slowdown, as per the report titled 'Startup Tracker-CY 22'.

"Funding for Indian startups in CY22 was nearly USD 24 billion, a drop of 33 per cent in comparison to CY21 but was still more than twice the funds raised in CY20 and CY19 each", it said.

The startups received total funding of USD 13.2 billion in 2019, USD 10.9 billion in 2020 and USD 35.2 billion in 2021.

Despite the funding slowdown, Amit Nawka, Partner - Deals & India Startups Leader, PwC India, said, "some areas like SaaS (Software as a service)



and early-stage funding have remained upbeat. With significant dry powder waiting to be invested, it seems likely that the funding scenario will begin to normalise after 2-3 quarters."

Meanwhile, he added, many startups were using the current situation to tighten operating models and optimise cash runway by deferring discretionary spends and investments.

The report said the early-stage deals accounted for 60-62 per cent of the total funding in 2021 and 2022 in volume terms and average ticket size per deal was USD 4 million per deal.

In value terms, it added, early-stage deals contributed to

approximately 12 per cent of the total funding in 2022 compared to nearly 7 per cent in 2021. Growth and late-stage funding deals accounted for 88 per cent of the funding activity in 2022 in value terms, representing 38 per cent of the total count of deals.

According to the report, average ticket size in growth-stage deals was USD 43 million and late-stage deal was USD 94 million during 2022.

As regards the city-wise startup funding, the report said, Bengaluru, NCR and Mumbai accounted for nearly 82 per cent of total Indian startups as of December 2022. As many as 28 per cent of startups in the top three cities have raised in excess of USD 20 million.

Bengaluru witnessed the highest number of unicorns, followed by NCR and Mumbai. Similar trends have been noted for other companies that have raised more than USD 50-100 million, the report said.

Micro & small enterprises corner 55% of total orders placed on GeM portal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Micro and small enterprises (MSEs) have cornered over 55 per cent of the total orders placed on the public procurement platform GeM since FY 2020-21, a senior government official said.

The Government e-Market (GeM) portal was launched on August 9, 2016, for online purchases of goods and services by all the central government ministries and departments.

GeM CEO P K Singh said that the public procurement policy for MSEs mandates 25 per cent of buying of goods and services from these units and 3 per cent MSEs owned by women.

"On GeM, MSEs have secured 55.2 per cent (Rs 1,41,887 crore) of total order value (Rs 2,57,263 crore) and MSEs owned by women have secured 8 per cent (Rs 11,373 crore) of the MSE orders since



FY 2020-21 till now. The numbers reflect inclusivity on GeM," Singh told PTI.

Procurement of goods and services from government portal GeM has crossed Rs 1 lakh crore so far this fiscal on account of an increase in buying activities by different ministries and departments.

The commerce ministry is also in the process of awarding a project to upgrade the portal.

Currently, government departments, ministries, public sector units, state governments, and Central Armed Police Forces are allowed to carry out transactions through this portal.

Rupee gains 13 paise to 81.61 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee gained 13 paise to close at 81.61 against the US dollar on Wednesday, driven by foreign inflows from bonds selling and overall weakness in crude oil prices.

However, a muted trend in domestic equities dented investor sentiments and capped the sharp gains in the rupee, traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 81.73 and touched an intra-day high of 81.52 and a low of 81.82 against the greenback.

It finally ended at 81.61, registering a rise of 13 paise over its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee settled at 81.74 against the US dollar.

"Indian Rupee appreciated on Wednesday extending gains of the previous day on

foreign inflows from bonds selling...And overall weakness in crude oil prices," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

However, FII outflows and recovery in US Dollar capped sharp gains.

Choudhary further noted that the dollar gained as traders are adjusting their positions ahead of US CPI inflation data.

The dollar also gained on safe-haven appeal as the World Bank trimmed the 2023 global GDP forecast to 1.7 per cent citing the Russia-Ukraine conflict, inflation and higher interest rates as the main reasons.

"We expect the Rupee to trade with a positive bias amid risk-on sentiments and weak crude oil prices. However, sustained outflows by foreign investors may cap



sharp gains. Investors may remain cautious ahead of inflation data from the US and India on Thursday. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 81 to Rs 82," Choudhary said.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, advanced 0.06 per cent to 103.30.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose 0.42 per cent to USD 80.44 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 9.98 points or 0.02 per cent to end at 60,105.50, while the broader NSE Nifty fell 18.45 points or 0.1 per cent to 17,895.70.

"Rupee extended its gains ahead of inflation numbers that will be released on Thursday. The expectation of inflows in the bond segment is supporting the currency," said Gaurang Somaia, Forex & Bullion Analyst, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Healthcare tech industry body seeks cut in customs duty, removal of health cess on medical devices in Budget

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Budget, Medical Technology Association of India (MTAi) on Wednesday urged the government to reduce customs duties and removal of health cess on imported medical devices.

MTAi, which represents medical technology companies, appreciated the various reforms undertaken by the government during the previous year, but said that more was needed to be done as 80 per cent of the medical devices used are imported.

MTAi Chairman and Director General Pavan Choudhary said the customs duties and taxes levied on medical devices in India are one of the highest in the world and highest among the neighbouring countries which directly impacts patients' affordability.

"As the preparation for the



Union Budget 2023 gets underway, we expect a correction in the customs duties and taxes levied on medical devices," Choudhary said.

The sector, he added, requires more focus in government outlays and one way to achieve this is by increasing the public health spending to meet the current gaps in healthcare demand and supply. He also suggested the government should consider a separate budget allocation for promoting and marketing medical device sector globally.

MTAi said the high customs duty has adversely impacted the costs of medical devices in India and it should be reduced to 2.5 per cent. Also, the 5 per cent health cess ad valorem imposed on imported medical devices has further compounded the burden on the industry and should be removed.

There is a need for focussed increase in public spending on health infrastructure especially in Tier 2, Tier 3 cities and rural areas, MTAi added.

POWERGRID CSR bids for mother-child care

PNS ■ BAGHPAT

As a CSR initiative, Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID) signed an MoU with CMO, Baghpat for providing financial assistance towards establishment of 11 maternal and newborn care units, 8 nutrition rehabilitation centers and mobile pathology labs along with upgradation of the already existing NRC at District Hospital in Baghpat. Along with these establishments, POWERGRID shall also provide funding for the next 12 months towards providing nutritious food and protein to malnourished children / underweight children / adolescent girls of the district.



Malnutrition, especially micronutrient deficiencies, restricts survival, growth and development of children.

It contributes to morbidity and mortality in vulnerable population, resulting in substantial diminution in productive capacity in adulthood and consequent reduction in the nation's economic growth and wellbeing.

Gold jumps ₹89; silver by ₹677

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price jumped by Rs 89 to Rs 56,126 per 10 gram in the national capital on Wednesday amid gains in rates of the precious metal globally, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the yellow metal had settled at Rs 56,037 per 10 gram.

Silver also rose Rs 677 to Rs 69,218 per kilogram.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at Rs 56,126 per 10 gram, up Rs 89 per 10 gram. Domestic market gold prices gain was capped by a stronger rupee," said an analyst at HDFC Securities.

In the overseas market, gold was trading higher at USD 1,882.2 per ounce while silver was up at USD 23.88 per ounce.

'India recycles only 30% of 3.4 MT plastic waste'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India generates around 3.4 million tonnes (MT) of plastic waste, a report said on Wednesday noting that only 30 per cent of it is recycled.

Over a five-year period, the plastic consumption in the country has risen at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 9.7 per cent to 14 MT in the financial year 2016-17 to 20 million tonnes in 2019-20, Marico Innovation Foundation said in a report released in the national capital.

India's plastic waste output also doubled between the said period, the report titled 'Plastics, The Potential and Possibilities' said.

The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and Praxis Global Alliance report said, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu contribute 38 per cent India's plastic waste.

UP signs 79 MoUs worth ₹76,000 cr

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government on Wednesday held a roadshow here in which 79 memorandums of understanding (MoU) worth Rs 76,000 crore were signed, an official release said.

Industrial Development Department Minister Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi addressed eminent industrialists in the roadshow and discussed the changes that have taken place in the state in the last five years and the investment-friendly policies of the Yogi Adityanath government while inviting them to invest in the state, as per the release.

The investors who came to participate in the event appreciated the wind of change in the new Uttar Pradesh, it added.

Kamlesh Jain, Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer of Varun Beverages, said: "We have 7 plants in UP. The environment of UP is better than anywhere else. We had to set up a plant in Gorakhpur. The allotment letter for the land arrived within two and a half months. The Uttar Pradesh government is doing great work. We will invest Rs 3,400 crore in Uttar Pradesh".

Bajaj Allianz, Punjab & Sind Bank enter into corporate agency partnership



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance for distributing its life goals-based product suite.

The partnership will allow Delhi-headquartered Punjab & Sind Bank's customers to avail a variety of retail life insurance products from Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance including term, savings, retirement and investment options, according to a joint statement.

Meta, FADA join hands to enable auto dealerships to reach customers digitally

PTI ■ GREATER NOIDA

Social media platform Meta Son Wednesday said it has joined hands with Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) to enable auto dealers across the country to reach consumers digitally.

The announcement of the programme Move with Meta was made at the Auto Expo 2023 here.

It would upskill more than 3,000 auto dealers across the country to build a social presence and digitise using Meta platforms, the social media giant said. FADA, currently, represents 15,000 auto dealers across the country.

With people increasingly relying on digital touchpoints to decide on their automobile



purchases, auto dealers have felt an urgent need to become discoverable to customers online, it said.

Meta platforms enable auto dealers to build a social presence through its key products, such as Stories, Reels, Business messaging, and Facebook and WhatsApp Groups.

It added that Facebook and Instagram also help auto dealers with a more efficient model of lead generation through hyperlocal outreach.

Govt to invite Eols for Concor privatisation this month

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government will this month invite Expression of Interest or preliminary bids for privatising Container Corporation of India (Concor), an official said on Wednesday.

The official said the bid document for Concor is almost ready and has to get approval from 'Alternative Mechanism' which is essentially a group of key Cabinet ministers.

"We are trying hard to issue the Preliminary Information Memorandum inviting Expression of Interest (EoI) for Concor as quickly as possible. It should be issued this month, subject to approval," the official told PTI.

The Cabinet, in November 2019, had approved strategic sale of a 30.8 per cent stake,



along with management control, in Concor out of the government equity of 54.80 per cent. The government will retain 24 per cent stake post sell-off but without any veto powers.

However, the stake sale was hanging fire as investors awaited clarity on the rail land lease policy and licensing fees. The Union Cabinet in

September approved a revised policy which provides for long-term leasing of railway land for cargo related activities for a period of up to 35 years at 1.5 per cent of market value of land per annum.

The completion of Concor strategic sale would spill over to next financial year when financial bids would come in from potential investors.

WorkIndia raises \$12mn in funding led by SBI Holdings

New Delhi: WorkIndia, India's largest blue and gray-collar job portal, has raised \$12 million in its pre-series B funding from SBI Holdings, Tokyo, Yamauchi No.10 Family Office, the founding family of Nintendo, Persol and Insitor.

Kunal Patil, Co-founder, and CEO, WorkIndia said, "The blue-collar market has seen two phenomena viz one penetration and two, adoption."

INDIA EYEING ANOTHER BIG WIN WITH ROHIT, VIRAT IN FULL FLOW

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Buoyed by the form of its top three batters, a clinical India will look to take an unassailable 2-0 lead when they face Sri Lanka in the second ODI here on Thursday.

Having ended his century drought for nearly three years in a T20I against Afghanistan in the Asia Cup in September, Virat Kohli has not looked back since then especially in the white ball format and brought up his 73rd International century in their 67-run win in Guwahati on Tuesday.

He looked in supreme control in the first ODI in Guwahati on Tuesday and made Sri Lanka pay the price for two dropped chances to slam a back-to-back ODI hundreds that formed the backbone of India's massive 373 for seven. It was like the Kohli of the old as he looked uncluttered and no Sri Lankan bowler troubled him.

Returning from an injury, Indian skipper Rohit Sharma too allayed any concerns whatsoever of being short on match-fitness as he took on the Lankan attack in a 67-ball 83 to set the

foundation for a mammoth total. He seemed to be in his zone before coming to his favourite venue Eden Gardens.

The last time the two teams met in an ODI here, Rohit struck that world record 264 eight years back. Now here in his favourite venue as the Indian skipper, Rohit would be definitely keen to get to a big score.

That an ODI century is also eluding him since a long time — his last ODI hundred came against Australia in January 2020 would also be an added motivation.

Add young opener Shubman Gill's splendid ODI run to Indian top three and Indian top-order looks sorted and would once again look to dominate the pedestrian Lankan attack.

Having got unflinching support from his skipper, Gill was back as opener in the ODI format at the expense of left-handed keeper-batter Ishan Kishan, a selection that copped a lot of criticism in Guwahati.

But Gill silenced all that debate with yet another aesthetic knock of 70 off just 60 balls as he continued his fine form from



last year during which he has averaged 70-plus from 12 innings.

With Shreyas Iyer also coming back from a dream ODI run last year and occupying the no 4 spot with his flair for tackling

spin and rotating strike in the middle overs, the only spot that may open up in the batting order is that of KL Rahul.

Rahul, who also doubles up as a wicketkeeper, has been in wretched form of late but may

get a longer run especially in the series to prolong Kishan's wait.

Mohammed Siraj continued to raise his stakes and looked terrific with the new ball in an opening spell of 5-1-15-2, laced with 25 dot balls on a flat deck

at Barsapara Stadium.

On Eden's fast deck, Siraj will relish the challenge bowling with old warhorse Mohammed Shami as it remains to be seen whether the team think tank opts for an extra seamer.

Umran Malik played the role of the enforcer in the middle overs till Dasun Shanaka took on him en route to a fine century.

The young pace gun is a work in progress and would look to improve with every match.

Skipper Dasun Shanaka has been the only silver-lining for Sri Lanka in a lopsided contest in Guwahati. From being 179/7, the premier Lankan all-rounder gave the visitors some hope with a valiant 108 not out as he would look to continue his fine form.

Taking full advantage of the dew, Shanaka took Indian bowling to cleaners but they would need a collective effort from their batters to give India any fight.

With opener Pathum Nissanka also in good form, the Lankans would look to put up a strong show with the batting.

But the biggest letdown for the Sri Lankans was their fielding as they dropped Kohli twice. They would also hope for an improved show from their bowlers especially in the power-play where they gave a lot of width to Indian batters.

It also remains to be seen whether Sri Lanka will get the services of left-arm seamer Dilshan Madushanka who made his debut in Guwahati.

He hurt his right shoulder while fielding and coach Chris Silverwood said they are awaiting the X-ray to make sure everything is okay.

TEAMS (FROM)

India: Rohit Sharma (c), Hardik Pandya (vc), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), Washington Sundar, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj, Umran Malik and Arshdeep Singh.

Sri Lanka: Dasun Shanaka (c), Kusal Mendis (vc), Pathum Nissanka, Avishka Fernando, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Charith Asalanka, Dhananjaya de Silva, Wanindu Hasaranga, Ashen Bandara, Maheesh Theekshana, Chamika Karunaratne, Dilshan Madushanka, Kasun Rajitha, Nuwanidu Fernando (ODIs), Dunith Wellalage, Pramod Madushan, Lahiru Kumara. Match starts: 1.30pm IST.

I was in denial about my vulnerability, frustration was creeping in: In-form Kohli recalls prolonged lean patch

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

A remarkably eloquent Virat Kohli admitted being in complete denial about his "vulnerabilities" and "frustrations" during his poor run of form, which in turn also made him "cranky" and "snappy" with his family and friends.

Kohli smashed his 45th ODI hundred, a 87-ball 113, to guide India to a 67-run win over Sri Lanka in the opening game here on Tuesday.

The 34-year-old batter had scored an identical 113 against Bangladesh in his final ODI of 2022 and has now 73 international hundreds with the last three coming in a space of four months after a near three year lull.

"In my case, in denial, frustration was creeping in. I was very cranky, very snappy in my space. It was not fair on (wife) Anushka (Sharma), my closed ones, it's not fair on the people who support you. So I had to take responsibility and kind of put things in perspective," Kohli told teammate Suryakumar Yadav in an interview for bcci.Tv. Kohli reiterated the need to be away from his primary pas-



sion in order to rekindle it and feel hungry once again.

"I was far off from my cricket. My attachments, my desire, had totally taken over. That's when I realised that I can't be away from who I am. I have to

be true to myself. Even when I am vulnerable, I am not playing well, I am the worst player around, I have to accept it. I can't be in denial," Kohli admitted his frailties.

In fact, he had a word of

advice for Surya, who is in the form of his life as far as T20Is are concerned.

"Sometimes what happens, you (Surya) will also experience it as you play more and more now, people look at you differ-

ently. When Surya goes out to play, people will say that Surya will do it. 'To keep up with it is an intense process,' he told his junior colleague about the weight of expectations that he has carried for more than a decade now.

One only realises the downside when form deserts a player, said Kohli.

"When your cricket is going well, all these things flow well but whenever there is a slight dip, in my case, frustration started creeping in because I wanted to play in a certain way but my cricket was not allowing me to play like before."

Kohli said that he would like to build on his good form having started the new year with a hundred.

"I am just happy... In the last two years I didn't have such a start," Kohli said.

"It was the first match of the year and I got a century, so hopefully, I can build on this because it is also a World Cup year and there is a big Test series coming against Australia.

"When you score runs in any match, it gives you confidence. I am happy I was able to almost bat through the innings,

to give the team 20-30 extra runs with dew coming in. I am just happy and excited to play."

Kohli stressed on the need to get away and comeback refreshed, an approach that has helped him get rejuvenated.

"Sometimes your mindset goes up and down when you play so much, but keeping that mental freshness is helping me."

The former India skipper had endured an extended lean patch for last few years and also took a month off from the game last year before returning to score his first hundred in 1020 days in September against Afghanistan in T20 Asia Cup.

Kohli continued his magnificent run in the T20 World Cup in Australia, scoring 205 runs to be named the ICC Men's Player of the 'Month for October'. He then smashed his 44th ODI hundred in December last year.

"When I returned relaxed in Asia Cup, I started enjoying training again, which is how I have always played cricket," he said.

So I would say that if you feel even a bit of desperation then take two steps back, rather pushing more and more because it will only go away from you."



KL has found ways to get out, coaches should work on his flaws: Azharuddin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

KL Rahul needs to be way more consistent and work on his technical flaws with national team coaches, feels former India captain Mohammed Azharuddin. The 57-year-old Azhar, whose elegant wrist work made him a cynosure of cricket fans, is a bit disappointed that a player of Rahul's talent isn't realising his full potential.

"I think consistency is the problem in KL Rahul's case. But I think there are coaches who should rectify his flaws. In my opinion, he is a good player but consistency is missing in his game," Azharuddin told PTI in an exclusive interaction.

Rahul, who has had a string of poor scores since his international comeback, was bowled round his legs for a sedate 39 in the opening ODI against Sri Lanka in Guwahati on Tuesday. "I think Rahul is getting out in a lot of manners. Primarily, it is not the good balls that are getting him out. It is poor shot selection first up that is causing problems," said Azhar, who believes that all senior players should take out time and play domestic cricket.

Limited over captain Rohit Sharma and superstar Virat Kohli were among runs in the opening ODI and Azharuddin feels that these two will be India's premier performer during the 50-over World Cup at the end of the year. "Both are very good and classy players and they have done well in the past too, as the records say. I do believe Kohli and Rohit will do fairly well in the World Cup. In ODI format, they have always been pretty consistent."

Having captained the Indian team in two phases and close to a decade between 1990 to 1999, Azharuddin has a fair idea about people with leadership acumen. Hardik Pandya, the

new T20 skipper is one such player according to him.

"Hardik has looked good as a leader and seems that he can carry the team along. But he needs to be careful about his back as he had been out for a long time. 'India would need Hardik, the all-rounder and we can't afford to risk injuries. Hardik has got a young team and that's the way forward. To forge a winning combination, it will need strong co-ordination for the upcoming T20 series."

Indian selectors have copped a lot of flak of late and Azhar would ideally like his former teammate and chairman of selectors Chetan Sharma to clear the air about certain selections so that there is no ambiguity. "Definitely, Chetan is supposed to be doing at least one or two press conferences and should tell that what is the way forward for the current Indian team," he was forthright. He has now been the president of Hyderabad Cricket Association for more than a year but had his share of differences with former India players like Arshad Ayub and Shival Yadav with regards to running the administration.

"It has been good so far. We are fighting to revive the lost reputation of the Hyderabad Cricket Association. We have had a lot of work done (in terms of renovation) in the Stadium arena as well as dressing rooms.

"When I took charge, it was all in pathetic condition. We will be hosting our second international match in three months time (vs New Zealand). We are very happy that the BCCI has recognized our hardwork and matches are being allotted to us," Azharuddin said.

It must be mentioned BCCI awards matches to every centre as per its own devised rotation system and thus Hyderabad is hosting a T20 and ODI in a short span of time.

Playing in T20 leagues will prepare me for ODI World Cup: Joe Root



PTI ■ DUBAI

With an eye on the ODI World Cup in India this year, former England Test skipper Joe Root is hoping to further fine-tune his 50-over skills by playing in domestic T20 leagues such as the ILT20 in the UAE.

While Root has played more than 150 ODIs, scoring 6,207 runs at an average of 50.05, he still feels leagues like the ILT20, beginning in Dubai on January 13, will give him the necessary versatility as England aim to retain the 50-over World Cup.

"I have a lot of experience in playing 50-over cricket now. I have got a good understanding of how to play in ODIs.

"I really want to develop my white-ball game further and if there is anything that I can add to my 50-over game, it will come from playing more T20 cricket and putting myself in situations I have not found myself frequently during the course of my career so far," said Root, who will play for Dubai Capitals in ILT20.

While Root has been one of England's most trusted top-order batters in Tests and ODIs,

scoring runs aplenty, he has only played 32 T20Is, scoring 893 runs.

The 32-year-old went unsold in his very first IPL auction (base price Rs 1 crore) this year at Kochi even as country-mate Sam Curran went for a record sum of Rs 18.25 crore and the current Test skipper Ben Stokes earned Rs 16.25 crore.

Indicating that he wants to get a good grip on the shortest format, given that all the money now is in domestic leagues, Root hoped he could score big in ILT20 and then take his T20 career further.

"It's really exciting for me. I haven't played a lot of T20 cricket in the last couple of years, but my experience as a cricketer will hold me in good stead," said Root, who was not part of the team's T20 World Cup run in 2021 and 2022, though he was a part of the side that won the ODI World Cup at Lord's in 2019.

"Hopefully, I can go out there and get some big scores to help our team win some matches."

Root also said that Sachin Tendulkar was his icon and a "standout" for him when he was growing up.

"I mean obviously there are some wonderful players currently playing but look at what Sachin (Tendulkar) has achieved; it's just remarkable really, the longevity, the ability to be such a high-performing player at such a young age, and then to be able to sustain and to keep developing and moving forward in the game," Root told Zee.

Ranji Trophy: Prashant scores ton as Himachal take first-innings lead

PTI ■ NADAUN

Prashant Chopra completed his 12th first-class century as the Himachal Pradesh opener helped the hosts take the first-innings lead in their Ranji Trophy Group A match against Odisha on Wednesday.

The dependable opener's 198-ball 138 was the highlight of the day as Himachal quickly got on with the task of erasing the opponents' first-innings lead.

Beginning the day at 91/2 in reply to Odisha's first-innings total of 191, Himachal had only Prashant to thank for guiding them to a modest 258 even as the visitors' seam bowler Sunil Roul wreaked havoc.

The 24-year-old Roul created a lot of hurdles for the hosts with his nagging line and length.

But Prashant, starting from where he had left off on Tuesday at 61, kept accumulating runs



and punished any loose deliveries by dispatching them for boundaries. The opener ended up with 18 fours and a six with a healthy strike rate of almost 70 to boot.

The seasoned batter, in the process, completed his 4,000 first-class runs even as Roul continued to chip away, returning figures of 6/62.

Prashant finally fell victim to a Roul delivery, trapped in front of the wicket. His dismissal

opened the floodgates as none of the Himachal batters could play the wily bowler with confidence.

Himachal wicketkeeper-batter Praveen Thakur and Mayank Dagar departed without opening their account, while tail-enders Vaibhav Arora and Kanwar Abhinav too fell cheaply. Soon, the hosts' batting wound up at 258 in 76.5 overs.

At stumps on day two, Odisha were 29 without loss in

13 overs with Anurag Sarangi and Shantanu Mishra unbeaten on 14 and 15 respectively.

BRIEF SCORES:

At Nadaun: Odisha 191 and 29 for no loss in 13 overs vs Himachal Pradesh 258 in 76.5 overs (Prashant Chopra 138, Amit Kumar 46; Sunil Roul 6/62).

At Kalyani: Baroda 269 in 100.1 overs (Jyotsnail Singh 85, Priyanshu Moliya 50, Mahesh Pithiya 52; Mukesh Kumar 3/56, Akash Deep 4/71) vs Bengal 189 for 9 in 59 overs (Anustup Majumdar 90; Soibeh Sopariya 3/43, Sahejadhkan Pathan 4/46).

At Rohtak: Nagaland 88 in 42.1 overs (Shrikant Mundhe 32; Amit Rana 5/15) vs Haryana 56 for 2 in 14.5 overs (Yuvraj Singh batting 38).

At Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh 107 for 6 in 52 overs (Dhruv Jurel 29, Sameer Choudhary batting 28; Agrim Tiwari 2/17) vs Uttarakhand.

Murphy earns maiden call-up, Australia name spin-heavy squad for Test tour of India

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Uncapped off-spinner Todd Murphy, with all of seven match first-class experience, received his maiden Test call-up as Australia announced a spin-heavy squad for their upcoming four-Test series in India starting February 9.

Looking for their first Test series win in India since 2004, Australia will play Test matches in Nagpur (February 9-13), New Delhi (February 17-21), Dharamsala (March 1-5) and Ahmedabad (March 9-13). The 22-year-old from Victoria will join fellow

spinners Ashton Agar, Mitchell Swepson and Nathan Lyon in the 18-member squad which also includes Peter Handscomb and Matthew Renshaw as batting back-ups.

Owing to a finger injury, Mitchell Starc will miss the first Test in Nagpur on February 9 and is likely to join his pace colleagues -- captain Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Scott Boland and Lance Morris later for rest of the series. All-rounder Cameron Green will also be part of the contingent as he races against time to recover from a finger fracture.

"We have selected a squad that pro-



vides the depth and flexibility required to adapt depending on the conditions we may encounter, former skipper and current chief selector George Bailey said in a statement.

On Murphy's call-up, Bailey said:

"Todd Murphy has progressed quickly having impressed in domestic cricket and recently with Australia A. With those performances Todd has emerged as a strong spin option."

Murphy will be Nathan Lyon's understudy, having taken 29 wickets in his seven first-class games so far. He has also played 14 List A and 8 T20 games "Ashton Agar continues to impress following his comeback in Sydney and we believe left-arm finger spin will play an important role in Indian conditions. Mitchell Swepson has recent Test experience in the sub-continent and offers leg-spinning variety."

While Handscomb will join Renshaw as the batting backups, Marcus Harris was left out.

"Peter Handscomb deserves his place back in the squad. His domestic form has been strong recently and Pete has proven he can perform at the Test level," Bailey said. "His experience against spin on the subcontinent is valuable and he is also an exceptionally good close to the wicket catcher."

Handscomb last played a Test in 2019. Australia will also play three ODIs in India but the squad for the limited over series will be announced at a later date.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN 2023: UNVACCINATED DJOKOVIC BACK, YEAR LATER

AP ■ BRISBANE

Novak Djokovic had just wrapped up last season by winning the ATP Finals for a record sixth time when, rather than looking ahead to 2023, his mind immediately went back to the way 2022 began: He was unable to compete in last year's Australian Open after being deported from the country because he was not vaccinated against COVID-19.

That whole episode, and the decision to eschew the shots required for entry elsewhere, too, helped define his season and, perhaps to some, his legacy. So as he reflected on his triumph at the year-ending championships in Italy last November, Djokovic viewed it through the prism of what occurred in Australia last

January.

"It feels deeply satisfying and, at the same time, huge relief, because of the circumstances that I have been through this year — situations earlier this year, of course, with Australia. ... That had an effect, obviously, on my start of the year," the 35-year-old from Serbia said. "For the first several months, I was trying to find that balance, game-wise but also mentally, in order to be able to come back to the court and find that tennis level that I need."

When the new Grand Slam season begins at the Australian Open on Monday morning (Sunday night EST), Djokovic will be back. Back in Australia — despite never getting inoculated against the coronavirus — thanks to government decisions

to remove any vaccination requirements for visitors and to waive what could have been three-year ban for him as someone whose visa had been revoked. Back at a tournament he has dominated like no other, resulting in nine of his 21 major trophies, including the past three times he played there.

Back in position to strive for elite status and to challenge his great rival Rafael Nadal for supremacy in the Grand Slam title chase. Sure, it is Nadal who is the defending champion and who owns a men's-record 22 majors. It is Djokovic, though, who will draw the most attention. And it is Djokovic who will be viewed as the favorite — and would have been, even had he not started off his trip to Australia by winning a tuneup



title at Adelaide.

The lead-up to this Australian Open has been filled with talk about who will not be there: Serena Williams and Roger Federer ended their playing careers in 2022, as did Ash Barty; No. 1-ranked Carlos Alcaraz and seven-time major champion Venus Williams are injured; former No. 1 and four-time Slam winner Naomi Osaka last played a completed match in August; another former top-ranked player, Simona Halep, is serving a provisional doping suspension. Once play begins, the talk will squarely be about Djokovic, and most folks in the sport seem to agree he should be back in the field. Nadal, for one, called it "good for tennis."

"It's nice to see cooler heads prevailing there, (after) politics

got in the way," former U.S. Davis Cup captain Mardy Fish said.

Frances Tiafoe, an American who reached the U.S. Open semifinals, said: "We want the biggest players playing in the biggest tournaments in the world, regardless of everything else. We're trying to sell a product at the end of the day, and you want those big names at the big events."

One measure of how much things have changed, even as the coronavirus remains a part of daily life around the world: For the first time since 2020, players at the Australian Open will not need to self-report if they test positive for COVID-19; tournament director Craig Tiley said they're simply being encouraged to stay away if they are sick.

Man United, Newcastle advance to League Cup semifinals

AP ■ LONDON

Manchester United cannot stop winning. Marcus Rashford cannot stop scoring.

Make that eight straight wins in all competitions for United after a 3-0 victory over third-tier Charlton Athletic secured a place in the English League Cup semifinals on Tuesday.

Rashford came on as a 60th-minute substitute and had enough time to grab two goals, scoring for the sixth game in a row.

While United is looking to end what will be a six-year trophy drought, Newcastle has a shot at a first piece of silverware since 1955.

The Saudi-controlled club from northeast England dispatched Leicester 2-0 thanks to goals by Dan Burn and Joelinton and advanced to the last four of the League Cup for the first time since 1976. Not even 18 months into its new era, Newcastle is perhaps exceeding expectations after rapidly becoming a force in English soccer.

It is the latest positive step in encouraging seasons for two teams who have also established themselves in the top four of the Premier League.



Newcastle and Man United are tied on points in third and fourth place, respectively, and are in relentless form, with just one loss between them since September.

The other two quarterfinals take place Wednesday, when Manchester City visits Southampton and Nottingham Forest hosts Wolverhampton in another all-Premier League matchup.

RELENTLESS RASHFORD

Drawn against the lowest-ranked team left in the competition, Man United manager Erik ten Hag was able to field a weakened lineup against Charlton — perhaps in view of

a derby match against Man City in the league on Saturday — and still come through fine.

"I said before the game, No ifs, butts or maybes, we have to be in that semifinal' and we did the job," Ten Hag said.

Brazil winger Antony collected the ball on the right and curled a shot into the far corner from just outside the area to put the hosts ahead in the 21st minute at Old Trafford.

Rashford was one of three substitutes to enter on the hour mark and poked home a finish in the 90th at the culmination of a counterattack to end Charlton's hopes. The England forward then stroked in a left-footed shot after beating the off-

side trap, for his 18th goal for club and country this season.

Rashford has 15 goals and six assists in 25 matches for United and is perhaps in the best form of his career.

United is through to the semifinals for the third time in four seasons. It was eliminated by City in the last four in 2020 and '21.

EASY FOR NEWCASTLE

At St. James' Park, Dan Burn was the unlikely scorer of Newcastle's breakthrough goal in the 60th minute, the tall left back taking a pass from Joelinton and surging through Leicester's defense before slipping home a low finish.

"I like to get forward and it's entertaining watching a guy my size running into the box," Burn said after scoring his first goal for the team he grew up supporting.

"I used to sit in the East Stand," he added. "You always want to score in front of the Gallowgate End and to do that in front of my family was amazing." Joelinton, who had earlier hit the post, then scored himself in the 73rd with a low, angled shot.

The 1976 final was the only time Newcastle has reached the League Cup's title match.

Hero Cup gives Europe chance to assess options for Ryder Cup

AP ■ WASHINGTON

For European golf, this year's Ryder Cup is set to mark a break from the past. This week might provide a hint as to who is part of the future.

The Hero Cup match-play event takes place in Abu Dhabi from Friday to Sunday, pitting Britain and Ireland against Continental Europe in a competition that allows European Ryder Cup captain Luke Donald a chance to assess his options eight months out from the contest with the United States outside Rome.

New blood will be needed in Donald's Ryder Cup team because of the likely absence of veteran players — such as Ian Poulter, Lee Westwood and Sergio Garcia, who all play in the Saudi-funded LIV Golf league — who have long been the backbone of Europe's lineup.

The Hero Cup, essentially a renewal of The Seve Trophy that had eight editions from 2000-13, is the perfect opportunity for up-and-coming players to prove themselves in a team format and press their case for inclusion in the Ryder Cup, especially with Donald having six captain's picks.

Malaysia Open: Sindhu loses to Marin, Prannoy trumps Sen in opening round



PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu faltered on her return to action after a long injury lay-off but in-form HS Prannoy continued his sensational run to progress to the second round of the Malaysia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

Sixth seed Sindhu, who was playing her first match since she sustained a stress fracture on her left ankle en route her Commonwealth Games gold in August, lost 12-21, 10-21, 15-21 to Rio Olympics champion Carolina Marin of Spain in 59 minutes.

Earlier, world No. 8 Prannoy lived up to his new status of being India's best-ranked men's

singles player with a comeback from behind 22-24, 21-12, 21-18 victory over Lakshya Sen, ranked 10th, in an edgy opening-round contest that went for little over an hour.

The 30-year-old from Kerala will next face Indonesia's Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also advanced to the pre-quarterfinals with a 21-16, 21-13 win over the Korean pair of Choi Sol Gyu and Kim Won Ho.

The world No. 5 pair will meet the Indonesian combination of Muhammad Shohibul Fikri and Bagas Maulana.

Malvika Bansod, however, failed to cross the opening hurdle, losing 9-21, 13-21 to second seed Korean An Se Young.

The women's doubles pair of Ashwini Bhat and Shikha Gautam lost 10-21, 12-21 to Thailand's Supissara Paewsampran and Puttita Supajirakul.

Sindhu came into the match with a 5-9 head-to-head record against Marin, who had a tough last few years, having suffered an ACL in both her knees.

The Indian had a rusty start as she struggled with her finishing, allowing an aggressive Marin to grab an 11-3 lead at the interval. The Spaniard then zoomed to eight game points with precise returns, converting them at the first opportunity.

In the second game, Sindhu returned the favour, moving to a massive seven-point lead at the break. The Indian followed up her strokes well, playing some excellent shots and looking more polished at the net as she grabbed 10 game points with the Spaniard going to the net time and again.

Sindhu converted it when Marin faltered with her net play again.

In the decider, Marin again found her touch as her cross-court returns, punch clears and body smashes kept Sindhu at bay. The Spaniard moved into the breather with a four-point advantage after Sindhu went wide.

FIH World Cup: Analysis of participating teams

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR/ROURKELA

Analysis of teams participating in the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup, beginning here from Friday.

Argentina (world rank: 7)

Rio Olympics champions Argentina are Pan American hockey's flag bearer, having won the continental title on 14 occasions. With a swashbuckling style and incredible technical ability, Los Leones can beat any team in the world on their day, something they showed in their 2-1 victory over reigning Olympic and world champions Belgium in November.

But the team coached by former Argentina goalkeeper Mariano Ronconi has struggled in the World Cups, having reached the semifinals only once in their 13 appearances so far — in the 2014 edition when they had finished third.

Last time, they topped their group but lost to England 3-2 in the quarterfinals. The loss of star penalty corner specialist Gonzalo Peillat to the German team after playing more than 100 matches for Argentina will be felt.

Agustin Mazzilli, Lucas Vila and team captain Matias Rey — named Player of the Tournament as his team swept to victory in the 2022 Pan American Cup in Santiago, Chile to seal their World Cup — are among the players to watch out for despite being well into their 30s.

Australia (world no: 1)

The Kookaburras are the most consistent men's hockey team in the last 30 years, having remained in the top four of the FIH World Rankings for the duration of that period. They have won every prize available, including the Olympic, World Cup, FIH Hockey Pro League and Oceania Cup titles.

The team coached by former striker Colin Batch has not played too many matches after a shoot-out loss to Belgium in the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. They, however, claimed a sensational seventh Commonwealth Games title, thrashing India 7-0 in the final in Birmingham in August last year. Since then they have played just five matches against India, winning 4-1 in a high-scoring home series in November-December.

Unlike many other teams in this World Cup, Australia have not started their Pro-League campaign this season but known for fast-paced, attacking hockey with compact defence, there is no doubt that the Australians will go in search of a record-equalling fourth world title.

They had lost to the eventual runners-up Netherlands in the semifinals in the shootout and beat England in the third-place match.

Captain Eddie Ockenden, penalty corner specialist Blake Govers, defender Jake Harvie, midfielder Aran Zalewski will be among the players to watch out for the brilliant Kookaburras.

Belgium (world no: 2)

Belgium's rise from among European also-rans to the summit of global hockey has been one of the standout stories of the past two decades. In the past last years the Red Lions have won every major title on offer, including the World Cup (2018), Olympic Games (2021), European Championship (2019) and FIH Hockey Pro League (2020-21).

They are again the favourites to win the title, along with Australia and the Netherlands, and defend the title they won at the Kalinga Stadium four years ago.

The team coached by Dutchman Michel van den Heuvel has strength and depth

in every department and contains some of the world's finest players, proven winners who have claimed the biggest titles on the greatest of stages.

They, however, have relied on the tried and tested players with more than half of the squad above 30 years and over (or nearly) 200 matches to their kitty.

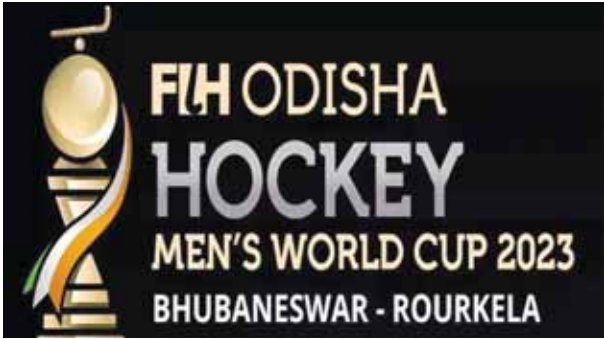
In Vincent Vanasch — who lost to India's PR Sreejesh in the FIH Goalkeeper of the Year award — and Loic Van Doren, they have two world class goalkeepers, while Arthur Van Doren, Victor Wegnez, Felix Denayer, Florent Van Aubel, John-John Dohmen, Alexander Hendrickx, Arthur de Sloover and Tom Boon — the latter two both shortlisted for the FIH Hockey Stars Player of the Year Award for 2022 — are all extraordinary talents.

Germany (world no: 4)

With four Olympic gold medals, two World Cups and eight European titles, Germany have an enviable history in international hockey. Tactically astute and technically superb, Die Honamas — as the German national team is known as — have a habit of hitting form at Olympic Games and World Cups, something they will be hoping to repeat here in Odisha.

After losing to India in the bronze-medal play-off in the Tokyo Olympics, Germany got a new coach in Andre Henning. The team had a long preparation of more than eight months, winning 13 out of 18 matches in the past year and will look to replicate the same performance in the World Cup.

Forward Niklas Wellen — who was one of the nominations for the FIH Best Player award — and goalkeeper Alexander Stadler, who was in the running for Best Goalkeeper award, would be among the key play-



ers in this German team.

Another forward Christopher Rühr and captain Mats Grambusch would be the other star players. The addition of star penalty corner specialist Gonzalo Peillat — the man who fired Argentina to Olympic gold at Rio 2016 — would only lend potency to the side.

India (world no: 6)

India won the World Cup once in 1975, and since then have failed to qualify for the semifinals. They won a bronze in the inaugural edition in 1971, clinched a silver in 1973. In the

previous edition, also held in Bhubaneswar, they did go past the group round but failed to win a quarterfinal game against the Netherlands. From 1978 to 2014 they could not go past the group stage.

After years of sliding down in the world game, culminating to the failure to qualify for the 2008 Olympic Games — a competition they had won a record eight times — India are back at the top table.

A bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympic Games was a landmark moment for the team,

following it up with a third-place finish in the 2021-22 edition of the FIH Hockey Pro League.

Since Graham Reid took over the head coach's position, India's stature has grown up. He has been able to get the best out of the players, injecting a tactical discipline to their trademark skilful, fluid playing style, making them a team that is respected and feared in equal measure.

After losing to Australia 0-7 in the Birmingham Commonwealth Games final, India had improved a lot in the away series against the Kookaburras. India lost 1-4 in the high-scoring series but contested on equal footing in three matches and notched up a rare win against their formidable opponents.

Captain and FIH Player of the Year Harmanpreet Singh, a fabulous defender and one of the best drag flickers in the game, will be the key player while goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, midfield ace Manpreet Singh and Hardik Singh, and striker Mandeep Singh are all capable of bringing

Current Indian hockey team is way more matured than teams of past: Hassan Sardar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

He used to be a resident threat to Indian hockey teams of late '70s and early '80s but Hassan Sardar, Pakistan's master centre forward of yesteryears is amazed to see the maturity shown by the national team from the neighbouring nation in recent years.

In his opinion Australia, Belgium and Netherlands are other strong contenders apart from India.

The FIH Men's Hockey World Cup gets underway in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela

from Friday. India is pitted in group D along with England, Spain and Wales.

Olympic gold medallist Sardar, who mesmerized the Indian hockey loving public with 11 goals during the 1982 World Cup in Mumbai, feels that there is not much difference between Harmanpreet Singh led team and other top nations.

"I had said before the Tokyo Olympics that this Indian team is capable of winning medals at the highest level. They won bronze but there is hardly any major difference in top 4 teams in world hockey now," Sardar

told PTI Bhasha in an exclusive interview from Pakistan.

"This Indian team is way more focussed and matured. Add to it, they have an added advantage playing at home ground. I have seen a hockey tournament in Odisha and would like to congratulate state CM Naveen Patnaik for promoting hockey in a big way," said the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic gold medallist.

India's lone title win in WC was 48 years back when Ajitpal Singh's defeated Pakistan in the final.

about game-changing moments.

Defender Amit Rohidas, who has captained the team in the past and also takes penalty corners, and forward Akashdeep Singh will be among the other players to watch out for.

Netherlands (world no: 3)

Under head coach Jeroen Delmee, the legendary Dutch defender who as a player won two Olympic gold medals, the Netherlands have found consistency in their performance. Since taking charge in the latter part of 2021, Delmee has injected a significant amount of fresh talent into the Oranje squad.

The young guns rose to the challenge in style, winning 12 of their 16 matches in the 2021-22 edition of the FIH Hockey Pro League to win the title for the first time.

Having suffered painful defeats in the last two FIH Men's World Cup finals, the Netherlands will be aiming to make it third time lucky this time around and win a fourth world crown, a feat only Pakistan have managed to achieve.

Captain Thierry Brinkman, striker Koen Bijen, penalty corner ace Jip Janssen and goalkeeper Pirmin Blaak will be among the players to watch out for.

England (world no: 5)

England played in World Cup final only once, in 1986, when they lost to Australia 1-2 in front of their home crowd in London. They finished fourth in the last three editions and the current team under new head coach Paul Revington will be hoping to win its maiden title.

But they have come in this World Cup with a young squad, with 10 players having zero experience at this level.

Zach Wallace, Condon David, Martin Harry and Roper Phill will be among the England players to watch out for.

Spain (world no: 8)

Spain hosted the first-ever World Cup in 1971. So far in hockey's most prestigious event, Spain have played in the finals twice, in 1971 and 1998, but failed to win the crown.

They will be the dark horse in Pool D which also has India, England and Wales. Recent wins against teams like India and New Zealand will surely make them believe that a young squad can beat the best teams in the world.

Under coach Max Caldas, Spain will expect Alvaro Iglesias, Ricardo Sanchez and Enrique Gonzalez to play the playmaking role.

Korea (world no: 10)

After failing to qualify for the 2018 edition, Korea return to World Cup action courtesy of a superb victory at the Asia Cup, where they defeated Malaysia in the final. The team has been involved in two high-profile competitions in recent months, finishing runners-up to Malaysia in the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup in November. Evergreen 39-year-old captain Namyoung Lee will be among the key players.

New Zealand (world no: 9)

New Zealand are all set to compete in their 11th World Cup, with the Odisha event being their seventh in succession. They are yet to finish higher than seventh, a placing they have achieved on four separate occasions, but that could all change this time around.

The Black Sticks are always a force to reckon with, being blessed with some genuinely world-class players in their ranks.

Defender Blair Tarrant, veteran striker Simon Child, penalty corner expert Kane Russell, defensive midfielder Nick Ross and 19-year-old debutant Charlie Morrison could be the players to wat