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# PM: World in crisis, need to redesign pol-eco order



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the opening session of the Voice of Global South Summit, via video conferencing, in New Delhi on Thursday

## Adverse impact of Ukraine war on fuel, fertilisers, food, says Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The adverse impact of Ukraine conflict on fuel, food and fertilisers supply chains to developing nations and climate change have placed

the world in a state of crisis and no one can predict for how long this unpredictability will last, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said here on Thursday.

Sounding this note of caution, he asked the developing countries to come together to redesign global political and financial governance that can remove inequalities and enlarge opportunities.

In his address at the opening session of the two-day Voice of Global South Summit hosted by India, Modi in a virtual address referred to press-

ing global challenges such as food and energy security triggered by the Ukraine conflict, terrorism and climate change and said the developing countries are feeling the impact of the situation though they were not responsible for it.

"We have turned the page on another difficult year, that saw war, conflict, terrorism and geo-political tensions, rising food, fertilizer and fuel prices, climate-change driven natural disasters, and lasting economic impact of the Covid pandemic," he said.

"It is clear the world is in a state of crisis. It is difficult to predict how long this state of instability will last," Modi said.

He said there is a need to "re-energise" the world, and pitched for a global agenda of 'Respond, Recognise, Respect and Reform' to deal with the challenges. "Respond to the priorities of the Global South by framing an inclusive and balanced international agenda, and recognise that the principle of 'Common but Differentiated Responsibilities' applies to all global challenges," he said.

"Respect sovereignty of all nations, rule of law and peaceful resolution of differences and disputes and reform international institutions, including the United Nations, to make them more relevant," Modi added.

Leaders of several countries, including Bangladesh, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Guyana, Mozambique, Mongolia and Senegal, were among those who attended the summit.

The 'global South' largely refers to the developing countries, especially those in Asia, Africa and South America.

Continued on Page 2

## Boy breaches PM's security during road show; being grilled



Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves at supporters during a roadshow ahead of the inaugural ceremony of the National Youth Festival in Hubballi on Thursday

PTI ■ HUBBALLI (KTK)

A young boy, not even in his teens, who cut through the security cordon and tried to hand over a garland to Prime Minister Modi during a roadshow here on Thursday, was taken away from the scene and is being questioned by the local police.

According to police officials and grabs from the live video streaming of the event, the boy, who was seen rushing towards Prime Minister Modi's motorcade with a garland in hand, managed to reach very close to Prime Minister Modi.

The Prime Minister extended his hand to accept the garland from above the car door but could not reach the

boy. The Special Protection Group (SPG) personnel got hold of the garland before local police secured the boy and removed him from the scene.

SPG passed on the boy's garland to the Prime Minister who then put it inside his vehicle. The incident happened during a road show by the Prime Minister as he was reaching the venue for inaugurating the 26th National Youth Festival here.

PM Modi was standing on the 'running board' of his moving car and waving at an enthusiastic crowd that lined up the route in large numbers as he headed to Railway Sports Ground from the airport, when the incident occurred.

Continued on Page 2

## Sharad Yadav passes away

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



July 1, 1947 — Jan 13, 2023

Veteran socialist leader and former Union Minister Sharad Yadav passed away on Thursday night in Delhi after a prolonged illness. He was admitted at a private hospital in Gurugram. He was 73.

His daughter Subhasnai Sharad Yadav broke the news through a Facebook post, "Papa nahi rahe."

A statement from the Fortis Memorial Research Institute said Sharad was brought to the emergency ward in an unconscious and unresponsive state.

"On examination, he did not have any pulse or recordable blood pressure. He underwent CPR as per ACLS protocols. Despite best efforts, he could not be revived and was declared dead at 10.19 pm," the statement said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed condolences over Sharad's demise. "Pained by the passing away of Shri Sharad Yadav ji. In his long years in public life, he distinguished himself as an MP and a Minister. He was greatly inspired by Dr Lohia's ideals. I will always cherish our interactions. Condolences to his family and admirers. Om Shanti," he tweeted.

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav also expressed grief on Sharad's demise. "The news of the untimely demise of Mandal

Messiah saddens me... Great socialist leader and my guardian respected Sharad Yadav ji. I am speechless," he tweeted in Hindi.

The RJD leader said he had a conversation with his family members. "In this hour of grief, the entire Samajwadi fraternity is with his family members," he said.

A strong votary of Opposition unity, Yadav was once the supreme leader of the Janata Parivar. He led the Janata Dal(U) as its president, and then parted ways with Lalu Prasad. Later, he joined hands with Nitish Kumar and was the national president of the party. In 2017, he was disqualified from the Rajya Sabha after Nitish petitioned against him for indulging in "anti-party activities".

Continued on Page 2

## Freezing -4 c to +2 c in plains from Jan 16 to 18

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As northwest India is already under the grip of cold wave conditions, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Thursday predicted a fresh spell of severe cold wave in north India from Makar Sankranti (January 14). The maximum severity of the cold will be felt on January 16 and 17 due to incursion of strong northerly winds with the passing western disturbance. Meanwhile, an online weather forecaster predicted a drop in the minimum temperature to minus 4 degrees Celsius between January 14 and 19 in the plains. The severe chill is likely to be at its peak from January 16 to 18.

"Severe chills are on the horizon between January 14 and 19 and are likely to be at their peak from January 16 to 18, tweeted Navdeep Dahiya, the founder of Live Weather of India, an online weather platform.

"Don't know how to put this up but the upcoming spell of #Coldwave in #India look really extreme during 14-19th January 2023 with peak on 16-18th. Never seen temperature ensemble going this low in a prediction model so far in my career. Freezing -4°C to +2°C in plains, Wow!", Dahiya tweeted.

"Also to note this is a historic run so far in



Professors of Guru Nanak Dev University dance as they celebrate the Lohri festival in Amritsar on Thursday

11 days of Jan with the next few days look really cold, #January 2023 can be historically coldest — maybe for the 21st century so far? — will be back with more data inputs post this spell of #Coldwave," he added.

Continued on Page 2

## CBI raids ex-FS for currency notes' security thread deal graft

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday conducted searches on the premises of former Union Finance Secretary Arvind Mayaram after registering an FIR against him and a UK-based company for alleged corruption in the supply of exclusive colour shift security thread for currency notes.

In its FIR, the CBI alleged that Mayaram, the UK-based company De La Rue International Ltd and unidentified officials of the Finance Ministry and the RBI, hatched conspiracy to extend undue favour to the British firm.

Mayaram granted an "illegal" three years extension to the firm for supplying colour shift security thread without taking any mandatory security clearance from the Home Ministry or informing the then Finance Minister, the FIR says.

Continued on Page 2

## Finally, razing of unsafe buildings in Joshimath begins

New Delhi/Dehradun: The process of demolishing two "unsafe" hotels in subsidence-hit Joshimath began on Thursday, two days after the exercise was stalled due to protests by their owners demanding compensation, while the evacuation of affected people to safer locations continued. In Delhi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah assessed the situation in Joshimath. Continued on P2

## CAPSULE

### BJP, CONG RAP BIHAR MIN FOR JIBE AT HINDU EPIC

New Delhi: The BJP and the Congress on Thursday slammed Bihar Education Minister Chandrashekhar for saying that 'Ramcharitmanas' promoted hatred. The BJP sought his sacking and apology by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. P5

### DOUBLE DELIGHT: IIP RISES, INFLATION EASES

New Delhi: In a double delight, retail inflation eased to year low of 5.72%, while factory output rose sharply to 7.2%. P10

## 3 debtors kill, bury woman; body exhumed, cremated

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Meena Wadhavan

The Delhi Police on Thursday arrested three men for killing a 54-year-old woman lender and burying her body in a graveyard in Delhi's Nangloi. The graveyard caretaker has also been arrested. The police exhumed the body which was handed over to her family who cremated it on Thursday.

The three accused — identified as Mubin Khan, Rehan, and Navin Khan — confessed to killing Meena Wadhavan for demanding back her money, according to the police.

Meena, a resident of Avantika Enclave in Mangolpuri, was reported missing on January 2 at Mangolpuri Police Station.

The accused were arrested after their crime was caught in CCTV footage, said DCP Harinder Kumar Singh.

Continued on Page 2

## LAC stable, but unpredictable, says Army Chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The situation is "stable, under control and yet unpredictable" at the northern border (China), Army Chief General Manoj Pande said here on Thursday. But he added China has increased deployment in the eastern sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), including Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

He also said Pakistan-backed terrorist organisations have shifted their focus to Jammu region and are trying to step up violence by targeted killings of members of minority communities like in Rajouri, the Army Chief said.

The Army Chief's remarks on China came weeks after Indian and Chinese troops clashed in Tawang region of Arunachal Pradesh on December 9 and persisting tension for the last two years in Eastern Ladakh.

He also said massive infrastructure development work has taken place in all the

regions in India facing China and the armed forces are ready to meet any challenge.

Giving the overall review of the situation along the LAC, Pande said there is a slight increase of Chinese troops deployment opposite the eastern command of India.

He refrained from disclosing the exact locations and said "we have matched the strength and are adequately well poised" to thwart any threat.

Pande said the Chinese troop presence increased as they did not return to their bases after training in the forward areas. "We are keeping watch," he said.

Addressing a news conference ahead of the 75th Army Day on January 15, Pande said the "situation is stable, under control and yet unpredictable on the Northern Border."

While talks are on at the military and diplomatic levels to restore normalcy in Eastern Ladakh, the Army Chief said all the sectors of the LAC are well defended.

Continued on Page 2

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NCR-PULSE

**CALL RECEIVED REGARDING BOMB THREAT IN SPICEJET FLIGHT**  
New Delhi: A call was received regarding the presence of a bomb in a Delhi-Pune SpiceJet plane before its take off here on Thursday, police said. All the passengers and crew members are safe, they said, adding that the aircraft is being checked. Sources said the estimated departure time of the plane -- SG 8938 -- was 5:35 pm. The passengers were at the boarding gate and not inside the aircraft when the call was received, they added. "Officials of the CISF and the Delhi Police are on alert. We were informed by authorities regarding a call they received where the caller said there was a bomb in the Pune-bound SpiceJet plane. The plane is being checked but nothing suspicious has so far been found. However, we are following the security drill in accordance with our standard operating procedure," a senior police officer said

**SISODIA INAUGURATES ONLINE BOOK FAIR FOR SCHOOLS**  
New Delhi: Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday inaugurated a virtual mega book fair for Delhi government schools. The online platform will enable schools under the Directorate of Education to purchase books for their libraries. Sisodia said Delhi is the first in the country where teachers and children of all government schools participate in the virtual fair and select books for their library. "Books play a vital role in the all-round development of children. Considering this, the Delhi government has made significant changes in the libraries of its schools over the past six to seven years," he said.

**MAN DETAINED FOR CONNECTION WITH KHALISTANI TERRORIST**  
New Delhi: Ahead of Republic Day, the Delhi Police Special Cell detained a person on Thursday over his alleged connection with a Canada-based Khalistani terrorist, officials said. Some other people, suspected to have links with the Canada-based Khalistan terrorist, are also being quizzed. They were picked up from northwest Delhi's Jahangirpuri area, they said.

India doing its part, global climate action needed: Bhupender

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

India on Thursday said it is committed to tackle the impact of climate change and reminded the developed countries to meet their responsibility on providing financial aid and technology transfer.

"India is committed to tackling the impact of climate change and supporting the efforts of developing countries in achieving their development goals through necessary technical assistance," Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav said on Thursday while addressing a two-day Voice of Global South summit held on virtual mode.

"The development of a country and the conservation of its biodiversity and ecosystems are two important aspects, neither of which can be ignored.

"As such, there is a need for development policies to be inclusive and sustainable to reduce inequality and contribute to empowerment and improvement of the quality of people's lives," he said.

Asserting that India understands the vulnerability of

Team Yogi's Delhi roadshow today

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

Committed to making Uttar Pradesh a \$ 1-trillion economy and having successfully completed roadshows abroad and in Mumbai and Chennai to invite investors to the Global Investors' Summit (GIS-2023), Team Yogi is all set to hold the next roadshow in New Delhi on Friday.

The round of business to government (B2G) meetings of ministers and senior officials with entrepreneurs will start in the early morning at The Oberoi Hotel in Delhi, and will continue till late at night. A large number of industrialists will also participate in the roadshow.

During the B2G meetings and roadshows, Chief Minister Yogi's team will make entrepreneurs in Delhi aware of the



ministers Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi', Arvind Kumar Sharma, Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary, ministers of state Sandeep Singh, Kapil Dev Aggarwal and Arun Kumar Saxena, while Agriculture Production Commissioner Manoj Kumar Singh, Infrastructure and Industrial Development Commissioner Arvind Kumar, NOIDA Authority CEO Ritu Maheshwari, Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) CEO Arun Veer Singh, Invest UP CEO Abhishek Prakash and Chief Minister Yogi's advisor KV Raju under the leadership of Chief Secretary Durga Shankar Mishra will apprise the Delhi entrepreneurs about the merits of Uttar Pradesh.

Chief Minister Yogi's team will meet over a dozen veteran

HSVP to raise ₹2,573 cr by selling commercial land in Gurugram

**PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM**

The Haryana Shahri Vikas Pradikaran (HSVP) plan to raise over Rs 2,573.88 crores by selling its expensive commercial land in Gurugram.

The development authority has listed a total of 3 commercial plots located in Sector 29, earmarked for commercial complexes. All these properties will be sold through e-auction, officials said.

As per the details shared by the authority, the auction will be held on February 08.

According to the officials, the plot 1 area is 5 acres, Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is 3.50 and the proposed reserve price is



Sharad Yadav passes...

**From Page 1**

Sharad was known to take a strong stand on issues close to his heart. But he also remained flexible in his political management. This is why he fell out with both Nitish and Lalu several times., and again joined hands with them, too. A powerful voice in Mandal politics, Sharad commanded significant respect in the political circle of Delhi.

This is the reason, both Lalu and Nitish relied on him to lead their parties as national presidents for a long period of time.Sharad formed his own party Loktantrik Janata Dal in 2018. After not achieving much with the new outfit, he merged it with Lalu's RJD in March 2020. Despite his poor health, he frequently appeared with Opposition leaders and called for a united platform to take on the BJP.

Sharad was born on July 1, 1947, in Babai village in the Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh. He obtained his Bachelor of Science degree from Robertson College Jabalpur. However, Bihar remained his political "karmbhoomi," due to his

Finally, razing of unsafe buildings...

**From Page 1**

Shah also reviewed the steps taken to ameliorate people's hardship at a meeting attended by Union ministers Nitin Gadkari, RK Singh, Bhupendra Yadav and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and top officials.

Joshimath, the gateway to famous pilgrimage sites like Badrinath and Hemkund Sahib and international skiing destination Auli, is facing a major challenge due to land subsidence.

Hotels Malari Inn and Mount View had developed

cracks and were precariously leaning towards each other posing a threat to the settlements around them, officials said.

The demolition began following an agreement between the administration and the property owners.

The buildings are being razed under the technical supervision of Roorkee-based Central Building Research Institute with Hotel Malari Inn, Disaster Secretary Ranjit Sinha told reporters here.

"Everything will be done under the technical supervision of CBRI. The hotels will be dismantled in such a manner that no harm is caused to the structures nearby," an official engaged in the operation said.

Meanwhile, the Uttarakhand government told the Delhi High Court that authorities are rehabilitating the affected families in Joshimath, and that the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) have been deployed in the area.

**Boy breaches...**

**From Page 1**

Senior police officials told PTI that the boy who was whisked away from the spot was being questioned.

Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissioner Raman Gupta said the incident cannot be called a security breach as everyone (allowed to wave at the PM and greet him from both sides of the road) had been frisked and checked."We cannot call it a security breach because we had frisked and checked everybody who stood on both sides of the road. Even the garlands were thoroughly inspected," Raman Gupta told PTI.

CBI raids ex-FS for currency notes' security thread...

**From Page 1**

The extension granted by Mayaram was allegedly the fourth, the FIR alleged.

Following the registration of the case, the agency conducted searches at the Jaipur and Delhi residence of the 1978-batch retired IAS officer.

In 2018, the agency had registered a Preliminary Enquiry on a complaint dated February 14, 2017 from the Chief Vigilance Officer of the Department of Economic Affairs in the Finance Ministry, Raj Kumar.

The agency had entered

into a five-year agreement with De La Rue International Ltd for the supply of exclusive colour shift security thread for Indian bank notes in 2004. The contract agreement was subsequently extended four times till December 31, 2015, the FIR alleged.

The then Finance Minister had on July 17, 2004 authorised the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to enter an Exclusivity Agreement with the suppliers of exclusive security features on behalf of the Union government, which was signed with De La Rue on September 4,

security feature and for which the company holds exclusive manufacturing rights.

The agency has alleged that the exclusivity agreement was signed by PK Biswas, Executive Director, RBI, without verifying the patent claim of De La Rue.

Both RBI and the Security Printing and Minting Corporation of India Ltd (SPMCIL) submitted their reports about the non-possession of the patent by the company on April 17, 2006, and September 20, 2007, respectively.



**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
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4	Cost of tender document	Rs. 0.00/-
5	Date & time of submission of tender bid and opening of tender	03.02.2023 at 15:00 Hrs
6	Website particulars where complete details of tender can be seen.	<a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a>

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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

132/23

LAC stable, but unpredictable, says Army...

**From Page 1**

The LAC is divided into three sectors including western (Ladakh), middle(Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh)and eastern(Arunachal Pradesh).

Asked about China ramping up its infrastructure, he said India is taking appropriate measures to deal with the situation and the Border Roads Organisation(BRO) has also constructed more than 2,000 km of roads in five years along the LAC. The BRO has also

built 7,450 metres of bridges in these border areas to improve logistical back up and work is on to build the 1,700 km long Frontier Highway connecting all the valleys of Arunachal Pradesh.

He said at least two tunnels are nearing completion, and they will ensure all-weather connectivity to the Tawang region.

The Army Chief pointed out that four strategic railway lines are also in the pipeline . Three of them in the north-east and one in Ladakh and source of funding is now under consideration, Pande said.

He said more than 55,000 habitats have been constructed in the last few months for troops to provide them with heated living accommodation in harsh winter months in Ladakh region. Such heated enclosures were also set up for 400 long-range guns to ensure their smooth functioning, the army chief said, adding Rs 1,300 crores were spent in the

last three years on these crucial projects. On the activities of the Pakistan-backed terrorist organisations, he said they have now shifted their focus to Jammu region and were trying to step up violence by targeted killings of members of minority communities like in Rajouri.

The terrorist 'tanzeems' (organisations) were now trying to infiltrate into Jammu region through the international border there and adjoining Punjab, he said adding there were attempts to smuggle weapons and ammunition through drones. On the recent spurt in incidents of terrorism in Jammu, Pande said since the Army foiled their attempts in the Kashmir valley, terrorist organisations are now focussing on Jammu. Keeping in view the incidents, the Army and the Central Reserve Police Force(CRPF)have increased their presence and further strengthened the counter-insurgency grid in Jammu, the Army chief said.

3 debtors kill, bury woman...

**From Page 1**

Initially, when police started looking for her, they found her mobile phone switched off. Soon they found that two of the people who had last called her on mobile were at the same location as she was, and based on the finding, apprehended one Mobin.

The police later detained another suspect Navin on Wednesday evening. He confessed to his involvement in the killing, the police said. Navin revealed that he and Mobin knew the woman for the last 4-5 years, and she was killed by a third man, Rehan, on the afternoon of January 2 in outer Delhi's Mangeram Park in Mobin's room.

At night, the three took her body to Nangloi graveyard and buried it there with the connivance of the cemetery caretaker, the DCP said.

Freezing -4 c to...

**From Page 1**

On the other hand, the IMD predicted fresh spells of dense to very dense fog and isolated cold wave conditions over northwest India from January 15. As per the IMD, the minimum temperature is likely to fall by 2 to 3 degrees in East India after three days. Similarly, there will be a gradual fall in minimum temperatures by 3-6 degrees over Gujarat by January 15 and no significant changes thereafter.

"A fresh spell of dense to very dense fog is very likely in isolated/some pockets during night & morning hours over Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh & Delhi and Uttar Pradesh from 14th to 17th; Dense Fog is very likely in isolated pockets over Jammu division, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand during January 15 to 17 and over North

Madhya Pradesh during January 16 and 17," it said.

An active western disturbance was expected to trigger a 2-4 degrees Celsius rise in minimum temperatures over the north-western plains till Friday. But it warned of a fresh burst of icy chill in the national Capital after that.

Days after recording its third-worst cold spell in 23 years, the minimum temperature in Delhi settled at 9.3 degrees Celsius on Thursday, two notches above the season's average. The maximum temperature is expected to hover around 19 degrees Celsius, according to the IMD. The maximum temperature in Delhi on Thursday settled at 21.6 degrees Celsius, two notches above the normal, the India Meteorological Department said. The relative humidity at 5.30 pm was 73 per cent.



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

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[See proviso to rule 8(6)]  
**Notice for sale of immovable assets**

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# Delhi Govt's DIP slaps recovery notice on AAP

Party asked to return ₹163.62 cr spent on Govt ads within 10 days

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government's Directorate of Information & Publicity (DIP) has issued a notice to the ruling AAP for the recovery of ₹163.62 crore spent on advertisements allegedly in violation of the Supreme Court guidelines issued in 2015. The recovery notice also includes the interest on the amount and makes it mandatory for the ruling party to pay the whole amount within 10 days.

The notice relates to money spent on advertisements mostly published outside Delhi. The development comes nearly a month after Delhi Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) VK Saxena directed Chief Secretary to recover ₹97 crore from the AAP for political advertisements it published allegedly in the guise of Government advertisements. The Supreme Court-appointed committee, comprising BB Tandon, former CEC, TK Vishwanathan, former Secretary Law (GoI) and former Secretary-General, Lok Sabha and Madhav Menon, founder NLSU, found the advertise-

ments to be violating the guidelines, and ordered for recovery to be made for them from AAP.

According to records, out of ₹106.42 crore, payment of ₹99.31 crore has already been made to the concerned agencies by DIP and ₹7.11 crore (approximately) is outstanding.

The notice from DIP reads, "In view of the above, you are requested to reimburse ₹99,31,10,053 to the State Exchequer immediately and ₹7.11 crore (approximately) for the remaining advertisements whose payment has not been released so far by the Government, should be paid directly to the agencies concerned in 10 days from the date of issue of this notice."

"If the AAP convener fails to do so, all consequential legal action including attachment of the properties of the party shall be taken in a time-bound manner, as per the earlier order of the Delhi L-G," sources said.

While ₹99.31 crore is on account of principal amount incurred on political advertisements till March 31, 2017, the remaining ₹64.31 crore is on account of penal interest on this amount. The Delhi Government's Directorate of Audit has also deputed a special audit team for conducting an audit of all such political advertisements after March 31, 2017, the sources said.

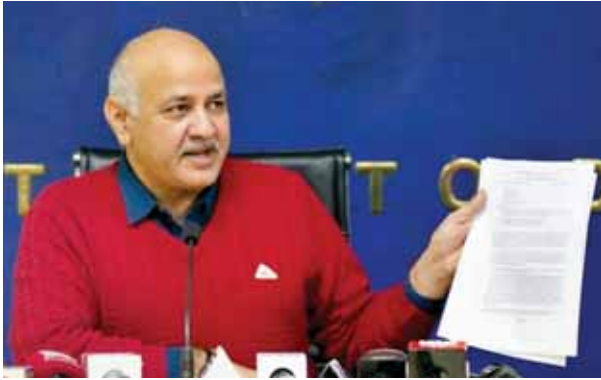
## Ads of BJP CMs appear in Delhi newspapers: Sisodia

Will party also recover money from them, asks Deputy CM

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday hit out at Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena and the BJP for using officials to target the Delhi Government following a notice to the ruling AAP for the recovery of money spent on advertisements allegedly in violation of the Supreme Court's 2015 guidelines.

The AAP's national secretary Pankaj Kumar Gupta has written to the DIP stating that the demand of Rs 163.62 crore is "arbitrary" and "perverse" as he sought copies of advertisements whose costs are to be recovered. Addressing a press conference, Sisodia said even advertisements of BJP Chief Ministers are published in Delhi's newspapers. "Will BJP also recover money from them? I want to tell BJP to stop mis-



Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia addresses a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday.

using Delhi's officials to target Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and the Ministers of Delhi Government," he said.

Sisodia said that it was alleged that since these ads were published outside the national Capital, their cost should be recovered from the party.

"Is it a crime to give ads outside one's State? Every State Government gives ads outside their State. You can see so many hoardings of Yogi Adityanath, ML Khattar, Shivraj Singh Chauhan and so many other CMs all across

Delhi. You can see full page ads of other State Governments published in the Delhi edition of newspapers almost daily. If it is a crime, then money spent by their Governments should also be recovered from BJP or Congress," said Sisodia, while addressing the media.

"Did their officers issue recovery notices to their own CMs? No, because first, this is a mischievous and frivolous notice and second, in those States, no officer has the courage to send such a notice to his own CM," he said.

"Lieutenant-Governor

Saxena who controls services, pressurises the officers to issue such notices against their own Ministers and the CM. In Delhi, officers are not working on public services like water, electricity, education etc but most of the time the officers are busy in such useless activities. Therefore, it is extremely important that control over officers lies with the elected Government," said Sisodia.

Sisodia said that the people of the national Capital gave Kejriwal mandate to get work done for the poor, and for greater progress of Delhi, but the BJP is controlling these officers in an unconstitutional manner and is misusing them for their political vendetta against the Delhi CM.

Sisodia said that the recovery notice is an example of how the BJP has been misusing its power to serve its political agenda.

Taking to Twitter, Sisodia commented, "Officers of Del Govt are being misused by LG n BJP, not to do ANY public service work, but to keep targeting elected ministers and ruling AAP. Thats why they wish to continue their control over "services"

## AAP's bank account should be seized: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEWDELHI

Delhi BJP on Thursday slammed the AAP alleging that Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia is trying to mislead the public and the saf-ron party has nothing to do with the recovery notice sent to them by the Delhi Government's Directorate of Information & Publicity (DIP). BJP MP Manoj Tiwari said that the BJP demands that AAP's bank account should be seized and the money should be recovered from the bank accounts of the party leaders who used the funds for their publicity.

"The AAP wasted the taxpayers' money. The fund which was supposed to be used for development of the poor has been used for the publicity of the party and leaders. They also tried seeking a stay on this recovery order but the High Court did not entertain them," the BJP MP alleged. Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri alleged that the recovery order is the

result of the wrongdoings of the AAP and the BJP or bureaucracy has nothing to do with it. "Manish Sisodia is mischievously linking this matter with the issue of control over officers in the national Capital, on which a hearing is going on in the Supreme Court.

The truth is that the AAP looted the people's hard-earned money after forming the Government, and the committee, directed by the SC, told the Delhi Government to recover this amount from the party," he underlined.

"The Delhi Government has also gone to the High Court and the Supreme Court against this order, but it did not get any relief there. That is why this recovery has now been ordered," Bidhuri alleged.

Delhi BJP working president Virendra Sachdeva said that the recovery notice sent by the DIP is proof that Kejriwal has used the hard earned money of the people of the national Capital by giving advertisements instead of using it to build schools, hospitals etc, in Delhi.

## LG barred teachers from travelling to Finland for training: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing tussle between the Delhi Government and the Lieutenant-Governor (L-G), Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday alleged that the L-G has barred school teachers from travelling to Finland for their training.

Sisodia, who also holds the education portfolio, claimed that the AAP Government had accepted the proposal for training and sent it to L-G VK Saxena who "rejected" it saying the training can be done in the country itself.

Taking the matter to Twitter, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal commented, "We have been sending Delhi government school teachers abroad for training, it has contributed greatly to Delhi Education Revolution; it is not right to stop them from going for training abroad."

"You stopped me from going abroad, no problem. But let the teachers go to Finland for training? Don't stop them?"

Delhi CM further tweeted. Sisodia said that the LG has prohibited Delhi government school teachers to travel to Finland for training. "The government had accepted the proposal for training of 30 teachers and sent it to the LG. He said that the training can be done in the country itself," he said.

"Delhi's education model has made India proud all over the world. Instead of helping to make that education model more glorious, the LG is focused on stopping the unique initiatives, it is very shameful," claimed Sisodia.

"After coming into power, the Delhi government sent its teachers for training to leading countries and institutions that are best in the field of education such as Singapore, Finland, Oxford Cambridge and IIMs.

This initiative was taken to provide global exposure to the teachers of the world's education models and adopt them in their schools," Deputy CM said. "Due to this international training, the confidence of teachers and school leaders has

increased, and they now look at education from a global perspective," he said.

"It is noteworthy that the file of in-principle consent and administrative approval was received by the LG office on October 25, 2022. Saxena returned the file to the Chief Secretary on November 10, 2022 seeking three clarifications/objections.

SCERT Delhi clarified those points and re-submitted the file to LG office on December 14, 2022. After this LG asks for two more clarifications and returns the file to CM on January 9, 2023," Sisodia claimed. "It is more than evident that the L-G is now trying to stop the key initiatives being undertaken by the Delhi government in the field of education," he alleged.

Responding to the allegation, Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor claimed this as move to divert the attention of the people of the national capital from 'advertisement scam' conducted by them.

## Mohalla Clinics, Food Truck Policy, Winter Action Plan stalled by bureaucrats, say Delhi Govt sources

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing tussle between the elected dispensation of Delhi and the Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) over governance, the AAP-led Delhi Government on Thursday accused bureaucrats of halting several flagship projects of the Arvind Kejriwal Government including Mohalla Clinics, the Delhi Food Truck Policy, Dilli Bazaar, constitution of a Haj Committee and the Winter Action Plan.

The AAP Government sources said that these projects have been halted as bureaucrats, who report to L-G VK Saxena, have started ignoring the Government's directives. Sources said that the pay-

ment for electricity, rent, lab tests and doctors salaries for all Mohalla Clinics in Delhi were not made for three months just before municipal elections in December based on oral and informal directions of the L-G.

"As a result, Delhi Government Finance and Health departments started raising frivolous objections to delay payments and patients visiting Mohalla Clinics suffered.

When the Finance Minister summoned the Finance Secretary to resolve the issue, the Finance Secretary neither attended any of the meetings called by the Finance Minister nor responded to his telephone calls or messages," they said. "In a span of just five months, 20 meetings were called by the Minister (Environment and Forests) to discuss crucial subjects such as the Winter Pollution Action Plan for Delhi.

Of these, only one meeting was attended by the head of Environment and Forests Department, and the rest were skipped without explanation," they said. "There are several examples of flagship initiatives

of the AAP Government being stopped by pressurising officers, such as to set up a research centre on diabetes of international standards at GTB Hospital, free yoga classes for 17,000 people daily, an ongoing program that has suddenly and abruptly been refused extension after November 2022," they said.

"The Government provides financial assistance to SC students preparing for competitive exams. Their payments are not being released by officers, stalling the entire initiative. Payments have also been stopped to contractors of the water and sewer department, resulting in many critical projects coming to a standstill," sources claimed.

"When the file was sent to the L-G with names of the newly-constituted Haj Committee, he changed the names suggested by the CM and sent the file directly to the officers and got the notification issued," they said. "The online e-commerce portal was conceptualized by the DDC during the Corona pandemic and will be a boon to lakhs of small

traders and shopkeepers of Delhi by enabling them to go online for free. The initiative was announced as part of the Rozgar Budget in March 2022.

The detailed tender/RFP for this was prepared by the DDC and submitted to the Industries Department in July 2022.

However, even after five months, these tender documents haven't been floated by officers of the Industry Department," sources said.

"Delhi's Electronic City is to be set up in 82 acres of land in Baprola and is estimated to generate 40,000 jobs. After multiple stakeholder consultations and research, DDC had drafted and submitted a detailed blueprint for the Delhi Electronics Policy to the Industries Department through Deputy Chief Minister on October 12, 2022.

However, even after three months, officers of Industry Department are yet to even review the detailed policy prepared by DDC or submit the final policy for the approval of the concerned Minister and the Cabinet," they said.

"The Delhi Food Truck Policy was announced in the month of March 2022. A draft policy was to be submitted for the approval of the Minister and the Cabinet in July 2022. But even after seven months, no proposal has been moved by the Tourism Department," sources added.

## AAP proposes dates for holding elections for Mayor's post

**New Delhi:** The AAP Government has proposed four dates for holding the elections of MCD Mayor and sent the proposal to Lt Governor V K Saxena, Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia said on Thursday.

In a tweet, Sisodia said the Municipal Corporation of Delhi is functioning without a mayor for past eight months and any further delay was not good. "A proposal has been sent to the LG for holding mayoral election in Delhi on January 18, 20, 21 or 24. SR

## DU principals meet L-G, seek release of delayed salaries



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi University Principals' Association on Thursday accused the Arvind Kejriwal dispensation of "deliberately delaying" the release of sanctioned grants to government-funded colleges. A delegation of Delhi University

Principals' Association (DUPA), met Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena and brought to his notice the serious issues and constraints being faced by 12 colleges funded by the Delhi Government. They raised issues affecting government-funded colleges, including cur-

tailment of funds, non- or delayed payment of salaries to staff members and non-sanctioning of teaching and non-teaching posts.

It also sought Saxena's intervention so that the colleges could focus on providing quality education.

The delegation also raised the issue of pending medical reimbursements and other dues of employees and said salaries were being delayed by one to five months. There was no immediate reaction available from the government.

The delegation included Delhi University Principals' Association President and Khalsa College Principal Jasvinder Singh, association Secretary and Aryabhata College Principal Manoj Sinha and the principals of three other colleges. There are 12

Delhi University colleges fully funded by the Kejriwal government.

"The serious issues that are affecting the quality of education in these colleges include deliberate curtailment of funds, non/delayed payment of salaries to staff, non-sanctioning of teaching and non-teaching posts by the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP government, and day to day interference and harassment by incapable and inexperienced persons appointed to the governing bodies of these colleges by the AAP government," the sources said, citing the association.

The delegation informed Saxena that no grants had been allotted to many colleges for capital assets and sports promotion in for the past four years.

The sources added that the

Public Works department had not started repair and maintenance work in some colleges while it had stopped work at others due to non-sanction of funds. "As a result, the college buildings and infrastructure are in a depleted condition," the sources added.

"No new posts of teaching and non-teaching staff are being sanctioned despite the increase in student strength by 25 per cent due to implementation of reservations for the economically weaker sections. "Some colleges are under-utilising physical capacity but due to non-sanction of teaching and non-teaching staff, they colleges are not able to start new courses and increase enrolment," the sources said.

In its representation, the association said, "Numerous new and relevant courses were

started in these colleges to cater to the needs of the emerging economy and provide employment to the youth and, as a consequence, many teaching and non-teaching positions were filled, the approval of which is pending with the government."

The association requested Saxena to intervene and take steps to ensure ex post facto approval of all the positions and allow further recruitment of teaching and non-teaching staff members as was the case in other Delhi University colleges.

The Lt Governor's Secretariat has marked the association's representation, along with another submitted by the Delhi University Karmachari Parishad, to Kejriwal for remedial action on priority.

## Cong to kick-start 'Haath Se Haath Jodo' campaign in city from January 26

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress will launch the 'Haath Se Haath Jodo' campaign, an extension of Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Yatra, to reach out to people at block and district levels in the national Capital.

Addressing the media, former Congress MLA Anil Bhardwaj said that 'Haath Se Haath Jodo Abhiyan' is the next step after the Bharat Jodo Yatra and the purpose of these campaigns is to end hatred among people across the country. "We got a lot of support from people of Delhi during Bharat Jodo Yatra and hope to receive the same response for this

campaign as well," he stated. The Congress will start 'Haath Se Haath Jodo' campaign from January 26 to March 26 in order to spread the message of the ongoing Bharat Jodo Yatra across the country.

Former Bihar Congress chief Madan Mohan Jha, who will head the 'Haath Se Haath Jodo' campaign in Delhi, said that the party will reach out to people at block and district levels first in the national capital.

"We will meet various leaders of Congress in Delhi. We will also meet candidates who lost in concluded MCD elections. The campaign will be held at three levels - block, district and state," Jha said.

## Nupur Sharma gets gun licence

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has granted a gun licence to former BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma, who was suspended last year from the party for her alleged derogatory remark against Prophet Mohammad.

According to police, Sharma had applied for the license which has been granted after assessing threats and following due procedure. She has been allowed to carry a gun for her safety, police said. Sharma's remark on the Prophet during a TV debate



had triggered protests across the country and drew sharp reactions from various quarters. Several FIRs were lodged across the country against Sharma in connection with

her remark. The BJP had suspended her and expelled its Delhi unit media head Naveen Kumar Jindal as the row over their alleged derogatory remarks against the Prophet escalated amid protests from some Muslim countries.

In June last year, the Delhi Police had provided security to Sharma and her family after an FIR was registered on a complaint which alleged that she was getting death threats over her controversial remarks. She had requested the police to provide security, citing harassment and threats.

## Ansal's plea to stay release of series on Uphaar rejected

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Thursday declined a plea by Sushil Ansal, convicted in the 1997 Uphaar cinema fire case, to stay the release of web series 'Trial by Fire' said to be based on the incident and scheduled for release on Netflix on January 13.

Justice Yashwant Varma denied the interim relief to Ansal and said a detailed order will be uploaded on the court's website later. A massive fire had broken out at the Uphaar cinema during the screening of the Hindi film 'Border' on June 13,



1997, claiming 59 lives. Ansal, who alleged defamation, had urged the court to grant an injunction against the release of the web series, saying even its teaser got 1.5 million views in four days which shows the immediate impact it has.

The lawsuit by the 83-year-old Ansal also sought to

restrain the circulation and publication of a book titled 'Trial by Fire- The tragic tale of the Uphaar Tragedy' which was launched in 2016.

Ansal claimed the web series directly attacks his personality. Ansal's plea was vehemently opposed by the counsel for the producers of the web

series, Netflix and authors of the book -- Neelam and Shekhar Krishnamoorthy -- who lost their two children in the fire tragedy. In his plea, Ansal said he has been 'punished both legally and socially' and the release of the series, based on the book written by a couple who lost their two children to the fire, will cause irreparable harm to his reputation and breach his right to privacy.

"The events are causing and will cause loss of reputation of the plaintiff, public trial, humiliation, stigmatisation and irreparable injury along with

causing grave prejudice to the revision petitions pending before this court arising out of the (evidence) tampering case," the suit said. In 2017, the Supreme Court had finally decided the Uphaar cinema blaze case and directed the now 83-year-old Sushil Ansal and his brother Gopal Ansal (74) to pay a fine of Rs 30 crore each.

The top court had then released Sushil Ansal taking into account the period he had already spent in jail. The Ansal brothers and two others were later held guilty of tampering with the evidence related to the trial.



# ‘No BJP-JD(S) tie-up in K’taka’

Saffron party plans to bag 150 of 224 seats in Karnataka Assembly

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seeking to retain power in its southern stronghold, the BJP has set a target of winning 150 seats of the 224 seats in Karnataka but it has decided not to enter into an alliance with the Janata Dal (Secular), contrary to the word doing the rounds.

BJP insiders said Home Minister Amit Shah has categorically made it clear that there is no question of an alliance with the JD (S) and pointed to his assertion during his recent Karnataka visit that this time round there will be a straight contest between two parties in the State.

"On one hand, there is the BJP, a party of patriots and on the other, there is the Congress which supports the "Tukde-Tukde Gang," he said.

The BJP is eyeing a quantum jump in its tally pinning its hopes on winning over a chunk of Vokkaliga votes in the Old Mysore region to storm back to power.

The southern Karnataka region has long been a sore point for the BJP, especially in Assembly polls, where the JD (S) has traditionally done well due to the influence of its leader and former Prime Minister Deve Gowda, especially among the dominant Vokkaliga community, while the Congress has been the



other main force. This even as the Congress is drawing confidence from the response to its leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra in the State

However, the BJP believes that its aggressive moves to expand in the region by winning over several influential local leaders after it came to power by toppling the Congress-JD(S) government in 2019 besides the regional rival's "waning" impact and its outreach led by Home Minister Amit Shah and president J P Nadda, who have hopped across mutts with significant following, will pay it dividends this time.

"We will make a quantum jump in our tally in the region and retain power in the state with a big majority," said BJP general secretary Arun Singh, who is also in charge of the party's affairs in Karnataka. Singh dismissed the assump-

tion about Congress gaining from the Yatra saying that the BJP had done well in the local polls in Chamaranjanagar, which falls in Old Mysore, and Bijapur.

On its tallest leader from Karnataka and former chief minister B S Yediyurappa, who made way for Basavaraj Bommai for the top post in July 2021, Singh asserted that he had set the target of winning 150 seats in the 224-member assembly and has been working to achieve it.

Rivals may float claims against our party but the BJP is a "united house" while the chief minister enjoys a clean image, he claimed, adding that it is the Congress which is a "divided house" with former chief minister Siddaramaiah and state party chief D K Shivakumar pulling in different directions. Old Mysore remains central to the BJP's ambition to

retain power in the state which it had swept in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls by winning 25 of 28 seats. BJP sources noted that the state government has seven ministers from the Vokkaliga community while the central government has also one in Shobha Karandlaje. One of its national general secretaries, C T Ravi, is also from the caste which is the second largest in the state after Lingayat.

Old Mysore has nearly 64 assembly seats outside Bengaluru, and the BJP's tally was in low single digit last time. The Congress and the JD(S) both won handsomely despite contesting separately.

## BJP to hold 11,000 rallies in Telangana

Telangana is yet another southern State , besides Karnataka, where the BJP has decided to go all out. The party will unleash a rally blitzkrieg in the State with more than 11,000 rallies in February itself at the 9,000 Shakti Kendras and 119 Assembly constituencies topping it with public rallies by its top State and Central leaders. The BJP is already in election mode in the State. PNS

# Centre, UP drug dept hold fresh inspection at Marion Biotech’s office

## UP suspends licence of pharma firm after WHO bans its cough syrup for kids

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A day after the World Health Organization (WHO) warned against the use of two Indian cough syrups for children that have been linked to deaths in Uzbekistan, Uttar Pradesh drug department suspended production licence of the manufacturer of the drug, Marion Biotech, even as the test results of its controversial cough syrup are awaited.

A team of central agencies and the Uttar Pradesh drug department on Thursday carried out a fresh inspection at Marion Biotech's office here, a day after the World Health Organisation (WHO) issued a medical product alert on Ambranol and Dok-1 Max syrups, both manufactured by the firm.

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), India's central regulatory body for pharmaceuticals and medical devices, had in December initiated a probe

in connection with the death of 18 children in Uzbekistan allegedly linked to Marion Biotech's cough syrup.

The Health Ministry of Uzbekistan claimed these children had consumed the cough syrup. The central and state teams had earlier carried out an inspection at the firm's office on December 29 and taken six samples of Dok-1 Max for testing, while on Thursday they took four samples of Ambranol, the official told a news agency. During the December 29 inspection, the firm representatives could not produce documents related to the production of 'Dok-1 max' cough syrup, prompting the government to order halting of its production immediately, the official added.

"The production licence of the firm remains suspended, as was ordered on December 29. Now the suspension order has been issued in writing to the firm on January 10 and has been acknowledged by the firm," he said.

"On Thursday a fresh inspection was done during which four samples of Ambranol cough syrup were taken for testing. Documents related to Ambranol production were also examined," he said. On the status of the test results, the officer said the samples were taken by the central agencies and their

results are yet to arrive.

Marion Biotech did not sell 'Dok-1 Max' and Ambranol in India and its only export has been to Uzbekistan, according to records and as per estimates, the company exported around 1 lakh Dok-1 Max syrups in 45 days. On Wednesday, the WHO also issued a 'medical product alert', referring to two substandard (contaminated) products, identified in Uzbekistan and reported to it on December 22, 2022. According to WHO, substandard medical products are those that fail to meet quality standards or specifications and are therefore 'out of specification.' "The two products are

AMBRONOL syrup and DOK-1 Max syrup. The stated manufacturer of both products is MARION BIOTECH PVT. LTD, (Uttar Pradesh, India). To date, the stated manufacturer has not provided guarantees to WHO on the safety and quality of these products," the WHO stated.

"Laboratory analysis of samples of both products, undertaken by national quality control laboratories of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Uzbekistan found both products contained unacceptable amounts of diethylene glycol and/or ethylene glycol as contaminants," it said.



# Cong terms Dhankhar’s remark as attack on judiciary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Thursday described Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar's remarks questioning the landmark 1973 Kesavananda Bharati case verdict as an "extraordinary attack on the judiciary".

The party said Dhankhar is "wrong" in stating that Parliament is supreme and his views should warn every Constitution-loving citizen to be alert to the dangers ahead. The Congress said that this "no-holds-barred assault" on one constitutional institution by another was also quite unprecedented.

A number of legal experts too denounced Dhankhar's remarks questioning the Kesavananda Bharati verdict. Dhankhar, who is also the ex-officio chairman of Rajya Sabha, had on Wednesday criticised the scrapping of the NJAC Act in 2015 and also questioned the Kesavananda Bharati case verdict, saying it set a wrong precedent and that he disagrees with the Supreme Court ruling that Parliament can amend the Constitution but not its basic structure.

Dhankhar went on to state



that "one-upmanship and public posturing" from judicial platforms is not good and these institutions must know how to conduct themselves. Dhankhar's virtual censure of the judiciary had come following the Supreme court's remarks on the issue of the collegium system.

Reacting to his remarks, former Union Minister P Chidambaram said the "basic structure" doctrine was evolved in order to prevent a majoritarian-driven assault on the foundational principles of the Constitution. "The Hon'ble Chairman of the Rajya Sabha is wrong when he says that Parliament is supreme. It is the Constitution that is supreme. Suppose Parliament, by a

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot and Rajya Sabha Dy. Chairman HN Singh at the 83rd All India Presiding Officers' Conference in Jaipur, PTI Photo

majority, voted to convert the parliamentary system into a Presidential system. Or repeal the State List in Schedule VII and take away the exclusive legislative powers of the States. Would such amendments be valid?" Chidambaram said in a series of tweets. Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh mentioned having different views is one thing, but the Vice President has taken the confrontation with the Supreme Court to an altogether different level. Supreme Court Bar

Association president and senior advocate Vikas Singh said there is no question of posturing as the Supreme Court decides a case on the basis of pleadings. "I don't really understand what he is saying.

Is he saying that justice delivery should stop, or the judges should not pass judgements contrary to what the government wants it to do? As far as the judiciary is concerned there is no question of posturing as they decide a case on the

basis of pleadings and judicial review is an integral part of our system," he said. Noted lawyer Prashant Bhushan said in a constitutional republic, the Parliament is not supreme and rather it is the Constitution which is.

He also advised the Rajya Sabha chairman to study the Constitution. "The present government is unhappy with the basic structure doctrine because it wants no impediment to the structural changes they want to make in our

democracy and polity. Dhankhar should go back to study the Constitution," Bhushan said.

Senior lawyer and constitutional law expert Rakesh Dwivedi said judges in India are used to such remarks and right from the time of late Indira Gandhi there has been attack on the judiciary. Dwivedi said the vice president may have his own views but they are not binding on the judiciary in any manner.

## Organised disruptions in House not good for Indian democracy: Speaker

**Jaipur:** Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday said that pre-planned organized disruptions in the House are not good for democracy.

He urged that there should be maximum dialogue in the Houses, proper use of technology and strong connection between the people and the Legislature. He was addressing the valedictory function of the 83rd All India Presiding Officers' Conference. Birla stressed on maintaining digni-

ty and decorum in the House and for increasing the number of sittings. He suggested to the Presiding Officers to encourage those public representatives who participate in good debates and discussions and prepare an action plan to act against those members who constantly obstruct the proceedings of the House, so that the dignity of the House is not compromised. He observed that India's democracy inspires all countries, so Presiding

Officers and public representatives should contribute in making legislative bodies as ideal institutions.

Debates and discussions enrich legislations, said the Lok Sabha Speaker. Speaking on this occasion, Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Harivansh said that Indian Parliament has always been on the forefront of making endeavours to effect institutional reforms for enhancing legislative productivity. PNS

# Troops relocated from Joshimath: Army Chief Centre urged to hasten Sethusamudram project

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of events in Joshimath, Uttarakhand, recently with many buildings developing cracks, the Army has relocated some of its troops to the higher reaches of the region for the time being, Army Chief General Manoj Pande said here on Thursday.

He, however, assured operational readiness of the army is not adversely impacted by the developments. This observation came in the backdrop of the strategically important Joshimath-Mana post road developing cracks, thereby hampering movement of the



A man walks near damaged buildings, in Joshimath, on Thursday

troops. The road leads right up to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) facing China. Pande

said the road had some minor cracks and the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has

repaired them ensuring smooth logistical backup and overall it has not impacted accessibility to forward areas.

Regarding relocating the troops, the Army chief said at least 20-25 buildings of the army establishment developed minor cracks and the troops living in them were temporarily shifted to higher grounds. If need be, they may later be shifted to Auli further up, Pande said.

As far as assisting the local authorities, he said army has a hospital, helipad and other facilities and they have been offered to the administration including some shelters for relocating local people there.

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu Assembly on Thursday unanimously adopted a resolution urging the Centre to implement the Sethusamudram ship canal project without any further delay.

The resolution said that the "Sethusamudram project is essential to strengthen the economic development of Tamil Nadu and India." The main opposition AIADMK said that the views of fishermen should be ascertained, the past dredging work analysed and if it is going to hugely benefit the people, then it would support. BJP's lone MLA



Nainar Nagendran said his party would welcome it if it did not cause any damage to the Ram Sethu.

Piloting the resolution, Chief Minister M K Stalin traced the timeline of the dream maritime project since the days of former Chief Minister C N Annadurai and the nation's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Stalin said late AIADMK supremo, J Jayalalithaa who had supported the project from the start, suddenly changed her stand and knocked the doors of court against it.

Had there been no political stumbling blocks, there would have been a lot of benefits after the project's commissioning about 10 years ago.

A Sethusamudram project related matter is in Supreme Court and the BJP-led Centre has said that it would implement the project in an alternative alignment.

"A Union Minister (Jitendra Singh) has stated in Parliament that it was difficult to pinpoint the structure in Rameshwaram sea area. I urge the House to adopt the resolution, which is based on the thought that the Sethusamudram project should be implemented through struggle and persuasion (by persuading the Centre), when the BJP government has taken such a stand," Stalin maintained.

# SpiceJet locks flyers between boarding gate, flight

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In another incident of mismanagement or mishandling of air passengers at the airport, SpiceJet airline on Tuesday allegedly locked passengers between the boarding gate and an aircraft which was scheduled to take off for Bengaluru at Delhi airport.

Meanwhile, a SpiceJet spokesperson issued a clarification stating that the flight was delayed due to weather disruption in the network and passengers were requested to wait at the aerobridge as the security check was already done. "The incoming crew was



not legal to operate the subsequent flight to Bengaluru and crew was arranged from another incoming flight. On average, the turnaround time for a Boeing aircraft is 40-45 minutes at Delhi airport, while on this particular flight the turnaround time was around 20

minutes more than the average turnaround time. As passengers had completed the security check, they were requested to wait at the aerobridge," the SpiceJet spokesperson said.

A video on social media shows that when passengers of Delhi-Bengaluru flight SG 8133

asked to open the boarding gate so that they could rest back in the waiting area, the authorities denied it and went missing. Stuck between two closed doors, many passengers including senior citizens, got visibly upset. A video posted by one of the travelers shows people banging on the transparent doors asking the airline staff for water.

They were denied to move back to the waiting area and were confined there for more than an hour. The passenger claims that airline told them to ask for water once inside plane but failed to tell them when the flight would depart.

# 6 YouTube Channels barred for fake news spread

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has cracked down on six YouTube channels that were found to be spreading fake news to nearly 20 lakh subscribers, an official statement said on Thursday.

The Fact Check Unit of the Press Information Bureau (PIB) of the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting said these six channels were working in a coordinated manner and spreading false information and their videos had over 51 crore views. The YouTube channels were found to be spreading fake news about the elections, proceedings in the



Supreme Court and Parliament, and the functioning of the government, the statement said. The channels are - Nation TV with over 5.57 lakh subscribers, Samvaad TV with 10.9 lakh subscribers, Sarokar Bharat (21,100),

Nation24 (25,400), Swarnim Bharat (6,070) and Samvaad Samachar (3.48 lakh), the statement said. A senior official said that the channels Samvaad Samachar, Samvaad TV and Nation TV changed their names to Inside India, Inside Bharat and Nation Weekly respectively, after being "busted" by the Fact Check Unit of PIB.

The videos on the channels in question included false claims regarding ban on electronic voting machines, and false statements attributed to senior constitutional functionaries including the President and the Chief Justice

of India. "The channels are part of a fake news economy that thrives on monetization of fake news," the statement said. It said that the channels use fake, clickbait and sensational thumbnails and images of television news anchors of TV channels to mislead the viewers to believe that the news was authentic and drive traffic to their channels to monetize the videos published by them.

This is the second such action by the Fact Check Unit of the PIB.

Last month, the unit had exposed three channels peddling fake news and written to YouTube to take them down.



# Ramcharitmanas row erupts; BJP, Cong seek Nitish's apology, Edu Min's ouster

PTI ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar Thursday said he will speak to his Cabinet colleague Chandrasekhar, a senior RJD leader, whose recent remarks about Tulsidas's epic poem 'Ramcharitmanas' has raised a controversy.

The JD(U) supremo was replying to queries from journalists in Darbhanga district which he visited as part of his state-wide mass outreach programme 'Samadhan Yatra'.

"I don't know about the matter. But I will enquire," was Kumar's curt reply.

Chandrasekhar, who holds the education portfolio, had commented on 'Ramcharitmanas', the popular version of the Ramayana penned by medieval saint Goswami Tulsidas, at the convocation ceremony of Nalanda

Open University on Wednesday.

Later, when accosted by reporters, he had stuck to his point of view and said "Manu Smriti, Ramcharitmanas and Bunch of Thoughts (written by RSS ideologue M S Golwalkar) have promoted hatred in the society. A reason why these (works) face opposition from Dalits and OBCs".

The Minister said he will seek "expunction from the Ramcharitmanas all verses that condone social discrimination".

The BJP and the Congress have expressed anger over the statement and sought the Minister's ouster and an apology from Nitish. The BJP's state unit spokesman and national general secretary Nikhil Anand came out with a statement accusing the RJD leader of having hurt Hindu sentiments with 'appeasement of Muslims

in mind".

BJP MLA Haribhushan Thakur Bachaul, who is fast emerging as Bihar's Hindutva poster boy, asked the RJD leader to "Show he is man enough by being as outspoken about Islam".

The RJD leader also received a thumbs down from Chirag Paswan, who seeks to carry forward his late father Ram Vilas Paswan's political legacy while aligning with the BJP. Terming the statement by Chandrasekhar as "incendiary" (bhadkaau), Paswan blamed it on the "divisive tactics" of Nitish Kumar, his bete noire.

The BJP slammed Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar over the controversial remarks alleging that his government has been hurting Hindu sentiments and wondering if the minister will dare to make



similar comments on holy books of other religions.

BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad lashed said, "Why is Nitish Kumar silent? He should answer. The country will not tolerate if Lord Ram is disrespected. He should take his (minister) resignation and apologise for hurting the country's sentiments."

The Congress, which is an

# World looking up to India and its youth, says Modi

PTI ■ HUBBALLI

Asserting that "Yuva Shakti" is the driving force of India's journey, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the next 25 years are important for building the nation.

Repeatedly invoking Swami Vivekananda, he said there is a great optimism in the world towards India and its youth.

"Yuva shakti is the driving force of India's journey, the next 25 years are important for building the nation. Yuva Shakti's dreams decide India's direction. Yuva Shakti's aspirations decide India's destination. Yuva Shakti's passion decides India's path," he said.

He further said that to harness the Yuva Shakti we need to be young with our thoughts and efforts.

"To be young is to be dynamic in our efforts, to be



panoramic in perspective, to be pragmatic. If the world looks to us for solutions it is because of the dedication of our Amrit generation (the youth)," he added.

The Prime Minister earlier inaugurated the National Youth Festival here on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.

The 26th edition of the festival, which will be held till January 16 at Hubballi-Dharwad, is being organised by the Ministry of Youth

Affairs and Sports in collaboration with the Government of Karnataka.

Pointing out that India is the fifth largest economy in the world and the goal is to take it to the top three, Modi said this economic growth of the country will bring in a lot of opportunities for our youth.

"This is special time in history, you are a special generation, you have a special mission, this is the mission of making an impact for India on the global scene," he said.

# Bedridden woman booked under Gangsters' Act by Meerut Police

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a bizarre case, the Meerut Police have booked a woman, bedridden since the past 20 years, under the Gangsters' Act and named her entire family in a case pertaining to a financial transaction that never happened.

The woman, Alisha Begum (53) has been bedridden since the past 20 years due to multiple health disorders, including vision loss. She weighs around 130 kg and cannot walk on her own. Police records claim that she is a gangster.

According to reports, Alisha's husband Mohd Haneef (53) had business relations with a local businessman Naseem Qureshi. In November 2021, Qureshi filed an FIR against Haneef for not returning Rs 3.5 crore that the former claims to have given to the latter for



"constructing a meat plant in Madhya Pradesh".

"In 2021, investigation revealed that there were many lapses in handling of the case. There was no need for stringent Indian Penal Code sections, and it was merely a case of IPC 406 (breach of trust). Besides, notary agreement deed that complainant (Qureshi) had claimed to have entered into with the accused, also had flaws. The photos of the partners were picked from social media and were not as per the set standards," said Superintendent of Police Jitender Srivastava.

# Bhopal gas tragedy: Depreciation of rupee can't be ground for top-up of settlement amount, UCC successor firms to SC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Successor firms of the Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) told the Supreme Court on Thursday that the depreciation of the rupee since 1989, when a settlement was arrived at between the company and the Centre, cannot be a ground to now seek a "top-up" of compensation for the victims of the Bhopal gas tragedy.

A five-judge bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul reserved its verdict on a curative petition of the Centre seeking an additional Rs 7,844 crore from the successor firms of UCC for extending greater compensation to the victims of the 1984 tragedy which had claimed more than 3000 lives and caused damage to the environment.

Senior advocate Harish Salve, appearing for the respon-



dents, told the bench, also comprising Justices Sanjiv Khanna, Abhay S Oka, Vikram Nath and JK Maheshwari, the Government of India never suggested at the time of the settlement that it was inadequate.

"There are series and series of affidavits starting from 1995 and ending as late as 2011, where the Union of India has opposed every single attempt to suggest that the settlement (of 1989) is inadequate. Affidavits upon affidavits were filed," Salve said.

# I-T sleuths find ₹15 cr on TMC MLA's premises, Zakir cries foul

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

After former Bengal minister Partha Chatterjee it is the turn of another ex minister and Trinamool Congress MLA Zakir Hussein.

The Income Tax authorities have recovered Rs 15 crore from the factory and rice mills of Hussein a businessman-cum-TMC MLA from Jangpur in Murshidabad district. Hussein however cried "conspiracy" saying he was being framed and that the cash was kept to pay the wages of agricultural labourers and his factory workers.

The Income Tax Department sources said that of the Rs 15 crore, Rs 9 crore was recovered from his residence alone, while the remaining Rs 6 crore was recovered from a Bidi factory and rice and



oil mills owned by Hussain.

Hussein is a two-time Trinamool Congress MLA and a former State minister.

A total of 28 locations were raided on Wednesday and Thursday. The cash was stuffed inside gunny bags, sources said.

Raids were also being conducted at the house, offices and a hotel belonging to Amiruddin Bobby a Kolkata Municipal Corporation councillor. Bobby is a TMC corporator and Mayor-in-Council of KMC. Though I-T sources

would not reveal much there were inside reports that raid was being conducted in premises belonging to the TMC councillor for the past more than 50 hours said adding a large number of documents have thus far been recovered.

Already in the line of fire on account of its senior leaders getting implicated in a plethora of scams --- from cow smuggling to recruitment scandal -- that saw some of its ministers and MLAs going to jail, the TMC leaders stuck to their usual defence complaining political witch-hunting by the BJP.

Though the TMC leadership would not react immediately some of their senior leaders said the party was being targeted by the BJP government ahead of the panchayat elections. "Let the law take its

own course but one thing is for sure that the TMC is targeted by the BJP knowing full well that they will miserably fail in the rural polls ... this is a clear case of political vendetta," a senior TMC leader said.

Earlier the Enforcement Directorate recovered Rs 51 crore and jewelry and other valuables worth many more crores from the residence of Arpita Mukherjee a close aide of Partha Chatterjee a former Bengal minister and number two in Mamata Banerjee Cabinet.

Even as the news hit national headlines the minister was later arrested. Similarly another senior TMC leader and its national executive member Anubrata Mondal too were arrested by the CBI on charges of cow smuggling. Both are presently in jail.

# Infra available for all industries in MP: CM

PNS ■ INDORE

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Madhya Pradesh has developed policies according to the needs of industries by making basic arrangements in the state for industries of all sectors. The state government is also ready to make arrangements in policies accordingly if there is possibility of more investment and more employment in the state. The team Madhya Pradesh is committed to implement the spirit of Ease of Doing Business.

Chouhan was participating in the first session of one-to-one discussion with industrialists and investors at the Brilliant Convention Center in Indore on the second day of the Global Investors Summit. Consulate Generals of various countries, representatives of

industry and trade organisations and persons from industrial groups met Chief Minister Chouhan. Representatives of Norway, Kingdom of Netherlands, Israel, United Arab Emirates, Canada, Thailand, Mauritius, France, Jamaica, Ghana and Singapore, delegations from Indian Chamber of Commerce from Slovakia, Indian Export Organization met Chouhan.

In a one-to-one discussion with Chouhan, the Executive Chairman of Epic Group, a leading group in the garment sector established in Hong Kong, Executive Chairman Ranjan Mehta and Vice President Smt. Anu Arora, discussed the action plan for setting-up a vertical fabric and garment unit with an investment of Rs 400 crores on 35 acre land near Bhopal. The unit will gen-

erate employment opportunities for about 10,000 persons.

Epic Group supplies garments to multinational companies like Levis, Amazon, Walmart, Nautica etc. The group currently has units operating in Bangladesh, Jordan, Vietnam and Ethiopia. The group is keen to shift some of its activities from Bangladesh to Madhya Pradesh. The group discussed the opening of training centers in the state. 80 per cent export will be done from the unit of the group to be established in the state. Welcoming the proposal, Chouhan said that all facilities and procedures will be completed expeditiously.

A delegation led by Hans Jacob Frydenlund from Norway discussed about long term investment in solar and wind energy green energy and renew-

able energy in Chhindwara district. The delegation expressed its desire to work together with both the countries in the field of climate change and environment.

Israel's Consul General Kobbi Shoshani and Trade Commissioner Istav Elmalak said that Israeli companies have invested in India in energy, telecommunications, real estate and water technology. Israeli companies are interested in conducting various activities in the field of agriculture in Madhya Pradesh and investing in them. Also they are willing to invest in skill development, smart city development and infrastructure development.

Representative of Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industries led by Manish Tripathi met Chief Minister Chouhan.



# Investment to give decisive impetus to MP growth: CM

PNS ■ INDORE

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has said that Madhya Pradesh's development will be given a decisive impetus through investment.

"We will not let even a sin-

gle Penny go to waste of industrialists investing in Madhya Pradesh. The strategy of full co-operation to the industries will be adopted through 7 sources of dialogue, co-operation, facility, acceptance, bridge, simplicity and co-ordination," said the Chief Minister.

# DCGI for market authorisation of SII's Covovax as booster

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

An expert panel of the central drug regulatory authority has recommended market authorisation for Serum Institute of India's Covid vaccine Covovax as a heterologous booster dose for adults who have been administered two doses of Covishield or Covaxin, it is learnt.

According to sources, Prakash Kumar Singh, director (government and regulatory affairs) at Serum Institute of India (SII) had recently written a letter to Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) for approval of Covovax heterologous booster dose for those aged 18 years and above in view of escalating COVID-19 pandemic situation in some countries.

"The subject expert committee (SEC) of the CDSCO on Wednesday deliberated on the issue and recommended for market authorisation of Covid jab Covovax as a heterologous



booster dose for adults who have been administered two doses of Covishield or Covaxin," an official source said.

The DCGI had approved Covovax for restricted use in emergency situations in adults on December 28, 2021, in the 12-17 age group on March 9, 2022 and also in children aged 7-11 years on June 28, 2022 subject to certain conditions. Covovax is manufactured through technology transfer from Novavax. It has been approved by the European Medicines Agency for conditional marketing authorization.

# CBI books Mumbai-based firm, 4 directors for duping consortium of banks of ₹4,957 Cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has registered an FIR against Mumbai-based Pratibha Industries Ltd and its four directors/guarantors for allegedly duping a consortium of 17 banks led by Bank of Baroda to the tune of Rs 4,957 crore.

Besides Pratibha Industries Limited, Mumbai, the CBI has named Directors and Guarantors Ajit Bhagwan Kulkarni, Ravi Kulkarni, Sunanda Datta Kulkarni and Sharad Prabhakar Deshpande as also unknown public servants and unknown private persons, as accused in the case.

The company was into development of infrastructure projects, which included designing, engineering and execution/construction of complex, integrated water transmission, distribution projects, water treatment plants, mass housing projects, precast design and construction, road construction and urban infrastructure, the CBI said in a



statement.

It was alleged that the accused had diverted huge amounts of money from the borrower company to its related parties and subsidiaries and subsequently, these advances were written-off by the company. It was also alleged that the company had entered into fictitious sales and purchase transactions in order to inflate its turnover.

Further, to avail credit facilities from the lender banks, the work-in-progress was allegedly inflated and a huge amount of Vender Liability was directly adjusted against Customer Account without having any supporting document for the same.

# FSSAI specifies standards for Basmati rice



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has specified the identity standards for basmati rice to be enforced from August 1. Due to its unique quality attributes, basmati is a widely consumed variety of rice both domestically and globally and India accounts for two thirds of its global supply.

It fetches a price higher than the non-basmati varieties and hence is prone to various types of adulteration for economic gains which may include, among others, undeclared blending of other non-basmati varieties of rice.

The standards are aimed at establishing fair practices in the trade of basmati rice and protecting consumer interest, both domestically and globally.

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

**PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET**  
[See proviso to rule 8(6)]  
**Notice for sale of immovable assets**  
This E-auction Sale notice for sale of Immovable assets is being issued by ICICI Bank Ltd. (on underlying pool assigned to ICICI Bank by Dewan Housing Finance Ltd.) in relation to the enforcement of security in respect of a housing loan facility granted pursuant to a loan agreement entered into between DHFL and the following borrower(s) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.  
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the **Physical possession** of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" as per the brief particulars given hereunder:  

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Mrs. Manorama Devi (Borrower), Mr. Rakesh Kumar (Co-Borrower) QZDWA00005021560	DDA JANTA FLAT NO-198, 3rd FLOOR, POCKET-7, PHASE-1 NASIR PUR, DWARKA DELHI Area: 236.81 Sq.Ft.	Rs. 15,41,672/- as on January 10, 2023	Rs. 9,50,000/- as on January 10, 2023	January 20, 2023, From 11:00 AM to 01:00 PM Onwards	February 04, 2023 From 11:00 AM Onwards

  
The online auction will take place on the website of e-auction agency **M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited (URL Link-https://disposalhub.com)**. The Mortgagors/ noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till **February 03, 2023 before 5:00 PM** failing which, this secured asset will be sold as per schedule.  
The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) to **ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005** on or before **February 03, 2023 before 5:00 PM** and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before **February 03, 2023 before 5:00 PM** along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at **ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005** on or before **February 03, 2023 before 5:00 PM**. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of **"ICICI Bank Limited"** payable at Delhi.  
For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the E-auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact **ICICI Bank Limited on 9599281817/8584874809**. Please note that Marketing agencies **1. M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited., 2. Augeo Assets Management Private Limited**, have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.  
The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons.  
For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit **www.icicibank.com/n4p4s**  
**Date : January 13, 2023**  
**Place : Delhi/ NCR**  

Authorized Officer  
ICICI Bank Limited



# Stay focused

## Dhankhar should focus on improving the behaviour of lawmakers instead of targeting the judiciary

In his address at the inauguration of the 83rd All India Conference of Presiding Officers' in Jaipur on Thursday, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar expressed his anguish over the manner in which lawmakers in the country behave. He rightly pointed out that people's representatives — be it the Members of Parliament and of Legislative Assemblies and Councils — should follow rules and maintain decorum. How can MLAs, MLCs, and MPs swear by the Constitution and law, and yet blatantly flout rules and throw decorum to the winds, he asked. A pertinent question which, unfortunately, political parties are not interested in answering. Dhankhar reminded the audience that the Constituent Assembly, during its 11 sessions spread over almost three



years, dealt with some of the most critical and sensitive issues, but there was not a single instance of disruption or disturbance. Dialogue, discussion, and debates were keys to decision making in the Constituent Assembly, he added. This is a timely reminder to our political class which would serve the nation and itself well by emulating rather than worshipping the leaders of that era. Idolatry is easy and emulation — especially that of great men and women — is difficult, but still our political masters can at least try to be like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, and BR Ambedkar.

Dhankhar also rightly said that the judiciary, the executive, and the legislature should confine themselves to their respective domains and conform to the highest standards of propriety and decorum. That indeed is the sine qua non of a healthy democracy. But his remarks on the supremacy of Parliament were not very accurate. His belief that Parliament has the absolute right to amend the Constitution, which "is not subject to any other authority," is misplaced. Even more objectionable is his attack on the basic structure doctrine. In 1973, in the Kesavananda Bharati case, the Supreme Court came up with this doctrine, asserting that Parliament has the right to amend the Constitution but not alter its (the Constitution's) basic structure. In a way, the doctrine is tautological: the basic structure of any constitution — or, for that matter, anything else — cannot be changed unless you want to change the entire thing. The basic structure of a constitution can be changed by only those people who do not believe in it. The fact that the Vice-President of the nation says such a thing makes it even more unacceptable. The tautology became a bold statement by the legendary SC justice HR Khanna, as judiciary was made to fight the forces of dictatorship that were gaining strength at that time. This is the reason that no politician, not even from the Congress, has attacked this doctrine. In fact, senior Congress leader P Chidambaram has supported the doctrine. Dhankhar should focus on improving the behaviour of lawmakers instead of targeting the judiciary.



Kites featuring the logo of India's G20 presidency during International Kite Festival 2023, in Rajkot

# That sinking feeling

## Joshimath is caving in and many more towns in Uttarakhand could go this way. Who is to blame?

Investigate restoration efforts. What has happened in Joshimath and is likely to be repeated elsewhere in the state and even in the neighboring Himachal Pradesh is not natural. It is the state and even in the neighboring Himachal Pradesh greed and exploitation of nature to the hilt which has resulted in the havoc in the hills. The roads are caving in forcing the authorities to evacuate the people living there. The administration has declared all nine municipal wards as "disaster-affected" and "unsafe for living" under the Disaster Management Act. Many expert teams have been dispatched to the town to study the situation. This includes experts from the National Disaster Management Authority, IIT Roorkee, the Geological Survey of India, and the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology inspecting the area for assessing the gravity of the situation. Many measures are under consideration for damage control. Repair and retrofitting strategy are most likely to be adopted to restore the partially damaged houses but that is not a permanent solution as further land subsidence in the area can and have to be investigated but one thing is for sure it has to do with the several dams being constructed in the vicinity especially the one in Vishnugad. These dams have divided a town sitting on a hollow tunnel which can cause the whole town to go down. There could be many reasons or combinations of them which led to the Joshimath disaster including improper drainage systems, consarning successive governments against allowing construction activity. But no one pays heed to their good advice, the profit motives and so-called 'development' takes precedence and environmental concerns take a backseat.



What has happened in Joshimath would check, and deforestation soil erosion because of the changing course of the Alaknanda River, however, is the major one. The government has rightly stopped the Tapovan road between Helang and Marwari and also the NTPC's Tapovan in Joshimath where large cracks have appeared in houses and land subsidence is playing havoc with the lives of the residents. More than 600 houses have cracks and many more are on the verge of becoming uninhabitable. Vishnugad Hydro Project. Soon this issue is going to be a political slugfest and the blame game will begin. The real issue would be lost in the din and we shall wait for the next disaster. We wait for the next disaster.

# The Bharat Jodo Yatra misleads

## Can a party that has attempted to destroy our democracy, and even carried out pogroms be the messenger of love and unity?

The Congress Party's Bharat Jodo Yatra led by Rahul Gandhi is gradually attracting public attention; it has even garnered a degree of respectability with celebrities from different walks of life joining the Gandhi scion. But shorn of its jamboree value, the BJY needs to be analyzed objectively for its relevance and the hope that it offers.

Is this another political circus with the intent to regain political power? Or is it a sincere message of love and unity? And if so, can Congress be counted on to deliver the utopia that it promises?

A truly objective evaluation of the track record of Congress is disappointing and even scary; it reveals a picture of expedient opportunism and questionable morality. The badge of secularism that it flaunts has often jostled with a sense of entitlement, an insatiable thirst for power, and a warped hubris that condones mass killings to avenge the death of its leaders.

The 1984 anti-Sikh carnage is a classic example of the Congress Party's double talk; strictly speaking, it was a pogrom, validated by every criterion that defines such sectarian violence. To call it a Hindu-Sikh riot is to mislead. The Congress Party exclusively instigated, planned, and executed a one-sided, organized massacre of over 3000 Sikhs.

The Nanavati Commission confirmed the involvement of the Congress: "The systematic manner in which the Sikhs were thus killed indicates that the attacks on them were organized. Whatever acts were done, were done by the local Congress (I) leaders and workers, and they appear to have done so for their personal political reasons...." (Nanavati Report, Part iv).

A deliberate delay in deploying the Army and Rajiv Gandhi's famous statement, "When a big tree falls, the earth shakes" are further evidence of the Congress party's insensitivity. That a sitting PM chose to justify these atrocities is unpardonable.

Another lesser-known pogrom also has a Congress hand. Post Mahatma Gandhi's



assassination by Nathuram Godse (a Brahmin), Maharashtra was rocked by violence that had Congress workers running amok torching Brahmin homes and killing Brahmins. While there are no official figures, some claim thousands of Brahmins lost their lives.

The historian Vikram Sampath refers to this suppressed part of our history in a recent interview. He states: "While writing 'Savarkar: Echoes from a Forgotten Past', several people, whose ancestors witnessed the pogrom or were affected by it, came forward to share their stories."

He also indicated that several Congress officials took part in the carnage. Post-independence the Congress Party's 'vote bank' politics facilitated illegal immigration into Assam provoking local unrest, dissension, and a dangerous instability that triggered the Assam Students Movement. For nearly 6 years (1979-1985) the Northeast suffered through daily protests and unimaginable acts of fratricidal violence.

The widespread opposition to the CAA-NRC in 2020

A TRULY OBJECTIVE EVALUATION OF THE TRACK RECORD OF CONGRESS IS DISAPPOINTING AND EVEN SCARY; IT REVEALS A PICTURE OF EXPEDIENT OPPORTUNISM AND QUESTIONABLE MORALITY

which the Congress supported was essentially an attempt to safeguard the gains of illegal immigration and sustain the divisiveness of Assam so that political interests could prevail.

Qualms about Narendra Modi's autocratic and anti-democratic demeanor are more fiction than fact. In 2002, when he was subject to overwhelming criticism for his handling of the Gujarat riots, he resigned prematurely and sought a vote of trust from the public -- a democratic gesture par excellence.

The BJP has always adhered to democratic principles at all times. In late 1999, after a successful tenure of 13 months, the BJP was forced to seek a vote of confidence as a result of a realignment of political parties. The BJP lost by a single questionable vote cast by a Congress member (Giridhar Gamang) who had ceased to be a member of the Lok Sabha after being elected to the state legislature. Yet, Atal Bihari Vajpayee (the then BJP PM) promptly resigned in the larger interest of democracy.

Contrast this with what happened in 1975: when the

Allahabad high court invalidated Indira Gandhi's election, she chose to suspend democracy and imposed a state of Emergency; the darkest period of our democracy.

India is more united today than it has ever been since Independence; there is no symbolic barrier between Kashmir and India; there is stability in Assam in contrast to the turmoil of the 1980s. And the umpteen number of massive protests (Farmers stir, CAA agitation) is ample proof that democracy is alive and kicking under the Modi regime.

The concept of a divided nation engulfed by a maelstrom of hate is an illusion and nothing more; a specter skillfully engineered by violent street protests, misrepresenting normally found street crimes as hate related and stoking the subliminal paranoia of minorities. It is a figment of imagination confined to the warped minds of negativists.

(The author, a US-based academic and political commentator, frequently writes on current affairs in India. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### GOVERNOR'S MISCONDUCT

Sir — RN Ravi has not shown minimum maturity while addressing the house. Even the opposition party would have consulted the ruling party whether we together can change the name. Governor has been taught by the centre that he can create a fissure in the ruling party by proposing a new name for the State. Basically, the name of the State is neither troubling AIDMK or DMK, it is troubling very much that the BJP and Ravi have become their agent.

BJP tried its best to break the relationship of the people of the State from their past heritage. Every state in India has some cultural importance with which its identity is visible. But BJP has nothing to do with the cultural heritage of the States and it wants all around to be Hindus only for gaining political points. It tried to bring the Hindu religion into West Bengal where thousands of Crores were spent in the assembly election. But the result is in vain. A Governor who is the custodian of the constitution in the State and deviating from his duties for which he is paid is condemnable. DMK leaders are right in saying that he must be called back because he is responsible for disturbing harmony in the state.

RK Arya | Faridabad

### AIMING HIGH FOR AFFORDABLE HOMES

Sir — Mumbai's biggest challenge is in providing housing for its inhabitants. Unfortunately, the majority of the city's population is forced to live in either sub-standard housing options in the core city or live in peripheral locations.

There is also a need to create rental housing within the city limits to accommodate the transient population between rental and ownership, and a combination of these two will provide the right response to the city's housing challenges. Highlighting the price willingness or buying capacity of a consumer, a survey said thirty-eight per cent of the respondents would prefer to buy houses priced less than Rs 15 lakh, while 26 per cent preferred the Rs 16-25 lakh price range, and

## National Youth Day



12th January is the day of National Youth as it marks the 160-birth anniversary of the great youth icon, Swami Vivekananda, who was born as Narendranath Datta on 12 January 1863. In 1984 the Indira Gandhi Government declared this day as National Youth Day and since 1985, it is celebrated every year, because the government felt that Vivekananda's ideals and teachings are a source of inspiration for the youth. For Vivekanand, education meant secular learning that built character and instilled human values in students. He believed that it is the duty of the youth to be responsible towards themselves, their families, societies, and the nation. He said, youth are young and have

unmatched energy, and can bring about powerful changes. As a youth icon, he famously said, "Take risks in your life. If you win, you can lead, if you lose, you can guide."

It's a pity that during the Prime Minister Narendra Modi era, thousands of youth instead of serving the nation, remain idle and ramble as jobless. PM Modi, a strong Vivekanand follower, may have forgotten that Vivekanand 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. Who forgets the most-notable disciple of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda's famous saying: "So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them".

Actually, self-perfection and service were patriotic saint Vivekananda's ideals, and the order continued to stress them. He adapted and made relevant to the 20th century the very highest ideals of the Vedantic religion, and, although he lived only two years into the 20th century, he left the mark of his personality on East and West alike.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

36 per cent had a budget beyond Rs 25 lakh. These houses could be engines of growth and put economy on growth trajectory.

Gundu K Maniam | Mumbai

### ELON MUSK MAKES A NEW RECORD

Sir — Elon Musk, the eccentric billionaire whose name keeps doing rounds in the news for some reason or the other, has created a new world record for loss of personal fortune in history and broke the record of Japanese tech investor Masayoshi Son losing \$58.6 billion which was set in 2000 & the record was registered on the information.

Forbes estimated that Mr Musk has lost around \$182 billion since November indicate the figure is close to \$200 billion. Although the exact figure is almost

impossible to ascertain according to hill Elon Musk's net worth dropped from \$320 billion in November 2021 to \$137 billion as of January 2023, largely due to the bad performance of Tesla's stock because of it Elon Musk sold \$7 billion worth Tesla stock as he was trying to finance his deal to purchase Twitter and another \$4 billion in November. Looks like Elon's Twitter deal is doing him more harm than good as it has put him in the glare of the media light and people are judging him every single day. It is the game of perception which makes or breaks a person. Musk is learning it the hard way.

Aaditya Chouhan | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## SOUND BITE

The new-found aggression in Hindu society is because Hindu society has been at war for over 1,000 years and it is but natural for those at war to be aggressive.



RSS Chief — Mohan Bhagwat

Last week, 11,500 deaths were reported. However, this number is underestimating, given the underreporting of COVID-related deaths in China.

WHO chief — Tedros Ghebreyesus

My heartiest congratulations to the entire team of RRR and to you sir! Your movie created history last night. What a proud moment for Indian cinema!



Actor — Madhuri Dixit Nene

The real winner was the sportsmanship of Rohit Sharma for refusing to take the run out. I doff my cap to you!

Former Sri Lankan cricketer — Sanath Jayasuriya

At this event, we commit ourselves to fighting hatred and violence, spreading the message of truth, compassion, and non-violence, and defending the constitutional values of liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice for all.



Congress president — Mallikarjun Kharge



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA IS THE VOICE OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Virtual Global South Summit is a move in the right direction



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

It is a new-year and India's plate for multilateral, plurilateral engagements is full, with almost all major metros hosting delegations and foreign dignitaries. There was a near stampede on the first day of the 'Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas' in Indore for grabbing a seat inside the main hall and many took to social media to complain about inadequate preparations.

Meanwhile Kolkata played host to a G20 meeting on financial inclusion. The most interesting one, also a move in the right direction, is the virtual Global South Summit. India has unofficially taken up the mantle to lead the Global South (loosely referred to a bunch of countries beyond the US, Europe, Russia and China) and be their voice in international forums. The summit theme "Unity of Voice, Unity of Purpose" saw nearly 120 countries representing the global south voicing their issues and finding commonalities.



The Global South nations are largely nonaligned with any major power bloc. They haven't applauded the US and its western allies for imposing sanctions on Russia, neither are they overtly supportive of Russia or China. The reasons could be economic, since many of these nations are facing twin troubles of pandemic aftereffects, and the long ongoing war in Ukraine, increasing prices of fuel and food, leading to severe financial crisis. This together with the disproportionate impact of climate change on their relatively poorer and smaller economies is almost driving the countries into states of anarchy and civil war, threatening sovereign boundaries.

India has rightfully taken up the mantle to champion their causes and concerns, in a year when it is steering the G20 presidency. The eight ministerial sessions focussing on financing people-centric development, balancing growth and environment friendly lifestyles, energy security and development, cooperation to build resilient healthcare systems, human resource development and capacity building, developing synergies in technology, trade, tourism and resources and suggestions for India's G20 presidency, were all opportunities to hear out a vast bunch of common issues affecting global south countries.

In addition, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also laid out the idea of cooperation among the Global South to have an effective bargaining power as a large block in international forums, while also showcasing India's innovative stack of digital public goods.

This is happening at a time when, for the time being it seems there is a lull in the tensions emerging from India's neighbours. On the western front, Pakistan has for some years been more inwardly focussed due to its internal politics and external threats emerging from the Taliban in Afghanistan. The constant tug of war between political and military leadership is now at its peak after being below the radar for many decades now. This domestic distraction together with the state of its economy has left little mind space to indulge in military and covert operations with India.

However, what is surprising is even China towards the end of the 2022, (number one security and strategic threat for India) has started making overtures for a healthy balanced relationship with India. Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi in the last week of December was quoted "ready to work with India for steady and sound growth of bilateral relations" in a leading Chinese media publication.

Clearly China is also bogged down by its domestic issues and slowing economy and therefore can't be seen as the biggest bully in the world. As of now it would like to continue a neutral path with India. This is the opportunity; the breathing space India needs to push its global leadership across various engagement platforms.

*(The author is a foreign affairs commentator)*

# Indian diaspora must carry Indian flag high



SUMET BHASIN

The doors of Indian institutions are always open for the Indian diaspora who will be equal partners in 'Amrit Kaal'

Over three crore Indian origin people, the diaspora, live in all parts of the world. Some of them are heads of the states. Some are driving global tech behemoths. They are the brains in the laboratories world over for solutions to problems faced by humanities. The Indian diaspora is an asset to countries of their residences.

Former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee first thought to connect with the Indian diaspora. Pravasi Bharat was conceptualised by him. The 17th edition of India's dialogue with diaspora took place in the cleanest city of India in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, which saw participation of over 3,000 people of Indian origin.

On January 9, 1915, Mahatma Gandhi had returned to India to serve his country in her struggle against British Rule. Late Vajpayee accorded the highest honour to the Indian diaspora by deciding that January 9 would be the 'Pravasi Bharat Diwas'.

The 17th edition of the Pravasi Bharat Diwas was hosted on the theme of the 'Indian diaspora reliable partner in Amrit Kaal'. The next 25 years will shape the destiny of India, and by the time the country celebrates 100 years of the Indian Independence, it will be a fitting tribute to Mahatma Gandhi and our freedom fighters to reclaim the glory that India was known for in the previous centuries before the Mughals and the British looted the wealth of the country.

The 3,500 participants of the Indian diaspora from 70 countries were joyous at the strides India has made in the recent years under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The vision for the country that late Vajpayee had shown to the Indian diaspora is now visibly taking shape before the eyes of the people of Indian origins.

The Indian Passport now brings global respect. The world has seen the strength of the Indian passport. The Indian diaspora in the previous decades needed the matinee star Manoj Kumar to tell the world what is India, as he hummed—"mein Bharat ka hun, Bharat ki baat sunata hun (I am from India, and tell stories from India)". Now, the sight of Indian passport tells stories of the achievements to the global audience loudly.

The Indian diaspora is no more slotted with the people of Pakistani origin, for even the Pakistan nationals fake even in the Muslim countries such as the UAE that they are Indians. This is on account of the Indian diaspora making firm imprints of their skills in whichever country they reside.

PM Modi was aware of late Vajpayee's vision for diaspora connect when he made it a point that he would connect with them during each of his foreign visit. Thus, the Indian diaspora has been a



THE INDIAN DIASPORA WILL HAVE TO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN THE FAST EXPANSION OF THE ECONOMY, FROM \$5 TRILLION WITHIN A FEW YEARS TO \$50 TRILLION BY 2047, WHICH WILL BE INCUMBENT UPON RAPID SKILLING

*(The author is Director, Public Policy Research Centre)*



companion of the Indian journey in the last eight and a half years since PM Modi took charge of the government at the Centre. PM Modi made no distinction between the people in India and those who live abroad, as he gave an account of the achievements of the country to the Indian diaspora in full detail. He, thus, showed the commitment that the government is committed to the interests of the Indian diaspora.

The Indian diaspora has also been deeply connected with the country of their origin. They never gave up their roots. They were bound by a strong sense of belonging to the country. The success of the International Yoga Day, Ayurveda, the Indian classical music and dance, history of India, and many others have seen the participation of the Indian diaspora. The Indian diaspora has shown belief in the country, as the remittances are now at par with the foreign direct investment annually, which is a feat without a parallel for any of the economy.

Now, Diwali and Holi are international festivals and so is Chhath. The White House in the US too celebrates Diwali and Holi. The tallest buildings in the world capitals celebrate the Indian festivals. India's Independence Day is now celebrated internationally.

PM Modi very deservedly called the Indian diaspora 'Rashtradoots'. He also rightly lauded the Indian diaspora for

being the peaceful and disciplined citizens of the countries of their residences. This has indeed been a defining attribute of the Indian diaspora, for they only enrich the countries of the residences with their skills and culture.

Germany and Australia recently signed pacts with India for skills development and easing the migration of the trained manpower from India. The free trade agreements signed by India with some of the countries such as the UAE, Australia, ASEAN, while the work is in progress in the case of the European Union, the UK and the US, have accorded top priority to the migration. The government under the leadership of PM Modi has ensured that the developed world benefits from the trained manpower of India.

Indeed, the developed world is facing the grey tsunami, as they deal with an older population, and their economies would be banking heavily on the Indian manpower. The Indian economy too is transforming, having become the fifth largest economy, and the third big economy status too is within sight, which will be achieved within a few years.

The Indian diaspora will have to play a key role in the fast expansion of the economy, from \$5 trillion within a few years to \$50 trillion by 2047, which will be incumbent upon rapid skilling. The Indian diaspora is already contributing to the skilling efforts of India and technology sharing.

But that would be needed to scale up. A section of the Indian diaspora has deep emotional connections with the Indian institutions such as the IITs, IIMs, NITs and so on. Some of them are already scaling up their connections with these institutions. But many of them may have to decide that the time has come to take the roles of mentors to the students in laboratories and young entrepreneurs of startups to share their knowledge and skills to make the mission of the 'Make in India, Make for World' a grand success.

The global supply chain is undergoing a rejig of the key suppliers in the post-pandemic era. India during the pandemic showed that the country is a reliable partner to the world in times of crisis by ensuring that the Indian participation in the global supply chains was never disrupted even while the country went under the national lockdown briefly.

The relevant Indian institutions are already considering the remote voting rights to the non-resident Indians. The government has also ensured that the Indian diaspora feels welcomed at places in the country they visit. India has ramped up ease of travel for the Indian diaspora. The doors of Indian institutions are always open for the Indian diaspora. They are equal partners of India in the 'Amrit Kaal'. The next 25 years will be the age of the Indian diaspora as well.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

IF THE AAP CONVENER, ARVIND KEJRIWAL, FAILS TO DO SO, ALL CONSEQUENTIAL LEGAL ACTION SHALL BE TAKEN IN A TIME-BOUND MANNER.  
— DELHI LG VINAI SAXENA



OFFICERS OF DELHI GOVT ARE BEING MISUSED BY LG N BJP, NOT TO DO ANY PUBLIC SERVICE WORK, BUT TO KEEP TARGETTING ELECTED MINISTERS AND AAP.  
— DELHI DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER MANISH SISODIA

# Vacancies in schools in Mandi, J&K hurt education

The local administration should take some corrective and timely measures to address the issue

The recent transformation in the way students-teachers interact, more specifically because of the pandemic, has poorly impacted the lives of students belonging to the underserved communities residing in the remote and rural regions of the country. In Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, the situation needs the immediate attention of the authorities.

The border district of Poonch is about 240 km from Jammu. Here, the situation of government schools in every tehsil is miserable. The government school in Urai Malikan Panchayat, Mandi tehsil, which is 31 km from Poonch, has decent infrastructure and is attended by a good number of children but unfortunately, the

MOHAMMAD RAYAZ MALIK

*(The author is from the border district of Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir: Charkha Features)*

strength of the school staff is not enough.

"Our school was shut for the last three years because of the lockdowns imposed due to Covid-19. Two months ago, the schools were reopened but the teachers have not returned. Only two, at times one, subjects are taught that are negatively impacting our education," shared Yasmeen Akhtar, a Class 10 student in this school.

Although the school has contributed significantly towards sports education but is unable to achieve the same quality for the rest of the subjects. The school in-charge, Master Mohammad Deen, said that this school received the status of High School in 2015 under the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan

(RMSA) - a flagship scheme of Government of India, to enhance access to secondary education and improve its quality.

Since then, the posts in this school have been lying vacant. The school has one post of master grade, one post of teacher and one post of a physical teacher vacant. The school staff consists of only five people. "We try our best but the quality of education is compromised because we have more than 329 students and it is extremely difficult to teach five subjects in ten classes each," rued Mohammad Deen.

He further informed us that special teachers were appointed in 2016 and at that time the school had the best matriculation result but

after some time their services were discontinued.

Only these five teachers are responsible for conducting classes, managing the school, including the Mid-Day Meal and other office work. Muhammad Aslam Malik, Sarpanch of the region, said, "As it is now a high school, the Education Department should address the issue at the earliest. More teachers should be hired to ensure that the education of the student is not impacted any further. Due to the lack of teachers, the children just go to school and return without any learning."

According to Muhammad Yunus, Clerk at the Head Zonal Education Office, Mandi tehsil, there are 158 government schools in

Mandi Education Zone, five Higher Secondary, eight High Schools, 53 Middle Schools, 91 Primary Schools and one KGBV. Of the 53, 49 middle schools do not have head teachers. Out of the eight high schools, two do not have headmasters. This includes High School Udai Malkan and High School Dinnogam.

Under such conditions, it is not very difficult to assess the quality of education being offered to the students who mostly come from poor families residing in this tough geography.

"We are trying," said Abdul Majeed, Chief Education Officer, Poonch, and a similar answer was provided by Bashir Ahmed, Zonal Education Officer, Mandi, when asked about

the measures being taken to address the situation.

"Schools have reopened after a long haul because of Covid-19. We are consulting with the teachers to get the system back on track and to bring some teachers from those schools where teachers are more and children are less," said the Zonal Education Officer, assuring that in the next one month people will definitely see a change.

Parents are very worried about the inappropriate ratio of teachers and children in High School Udai Malkan. Three children of 39-year-old Imtiaz Ahmad Malik are studying in Udai Malkan High School. According to him, this school was running very well. First, the situation was not favourable for a few

days due to the cancellation of the special status of the state, then two and a half years were ruined due to Covid-19.

When the schools opened in 2022, the children who had lost three years of education were again faced with the challenge of staff shortage. As per him, the local administration should take some corrective and timely measures to address the issue.

Musrat Naz, a student of Class 10 in the same school, said, "Beti Padhao, Beti Bachao is a very significant step taken by the government to ensure that girls' education is promoted at all levels, but girls in my region are unable to participate in the government's ambitious plan due to gaps at the local level."



# Russian forces press deadly assault for breakthrough in east

AP ■ KYIV

Russia said Thursday that its forces are edging closer to capturing a salt-mining town in eastern Ukraine, which would mark an elusive victory for the Kremlin but come at the cost of heavy Russian casualties and extensive destruction of the territory they claim.

Ukraine's Donetsk Gov Pavlo Kyrylenko said in televised remarks that more than 100 Russian troops have been killed in the battle for Soledar over the past 24 hours.

"The Russians have literally marched on the bodies of their own soldiers, burning everything on their way," Kyrylenko said while reporting that Russian forces had shelled a dozen towns and villages in the region in the past day.

Russian forces are using mortars and rockets to bombard Soledar in an unrelenting assault, battling for a breakthrough after military setbacks have turned what the Kremlin hoped would be a fast victory into a grinding war of attrition that has dragged on for nearly 11 months with no end in sight.

"Civilians are trying to survive amid that bloodbath as the



Russians are pressing their attacks," Kyrylenko said.

Soledar's fall would be a prize for a Kremlin starved of good battlefield news in recent months, after losing the significant city of Kherson in December. It would also offer Russian troops a springboard to conquer other areas of the eastern Donetsk province that remain under Ukrainian control,

particularly the nearby strategic city of Bakhmut.

The Russians' tactic in the assault on Soledar is to send one or two waves of soldiers, many from the private Russian military contractor Wagner Group who take heavy casualties as they probe the Ukrainian defences, a Ukrainian officer near Soledar told The Associated Press.

When Ukrainian troops

suffer casualties and are exhausted, the Russians send in another wave of highly-trained soldiers, paratroopers or special forces, to get a new foothold on the battlefield, said the Ukrainian officer, who insisted on anonymity for security reasons.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov praised the "selfless and courageous action" of Russian troops, which he said is helping

them to press forward in Soledar. "Gigantic work has been done in Soledar," he said.

Peskov, however, stopped short of confirming a claim by Wagner Group owner Yevgeny Prigozhin, who boasted about capturing Soledar on Wednesday.

"There is still a lot to be done and it's too early to stop and rub our hands, the main work is still ahead," he said in a conference call with reporters.

Fighting continued elsewhere in Ukraine.

The deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, reported Thursday that two civilians were killed and a further eight were wounded in Russian attacks on Wednesday.

Citing data from regional officials, Tymoshenko said that one civilian died and five were wounded in the southern Kherson province, where shells hit a maternity hospital, private houses and apartment buildings, while one person was killed in Donetsk.

Two people were wounded in the southeastern Zaporizhzhia province, with one further civilian sustaining injuries in the southeastern Dnipropetrovsk province.

## In Ukraine, power plant workers fight to save their 'child'

AP ■ KYIV

Around some of their precious transformers — the ones that still work, buzzing with electricity — the power plant workers have built protective shields using giant concrete blocks, so they have a better chance of surviving the next Russian missile bombardment.

Blasted out windows in the power plant's control room are patched up with chipboard and piled-up sandbags, so the operators who man the desks 24/7, keeping watch over gauges, screens, lights and knobs, are less at risk of being killed or injured by murderous shrapnel.

"As long as there is equipment that can be repaired, we will work," said the director of the plant that a team of Associated Press journalists got rare access to.

The AP is not identifying the plant nor giving its location, because Ukrainian officials said such details could help Russian military planners. The plant's director and his workers also refused to be identified with their full names, for the same reason. Because the plant can't function without them, the operators have readied armoured vests and helmets to wear during the deadly hails of missiles, so they can stay at their posts and not join less essential workers in the bomb shelter.



Each Russian aerial strike causes more damage, leaves more craters and more blast holes in the walls already pockmarked by explosions, and raises more questions about much longer Ukraine's energy workers will be able to keep homes powered, heated and lit in winter's subzero temperatures.

And yet, against the odds and sometimes at the cost of their lives, they keep power flowing. They're holding battered plants together with bravery, dedication, ingenuity and dwindling stocks of spare parts. Each additional watt of electricity they manage to wring into the power grid defies Russian President Vladimir Putin's nearly 11-month invasion and his military's efforts to weaponize winter by plunging Ukrainians into the cold and dark.

Power, in short, is hope in Ukraine and plant workers won't let hope die.

In their minds, the plant is more than just a place where power is made. Over decades of caring for its innards of whirling turbines, thick cables and humming pipes, it's become something they have come to love and that they desperately want to keep alive. Seeing it slowly but systematically wounded by repeated Russian attacks is painful for them.

"The station is like an organism, each organ in it has some significance. But too many organs are already damaged," said Oleh. He has worked at the plant for 23 years.

"It hurts me so much to watch all this. This is inhuman stress. We carried this station in our arms like a child," he said.

## Top Russian military officer put in charge of Ukraine action

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia's top military officer was put in charge of troops fighting in Ukraine on Wednesday, a move that appears to reflect the Kremlin's dissatisfaction with the current leadership and flaws in the military's performance.

Russia's Defense Ministry said that Gen. Valery Gerasimov, the chief of the General Staff of the Russian armed forces, was named the new commander of the unified group of forces in Ukraine.

The previous commander, Gen. Sergei Surovikin, was demoted to become Gerasimov's deputy along with two other generals.

The reshuffle, which was formally ordered by Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, clearly came on Russian President Vladimir Putin's approval, signalling that he still has trust in his top military leaders who have faced broad criticism for the troops' performance in the conflict.

It also suggests a recognition of flaws in carrying out what Putin called "the special military operation" in Ukraine.

While announcing Gerasimov's appointment, the Defense Ministry said it was aimed at improving coordination between various forces fighting in Ukraine.

"Raising the level of leadership of the special military operation is linked to the expansion of the scale of the tasks being fulfilled as part of it and the need to organize closer interaction



between branches of the military and to increase the quality of supplies and the efficiency of directing groups of forces," the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

Surovikin was credited with strengthening coordination and reinforcing control over Russian forces in Ukraine after his appointment in October. His demotion to the No. 2 role signalled that while Putin wasn't quite happy with his performance, he still trusts the general's expertise.

Soon after Surovikin was appointed in October, Russian troops pulled back from the southern city of Kherson under the brunt of a Ukrainian counteroffensive. The retreat from the only regional center captured by Russia since it sent troops into Ukraine on February 24 came weeks after its annexation by

Moscow and dealt a painful blow to the Kremlin.

In his turn, Gerasimov, who was seen as the top architect of the Russian action in Ukraine as the country's top military officer in charge of strategic military planning, was also widely blamed for Moscow's military setbacks.

His critics included Yevgeny Prigozhin, a millionaire businessman with close ties to Putin. Prigozhin, whose Wagner Group military contractor has played an increasingly prominent role in the fighting, has accused Gerasimov of incompetence and blamed him for a string of Russian military setbacks.

Such criticism was also shared by Chechnya's leader, Ramzan Kadyrov, who deployed troops from his region to fight in Ukraine and repeatedly urged

the Kremlin to up the ante in the conflict. The criticism of Gerasimov from Prigozhin and Kadyrov rose to a high pitch in September, when Russian troops were forced to pull back from Ukraine's northeastern region of Kharkiv by a swift Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Kadyrov particularly accused Gerasimov of covering up for his protege, Col. Gen. Alexander Lapin, who was in charge of the troops that retreated from the Kharkiv region.

Despite such attacks, Lapin was promoted to become the chief of staff of ground forces earlier this week. His promotion along with Gerasimov's new appointment appear to signal that Prigozhin and Kadyrov have little influence over the Kremlin's decision-making despite their increasing public activity.

## Brazil 'mega-protest' fizzles amid authorities' concern

AP ■ BRASILIA, BRAZIL

Skittish Brazilian authorities on Wednesday spared no effort to boost security in the face of a social media flyer promoting a "mega-protest to retake power" in two dozen cities. Whether because of preventative measures adopted or not, the supposed uprising was a dud.

Less than 10 protesters showed along Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach; there were more journalists in attendance, plus 29 police vehicles. On Brasilia's esplanade surrounded by federal government buildings, authorities had designated an area for protest and stationed police and national guard troops. Just one couple showed, dressed in the same Brazil soccer jerseys that thousands of rioters wore four days earlier.

"We were surprised to be the only ones here today," said Eunice Carvalho, a 58-year-old housewife joined by her husband. "People got scared after the imprisonments, which were excessive."

Speaking to journalists in Brasilia earlier, the federal appointee who has assumed control of the capital's security said police were shutting down the main avenue to traffic, limiting pedestrian access with barricades and blocking all access to the square that was the site of Sunday's mayhem.

"The right to protest freely will always be respected and cannot be confused with terrorism," said the official, Ricardo Cappelli.

Citing the call to protest, a Supreme Court justice ordered



local authorities in cities across Brazil to prevent protesters from blocking roads or occupying public spaces and buildings. Justice Alexandre de Moraes also ordered arrests and fines for people and companies who participate or help with logistics and funding.

The all-hands response — and the subsequent tranquility — underscored just how jumpy authorities remain after supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro rampaged through Congress, the Supreme Court and the presidential palace on Sunday, laying ruin to the government's three most important buildings. Officials arrested or detained some 1,500 people by the following morning, hundreds of whom were sent to prison.

Though there is no evidence of fraud in the Oct. 30 presidential election, the protesters have claimed the true winner was far-right Bolsonaro. He has fired up his base about the vulnerability of electronic voting

machines despite independent experts' assurances they are closely scrutinized. Bolsonaro also has warned his supporters that the election's leftist victor, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, would impose communism.

The call for a fresh uprising Wednesday sparked concern that the crackdown hadn't damped the will of radicals. Among those who vow to continue struggling is Daniel Bressan, 35, who traveled some 300 miles from the interior of Parana state to join Sunday's protest in Brasilia. He was detained by police the next morning, though he denies participating in any of the vandalism.

"A lot of people are going to be afraid to go to the streets and be arrested — I myself fear persecution by the legal system — but I'm not going to stop fighting and I'm not going to get discouraged," Bressan said by phone from the federal police's temporary holding center. "I'm ready for everything. Our free-

dom is worth more than our lives."

Jailing rioters represents only part of the government's effort to hold people responsible, with authorities also seeking to track down those who enabled the uprising. That includes organizers who summoned protesters to the capital and paid their way as well as local security personnel accused of either standing by and allowing the destruction to occur, or even cooperating.

Justice Minister Flávio Dino told local press this week that authorities have identified some of the protest's financiers. He said they are based in the south and center-west regions that Bolsonaro carried in the election. Without identifying individuals, he said they are members of the agribusiness sector, local business owners and people registered to own firearms.

Dino previously said the riot was apparently intended to spark a domino effect around the country. He has referred to the encampments that had been set up by Bolsonaro supporters outside military buildings to call on the armed forces to overturn election results as "incubators of terrorists." Authorities cleared away the camps in Brasilia and other cities after the rioting.

In November, the Supreme Court froze 43 bank accounts of people accused of having financed roadblocks that disrupted highway traffic in the wake of Lula's victory. At least 30 were in the center-west state of Mato Grosso, Brazil's top soybean producer.

## Georgia lawmakers push back on testifying in Trump probe

AP ■ ATLANTA

Georgia state lawmakers are pushing back on a state court ruling that forced some of them to testify during an investigation into whether former President Donald Trump and others illegally tried to influence the 2020 election in the state.

The state House and Senate adopted rules Wednesday that say legislative privilege — a legal concept rooted in the U.S. and Georgia constitutions that says lawmakers shouldn't face questioning for activities relating to making laws — should shield communications with people outside the legislature. Most majority Republicans voted in favor and most Democrats voted against.

Crucially, the language is only part of legislative rules. It's not clear if it would hold up in court, and judges nationwide have typically limited sweeping claims of legislative privilege.

A Georgia judge ruled last year that lawmakers had to testify before a special grand jury in Atlanta about contact with private citizens on Trump-related matters, even if those communications were part of leg-



islative duties.

"We can't all be experts on every issue that comes up before us," House Majority Leader Chuck Efrstration, a Dacula Republican, said Wednesday during debate. "We rely on others who do have expertise. That communication in order to help us make those determinations would be protected."

But Democrats question whether Republicans are trying to cover up evidence from the period after the 2020 elections, when some GOP lawmakers showcased Trump's false claims of electoral wrongdoing in Georgia.

"Are we trying to protect

that because of some of the issues in elections that came up with elections?" asked Senate Minority Whip Harold Jones II, an Augusta Democrat.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Robert McBurney ruled in July that lawmakers have broad immunity but could be asked about their conversations with people outside the legislature. Lawmakers had argued they should be entirely immune from testifying.

At the time of McBurney's ruling, Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis said there was evidence that testimony given before legislative committees in December 2020 by

Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani and others "was part of a multi-state, coordinated plan by the 'Trump Campaign to influence the results of the November 2020 election in Georgia and elsewhere."

Fred Smith, a constitutional law professor at Emory University in Atlanta, said district attorneys have powers that must be respected, too.

"It's hard to imagine that a state legislative rule could kind of trump a DA's ability to engage in their own state constitutional responsibilities, up to the line provided for in the Constitution," Smith said.

McBurney ruled that the grand jury couldn't ask questions about communications between lawmakers, or with legislative staff members, finding those conversations were immune because of legislative privilege.

But he found that such immunity "ought not to be a shield that benefits those outside individuals or otherwise obscures from the grand jury's view the full scope of the alleged efforts to subvert Georgia's elections."

The special grand jury has since finished its work.

McBurney dissolved the panel Monday and has scheduled a Jan. 24 hearing to decide whether all or part of the report should be made public.

Willis now must decide whether she will seek indictments from a regular grand jury against Trump or anyone else. The lengthy investigation has been one of several across the country that threaten legal peril for Trump as he mounts a third bid for the White House.

Democrats this week also questioned a provision that suggests one Georgia lawmaker might be able to block another lawmaker from testifying if the first lawmaker refused to allow colleagues to talk about private conversations.

"If you and your colleague to your right or left are having a conversation about a piece of legislation, you would have immunity as well as the colleague you're talking to," Senate Majority Leader Steve Gooch, a Dahlonga Republican, said Monday. "And so you would not be able to reveal the conversation that you and she are having without jeopardizing the immunity that that senator also enjoys."

## UML chairman Oli meets Nepal's PM, discuss cabinet expansion

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" and CPN-UML chairman K P Sharma Oli met on Thursday and discussed issues relating to cabinet expansion as well as the latest political developments.

Oli reached the PM's official residence at Baluwatar to meet Prachanda.

The two leaders, who have agreed to lead the government on a rotation basis, mainly discussed matters relating to expansion of cabinet and power-sharing, CPN-Maoist Centre secretary Ganesh Shah said.

Prime Minister Prachanda plans to expand the eight-member cabinet to give it full shape after securing the vote of confidence earlier on Tuesday.

He received the support of 268 of the 270 lawmakers who were present in parliament - the highest number of votes a prime minister has ever received in a vote of confidence in parliament.

Besides power sharing, the two leaders also discussed the



election of the new Speaker of the House of Representatives, according to sources close to the Maoist party.

The election of the Speaker is scheduled to take place on January 21. Prachanda is leading the government in the first half of the five-year tenure while the CPN-UML will get the first half term of the Speaker.

Similarly, the CPN-Maoist Centre will get the remaining half tenure of the Speaker while the CPN-UML will get the post of President as per the deal.

Meanwhile, chief ministers of all seven provinces have been appointed as per the understanding reached among the ruling alliances.

According to the deal, the CPN-UML got chief ministers in four provinces - Province No. 1, Gandaki Province, Lumbini Province, and Sudur Paschim Province. Similarly, Maoist got their chief ministers appointed in Bagmati Province and Karnali Province.

Janata Samajwadi Party got its chief minister in Madhes Pradesh. Hikmat Karki of CPN-UML was appointed the chief minister of Province 1, Khagraj Adhikary of Gandaki Province, Leela Giri of Lumbini, and Rajendra Rawal of Sudur Paschim.

Similarly, Shalikram Jamar-kattel of the Maoist Centre was appointed the chief minister of Bagmati and Raj Kumar Sharma was appointed for the post in Karnali. Saroj Kumar Yadav of JSP was appointed the chief minister of Madhes Province.

The opposition Nepali Congress — the largest political party in parliament with 89 seats — could not get hold of any of the seven provinces after the break in their alliance with the Maoist Centre.



# Oz finalising new security pact with Pacific neighbour

AP ■ WELLINGTON

The leaders of Australia and neighbouring Papua New Guinea said on Thursday they are finalising a new security treaty — a move that comes as a challenge to China's growing assertiveness in the region.

Last year, China signed its own security pact with the nearby Solomon Islands, raising alarm that it could lead to a military buildup in the South Pacific region.

Australia and PNG haven't released details of their planned new treaty, but Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said he expected negotiations to conclude in April and the treaty to be signed in June.

Albanese said the treaty would be based on the deep trust between the two nations. The people of Papua New Guinea showed heroism and humanity during World War II battles, he said.

"In the years ahead, Australia and Papua New Guinea have a chance to honour our shared history of service in the cause of peace — by adding to it," Albanese said.

"Deepening our defence ties and enhancing our national security cooperation, and achieving a swift conclusion to negotiations on a Bilateral Security Treaty."



Albanese's remarks were part of the first address to the Papua New Guinea Parliament by a foreign leader since the nation of 10 million gained independence in 1975.

"Australia and Papua New Guinea are the closest of neighbours, we are the greatest of friends," Albanese said.

Albanese said the treaty would work to address PNG's needs, including strengthening the justice system and resolving law-and-order challenges.

In response, PNG Prime Minister James Marape welcomed Albanese and said the

two leaders would meet later on Thursday to fine tune their relationship, including "support for the law and justice sector, including police, military exchanges."

Marape said the safety of both countries was intertwined.

He said Australia was more than just a bilateral partner and was a parent nation, because PNG had been under Australia's administration before gaining independence.

"One cannot talk about the Indo-Pacific without progressing the Papua New Guinea agenda because we are right in the heart and the centre of this

confluence, the Indo-Pacific confluence," Marape said.

"In order for PNG to participate in a safer Indo-Pacific region, Papua New Guinea herself must be stronger economically."

Albanese said he wanted to enhance trade between the two countries "in everything from coffee and cocoa to fisheries and tourism," and to work with PNG on nation-building projects including upgrading ports, roads and digital infrastructure.

Later on Thursday after the two leaders met, Albanese told reporters the discussions on the treaty had centred around increased defence cooperation and joint training of personnel, and the potential for joint operations.

Marape said the discussion had been all about the relationship with Australia.

"At no instance was China or any other nation brought into the picture," he said.

The tense relationship between Australia and China has thawed somewhat since Albanese's election victory in May 2022. Last month, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong met with her counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing for a new round of long-suspended China-Australia talks on foreign and strategic issues.

# US spies lag rivals in seizing on data hiding in plain sight

AP ■ WASHINGTON

As alarms began to go off globally about a novel coronavirus spreading in China, officials in Washington turned to the intelligence agencies for insights about the threat the virus posed to America.

But the most useful early warnings came not from spies or intercepts, according to a recent congressional review of classified reports from December 2019 and January 2020.

Officials were instead relying on public reporting, diplomatic cables and analysis from medical experts — some examples of so-called open source intelligence, or OSINT.

Predicting the next pandemic or the next government to fall will require better use of open source material, the review found.

"There is little indication that the Intelligence Community's exquisite collection capabilities were generating informa-



tion that was valuable to policymakers," wrote the authors of the review, conducted by Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee.

That echoes what many current and former intelligence officials are increasingly warning: The \$90 billion US spy apparatus is falling behind because it has not embraced collecting open-source intelligence as ad-

versaries including China ramp up their efforts.

This doesn't diminish the importance of traditional intelligence. Spy agencies have unique powers to penetrate global communications and cultivate agents. They scored a high-profile success when the Biden administration publicised ultimately correct intelligence findings that Russian President Vladimir Putin intended to invade Ukraine.

But officials and experts worry that the US hasn't invested enough people or money in analysing publicly available data or taking advantage of advanced technologies that can yield critical insights. Commercial satellite imagery, social media and other online data have given private companies and independent analysts new powers to reveal official secrets. And China is known to have stolen or acquired control over huge amounts of data on Americans, with growing concerns in Washington about Beijing's influence over widely used apps like TikTok.

# Storm-weary Californians clean up, brace for another torrent

AP ■ SANTA CRUZ

Laurie Morse shovelled wet sand into bags in the pouring rain Wednesday, preparing to stack them along her garage in a last ditch effort to keep out a rising creek on California's central coast, as the storm-ravaged state braced for another round of lashing rains and damaging winds.

Morse's roof was leaking, and along with her neighbours near Santa Cruz, she's spent every day of 2023 trying to figure out how to keep her house dry after an unrelenting onslaught of violent weather caused widespread damage over the past two weeks. Cars were submerged, trees uprooted and roofs blown off homes.

While the rain eased in many areas, thunderstorms led yet another atmospheric river into the northern half of the state and forecasters said the latest system would be followed by more storms this weekend and next week. From the San Francisco Bay Area down to Los Angeles, Californians had little time to rest between assessing damage from the last storm and preparing for the next.

Earlier this week, Morse and her fellow residents of tiny Rio Del Mar were ordered to



evacuate as hillsides collapsed and massive logs and stumps tumbled down the bloated Aptos Creek from the Santa Cruz mountains into the Monterey Bay.

Now they were scrambling to clean up while simultaneously stacking sandbags and hoping for the best as the rain got heavier.

"It's one step forward and two steps back right now," said Morse, 59, a disabled Army veteran. "There's so much damage already."

The plume of moisture lurking off the northern coast stretched all the way over the Pacific to Hawaii, making the atmospheric river "a true Pineapple Express," the National Weather Service said.

Michael Anderson, climatologist with the Department of Water Resources, said California

has been hit by seven storms since the end of December and two more slightly weaker ones were expected before the state gets a reprieve by the end of next week.

"The challenge is they're storms eight and nine in the sequence and the cumulative effect is likely to cause impacts larger than the storms themselves might cause," Anderson said.

At least 18 people have died in the storms battering the state. The figure is likely to rise, Gov. Gavin Newsom said Tuesday during a visit to the scenic town of Capitola, just up the Santa Cruz coast from Rio Del Mar, that was hard hit by flooding creek waters. Raging surf destroyed an iconic pier.

# Suspect in Abe assassination to face murder charge: Lawyer

AP ■ TOKYO

Japanese prosecutors are expected to formally charge the suspect in the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with murder on Friday, his lawyer said.

Tetsuya Yamagami was arrested immediately after allegedly shooting Abe with a handmade gun as the former leader was making a campaign speech in July outside a train station in Nara in western Japan.

Later that month, Yamagami was sent to an Osaka detention centre and given a five-month mental evaluation, which ended on Tuesday.

Public Notice  
NOTICE is hereby given that Mr. Surinder Kumar is owner of Plot land area measuring 7 Kanal 16 Marla 6 Sarsai out of total area measuring 18 Kanal 9 Marla, comprised in Khatwa No. 19, Khatwa No. 27, Mustali No. 58, Killa No. Killa No. 6/1(7-16), 16(4-2), Kila 2, Mustali No. 70, Killa No. 8/1(7-16), 16(4-2), Kila 2, situated at Village Khanda, Tehsil Sohna, District Gurgaon, Haryana by way of Transfer Deed dated 16.02.2020 Doc-8099 and Release Deed dated 16.02.2020, Doc-8206. Now, Mr. Surinder Kumar agreed to create mortgage in respect of the said property in favour of our client Profuctus Capital Private Limited (PCPL) & in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 07 days of this publication to Mr. Muneesh Chawar/ Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Ventus, Unit no 907, 9th Floor, GD-1/1, Tower, (B-08), Netaji Subhas Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9869670717/9861822836 (M)

Be it known to all that My Clients Bhim Sain S/o Ghasi Ram and Laxmi W/o Bhim Sain R/o M-282, Guru Harkishan Nagar, Paschim Vihar Delhi-67, have disowned their Sons Bharat Singh, Gopal, Vinod Kumar & Daughter in Laws Tanya W/o Bharat Singh, Shweta W/o Gopal, Lali W/o Vinod Kumar. from all their movable/immovable properties and severed all their relations both legal & social with them due to disrespectful behavior. Any person dealing with them shall be doing so at his/her own risk, and my clients shall not be responsible for the same.  
Sanjeev Dwivedi (Advocate)



# Ex-top Israeli legal officials oppose judicial overhaul

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Former top Israeli legal officials spoke out Thursday against sweeping changes to the country's justice system planned by the new conservative government, lending their voices to a growing outcry against the proposed overhaul.

Seven former attorneys general who have served in the post throughout the last five decades signed a letter of protest, along with four other former senior legal officials.

Three of the former attorneys general were appointed under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose current justice minister is spearheading the legal overhaul. The letter, published in Israeli media, denounced the proposed changes, saying they are destructive to the country's legal system.

"We call on the government to withdraw the proposed plan and prevent the serious harm to the justice system and the rule of law," the letter said.

The former officials said the

changes would turn the Supreme Court, often the last recourse for Israelis and Palestinians seeking to challenge what they see as discriminatory policies, into a "pseudo-political body that would be suspected of bending the law in favour of the government."

Israel's new government has made overhauling the country's legal system a centrepiece of its agenda. It wants to weaken the Supreme Court, allowing lawmakers to pass laws the court has struck down with a simple majority in parliament.

Other changes include politicising the appointment of judges, reducing the independence of government legal advisors or ignoring their counsel.

The legal changes could help Netanyahu, who is on trial for corruption, evade conviction, or even make his trial disappear entirely. Since being indicted in 2019, Netanyahu has railed publicly against the justice system, calling it biased against him. He says the legal overhaul will be carried out responsibly.

# 14 Malian soldiers killed by explosives in multiple attacks

AP ■ BAMAKO, MALI

Coordinated attacks by Islamic extremists have killed 14 Malian soldiers and wounded nearly a dozen, the army said.

Multiple improvised explosive devices detonated between Dia and Diarabare villages as well as between Koumara and Macina towns in central Mali, said Col Souleymane Demebele,

the director of public relations for the army, in a statement Wednesday.

During the same attacks, which occurred earlier this week, Mali's forces killed more than 30 "terrorists," Demebele said.

The West African nation has been riddled with violence linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group for a decade. Thousands of people have been killed.

# Lanka's top court orders ex-prez to pay 310 mn rupees in compensation for failing to prevent Easter attack



PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's Supreme Court Thursday ordered ex-president Maithripala Sirisena and four top former officials to pay a total of 310 million rupees as compensation to the victims of the 2019 Easter attack for their negligence in preventing the country's one of the worst terror strikes despite having credible intel of an imminent attack.

In its verdict, a seven-member bench of the apex court ruled that the respondents named in the petitions for failing to prevent the 2019 Easter Sunday attack had violated the fundamental rights of the petitioners.

The court ordered the then president Sirisena, who was also defence minister and commander in chief of the armed forces, to pay a compensation of 100 million rupees (USD 273,300) from his personal fund.

It also ordered former police chief Pujith Jayasundara and former state intelligence services chief Nilantha Jayawardene to pay a compensation of 75 million rupees (USD 204,975) each, former defence secretary Hemasiri Fernando to pay a compensation of 50 million rupees (USD 136,650) and former national intelligence service chief Sisira Mendis 10 million rupees (USD 27,330). The court said top officials failed to act on the detailed intelligence information shared by India to avert the deadly suicide bombings.

They have been ordered to pay from their personal funds to the victim fund maintained by the office of reparations. The apex court must be reported within 6 months on the payment of compensation. The bench said Easter Sun-

day was just a few weeks away when the intel about the imminent attack came from India. Still, the officials failed to show alertness or perceptiveness to carry out any measures to safeguard churches across the country. The bench also asked the state to take disciplinary action against Jayawardena.

Nine suicide bombers belonging to local Islamist extremist group National Thawheed Jamaat (NTJ) linked to ISIS carried out a series of devastating blasts that tore through three Catholic churches and as many luxury hotels on April 21, 2019, killing nearly 270 people, including 11 Indians, and injuring over 500. The attack stirred a political storm as the then President Sirisena and then Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe were blamed for their inability to prevent the attacks despite prior intelligence being made available.

As many as 12 petitioners, including the kin of the victims, the Catholic clergy, and the lawyers' body Bar Association of Sri Lanka, filed the fundamental rights petition against the then president for his negligence in preventing the attacks that proved fatal for the island nation's economy primarily dependent on tourism.

A presidential panel of inquiry appointed by Sirisena after the attacks ironically found the then-president guilty of his failure to prevent the attacks. Sirisena, however, pleaded not guilty to the charge in the case filed after the panel's findings.

The head of the local Catholic Church, Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith, continued to express his dissatisfaction over the probe in the matter, claiming that the investigation was a cover-up.

# ISIS claims responsibility for Kabul attack

AP ■ KABUL

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility on Thursday for a deadly bombing that killed at least five people near the Foreign Ministry in the Afghan capital the previous day.

The bombing was the second major attack in Kabul in 2023 and drew condemnation from the international community.

The extremist group said in a statement that a "martyrdom-seeker" it identified as Kheiber al-Qandahari detonated his explosive vest amidst a gathering of ministry employees and guards as they left through the ministry's main gate.

There was no immediate response from Afghanistan's Taliban rulers about the IS claim. Kabul police chief spokesman Khalid Zadran said on Wednesday that the explosion killed five civilians and that "a number of others were wounded" near the ministry.

The IS news outlet Amaq said the attack coincided with a



ministry training course for diplomats.

The extremists have increased their assaults since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021. Targets have included Taliban patrols and members of the country's Shiite minority. After Wednesday's attack, more than 40 wounded people were brought to a surgical centre in Kabul run by Emergency NGO, a humanitarian organisation.

Stefano Sozza, Emergency's director in Afghanistan, said at the time that he expected the number of casualties to rise.

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
NOTICE INVITING TENDER

<b>Name of Work and its Location:-</b>	30-Elect-69-T-2022-23-E3 Electrical work regarding Renovation of TPC Office (Remote Control Office), DRM Office, New Delhi.
<b>Approx Cost of the works in:-</b>	Rs. 29.33 Lacs
<b>Address of the Office:-</b>	Sr. Divil. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.
<b>Bid Security:-</b>	Rs. 58700.00
<b>Date &amp; time of submission of tender:-</b>	03.02.2023, 12.00 Hrs.
<b>Opening of tender:-</b>	03.02.2023, 12.00 Hrs.
<b>Website &amp; Notice Board:-</b>	<a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> & Sr. Divil. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.

**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE** 129/23

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE

The Sr. Divisional Engineer-III, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites E-Tender for the following work:

1	<b>Name of work :</b> Renewal to Platform surface, coping stone and widening of platform no. 16 for creating additional handling capacity for passengers at Delhi Main station in the jurisdiction of Sr.DEN-III/DLI
2	<b>Approx. cost of work :</b> Rs. 1,78,58,614.49 (Rupees One Crore Seventy Eight Lakh Fifty Eight Thousand Six Hundred Fourteen and Forty Nine paise Only)
3	<b>Earnest Money to be deposited :</b> Rs. 2,39,300/- (Rupees Two Lakh Thirty Nine Thousand Three Hundred Only)
4	<b>Cost of tender document :</b> Rs. 0.00/-
5	<b>Date &amp; Time of submission of tender bid and opening of tender :</b> 03.02.2023 at 15:00 Hrs.
6	<b>Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen :</b> <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a>
7	<b>Allocation :</b> 20536203

The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement system (IREPS) site i.e. [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for participating in the e-tender system.

For all terms and conditions please refer tender document.

No manual offers are acceptable.

Cost of tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only.

No.: 128-W/280/e Tender Notice/NIT/106/2022-23/W-3 Dated:- 12.01.2023 134/23

**Serving Customers with a Smile**

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
E-Tender Notice

Sr. DEE/EMU/GZB for and on behalf of President of India, Invites open e-tender under single packet system for the under noted work.

1	N.I.T No.	232-Elect-EMU-WC-11-22-23
2	Name of the work	Repair and maintenance of Toilet system in MEMU coaches consisting of various activities.
3	Tender cost	Rs. 00.00
4	Approximate cost	Rs. 16,47,280.00 inclusive of GST
5	Earnest Money	Rs. 33,000.00 (online payment mode available on IREPS website)
6	Completion period	24 Months
7	Validity of offer	60 days
8	Date & Time from tender advertised on IREPS website	11.01.2023 (17:01 Hrs.)
9	Date & Time from tender submission start and end	18.01.2023 to 01.02.2023 (15:00 Hrs.)
10	Tender closing Date & Time	01.02.2023 (15:00 Hrs.)
11	Date & Time of tender Opening (immediately when tender submission ends)	01.02.2023 (15:00 Hrs.)
12	Publication cost allocation	06041132

**Note 1:** All participant Tenderer/Tenderers will submit their requisite documents along with their tender offer. "No post tender correspondence for submission of additional document shall be entertained after opening of the Technical & Commercial offer. Even suo-moto post tender letters of the tenderers shall be treated as null & void".

**Note 2:** Duplicate documents should not be enclosed/uploaded.

Tender Notice is available on website of [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

232-Elect-EMU-WC-11-22-23 Date: 12.01.2023 139/2023

**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE

The Sr. Divisional Engineer-III, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites E-Tender for the following work:

1.	<b>Name of work</b>	Provision of PF shelter and other allied work at ANVT station.
2.	<b>Approx cost of work</b>	Rs. 1,92,57,050.26 (Rupees One Crore Ninety Two Lakh Fifty Seven Thousand Fifty and Twenty Six paise Only)
3.	<b>Earnest Money to be deposited</b>	Rs. 2,46,300/- (Rupees Two Lakh Forty Six Thousand Three Hundred Only)
4.	<b>Cost of tender document</b>	Rs. 0.00/-
5.	<b>Date &amp; Time of submission of tender bid and opening of tender</b>	03.02.2023 at 15:00 Hrs.
6.	<b>Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen</b>	<a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a>

The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement System (IREPS) site i.e. [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for participating in the e-tender system. • For all terms and conditions please refer tender document. • No manual offers are acceptable. • Cost of tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only.

No.: 128-W/280/e Tender Notice/NIT/104/2022-23/W-3  
Dated: 12.01.2023

**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE** 131/23

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. DEE/EMU/GZB for and on behalf of President of India, Invites open e-tender for the under noted work:

1	<b>GeM Bid Number</b>	GEM/2023/B/2974752 Dated:11.01.2023
2	<b>Name of the Work</b>	Management Cleaning bed attending of running room round the clock 24x7 and other associated work at EMU Car Shed Ghaziabad.
3	<b>Tender Cost</b>	NIL
4	<b>Approximate Cost</b>	Rs. 21,36,909.80 inclusive of GST
5	<b>Earnest Money</b>	Rs. 42,740.00 (payment mode available on GeM website)
6	<b>Completion Period</b>	24 Months
7	<b>Validity of Offer</b>	90 days
8	<b>Date &amp; Time from tender advertised on GeM website</b>	11.01.2023
9	<b>Date &amp; Time from tender submission start and end</b>	11.01.2023 to 02.02.2023 (11:00 Hrs.)
10	<b>Tender Closing Date &amp; Time</b>	02.02.2023 (11:00 Hrs.)
11	<b>Date &amp; Time of tender Opening (immediately when tender submission ends)</b>	02.02.2023 (11:30 Hrs.)
12	<b>Publication cost allocation</b>	06041132

**Note 1:** All participant Tenderer/ Tenderers will submit their requisite documents along with their tender offer. "No post tender correspondence for submission of additional document shall be entertained after opening of the Technical & Commercial offer. Even suo-moto post tender letters of the tenderers shall be treated as null & void".

**Note 2:** Duplicate documents should not be enclosed/uploaded. Tender Notice is available on website of [www.geM.gov.in](http://www.geM.gov.in)

GEM/2023/B/2974752 Date: 11.01.2023

**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE** 138/23



# ‘Industrial production rises 7.1% in Nov’

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's industrial production growth rose to a five-month high of 7.1 per cent in November on the back of better showing by manufacturing, according to official data released on Thursday.

The rise in the factory output measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) comes after a contraction of 4.2 per cent in October. The previous high was recorded in June 2022 at 12.6 per cent.

As per the IIP data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), the manufacturing sector's output grew by 6.1 per cent in November 2022.

The mining output rose by 9.7 per cent from 4.9 per cent in November 2021. The growth in power generation increased by 12.7 per cent in November 2022 compared to 2.1 per cent in the year-ago month.

As per the use-based clas-



sification, the capital goods segment recorded an impressive growth of 20.7 per cent in November against a decline of 2.6 per cent in the corresponding month of the last fiscal.

Consumer durables and consumer non-durables recorded growth rates of 5.1 per cent and 8.9 per cent respectively. Both these segments reported contraction in November 2021.

Infrastructure/construction goods too posted healthy

growth of 12.8 per cent as against 3.1 per cent in the same month of 2021.

The data also showed that the output of primary goods and intermediate goods improved by 4.7 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively in November 2022.

In the nine months of the fiscal (April-November), the growth in the IIP works out to be 5.5 per cent, down from 17.6 per cent in the year-ago period.

## Retail inflation falls to one year low of 5.72% in December

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation declined to a one-year low of 5.72 per cent in December 2022, mainly due to softening prices of food items, according to official data released on Thursday.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) based retail inflation was at 5.88 per cent in November 2022 and 5.66 per cent in December 2021.

As per the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), inflation in the food basket was at 4.19 per cent in December as against 4.67 per cent in November.

After remaining above the Reserve Bank of India's upper tolerance threshold of 6 per cent since January 2022, retail inflation declined in November to 5.88 per cent and further in December to 5.72 per cent -- its lowest level in one year.

# EoI for ₹17,000cr transshipment port in Nicobar Islands by Jan-end

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The Kolkata port on Thursday said an Expression of Interest (EoI) for the country's first mega container transshipment port at Galathea Bay in Great Nicobar Islands is expected to be floated by January-end, a senior official said.

There is no large container transshipment port in India and all international container cargo has to go to Colombo, Singapore and Port Klang in Malaysia.

"This Rs 17,000 crore port will help transshipment of cargo from the entire east coast of India as well as from Bangladesh and Myanmar," P L Haranadh, Chairman of Syama Prasad Mookherjee Port, Kolkata (SMPK), formerly Kolkata Port Trust, said here.

Union Minister of State for Port and Shipping Shantanu Thakur paid a visit to Andaman and Nicobar Island recently to preview develop-

ment activities planned for the islanders with port-related infrastructure.

Haranadh said, "The government is planning to build a container transshipment port at the southernmost tip of Andaman and Nicobar Islands at Galathea Bay. SMPK will float an EoI from interested investors by the end of January."

The transshipment port would enable big ships to anchor and raise India's share in maritime trade, create new job opportunities and save a lot of forex, officials stated.

"The EoI will help us seek their feedback from global port operators, maritime service majors and shipping liners. After this process, a detailed Detailed Project report will be prepared for the project for seeking bids," Haranadh told reporters after a stakeholders meeting.

SMPK Deputy Chairman A K Mehra said a draft project was sent to the Centre for approval and once that comes,



EoI will be floated.

In the first phase, the length of the jetty will be 1.6 kilometres and will have a capacity of 4.3 million TeUs (Tonne equivalent) containers. Later, it would be ramped up to 16 million TeUs over the years.

India has an International Container Transshipment Terminal at Kochi in Kerala but it has not taken off as expected, Mehra said adding that its scale is much lower than the proposed port in the Nicobar Islands.

Asked whether SMPK will

be the executing agency for the project, officials stated that now the port has been asked to float the EoI, prepare a detailed project report and seek requests for proposals.

The natural depth available at Galathea Bay will be 20 meters. It will offer two geographical advantages -- proximity to the busy east-west international shipping route that can facilitate shorter transits and greater economies of scale, along with deep natural water depths that can accommodate the latest generation of mega-ships.

# NCLT directs Rel Cap lenders, administrator to reply on Torrent Investments' plea by Jan 16

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Thursday asked insolvency-bound Reliance Capital's lenders and administrator to file a response by January 16 on Torrent Investments' plea to halt their plans to hold a fresh auction for better realisation.

Torrent Investments -- one of the bidders for the Anil Ambani-promoted Reliance Capital -- has offered Rs 8,640 crore to acquire the firm through the insolvency process.

Earlier this week, Torrent Investments approached the tribunal seeking a stay on the Committee of Creditors' voting to hold a second round of 'Challenge Mechanism' or e-auction for the bidders.

Torrent Investments, rep-

resented by Mukul Rohatgi, told the Mumbai bench of NCLT that their bid of Rs 8,640 crore was above the threshold and the matter ended there.

However, on January 7, the Committee of Creditors (CoC) informed that they want to start a fresh round of auction, he stated.

"The extension of 'Challenge Mechanism' is not permissible," Rohatgi added.

Darius Khambata, also representing Torrent Investments, stated that this whole process is unfair and the Rs 8,640 crore bid was in compliance with the 'Challenge Mechanism'.

After hearing Torrent Investments' plea, the tribunal comprising Pradeep Narhari Deshmukh and Shyam Babu Gautam asked the CoC and the administrator to file a reply by



Monday (January 16).

Under the first 'Challenge Mechanism', the threshold bids amounted to Rs 6,500 crore, while the highest net present value (NPV) offered by applicants was Rs 7,210 crore.

By the time of the second round, the threshold was Rs 7,500 crore, and the highest NPV was Rs 7,620 crore.

In the third round, the threshold was Rs 8,500 crore,

while the highest NPV was Rs 8,550 crore.

But by the end of the fourth round, the threshold, which was Rs 9,000 crore received the highest NPV of Rs 8,640 crore.

Kapil Sibal, on behalf of the CoC, said the Torrent Investments bid in the third round was 'suboptimal' and 'factually incorrect' as it was less than the threshold.

# Sebi bans three entities from securities market for insider trading activities

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi has slapped penalties totalling Rs 15 lakh on three entities and also barred them from the securities markets for one year for flouting insider trading rules with respect to the shares of Veeram Securities Ltd (VSL).

The regulator has imposed a fine of Rs 5 lakh each on entities -- Rakshit Mahendrabhai Shah HUF, Rakshit Mahendra Shah and Pinal Rakshitbhai Shah.

Besides, the entities have been directed to disgorge a total amount of Rs 90.94 lakh along with a 12 per cent annual interest from January 2017 till the date of actual payment.

The present proceedings emanate from a show cause notice issued in May 2021 to the entities wherein it was



prima facie found that they had executed contra-trades in the scrip of VSL during January to March 2018 period. This was in violation of the Code of Conduct of PIT (Prohibition of Insider Trading) rules.

In its final order passed on Wednesday, Sebi said the entities executed contra-trades in VSL shares within a period of six months of their prior transaction and thereby violated minimum standards of code of conduct under PIT norms.

According to the regulator, VSL had appointed Mahhendrabhai Ramniklal Shah as the compliance officer of the firm but he was not qualified to become the compliance officer.

"Therefore, I find that the contention of the entities that they had the waiver from the compliance officer of VSL for carrying out the contra-trades, is not sustainable," Sebi's Whole Time Member (WTM) Ananta Barua said in the order.

The regulator had also issued a warning to the entities for executing contra-trades and directed them to deposit the profit accrued out of such trades in Sebi-Investor Protection and Education Fund (Sebi-IPEF).

However, the entities failed to deposit the profits accrued out of the contra-trades in Sebi IPEF, as per the order.

## Sebi issues ₹6.48-cr demand notice to Sahara Group firm



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi on Thursday sent a Notice to Sahara Group firm Sahara Housing Investment Corporation, its chief Subrata Roy, and others, asking them to pay Rs 6.48 crore within 15 days in a case pertaining to flouting regulatory norms.

Also, the regulator warned of attachment of assets and bank accounts, if they fail to make the payment.

# Vegetable oils import rises 28% in Dec to 15.66 lakh tonnes

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's imports of vegetable oils, comprising edible and non-edible oils, rose 28 per cent to 15.66 lakh tonnes in December, driven by higher shipments of refined palmolein and crude palm oil.

In a statement, the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) said the import of vegetable oils during December 2022 stood at 15,66,129 tonnes compared to 12,26,686 tonnes a year ago.

As per the data, the import of edible or cooking oils increased to 15,55,780 tonnes from 12,16,863 tonnes, while the shipments of non-edible oils rose to 10,349 tonnes from 9,832 tonnes.

In the edible oil category, the import of refined (RBD) palmolein surged to 2,56,398



tonnes in December 2022 from only 24,000 tonnes in the year-ago period. The imports of crude palm oil (CPO) rose to 8,43,849 tonnes against 5,28,143 tonnes.

The vegetable oil year runs from November to October.

During November-December 2022, the import of vegetable oils increased by 30 per cent to 31,11,669 tonnes compared to 24,00,433 tonnes in the corresponding period of the previous year.

The imports of refined palmolein and CPO (crude palm

oil) increased sharply during November-December 2022.

The data showed that 4,58,646 tonnes of refined oils (all of its RBD palmolein) were imported during November-December 2022 compared to 82,267 tonnes in the year-ago period. Similarly, SEA said that 26,25,894 tonnes of crude oil were imported in the last two months compared to 22,73,419 tonnes in November-December 2021.

As a result, the share of refined oils jumped to 15 per cent from 3 per cent while crude oils share declined to 85 per cent from 97 per cent compared to the previous year.

Indonesia and Malaysia are the major suppliers of RBD Palmolein and Crude Palm Oil to India. The country imports soyabean oil from Argentina and Brazil.

## ₹ gains 38 paise to close at 81.30 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee gained 38 paise to close at 81.30 against the US dollar on Thursday, tracking the overall weakness in the American currency.

However, a muted trend in domestic equities and sustained foreign fund outflows capped the gains in the rupee, traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened strong at 81.54, but lost ground to quote an intraday low of 81.74 against the greenback. It finally ended at 81.30, registering a rise of 38 paise over its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee settled at 81.68 against the US dollar. "Rupee consolidated in a narrow range, and volatility remained low ahead of CPI numbers from India and US," said Forex & Bullion Analyst.

# All measures being taken to boost coal production in next season, says coal secy

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The power sector has been supplied more coal than the committed quantity and all-possible measures are being taken to augment the production of dry fuel in the next season also, a top official said on Thursday.

Speaking with reporters here, Coal Secretary Amrit Lal Meena said that the coal ministry has plans to supply more dry fuel to the power sector by March 31 and stressed that all coal companies are producing generally more than their target.

"Wherever there are issues in terms of land availability, forest clearances, logistics...We are having meetings with all stakeholders," he explained.

On the recent directive of

the power ministry to the generating companies to import coal, the secretary said it is a precautionary measure.

The power ministry has asked genscos to ensure the timely import of coal as it anticipates a supply shortfall of 24 million tonnes in dry fuel during April-September 2023.

"In power generation, the growth is more than 10 per cent from April to December and in the thermal segment it is 11.4 per cent. Though our coal production is also 15-16 per cent since the requirement of power has gone up much beyond what was expected therefore as a matter of abundance caution government has taken this precautionary measure," he explained.

The power ministry has



asked genscos to use imported coal to the extent of 6 per cent of their requirement.

"Power minister has set a target that we should try and see that about 45 million tonnes should be the closing stock at the thermal power end by the end of this 31 March. Though efforts are on since consumption has gone

up...Because of the factors you are aware of...So our endeavour is to achieve the target set up by the minister but this has posed a challenge," he explained.

The minister, he said, has also desired that by the end of March 31, 2023, the coal companies should have 65 million tonnes at its pit-head.

# Alibaba sells nearly half of its direct stake in Paytm

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chinese conglomerate Alibaba is learnt to have sold a 3.1 per cent stake - nearly half of its direct shareholding - in digital financial services firm One97 Communications in an indication of exiting the Indian market, sources said on Wednesday.

However, Alibaba group firm Ant Financial has not diluted its stake in Paytm and continues to hold 25 per cent of the company.

"There was a big movement in Paytm's stock today as a block deal took place where 2,59,930 shares were sold at Rs 535.90 worth 13.93 crore rupees. Chinese group Alibaba is behind the deal, selling up to 3.1 per cent of its total equity of about 6 per cent," a source closely watching the development at Paytm told PTI.

The development follows



Alibaba's stake sale in BigBasket and Zomato.

"Alibaba seems to be making an exit from India as it has sold shares in other investments," the source said.

The company's shares closed at Rs 542.25 apiece on the BSE.

Paytm's shares have been gaining after its associate Paytm Payments Bank received the RBI approval to appoint Surinder Chawla as its Managing Director and CEO. Email queries sent to Alibaba and One97 Communications did not elicit any immediate reply.

# Sensex, Nifty fall for 3rd day amid caution ahead of key inflation data

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty declined for a third straight day on Thursday as investors turned cautious ahead of release of key inflation and industrial production data.

In a choppy trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 147.47 points or 0.25 per cent to settle at 59,958.03 as 15 of its constituents ended with losses. During the day, it declined 473.18 points or 0.78 per cent to 59,632.32.

The broader NSE Nifty fell 37.50 points or 0.21 per cent to close at 17,858.20.

Sensex lost 789 points or 1.3 per cent while Nifty declined by 243 points or 1.58 per cent to trade below the 18,000 level in three sessions to Thursday.

From the Sensex pack,

Reliance Industries fell the most by 2.11 per cent. Axis Bank dropped 1.54 per cent, Tata Motors 1.4 per cent, Kotak Mahindra Bank y 1.26 per cent, Bharti Airtel 1.12 per cent and Bajaj Finserv by 0.87 per cent. Asian Paints, ICICI Bank, Tata Steel and ITC were among the major laggards.

UltraTech Cement rose the most by 1.81 per cent, Larsen & Toubro by 1.66 per cent, and HCL Technologies 1.62 per cent. Maruti, Nestle and HDFC were among the major winners.

Infosys, which declared its results after market hours, rose by 0.62 per cent. Infosys posted a 13.4 per cent year-on-year increase in consolidated net profit to Rs 6,586 crore for the December quarter and raised its full year revenue guidance to 16-16.5 per cent.

"The domestic market con-



tinued to remain volatile as investors eagerly awaited the earnings of other IT majors after a cautious warning from TCS. FIIs continue to dump Indian equities in search of cheaper investment avenues. Uncertainties over upcoming inflation numbers at home and the US kept the domestic market unstable, even as western peers stayed optimistic," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Markets traded volatile and ended marginally lower on the weekly expiry day. After the flat start, the tone was negative for most of the session however rebound in the final hours trimmed the losses, Ajit Mishra, VP - Technical Research, Religare Broking said.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.24 per cent and smallcap index went lower by 0.02 per cent.

# India expected to become USD 7 trillion economy in seven years: CEA

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said that the Indian economy will be USD 3.5 trillion at current prices by the end of the 2022-23 fiscal and is expected to be USD 7 trillion in the next seven years.

The government had previously said India would become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025.

Speaking at a recent MCCI event, Nageswaran had virtually said that the calendar year 2023 began in the context of the continuing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which will "create geo-political and geo-economic uncertainties".

The other major aspect is the opening up of China after two years of the pandemic and its impact on the world economy, particularly on retreating



oil and commodity prices and also on the growth of the advanced economies of the US and Europe.

He mentioned that India's GDP will be USD 3.5 trillion at current prices at the end of 2022-23.

"Indian economy will be USD 7 trillion in the next seven years, which is not impossible," Nageswaran said.

The CEA also said the most important issue is that the US is expected to lower its interest rates in 2024 or 2025, which will have an impact on the Indian rupee.



# PERFECT 10 FOR INDIA

## India win 2nd match by four wickets to register 10th straight ODI series win against Sri Lanka

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Under-fire KL Rahul made amends for his poor run of form as he anchored India's series clinching four-wicket victory over Sri Lanka in the second ODI with a dogged 64 on a tricky Eden Gardens track.

Snubbed time and again by Indian think-tank, Kuldeep Yadav proved his mettle yet another time as he formed a lovely bowling alliance with pacer Mohammed Siraj to demolish Sri Lanka for 215 inside 40 overs after they opted to bat.

The paltry chase on the quick Eden outfield however was not a cakewalk for Indian team, which lost its top-four batters for 86 runs in 14.2 overs.

Needing 130 from 214 balls, Rahul was the only designated batter left as he once again proved his utility in the middle overs with an unbeaten 64 off 103 balls that took India home with 40 balls to spare.

While there was a bit of seam movement on offer and ball from spinners gripping a bit, to be fair, there was no scoreboard pressure on the home team. The win also gave India an unassailable 2-0 series lead going into the Trivandrum ODI on Sunday.

"I won't say it was a flat wicket, or it was doing a lot that it was impossible to bat. When Sri Lanka started, I thought it was a 280-300 wicket," Rahul said after the match.

Having started off with a boundary, Rahul was quick to slow down as he ran hard for his singles en route to a 93-ball fifty.

The need of the hour was to play sensibly as Rahul and Har-

dik Pandya curbed their natural strokeplay in a decisive 75-run partnership that came off 119 balls. It was also a different Pandya (36; 53b) on display as he took time and gave Rahul a perfect support. Pandya however departed against the run of play, leaving 55 runs required from 95 balls.

India earlier endured some tense moments inside the powerplay when Rohit Sharma (17) and Shubman Gill (21) departed in four deliveries after an attacking start, while Virat Kohli (4) became the third casualty to be 63/2 in 9.3 overs.

Rohit took a faint edge behind the stumps to be dismissed by Karunaratne. In the next over Shubman Gill, who wowed the packed Eden crowd with his delectable cover drives, had a soft dismissal giving a straight catch to Avishka Fernando at short midwicket off Lahiru Kumara. The pacer, who replaced an injured Dilshan Madushanka (dislocated shoulder), was all charged up when he cleaned up the last match centurion Kohli with a delivery that jaggd back in.

More anxiety was in store as India were reduced to 86/4 in 14.2 overs when Shreyas Iyer was dismissed leg before by a ball going down the leg.

However, Rahul, relishing his role as a No. 5 was never in tearing hurry as he anchored the chase to perfection. He needed one good stand and in vice-captain Hardik Pandya (36) he got an able ally as they put up 75 runs. "The good thing about batting at No. 5 is you don't have to rush. You can take a shower, put your feet up and watch the game. But I always think what



team needs of me. If you can read the situation when you go in, it helps you and team. Batting at No. 5 has helped me understand my game better," Rahul said.

### KULDEEP SHINES THROUGH

Treated as disposable time and again by the current Indian

team management, Kuldeep Yadav once again displayed his skills with the ball and required calmness with the bat in his two boundaries towards end of the chase.

The left-arm wrist spinner, who was mysteriously left out after a five-wicket haul in his comeback Test against Bangladesh in Chattogram last

month, got a surprise call-up after leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal pulled out with a "sore right shoulder".

Kuldeep (3/51) answered the call grabbing three wickets in his first five overs, in a spell that triggered Sri Lankan collapse from being 102/1 just when it seemed that debutant Nuwanidu Fernando (50 from

## KL's advice to bowl hard lengths worked for me: Siraj

PTI ■ KOLKATA

India pace bowler Mohammed Siraj credited his success on Thursday in the second ODI against Sri Lanka to KL Rahul's accurate reading of the Eden Gardens strip and conditions during the second ODI here on Thursday.

Sri Lanka were bundled out for 215 in just 39.4 overs with Siraj and Kuldeep accounting for three wickets each as the visitors found the going tough on a batting track.

Siraj, who played a vital role in the opening ODI at Guwahati taking two wickets as Sri Lanka lost the opener by 67 runs, said during the innings break on Thursday that Rahul noticed that the ball had stopped doing its bit after only the first over and that a new strategy would have to be employed against the experienced batting order.

And that was to bowl hard lengths.

"The ball wasn't coming



out quick enough, and there wasn't enough swing. So the plan was to bowl stump to stump to keep the pressure from one end, hoping to get wickets and help the other bowlers," said Siraj, who had figures of 3/30 in 5.4 overs.

The play worked and it not just helped Siraj jolt Sri Lanka Avishka Fernando (20), it created enough pressure on the visitors for Kuldeep Yadav to come later on and reap a rich harvest with his wrist spin.

"KL (Rahul) told me it stopped swinging after one over, so I switched over to hard lengths. It is a good batting wicket but Kuldeep bowled very well to cause a middle-order collapse," added Siraj.

Siraj added that with the outfield extremely pacey, batters can flourish provided they play the ball on it merit.

"The outfield is very quick so the message to the batters is just watch and play the ball," said Siraj.

Replacing in-form opener Pathum Nissanka (stiff back), youngster Nuwanindu Fernando looked solid and hit a splendid half-century on debut in a 73-run partnership with Kusal Mendis (34).

The Indian new ball bowlers Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj swung both ways and got some early movement.

## Australia pulls out from Afghanistan ODI series



PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Cricket Australia (CA) on Thursday announced it has withdrawn from the upcoming ODI series against Afghanistan, saying it is "unable to proceed" with the fixture amid Taliban's growing restrictions on women and girls.

Australia were slated to take on Afghanistan in a three-match ODI series as part of the ICC Super League in UAE in March following their tour of India.

However, after "extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the

Australian Government", the CA decided to abandon the fixture.

"Cricket Australia has decided that it is unable to proceed at this time with the upcoming ICC Super League three-match Men's ODI series between Australia and Afghanistan scheduled for the UAE in March 2023," CA said in a statement.

"This decision follows the recent announcement by the Taliban of further restrictions on women's and girls' education and employment opportunities and their ability to access parks and gyms.

"CA is committed to supporting grow-

ing the game for women and men around the world, including in Afghanistan, and will continue to engage with the Afghanistan Cricket Board in anticipation of improved conditions for women and girls in the country," it added. Since seizing back control of the war-torn country in August 2021, the Taliban have steadily restricted women's rights - despite promising their rule this time would be softer than the regime seen in the 1990s. Women were banned from attending university and working for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) last month.

Afghanistan is the only ICC full member nation without a women's team, and won't have a team at the inaugural Women's U19 T20 World Cup starting on Saturday.

By withdrawing from the March fixture, Australia will forfeit 30 competition points which will be awarded to Afghanistan.

However, the points will be of little importance as Australia have already qualified for the ODI World Cup later this year in India. This is not the first time CA has taken a strong stance against the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan due to its policies against women. Australia had indefinitely postponed the one-off Test against the South Asian nation slated to be played in Hobart in November 2021.

The two teams are scheduled to meet twice more in the next couple of years with three T20Is scheduled for a neutral venue in August 2024, followed by Afghanistan's tour of Australia in August 2026 for one Test and three T20Is.

## India seek first podium finish in 48 years

PTI ■ ROURKELA

A historic bronze medal in the Tokyo Olympics bringing them back among the international elite, India will seek their first podium finish in 48 years in the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup as they begin their campaign against Spain in a tricky match here on Friday.

A medal in this showcase will strengthen the claim that the former giants of the game with eight Olympic gold have turned the corner in world hockey.

The country won a bronze in the inaugural tournament in 1971 and clinched a silver in the next edition in 1973. Ajit Pal Singh led the side to title triumph in 1975 but since then they have failed to even reach the semifinals. From 1978 to 2014, India could not go past the group stage.

The Indian team, no doubt, would be one of the medal contenders with the talented bunch led by Harmanpreet Singh emerging as a force to reckon with. The team has earned respect from other top countries in recent times.

Currently ranked sixth in the world, India have come into



the tournament after an impressive show against the world number one side Australia in an away five-match series though they lost the rubber 1-4.

Graham Reid's side matched the Australians, one of the favourites to win the World Cup, in most departments of the game, notching up their first win in six years against their formidable opponents.

In the previous edition, also held in Bhubaneswar, India had exited at the quarterfinal stage after losing to the Netherlands, the eventual runners-up, and

they would be looking to reach at least the semifinals this time.

India have also done well in the FIH Hockey Pro League, finishing third in the 2021-22 season. The confidence and the winning mentality is back with the team.

Since Reid took over the head coach's position in 2019, India's stature has grown. He has been able to get the best out of the players, injecting a tactical discipline to their trademark skillful, fluid playing style, making them a team that is respected and feared in equal measure.

Captain and FIH Player of the Year Harmanpreet Singh, a fabulous defender and one of the best drag flickers in the game, will be key to India's success while goalkeeper PR Sreejesh, mid-field ace Manpreet Singh and Hardik Singh, and striker Mandeep Singh are all capable of bringing 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 India players to watch out for.



## Prannoy enters Malaysia Open QF, Satwik-Chirag too win

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Star Indian shuttler HS Prannoy dished out another splendid show to progress to the men's singles quarter-finals with a thrilling win over Indonesia's Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo in the Malaysia Open Super 750 tournament here on Thursday.

The World No. 8 Indian looked in fine fettle as he staved off the spirited challenge from World No. 19 Chico 21-9, 15-21, 21-16 in an hour and four minutes. The 30-year-old from Kerala will take on either Malaysia's Ng Tze Yong or Japan's Kodai Naraoka next.

World No. 5 Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, seeded seventh, also entered

the men's doubles quarter-finals after beating Muhammad Shohibul Fikri and Bagas Maulana of Indonesia 21-19, 22-20 in 49 minutes.

Earlier, Commonwealth Games bronze medallists Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand fought hard before going down 13-21, 21-15, 17-21 to Bulgaria's Gabriela Stoeva and Stefani Stoeva in the women's doubles pre-quarterfinals.

For Prannoy, it was his second meeting with Chico, who had defeated him at the 2018 Syed Modi International.

Treasa and Gayatri will meet the French duo of Margot Lambert and Anne Tran in their next tournament at India Open Super 750 next week.

PTI ■ KALYANI

### Bengal lose three in chase of 177 against Baroda

Bengal will have to show a lot of composure if they hope to defeat Baroda with the hosts -- three down for 53 in their pursuit of a tricky target of 177 in a Ranji Trophy Group A match at the end of third day.

On an eventful third day when 14 wickets fell, Bengal's first innings wound up at 191 after just two runs were added to their overnight score.

They then had their seamers Mukesh Kumar (4/43) and Ishan Porel (3/22) to thank for dismissing Baroda for a paltry 98 in the second innings.

Coming in to bat for the second time, Bengal found themselves in hot waters, losing the entire top order comprising opener Abhishek Das (7), India A skipper Abhimanyu Easwaran (9) and Anustup Majumdar (9) cheaply, leaving them in a precarious situation of 53 for three, and a target of 187 looking like an insurmountable task.

With skipper Manoj Tiwary -- a veteran of 135 first-class games, who is nearing the 10,000-run milestone -- still to come and Sudip Gharami holding one end up with an unbeat-



en 28, Bengal can still turn around their reverses but they will have to bat with a lot of conviction on the final day.

Earlier, Baroda, following their 269 in the first innings, found the going tough in the second essay managing just one score in double digits. Pratyush Kumar's workmanlike unbeaten 62 off 149 deliveries and the diligence he showed while facing Mukesh and Porel was the talking point at the Bengal Cricket Academy Ground.

The 27-year-old opener,

playing only his eighth first-class game, kept his attacking instinct in check to reach his half century and remained unbeaten till he ran out of partners.

### Mandeep, Gurnoor ensure first innings lead for Punjab against J&K

Veteran skipper Mandeep Singh and young Gurnoor Brar hit half centuries as Punjab took a vital first innings lead of 46 runs against Jammu and Kashmir in a Group D Ranji Trophy match here Thursday.

Jammu and Kashmir start-

ed the third day's play at 176 for six and their first innings folded for 212 in 54.1 overs. The first two days of the match were heavily affected by poor weather.

Baltej Singh, who had taken a match haul of 11 wickets against Gujarat in an earlier game, once again was the pick of bowlers with figures of 5 for 47 in 15.1 overs while veteran Siddharth Kaul grabbed 4 for 82.

Jammu and Kashmir

104 balls) and Gurnoor (64 off 60 balls) added 100 runs to ensure at least three points for Punjab from the game. Their first innings ended at 268.

Gurnoor took the attack back to J&K camp, with five fours and three sixes.

At the end of the day, J&K had lost senior opener Shubham Khajuria to Baltej with the scorecard reading 18 for 1.

### Shorey shines bright for Delhi, Andhra players resort to face masks on field amid air pollution

Dhruv Shorey continued to be the shining light in an otherwise dull Ranji Trophy campaign for Delhi as the opener struck his third hundred of the season to put his side on course towards gaining a potentially decisive first innings lead against Andhra here on Thursday.

Shorey (142 batting) put his team in a solid position with the help of Hrithik Shokeen (45) and Himmat Singh (45 batting).

Shorey is now leading the run-scorers chart this season with 744 runs and a few more expected to come on fourth morning.

Fading light forced an early stumps as Delhi reached 300 for four in 93 overs, trailing Andhra

by 159 runs. The visitors had made 459 for nine in their first innings.

It was another cold morning at the Arjun Jaitley Stadium and the air pollution made matters worse, especially for Andhra. Two of their players, Ricky Bhui and C R Gnaneshwar were wearing masks on the field.

As a smoggy sky made way bright sunshine, Shorey came into his elements. The 30-year-old, who had made 252 and 150 against Assam, played some exquisite shots on way to reaching three figures.

He was guilty to being stuck on 99 for a bit too long which also led to the run out of Vaibhav Rawal (25). Shorey finally reached the milestone with a flick off left-arm spinner Lalith Mohan. His unbeaten effort comprised 12 boundaries and a six.

With only one day left, getting the first innings lead will be decisive in the game and Delhi would be hoping that Shorey and Himmat extend their unbeaten 90-run partnership.

Delhi, who have witnessed frequent breakdown of their players this season, are already out of the contention for a spot in the knock-out phase.





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