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WORLD 9

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MONEY 10

STARTUPS WITNESS DECLINE IN HIRING; STRUGGLE WITH ATTRITION: STUDY

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY JANUARY 17, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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## BJP aims to win all 9 States in semis before 2024 final

Party Executive slams Opp leaders for abusive language against PM; Nadda hails Modi for putting India at global polity centre stage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a call to party organisations to win all nine States going to the polls this year as a prelude to the Lok Sabha poll 2024, BJP president JP Nadda on Monday informed the delegates in the BJP National Executive that the party had strengthened 1,30,000 booths identified as "weak".

He also lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi for "putting the country at the centre stage of the global polity" and making it as the fifth largest economy "surpassing England". After a long deliberation, BJP leader Kiren Rijju proposed a political resolution at the meeting, accusing the Opposition of using abusive language in the campaign against Modi. The resolution cited nine issues, including Rafale, Pegasus and demonetisation, and cited Supreme Court's verdicts "exposing" Opposition's "negative campaigning".



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with BJP president JP Nadda during the BJP National Executive meeting at NDMC Convention Centre in New Delhi on Monday

Briefing news persons after the political resolution proposed by Rijju and seconded by the two Deputy CMs of UP and Karnataka was adopted, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the National Executive lauded the Prime Minister and congratulated him for the party "legally" winning the cases and rejecting the regular "negative campaign" by the Opposition. The other issues and cases listed by the BJP where Modi was targeted and rejected by the courts included "EWS

reservation, demonetisation and Central Vista." The resolution credited Modi for elevating "band value" of India globally with the Bali G-20 communiqué quoting the Prime Minister saying "this is not an era of war" and world leaders accepting his line of need to bring reforms in the United Nations. It also discussed the "historic win" in Gujarat where the BJP converted "anti-incumbency to pro-incumbency" which would have an impact on all the upcoming nine

Assembly polls in the year, she said. Earlier, delivering his inaugural address to the two-day meeting of the National Executive that commenced here at the NDMC centre, Nadda said the Prime Minister has brought back the glory of Indian heritage by back by building and renovating temple corridors and also moved the country away from the "slave colonial mentality" by changing 70 year old 'Rajpath' to 'Kartavya Path'.

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## Rijju's 'Govt nominee in collegium' letter stirs row

Letter in line with SC judgment, says Law Minister; Opp alleges Govt trying to browbeat courts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Law Minister Kiren Rijju on Monday claimed that his letter to Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud seeking Government representation in Collegium was a "precise follow-up action" suggested by the apex court while striking down the NJAC Act.

But his clarification did little to assuage outraged Opposition leaders who claimed that Rijju letter to the Chief Justice was part of the Modi Government's attempt to "intimidate" the judiciary. "The VP's assaults. All this is orchestrated confrontation with the judiciary to intimidate and thereafter capture it totally. The collegium needs reform. But what this Government wants is complete subservience. Its remedy is a poison pill for the judiciary," said Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh in a series of Tweets.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal dubbed the Government's move as "extremely dangerous". "There should be absolutely no Government interference in judicial appointments," Kejriwal said on Twitter.



On his part, the Law Minister said the move is in line with the direction of the Constitution Bench to restructure the MoP (Memorandum of Procedure) of the Collegium system. "I hope you honour Court's direction! This is a precise follow-up action of the direction of the Supreme Court Constitution Bench while striking down the National Judicial Appointment Commission Act. The SC Constitution Bench had directed to restructure the MoP (Memorandum of Procedure) of the Collegium system," the Minister said on Twitter. "The contents in the letter to hon'ble CJI are exactly in conformity with the observations and directions of the Supreme Court Constitution Bench. Convenient politics is not advisable, especially in the name of judiciary. The Constitution of India is supreme and nobody is above it," Rijju said. He said the Government's demand for the inclusion of its representatives and that of States in the collegiums of the Supreme Court and high courts was the "precise follow-up

action" suggested by the apex court while striking down the NJAC Act.

Former Law Minister and noted lawyer Kapil Sibal said that the Government has not adjusted to the fact that it does not have the final word on appointments in higher judiciary and resents it. "They are trying their best to create a situation in which the National Judicial Appointments Commission in yet another avatar may be tested in the Supreme Court once again," said Sibal.

"This is absolutely shocking. This is going to grossly undermine the very idea of independence of the judiciary and shall unsettle the fine balance as envisaged through the constitution. Is the government unable to resist the temptation of having a 'committed judiciary'," said RJD leader and Rajya Sabha MP Manoj Jha.

"The collegium system came into existence as a consequence of the Second and Third Judges case in 1993 & 1998 respectively. The Government tried to nullify it by bringing the NJAC paradigm which was struck down by the Supreme Court. Even if the Supreme Court would want to accommodate the Central Government's desire, how would they do so as the Memorandum of Procedure does not have space for such accommodation. Then the moot question is why only a representative of the Government alone?" said Congress MP Manish Tewari.

## At 1.4 C, 2nd lowest temp in 10 yrs in Delhi



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A biting cold wave swept north and northwest India on Monday with the minimum temperature settling in the range of one to three degrees Celsius in many parts. With the frigid northwesterly winds from the Himalayas setting in over the plains, it is likely to get even colder in the region in the next two days.

The national Capital recorded its lowest temperature this season with the mercury dropping to 1.4 degrees Celsius, during the wee hours of Monday. This is also the second lowest for the month of January in the last one decade. The previous low was observed at 1.1 degrees Celsius on Jan 1, 2021.

The minimum temperature in Delhi dropped by nine notches in two days. It was 10.2 degrees Celsius on Saturday and 4.7 degrees Celsius on Sunday. The maximum temperature was recorded 17.8 degrees Celsius which gave much relief from the cold wave in the day. The temperature is likely to drop 1-2 degrees Celsius from Tuesday on many parts of north India.

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## PM: Agnipath game changer for defence

Modi lauds first batch of Agniveers, says they will make armed forces youthful

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the newly-launched Agnipath scheme is transformative and a game changer making the armed forces future ready. He also said the policy will lend a youthful profile.

Making this assertion while addressing the first batch of Agniveers, now undergoing training in the Army, Navy and IAF, he lauded the recruits for being the pioneers of this "path-breaking" scheme which, he noted, will further empower women. He said the young

Agniveers will make the armed forces more youthful and tech-savvy. Interacting with the Agniveers from all over the country in virtual mode along with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, the Prime Minister said technologically-advanced soldiers will play a key role in our armed forces. Current generation of youth has this potential and Agniveers will play a leading role in the forces in the times to come, he added.

The Agnipath scheme was launched in June last year in which soldiers or Agniveers will be initially recruited for a period of four years. After completion of this tenure, 25 per cent of them will be retained for permanent service for 15 to 17 years while the others will be demobilised.

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## Thousands line up in Capital to welcome Modi in roadshow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shortly before the start of the BJP's National Executive, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday took out a road show in the national Capital. Enthusiastic BJP workers and supporters lined up on both sides of the road to greet the PM and showered flower petals on him.

Party workers, particularly women, cheered Modi as he waved at them while his car slowly moved from Patel Chowk to the NDMC, the venue of the BJP meeting.

In an atmosphere enlivened by music and 'Ram Bhajans' and the road displaying his life-size cutouts, BJP workers cheered with constant chants of "Modi, Modi..."

Continued on Page 2



Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves at supporters during a roadshow in New Delhi on Monday

## SC rejects Shahnawaz plea against HC order to file FIR in rape case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday rejected BJP leader Syed Shahnawaz Hussain's petition against the Delhi High Court order for registering an FIR on the accusation of rape. The apex court, which observed it will not interfere with the High Court order, said all remedies available under the law are open for Hussain.

"Let there be a fair investigation and, if there is nothing, it will exonerate you (Hussain)," a bench of Justices S Ravindra Bhat and Dipankar Datta told the counsel appearing for Hussain.

Senior advocates Mukul Rohatgi and Siddharth Luthra, representing Hussain, told the bench that complaint after complaint was filed by a

woman against the politician. "There are complaints after complaints which were investigated by the police and nothing was found. It cannot go on and on," Rohatgi argued, adding there was a "series of consistent attacks" against Hussain.

However, the bench observed, "We find no reason to interfere."

During the hearing, the top court observed that till date the statement of the complainant under section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), which deals with recording of confessions and statements before a magistrate, has not been recorded.

Luthra argued the complainant had alleged that she was in a relationship with Hussain's brother.

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## Nepal air crash: Widowed pilot meets hubby's fate 16 yrs later

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Anju Khatiwada, the co-pilot of the crashed Yeti Airlines' aircraft, had joined Nepal's aviation sector after the death of her husband who was killed while flying a small passenger plane of the same domestic airline in 2006.

Nearly 16 years later, the 9N-ANC ATR-72 aircraft — co-piloted by Anju — crashed on the bank of the Seti River near Pokhara's new airport on Sunday, with 72 people on board. Sixty-nine people were confirmed dead in Sunday's crash while three others are still missing. Anju is believed to be among the victims.

Anju was married to co-pilot Deepak Pokharel, who used to fly helicopters of the Nepal Army. After a few years of their marriage, Deepak, who became a pilot of Yeti Airlines, died in a Twin-Otter crash in Jumla district in 2006. She used the money she received as an insurance claim

after her husband's death to undertake an aviation course, according to Sudarsan Bartaula, a spokesperson of Yeti Airlines.

Anju studied a pilot course in the US and joined the aviation industry.

She joined Yeti Airlines in 2010 and became a captain fulfilling her dream. But nearly 16 years after Deepak's death, Anju seems to have lost her life as no survivors have been found so far after Sunday's



crash.

According to the airlines' sources, Anju, who completed her school at St Joseph's School in Biratnagar, had flown 6,396 hours in Kathmandu, Bhadrapur, Biratnagar, Dhangadhi and other airports.

After the death of her son-in-law, Anju's father wanted to send her to India to study, but she did not agree. Instead, she went to study a pilot course in the US.

## Covid jabs triggered side effects: Health Min's shocker in RTI reply

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a shocking revelation, two top organisations of the Union Health Ministry in an RTI response have admitted to multiple side effects due to Covid-19 vaccines that were administered to over a billion people in the country.

The side effects are bruises beyond the injected point, persistent vomiting without reasons, severe or persistent abdominal pains or headaches with or without vomiting, shortness of breath, chest pains, pain in limbs or swelling to name a few.

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) in an RTI reply to Pune businessman Prafull Sardha gave in detail various adverse events following immunisation (AEFI).

India has permitted the



usage of six vaccines, including AstraZeneca and Serum Institute of India's "Covishield", SII's own "Covovax", Bharat Biotech's "Covaxin", Dr Reddy's Lab imported "Sputnik V", Biological E Ltd's "CorBEVax", and Cadila Healthcare Ltd's "ZyCoV-D" for teenagers (12-17 age).

In a specific query by Sardha on the side effects of all these jabs, ICMR's PIO Dr Leyanna Susan George and

CDSCO's PIO Sushanta Sarkar have cited a plethora of ramifications arising out of all these vaccines comprising their FAQs.

It said that due to Covishield vaccine, AEFIs like injection site tenderness or pain, multiple red spots or bruises beyond the injected site, persistent vomiting without reasons, severe or persistent abdominal pains or headaches with or without

vomiting, shortness of breath, chest pains were reported.

Other AEFIs due to Covidshield were pain in limbs or swelling on pressing of calf/arms, weakness/paralysis of limbs of any particular side or parts of the body, including cranial nerves, unprecedented seizures, pain in eyes, blurred vision or diplopia, change in mental status, encephalopathy or depressed level of consciousness.

Similarly, Covovax side-effects include injection site pain/tenderness/induration, fatigue, malaise, headaches, fever, soreness of muscles, joint pains, nausea or vomiting, chills, body ache or extreme pain in limbs, asthenia (weakness or lack of energy), injection site pruritus (itching, rash, red skin, hives), enlarged lymph nodes, back pains, and rarely dizziness or drowsiness.

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## Zero Covid in 24 hrs in Delhi for first time

New Delhi: For the first time since March 2020, the national Capital recorded no new Covid case on Monday.

Delhi recorded its first coronavirus case on March 2, 2020 and logged a total of 20,07,313 cases with a cumulative positivity rate of 4.94 per cent and 26,522 pandemic-related fatalities so far.

The national Capital has battled three Covid waves so far, with the Delta variant-driven second wave in April-May 2021 being the deadliest.

The two months saw hospitals and family members of patients scrambling for oxygen and doctors being burdened beyond their capacities.

According to data shared by the city health department here, the number of active cases stands at just 10.

As many as 931 tests were conducted the previous day, the health department bulletin stated. The city reported just one new case on Sunday with a positivity rate of 0.05 per cent.



NCR-PULSE

Kanjhawala hit & drag case: Police to slap murder charge on accused

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi sessions court was told on Monday the police will invoke Section 302 of the IPC related to murder in the Kanjhawala hit and run case...

under Section 304 related to culpable homicide not amounting to murder. The offence attracts life imprisonment or imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to 10 years, besides fine.

The court of Additional Sessions Judge Susheel Bala Daggar, meanwhile, reserved its order on the bail application of an accused Ashutosh Bhardwaj.



invoke the provisions of section 302 in the case.

He said the actions of Bhardwaj in giving the car to a

person not authorised to drive, withholding the information about the crime and introducing the name of another co-accused as the driver was being investigated from the "conspiracy" perspective.

Bhardwaj's advocate had moved the sessions court after his bail plea was dismissed by a metropolitan magistrate on Thursday.

Police had arrested Deepak Khanna (26), Amit Khanna (25), Krishan (27), Mithun (26), and Manoj Mittal in the case on January 2. Later, they zeroed in on Ashutosh, who was arrested four days later.

Rodent menace hits Puri's historic Jagannath Temple



PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The authorities running the Jagannath Temple of Puri may need a Pied Piper to rid it of rodents that have infested the 12th-century shrine.

The rodents, whose numbers increased manifold during the absence of devotees in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, have been nibbling away at the attires of the gods - Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra - in the shrine.

The servitors and priests have voiced fears that the rodents may damage the wooden idols of the deities, though temple administrator Jitendra Sahoo feels there is no need to take fright.

"There were few rodents in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple but their number increased significantly after the COVID-19 pandemic," Ramachandra Dasmohapatra, a servitor, said.

The rodents also create a disturbance when the priests perform rituals, said Satyanarayan Puspak, representing the group of servitors who decorate the deities with garlands.

"The rats devour the flowers offered to the deities and nibble away at the valuable attires of the gods," Pushpalak said.

Punjab CM Mann should not be remote controlled: Rahul

PTI ■ HOSHIARPUR

In a swipe at Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday said he should not be under anyone's remote control and should run the state independently.

Punjab should be run from Punjab, said Gandhi while addressing a gathering here during his Bharat Jodo Yatra.

"I want to ask Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann that you are the chief minister of Punjab, Punjab should be run from Punjab only, Bhagwant Mann

should not come under pressure of (Arvind) Kejriwal ji and Delhi.

"You should work independently and should not be under the remote control of anyone," said Gandhi.

Bhagwant Mann has been facing criticism from the opposition parties which allege that all major decisions of his government are being taken in Delhi by AAP national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Gandhi said the Yatra was getting an overwhelming response and targeted the BJP government at the Centre.



Hatred and fear are being spread in the country and "brother is being pitted against brother", he alleged. He also attacked the BJP

government over the issue of unemployment and inflation. He again said that the Yatra was opening the shops of love in the market of hatred.

Modi Govt working for handful of people: Cong on Oxfam report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday hit out at the Centre asserting that the Narendra Modi Government is working only for a "handful of people" and the richest 21 Indians have more wealth than 70 crore people put together.

The party's reaction came in response to rights group Oxfam releasing its latest inequality report.

Congress General Secretary Communications Jairam Ramesh also claimed that the Oxfam's suggestion to Finance Minister Nirmala



Sitharaman to impose a wealth tax on India's uber rich will fall on deaf ears.

"The richest 21 Indian billionaires have more wealth than 70 crore Indians. Top 1 per cent of India now holds 40.5 per cent of total wealth. There's been a 121 per cent surge in the wealth of India's

billionaires since Covid struck. This is the result of a government that works just for a handful of people," Ramesh said in a series of tweets.

He further said, "Oxfam India has urged the Finance Minister to impose a wealth tax on the uber rich. Their suggestion will surely fall on deaf ears."

According to the latest Oxfam report, the richest one per cent in India now own more than 40 per cent of the country's total wealth, while the bottom half of the population together share just 3 per cent of wealth.

SC rejects Shahnawaz plea against HC order...

From Page 1 "She may have all the grievances against my brother... But I (Hussain) cannot be put to such trauma," he said. "Let it be investigated," the bench observed, adding the orders of the trial court as well as the High Court in the matter were against Hussain.

When Luthra said once an FIR is lodged, there may be consequences, the bench observed, "What consequences? You are not being held guilty. We are applying the law as we see. In a simple case, the victim has to run through all these loops."

When reference was made to the trial court record, the apex court said, "We have come to the stage of trial court record even before an FIR is registered. This speaks

volume about this case." Hussain's counsel said the complainant had approached the court on every occasion with multiple complaints. The bench asked whether the police had informed the complainant that there was no sufficient ground to proceed and lodge an FIR in the matter. "You may be a victim, she may not be a victim but there is a possibility of reverse also," the bench observed.

The High Court had on August 17 last year dismissed Hussain's plea challenging a trial court order directing the Delhi Police to register an FIR against him, saying there was no perversity in the 2018 order. The top court had on August 22, 2022 stayed the operation of the high court order.

Thousands line up in...

From Page 1

Several posters highlighting various initiatives of the government and also India's presidency of the G20 were put out along the roadshow route. Stages had been erected at places. Folk artists from several states performed on some of them, while others blared patriotic songs.

In an atmosphere of a carnival, people were seen singing and also taking out their mobiles to take pictures of Modi and the scenes around.

Thousands of policemen lined-up the road to avoid any untoward incidents and top overenthusiastic supporters crossing the red line.

BJP president JP Nadda welcomed Modi at the venue of the party's meeting, which started upon the prime minister's arrival.

Covid jabs triggered side effects: Health Ministry's...

From Page 1

Covaxin displays mild symptoms AEFIs like injection site pain/swelling, headaches, fatigue, fever, body ache, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, giddiness, tremors, sweating, cold and cough.

Sputnik V manifests with chills, fever, arthralgia, myalgia, asthenia, headaches, general discomfort, injection site pain/swelling/hyperaemia, nausea, dyspepsia, loss of appetite, or occasional enlarged regional lymph nodes.

CorBEVax shows effects like fever/pyrexia, headaches, fatigue, body pains, myalgia, nausea, arthralgia, urticaria, chills, lethargy, besides injection site pain/erythema, swelling, rash, pruritis or irritation.

At 1.4 C...

From Page 1

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a yellow alert in the national capital region for the next six days starting, Monday, owing to the upcoming severe cold wave in the national capital region. "Cold wave conditions over northwest India are likely to abate from January 19 as two western disturbances are likely to affect the western Himalayan region in quick succession," the IMD said. The first western disturbance is likely to affect the Western Himalayan region from the night of January 18 followed by the second western disturbance from the night of January 20. Under the influence of these two systems, the IMD said, the cold wave, which is sweeping through northwest India, is likely to abate from Thursday.

Ganga Vilas cruise ship reaches Patna

PTI ■ PATNA

The Ganga Vilas cruise vessel, flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week, reached the Bihar capital on Monday, officials said.

"Fool proof security arrangements are in place for the crew members and passengers who will spend the night on board and visit places of interest in the city, including the Patna Sahib Gurudwara, tomorrow," Deputy Inspector General of Police, Patna, Manavjeet Singh Dhillon told PTI.

"We are in touch with the Inland Waterways Authority of India to ensure a hassle-free stay for the cruise which is expected to be in Bihar for a few more days," said the senior IPS officer.

Flagged off at Varanasi on Friday last, the cruise had

entered Bihar a day later via Buxar.

Before reaching Patna, the vessel, carrying mostly foreign nationals, had a stopover in Saran district where the passengers visited Chirand archaeological site.

Earlier several reports claimed that the ship got stuck on the third day of its 51-day journey in Bihar's Chhapra due to shallow water in the Ganga and that several small boats took the tourists to safety.

The ship, however, was anchored in the river and the tourists took the boats for sightseeing. "The ship always remains in the main channel. The big ships can't go to the shore.

This is normal for a cruise ship," Raj Singh, Chairman of Exotic Heritage Group explained.

New Okhla Industrial Development Authority

Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida-201301 (UP) Website : www.noidaauthorityonline.com

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tenders are invited from eligible contractors/firm for the following jobs against which bids can be uploaded and same shall be opened/downloaded as per schedule mentioned. The details and conditions of all tenders are available on Noida Authority's official website: www.noidaauthorityonline.com & https://etender.up.nic.in. Please ensure to see these websites for any changes/ amendments & corrigendum etc.

Table with columns: S. No., Job No., Name of the Work, Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs). Includes items like Annual Maintenance & Repair Work, Road/Drain repair, etc.

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 30.01.2023 up to 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 31.01.2023 at 11.00 AM.

B) Re-Tender Work:

Table with columns: S. No., Job No., Name of the Work, Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs). Includes items like Drain construction, Drain repair, etc.

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 23.01.2023 up to 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 24.01.2023 at 11.00 AM.

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For more details and inspection of items call to Mr. Vikram 9990920031 or visit link: https://auctions.cardekho.com/#/bul-k-auction

PM: Agnipath game changer for...

From Page 1

As per the scheme, announced on June 14 last year, the three services are recruiting youths between the age bracket of 17-and-half years and 21 years for four years. For 2022, the upper age limit was raised to 23 years.

Opposition parties have criticised the exercise but the

Government has said it will make the armed forces more youthful and cater to its current needs.

The Prime Minister said new India is filled with renewed vigour and efforts are underway to modernise the armed forces as well as make them "aatmanirbhar" (self-reliant). In the 21st century, the way wars are fought is changing, he said, speaking about the new fronts of contactless warfare and challenges of cyber warfare, according to a statement issued by the Government.

Lauding the potential of the Agniveers, Modi said their spirit is reflective of the bravery of the armed forces which has always kept the flag of the nation flying high. The experience they will acquire through this opportunity will be a source of pride for life, he added.

"Hailing the potential of youth and Agniveers, the Prime Minister concluded by saying that they are the ones who are going to provide leadership to the nation in the 21st century," the statement quoting Modi said.

He said Agnipath will further empower women and expressed happiness at how women Agniveers are adding pride to naval forces.

The Prime Minister said he looks forward to seeing women Agniveers in all three forces, noting that they are leading armed forces on various fronts and cited examples of women posted in Siachen and driving modern fighter planes.

Modi told the recruits that getting posted in different regions will give them an opportunity to get diverse experiences and they should try to learn different languages, cultures and ways of living.

BJP aims to win all 9...

From Page 1

He informed the delegates that the Prime Minister would attend the function marking 200 years of the social reformer Dayanand Saraswati on February 13 as he is already implementing the Sarwati's call for "connecting the last mile marginalised man in the country" by various welfare and economic programmes. The meet of the top body of the BJP which was attended by all Central Ministers, including Amit Shah and Rajnath Singh, BJP-ruled Chief Ministers and around 600 delegates was preceded by a road show of the Prime Minister starting from Patel Chowk and till the NDMC convention centre.

At the venue of the meeting BJP also organised an exhibition showcasing cultural

nationalism and the ongoing construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya.

While BJP State presidents of Karnataka, Tripura, Nagaland & Meghalaya presented their reports at the National Executive meeting, the party's presidents of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana & Mizoram will present their State reports on Tuesday.

Giving the details of Nadda's presidential address in the close-door meeting , BJP leader Ravishankar Prasad said the party president underlined the importance of the nine State Assembly polls to be held this year in the run up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, and asked the party's national executive to ensure it does not lose in any States, including in Telangana. The BJP president

noted that the ongoing year was very important in the prelude to the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

The ruling party has been putting in place a number of exercises to strengthen its organisation to ensure that it comes back to power in 2024 at the Centre for a third term.

Nadda said the Prime Minister had mandated that 72000 "weak polling booths" be consolidated and the party has gone beyond this number and "reached 1,30,000 polling booth".

The BJP president lauded Narendra Modi-led Government and cited US President Joe Biden for praising India's vaccination drive which "reached 220 crore" and Russian President Vladimir Putin lauding India's "independent foreign policy" under Modi.



# Teachers' training in Finland new flashpoint between L-G, Govt

Kejriwal, Sisodia lead foot march to Raj Niwas against rejection of proposal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

led by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday led a foot march to Raj Niwas against Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) VK Saxena's interference in the city Government's functioning.

The latest flashpoint between the L-G and Kejriwal is the Delhi Government's proposal to send schoolteachers to Finland for training which Saxena has rejected.

The LG's office, however, denied that it rejected the proposal, saying it only advised the State to record the cost-benefit analysis to assess the effectiveness of such programs in the past. Questioning the L-G, the CM urged him to give it in writing that the proposal has not been rejected.

The AAP's march started after the Delhi Assembly was adjourned for the day. Kejriwal and the MLAs began the two-km walk from the Vidhan Sabha amid tight security arrangements but they were halted a few metres away from L-G's residence by the police.

Kejriwal on Monday insisted on meeting Saxena with rul-



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal with Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and others during a protest march towards Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena's office over his alleged interference in the working of the city Government, in New Delhi on Monday

ing AAP Ministers and MLAs. Sources in the LG's office said a message was sent to Kejriwal that Saxena has agreed to meet with him and his deputy.

Confirming that he received a message, the Chief Minister insisted that his MLAs be allowed to attend the meeting as well.

During the march, Kejriwal and other AAP MLAs carried placards reading: "Mr LG, allow the teachers to go to Finland." After being stopped by the police, Kejriwal and the MLAs returned to the Assembly.

"It is unfortunate that the Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister and MLAs are waiting on the road to meet the L-G but he refused to meet us," the CM

said. "Honourable L-G is saying he never rejected teachers' Finland training proposal. If that is the case, he (L-G) may kindly write to me a letter immediately, saying that he has no objection to the proposal and the matter will be over," Kejriwal said.

Speaking to reporters, Kejriwal said: "Who is L-G sahab to stop teachers' training? The Delhi Government's works are being deliberately impeded for political reasons.

"The L-G is not our headmaster to check our homework. He has to say yes or no to our proposals."

How will an elected Government function if it does not have any power to take decisions, the CM asked.

Kejriwal said that they were asking to meet the LG on "why is he stopping our teachers from going to Finland". "Finland has the best education system... We will wait here and we will fight for the future of our kids," he added.

Earlier, in a tweet, hitting out at the Delhi LG, Kejriwal wrote: "Delhi does not need tyranny but constitution and democracy. Our struggle for people's rights will continue."

The State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) had planned to send two groups of 30 primary in-charges to Finland in December 2022 and March 2023.

The Delhi government has so far sent 1,079 teachers to different countries for training. Of these, 59 have gone to Finland, 420 to Cambridge and 600 to Singapore. Besides, 860 school principals have been imparted training in prestigious institutes like IIM Ahmedabad and IIM Lucknow.

Asserting that the proposal has not been rejected, L-G's office said the Government has been advised to evaluate it in totality and record the cost-benefit analysis in terms of impact on the quality of education being provided to students.

"The L-G has also advised for examining and identifying similar training programmes in the Institutions of Excellence, within the country, so as to ensure optimal utilisation of resources, fiscal prudence and administrative effectiveness," the official said.

## Delhi Assembly session begins on stormy note

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Assembly was adjourned for the day on Monday after a war of words broke out between BJP MLAs and members of the ruling AAP over "illegal and unwanted obstructions and interferences" by Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena. The three-day Delhi Assembly session started on Monday on a tumultuous note and the House proceedings witnessed repeated adjournments on the first day and hardly 10 minutes of proceedings could be held.

As soon as the proceedings began, AAP MLAs started protesting against the BJP MLAs who were wearing masks and carrying oxygen cylinders. Speaker Ram Niwas Goel directed that the cylinders be taken away from the BJP members and questioned how they brought them into the House despite security restrictions.

BJP MLAs - Bidhuri, Abhay Verma, Mohan Singh Bisht, Om Prakash Sharma, and Jitendra Mahajan - were also seen wearing placards around their necks that alleged that people of Delhi were dying due to the toxic air and demanded the resignation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Taking cognizance of the "lapse" and noting that the cylinders could be used to injure someone, the Speaker summoned security person-



BJP MLAs wearing oxygen masks stage a protest during a session of Delhi Legislative Assembly, in New Delhi on Monday

nel to his chamber over the issue. Even as the protest by BJP members refused to die down, he said, "Please have some shame. I urge members to maintain peace."

Later, after a war of words broke out between BJP and members of the ruling AAP over "illegal and unwanted obstructions and interferences" by the L-G, Goel adjourned proceedings for 10 minutes.

AAP legislator Saurabh Bhardwaj initiated the discussion on calling attention motion on the issue of "illegal and unwanted obstructions and interferences in the education of children and training of teachers."

Bhardwaj said, "In 2018, the Supreme Court ruled that

other than land, public order and police, the Lieutenant-Governor has no authority to any other matter of the Government. The Lieutenant-Governor neither frames the law nor does he believe in the Constitution."

Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri expressed opposition on this issue and defended the L-G. Countering the claim of the AAP leader, Bidhuri said, "Saurabh is making false assertions in the Assembly."

Even as the protest by BJP members refused to die down in the House, the Speaker said, "Show me the certificate if you had corona. I will allow you (to carry oxygen cylinder) ... This

is false." Goel accused Bidhuri of trying to be the L-G's spokesperson, following which AAP MLAs came into the Well of the House.

After the House reconvened after the brief adjournment, AAP MLAs again started raising slogans against the L-G over his "objections" to sending Delhi government teachers for a training programme to Finland, following which the speaker again adjourned the House for half an hour. Subsequently, the House was adjourned for the day.

Earlier, Bidhuri, in a statement, said people are suffering from cancer and lung diseases due to pollution. "Hospitals in Delhi are full of patients with respiratory diseases. Doctors say that the disease of cough and pneumonia is spreading rapidly in the Capital and the biggest reason for this is the pollution of Delhi," he said.

## Cong slams BJP, AAP over waste of first day of Winter Session

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Congress president Anil Chaudhary on Monday lashed out at the AAP and the BJP, alleging the parties used the first day of the Assembly session for indulging in political gimmicks instead of transacting any business in public interest.

He alleged that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and his deputy Manish Sisodia were "not bothered" about filling the vacant posts of principals, vice-principals and teachers in Government schools, but were "rattled" by the L-G's decision to stop the education tour of teachers to Finland.

"The AAP and the BJP wasted the first day of Delhi Legislative Assembly's Winter Session indulging in political gimmicks. Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia are least bothered about filling the vacant posts of principals, vice principals and teachers in their government schools, but rattled by the lieutenant governor's decision to stop the so-called education tour of teachers to Finland," Chaudhary alleged.

He further alleged that the AAP legislators "squandered" the tax payers' money by protesting outside the Assembly against the L-G on the issue.

## FIR lodged over filthy comments against Kohli, Dhoni daughters

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Monday registered an FIR against unidentified persons for allegedly making indecent comments on social media about the daughters of Indian cricketers Virat Kohli and MS Dhoni, following a complaint by the Delhi Commission for Women.

DCW chairperson Swati Maliwal said the police action came after she issued a notice on the issue.

"After my notice the police lodged an FIR against unidentified persons. Very soon all-culprits will be behind bars," she tweeted in Hindi.

## MCD to meet on Jan 24 to elect Mayor

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena has approved the convening of the next meeting of the MCD on January 24 for the oath-taking of Councillors and the election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

The meeting will convene at 11 AM at Aruna Asaf Ali Sabhagar, 4th floor, A-Block, Dr SP Mukherjee Civic Centre, according to officials.

This comes days after the maiden meeting of the newly-elected MCD house was adjourned without electing the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor following a ruckus by Councillors over who would take oath first, with the AAP blaming the BJP for ensuring a departure from procedural norms and administering the oath to 10 aldermen, unelected members of the House, chosen by the L-G.

This was the first time in the history of the MCD that the House proceeding was adjourned before of the Mayor and the oath-taking of the



BJP and AAP MLAs exchange sloganeering during a session of Delhi Legislative Assembly, in New Delhi on Monday

Councillors. Both parties claimed that their Councillors suffered injuries in the brawl.

The MCD House comprises 250 elected Councillors. The BJP's seven Lok Sabha MPs from Delhi and the AAP's three Rajya Sabha MPs and 14 MLAs nominated by the Delhi Assembly Speaker will also participate in the elections to the posts of Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Six members of the Standing Committee will also be elected.

The Congress, which has nine Councillors, has decided not to take part in the voting. The AAP has a clear majority in the 250-member House.

The electoral college for the election of Mayor comprises the 250 elected Councillors, seven Lok Sabha and three Rajya Sabha MPs from Delhi and 14 MLAs.

The Delhi Assembly Speaker has nominated 13 AAP and one BJP member to the House.

## Govt yet to submit 3 CAG reports to L-G

### Saxena's nod is needed before reports are tabled in Assembly

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has not yet submitted three reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) to Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena for his approval to table them in the Assembly. There was no immediate reaction to this from the Delhi Government.

According to the sources, the Controller of Accounts of Delhi Government has sent a reminder to the office of Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia for seeking approval of the L-G to table the three audit reports namely, "State Finance Audit Report", "Performance Audit on Prevention and Mitigation of Vehicular Air Pollution in Delhi" and "Revenue, Economic, Social and General Sectors and PSUs" for the year ended March 31, 2021, that are pending.

"These three crucial reports were submitted to the Delhi Government on June 23, 2022, September 27, 2022 and November 10, 2022 respectively," the sources said.

It may be noted that the Constitution of India vide



The Delhi Legislative Assembly building.

Article 151 which mandates that "The reports of the CAG relating to the Accounts of the State shall be submitted to the Governor of the State, who shall cause them to be laid before the Legislature of the Assembly". The CAG submits its report to the State Government, who after approval of the Finance Minister and the Chief Minister sends the same to the Lt. Governor for recommendations for laying in the Assembly, as per Section 48 of the GNCTD Act, 1991," sources informed.

"All the above reports were submitted by the Principal Accounts Office to the office of the Deputy CM through Finance Department for seek-

ing the approval of Lt. Governor for tabling the same in the Delhi Legislative Assembly... as per the file monitoring system, all the said files are with the office of the Sisodia," read the reminder of the Controller of Accounts to the Deputy CM office," sources said.

"This deliberate delay in tabling the CAG report is despite a reminder by the LG to the AAP Government to lay the reports before the Assembly. The LG Secretariat on November 29, 2022, had written to the Finance Department, seeking "appropriate action as per law for expeditiously laying the (CAG) reports before the Legislative Assembly of Delhi in the next

session". However, the AAP Government, in blatant violation of the Constitutional norms, has been sitting over the reports ever since they were submitted to it," they said.

"Prior to this, the AAP Government had kept 10 reports of the CAG pending and not tabled the same before Delhi Assembly for four years in a row. The 10 CAG reports of the year 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, detailing "State Finances Audit Report", "Revenue Economic, Social & General Sectors and PSUs", "Social General & Economic Sectors (Non-PSUs)", "Finance Accounts of GNCTD" and "Appropriation Accounts of GNCTD", were pending with the Deputy Chief Minister, Sisodia, since as long as submitted by CAG," they stated.

"It was only after a determined shove from the LG Secretariat on June 15, 2022 as mentioned, after V.K. Saxena took over, that Kejriwal hurriedly convened a two day Session of the Delhi Assembly and laid all these pending CAG reports in one go on July 5, 2022, without any discussion," sources added.

## 2 inter-State arms syndicate busted ahead of R-Day

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Republic Day, Delhi Police's Special Cell busted two inter-State illegal firearms syndicates in the city with the arrest of four arms suppliers.

Rohit Kumar (26), Pawan Kumar (28), Sunny (21) and Harshdeep (19), who hail from Punjab, have been involved in arms trafficking for over four years, the police said, adding 18 pistols were recovered from

their possession. The accused sourced the firearms from Madhya Pradesh and supplied in Delhi-NCR, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and west Uttar Pradesh, the police said.

Additional Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) P S Kushwah said, "A specific information was received on January 13 following which three accused — Rohit, Pawan and Harshdeep — were apprehended near an auto stand at



Barapullah Road, Nizamuddin Railway Station, while exchanging firearms."

The fourth accused, Sunny, the handler of Harshdeep, was arrested from near Nizamuddin Railway Station, he added.

"Arrested firearms suppliers had received consignments of recovered pistols from two firearms suppliers of Sendhwa and Burhanpur in Madhya Pradesh. Sunny and Harshdeep had procured pistols from an arms supplier of Burhanpur. Rohit and Pawan had pro-

cured pistols from a person named Sardar of Sendhwa," Kushwah said.

Interrogation revealed that the accused used to carry new handsets and new SIM cards every time. After collecting the consignments of firearms, they used to travel by bus from Indore to the respective destinations and their modus operandi was to frequently change the buses on the way, he said. "Sunny has further disclosed that he had procured

pistols to avenge the attack on his brother in November 2022 by the associates of S K Kharod, a gangster, who is also associated with a university's students organisation. He had already supplied firearms to the gangsters and criminals in Punjab," the police officer said.

Accused Sunny was previously involved in a case of attempt to murder and robbery in Punjab's Patiala in 2021, police said, adding further investigation is underway.

## DU forms panel to set up centre for Hindu Studies

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi University on Monday formed a 17-member committee to establish a centre for "Hindu Studies" to introduce courses about the "history of Hindus" in the university. However, an academic council member questioned the necessity to have such a centre.

The panel will be headed by the Director, of South Delhi Campus of DU, Prakash Singh. Singh said a need was felt in the university for a Hindu studies centre.

"There are around 23 universities across India that offer courses in Hindu studies, DU also thought it must also have a centre for Hindu studies, Singh added. He emphasised that the panel would focus on first checking the viability of the centre and then introduce courses accordingly. However, an academic council member has opposed the need for the centre. "Where are other centres, Sikh, Muslim and other centres. The university must also open courses for these other religions," a council member said.

## ₹1 crore Covid ex-gratia given to DTC driver's kin

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Revenue Minister Kailash Gahlot on Monday handed over 'Samman Rashi' ex-gratia amount of ₹1 crore to the family of the deceased Covid-19 warrior Lal Singh.

According to a senior Delhi Government official, Singh was a driver in Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC). He performed the duty on June 7, 2020 and developed Covid symptoms. Later he tested positive and succumbed to Covid-19 on June 18, 2020.

"He is survived by his wife and two children. Singh joined DTC in 1984 as a cleaner and was promoted to the post of

Tyre Man. He was later promoted to the post of driver in 2002," he said.

On the occasion, Gahlot said, "Delhi Government will always stand with the families of Covid warriors who sacrificed their lives to protect humanity and society. I completely understand and acknowledge that no amount of money would be able to compensate for the loss of a loved one, but this 'Samman Rashi' is a way for the Delhi Government to pay tribute to the sacrifice made by these Corona warriors. We are proud of our Corona Warriors and I would like to express my gratitude to all of them," he said.

## Yamuna pollution doubled in 8 yrs: L-G

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Lieutenant Governor's Office of Delhi stated on Monday that during the last eight years of the Kejriwal Government, Yamuna pollution has doubled. As per the data presented by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) and the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) before the Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena, in terms of Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD), the Yamuna River at Palla has load of mere 02 in 2014. When the river left Delhi at Okhla Barrage, BOD load in it was 32 in the same year. However, in 2023, while the BOD load at Palla remains at 02, the same at Okhla has risen up to a staggering 56.

In the last eight year, the pollution in the Yamuna River has increased by around 75 percent in the national capital as of 2014.



The LG had called a meeting to take stock of the ground situation before the first meeting of a high-level committee set up by the National Green Tribunal on January 9 for the cleaning of the Yamuna where the DPCC and DJB made a detailed presentation. The green tribunal had requested the Delhi LG to head the committee.

"The year on year rise in pollution has been consistent since 2014, with the only exception being the year 2019, when Haryana - which was undertaking repair

of the Yamuna Canal, released more than four times water into Yamuna from the HathiniKund Barrage. The same resulted in pollutants getting washed downstream," they claimed.

The sources said that this deadly increase in pollution is mainly on account of, the AAP Government failing absolutely to check pollution from the Najafgarh Drain, despite persistent directions and monitoring of the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal.

"While in 2014, BOD at ISBT, just after the Najafgarh Drain falls into Yamuna was 26, in 2017, it rose to 52 and remains at a high of 38 even to date," they said.

"Najafgarh Drain accounts for 68.71 percent of the waste water being discharged into Yamuna, and the second biggest polluter is the Shadara Drain that accounts for 10.90 percent of discharge," they underlined.



# Opp questions need to deploy RVMs for migrant workers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Monday questioned the need to deploy Remote Voting Machines (RVM) for migrant workers and sought an answer to it in the first place before any move by the Election Commission to introduce it.

The poll body and the parties began discussions on the politically sensitive subject. Representatives from eight national parties and 40 State-recognised political parties attended the demonstration and agreed with the broad objectives of every effort to include non-voting electors in the election process.

The meeting was attended by leaders of the JD(U), Shiv Sena, CPI, CPI(M), National Conference, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Peoples Democratic Party, Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi, Revolutionary Socialist Party, and the Indian Union Muslim League, as well as Independent Rajya Sabha MP and former Congress leader Kapil Sibal.

"No opposition party wants to see the demonstration of a RVM. First the issue of the need to have such a machine should be settled," senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh told reporters after attending the demonstration.

The former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister said he felt that there would be no RVM demonstration till there is a consensus on having one. "The idea of RVM is not acceptable," Singh said, and added that the commission should address concerns about electronic voting machines



raised by eminent citizens of the country. The EC should also address the issue of urban apathy towards the election process, he said.

AAP leader Sanjay Singh said there were other ways to increase participation of voters. "How will we campaign in different States among eligible migrant voters using RVM? When there is a bypoll on one seat, say Jalandhar, RVM is not acceptable," he added.

The poll panel had invited representatives of eight national and 57 recognised state parties for an RVM demonstration here. The EC has extended the date of submission of written views by political parties till February 28.

"Matters related to legal, administrative aspects and logistical challenges for remote voting were discussed threadbare. Some political parties requested for demonstration of

RVM in the states while some others wanted the very concept of domestic migrants to be defined before taking the matter ahead," sources said.

"More than 80 political party representatives patiently listened to each other's submissions. They appreciated the EC's initiative of calling all-party discussion and suggested more such discussions on a regular basis in future," they said.

The Commission has maintained that RVMs, developed by the public sector undertaking Electronics Corporation of India, will be a standalone device not connected to the internet in any way.

The initiative, if implemented, can lead to a "social transformation" for migrants, the EC had said last month.

Each machine can handle up to 72 constituencies, allowing migrant voters to cast their votes from a remote polling booth.

Parties were also asked to give in writing their views by the end of January on issues such as changes required in the law to allow the use of RVMs.

# SC seeks Centre's take over pleas on criminalisation of marital rape

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday sought response from the Centre on a batch of petitions on criminalisation of marital rape. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala asked the Union Government to file its response on the issue by February 15 and the final hearing on the pleas would commence from March 21.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said that the Central Government has asked States for their views on the plea seeking criminalisation of marital rape. He said that apart from legal ramifications, the matter will have social ramifications as well and hence sought permission to file a counter.

Recently, the apex court has transferred all petitions on criminalisation of marital rape from many High Courts including Karnataka, where arguments were going for the past one year. Previous year there was split verdict in Delhi High Court on the matter by the Bench comprising Justices Rajiv Shakder and C Har



Shankar. Justice Shakdar supported the criminalisation of marital rape and Justice Hari Shanker rejected the petition by upholding the existing provisions which prevent registering case in rape accusations in married life.

Some petitioners have challenged the constitutionality of the marital rape exception under Section 375 IPC (rape) on grounds that it discriminated against married women who are sexually assaulted by their husbands. Under the exception given in Section 375 of the IPC, sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his wife, the wife not being minor, is not rape.

# Joshimath national disaster plea nixed; HC should hear it as matter of principle, says Supreme Court

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to entertain a plea seeking the court's intervention to declare the crisis in Uttarakhand's subsidence-hit Joshimath a national disaster, saying since the State High Court is seized of a "broad range of issues" it should hear it as a matter of principle. As the lawyer for the petitioner submitted that people in Joshimath are dying, the top court told him curtly, "You don't want to use these proceedings for sound bytes in social media."

A bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and JB Pardiwala asked petitioner Swami Avimukteshwarana and Saraswati to approach the

Uttarakhand High Court with his petition. "As a matter of principle, we should allow the High Court to deal with this. HC is seized of a broad range of issues, we'll give you liberty to approach the High Court."

The counsel for the Uttarakhand Government submitted all the points raised by the petitioner have already been acted upon. Senior advocate Sushil Kumar Jain, appearing for the petitioner, said people are dying and urgent steps are needed for relief and rehabilitation of those affected by ground subsidence. The bench then remarked, "You don't want to use these proceedings for sound bytes in social media, what you want is relief for affected persons." The apex court asked the petitioner to approach the High Court with his petition.

# MHA to celebrate Bose's life, work

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry is organising week-long events on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's life and his contribution to the freedom struggle in five States and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, where Union Home Minister Amit Shah will attend the concluding function at Port Blair on January 23.

The 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav Iconic Events Week' will be held from January 17 to 23 to celebrate 75 years of India's Independence, the government said in a statement.

The Central paramilitary

forces, Central Police Organisations, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration, and the state governments of Manipur, Nagaland, Gujarat, Odisha and West Bengal are jointly organizing the events.

The events are being organized at locations which are related to Netaji's life and work.

In Manipur, the events will be held at Mantripukhri, Keithalmanbi, Kangvai, Moirang and Nambol on January 17.

In Nagaland, it will be organized at Ruzahoo and Chesezu villages, Kohima on January 18.



The programmes in Gujarat are lined up at Haripura, Bardoli and Surat on January 29 and Cuttack in Odisha on January 20. In West Bengal, the event will be held in Kolkata on January 21.

The occasion will be marked by a range of activities celebrating Netaji's immense

contribution to India's freedom struggle which have been planned to be held throughout the week at these locations, the statement said.

The programmes have been designed to promote large-scale public involvement in all the events, so that the citizens can take inspiration from the country's national heroes and carry forward the great ideals that they stood for.

The weeklong event will culminate at Port Blair where Netaji hoisted the tricolour on December 31, 1943 for the first time on Indian soil, much before India's Independence in August 1947.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the parties challenging the anti-conversion laws of several States to file a common petition seeking transfer of cases on the issue from various High Courts to the apex court.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala asked senior lawyer Kapil Sibal, appearing for one of the parties, to file a common petition seeking transfer of all the pleas from High Courts to the top court.

"In view of the pendency of

matters before diverse High Courts, a transfer petition will be filed before this court for tagging and transferring of all cases before this court. List the matters after two weeks," the bench said.

In the meantime, it took note of the submission of senior advocate Dushyant Dave that one of the petitions, filed by lawyer Ashwini Upadhyay, casts aspersions on Christians and Muslims and asked senior lawyer Arvind Datar, appearing for Upadhyay, to file a formal plea for deletion of the "objectionable portions".

Datar, however, said he was not pressing the alleged

contents. The plea by Upadhyay against alleged "forceful religious conversions" was earlier being heard by another bench led by Justice MR Shah before it was transferred to the bench headed by the CJI recently.

Attorney General R Venkataramani, who is assisting the bench in one of the matters, said the High Courts should be permitted to continue with the hearing of petitions challenging the local laws. "We are not transferring the cases. Mr Attorney (General), we will hear you on this as well," the CJI said.

## IN SHORT

### WILL MAKE LIVE WATCHING OF PROCEEDINGS EASY: SC

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Monday said it would consider the suggestions made by senior advocate Indira Jaising to make live-streaming of court proceedings more accessible to citizens. A bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala noted the suggestions of Jaising and asked her to submit a note to the secretary general so that they could be considered at the time of finalisation of modalities and rules for live-streaming.

### UP CM'S OFFICE UNDER LOKAYUKTA PLEA QUASHED

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Monday dismissed a PIL seeking a direction to the Uttar Pradesh Government to amend the law to bring the office of the Chief Minister under the purview of State ombudsman Lokayukta. A bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala posed a question to the petitioner as to whom the directions were to be issued for amending the State Act.

### RESPOND TO PRENATAL TEST AGE BAR: SC TO GOVT

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Monday granted the Centre four weeks to file its response to a plea on the age restriction of 35 years for women for conducting pre-conception and prenatal diagnostic tests. The matter came up for hearing before a bench of Justices S K Kaul and A S Oka.

### LEAVE TO BABUS FOR STUDY ABROAD RATIONALISED

**New Delhi:** The Centre on Monday rationalised the process of granting approval for study leave for abroad to IAS officers and asked the states to ensure availability of sufficient number of bureaucrats both in the cadre and on central deputation before forwarding such proposals. Prior permission of the central Government is mandatory for ex-India study leave for IAS officers by the State Government concerned.

### SC TO HEAR GOOGLE PLEA ON NCLAT ORDER ON JAN 18

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Monday said it will hear on January 18 a plea of US tech giant Google against an order of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) refusing an interim stay on the competition regulator imposing a Rs 1,337 crore penalty on it. The NCLAT, on January 4, had refused an interim stay on an order of the competition regulator and had asked Google to deposit 10 percent of the amount.

# India, France commence 21st 5-day naval exercise 'Varnua'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to promote synergy between the navies of the two countries, the 21st edition of the five-day bilateral naval exercise 'Varnua' between India and France commenced on the western seaboard on Monday.

Initiated in 1993, the exercise has become "a hallmark of India-France strategic bilateral relationship," the Indian Navy said here.

The latest edition of the exercise will witness participation of indigenous guided missile stealth destroyer INS Chennai, guided missile frigate INS Teg, maritime patrol aircraft P-8I and Dornier, integral helicopters and MiG29K fighter aircraft, the Navy statement said. The French Navy will be represented by the aircraft carrier Charles De Gaulle, frigates FS Forbin and Provence, support vessel FS Marne and mar-



itime patrol aircraft Atlantique, it said.

The exercise will be conducted over five days from January 16 to 20 and will witness advanced air defence exercises, tactical manoeuvres, surface firings, underway replenishment and other maritime operations, it said.

Units of both navies will endeavour to hone their war-fighting skills in maritime theatre, enhance their interoperability to undertake multi-discipline operations in the maritime domain and demonstrate their ability as an integrated

force to promote peace, security and stability in the region, the Navy said.

Having grown in scope and complexity over the years, this exercise provides an opportunity to learn from each other's best practices.

The exercise facilitates operational level interaction between the two navies to foster mutual cooperation for good order at sea, underscoring the shared commitment of both nations to security, safety and freedom of the global maritime commons, the Navy said.

# India, UK review strategic ties

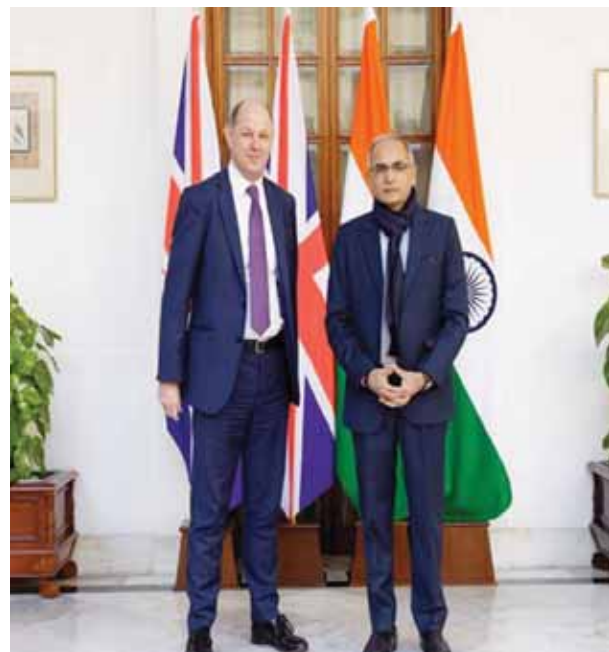
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and the United Kingdom (UK) on Monday reviewed the entire spectrum of their bilateral strategic partnership during talks between Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra and UK Permanent Under-Secretary Philip Barton here under the aegis of the 15th India-UK Foreign Office Consultations (FOC). The last FOC was held in November 2020 in London.

Giving details of the parleys, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said India and the UK share a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, with the adoption of Roadmap 2030 for Future Relations.

The FOC provided an opportunity to review the progress made in the implementation of Roadmap 2030 despite the restrictions imposed by the Covid-pandemic.

Both sides discussed issues like trade and economic cooperation, defence and security, science and technology, people-



to-people relationship, health and climate change, the MEA statement said.

It was appreciated that letters formalizing the Young Professional Scheme were

conclusion of a balanced and comprehensive India-UK Foreign Trade Agreement (FTA) that may intensify the economic engagement between the fifth and the sixth biggest global economies, the MEA said. India and the UK also exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest, including Afghanistan, Ukraine, the Indo-Pacific, Commonwealth and United Nations.

The United Kingdom appreciated India's contribution at the UN Security Council in 2021-22 as a non-permanent member and reiterated its support for UNSC reforms. It commended India's priorities as President of G20 this year as it looked forward to its participation. Both sides agreed to maintain regular exchanges at political and senior official levels and hold the next FOC in London in 2024.

During his visit to India, Barton also met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, in addition to a range of UK partners in the country.

# Pak media hails Modi, slams own PM Shehbaz

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Pakistani media has hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and said "he has brought India to the point where the nation has begun to cast a wider net of its influence and impact...while Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif begs the world for financial crumbs".

Underlining these achievements, the English language "The Express Tribune" editorial also pointed to the fact that India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has grown to over three trillion dollars. The write-up mentioned about India's expanding global footprint and its growing stature and heft on the world stage under Modi's leadership. Under Prime Minister Modi, "India's foreign policy has treaded skillfully and its GDP has grown to over \$3 trillion," the daily wrote.

Calling it 'monumental progress', Shahzad Chaudhry, a noted political, security, and defence analyst, writing in The Express Tribune, called India a preferred destination for all investors.

The writer said India has established its own domain on the foreign policy front. India is also a big producer of agricultural products and the IT industry adding "in agriculture, their yields per acre are comparable to the best in the world and despite being a country of over 1.4 billion people, it remains a relatively steady, coherent and functional polity".

"Modi has done something to brand India that none before him could manage. Importantly, India does what it feels and to the extent it needs," he wrote.

Chaudhary pointed out that even as Pakistan slides deeper into an economic crisis while Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif begs the world for finan-



cial crumbs, neighbouring country India is progressing day by day.

The writer warned that now Sharif will have to think seriously about how to improve Pakistan's economy. Chaudhary said now times have changed a lot. India has become the country in the world with which America and Russia, who do not see eye to eye with each other, are standing.

Chaudhary also mentioned India's progress and Modi's leadership saying no one talks

about Modi in Pakistan. He is no less than an anonymous personality in this country. But the reality is that no one has been able to do the work that Modi has done to brighten India's image at the international level, he said adding India is getting stronger day by day and the Pakistan Government will have to keep this in mind.

"India's dream is to become the third largest economy in the world by the year 2037 and it can achieve it. It has already

overtaken the UK to the fifth position. Foreign exchange reserves have also reached 600 billion dollars. While Pakistan has only \$10.19 billion in foreign exchange reserves left," the writer said.

According to him, "whether it is business or IT or military, India is no longer behind anyone. Even now countries like Saudi Arabia are ready to invest up to \$72 billion in India but turn their backs on Pakistan. Pakistan has to beg for up to seven million dollars.

China, an old and dear friend, has also started cutting corners".

"It is time to recalibrate our policy towards India and be bold enough to create a trination consensus, along with China, focusing on Asia to be the spur for wider economic growth and benefit. That alone will turn geoeconomics into a strategy. Breaking away from convention and boldness in conception can address this newer paradigm. Or we may be reduced to the footnote of history," he concluded.

Meanwhile, an old video of a speech by Prime Minister Modi is also trending across the border. Leaders of Imran Khan's party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, are sharing a clip of Modi to slam the Sharif government over Pakistan's financial crisis. The video shows Modi's speech in Rajasthan's Barmer during his campaign for the 2019 general election. "We destroyed

Pakistan's arrogance, forced them to go around the globe with a begging bowl," the Prime Minister says.

He also refers to Pakistan's threats of a nuclear attack and says: "We have stopped fearing Pakistan's threats. If they have nuclear weapons, ours are hardly kept for Diwali."

Earlier in November last year, former Prime Minister Imran Khan had lauded India's foreign policy, calling it free and independent. He said although the country attained freedom along with Pakistan, their foreign policy remains independent as India stood by its decision to buy oil from Russia despite opposition from the US. Again, in October 2022, Imran Khan praised India's foreign policy saying New Delhi was able to import oil from Russia at will while Pakistan was a slave to the West as it is unable to take fearless decisions for the welfare of its people.



# U'khand Govt accused of slow relief, rehab work in Joshimath; Centre's help sought

PTI/ANS ■ JOSHIMATH

The Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Samiti on Monday demanded scrapping of NTPC's Tapovan-Vishnugad hydel project and asked the Centre to take over the relief and rehabilitation works in the land subsidence hit-town, accusing the Uttarakhand government of carrying them out at a snail's pace.

Meanwhile, at least 44 more buildings have developed cracks in the last 24 hours in Joshimath, including the five-room rest house of the Public Works Department which is in a dilapidated condition.

The labourers in the premises were shifted to a safer place when more cracks appeared on the night of January 14.

The cracks in the banquet hall of a hotel owned by the former Head Priest of Badrinath, Bhuwan Chandra

Uniyal have widened.

PWD's Executive Engineer Surendra Patwal informed that cracks had increased in several houses in Singhdhaar ward and Manoharbaag.

Suraj Kaparwan, a resident of Manoharbaag ward, said that the cracks in the fields were widening.

So far, cracks have appeared in 826 buildings in the city area.

On Sunday, 17 more buildings were declared unsafe by the CBRI team and were marked with red crosses.

Joshimath Bachao Sangharsh Samiti (JBSS) convenor Atul Sati, in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accused the state government of ignoring its warnings about the imminent disaster for 14 months and dealing with it now at a slow pace.

The letter has been signed by Sati, who is credited with bringing the crisis into focus, Congress MLA from

Badrinath, Rajendra Bhandari and around a dozen activists of the Samiti.

"The crisis has endangered the very existence of a historic town, but the relief and rescue operations being carried out by the state government are devoid of any urgency," it said.

"We demand from the Prime Minister that the relief-rehabilitation and stabilisation work in Joshimath is taken over by the Centre to secure the lives and interest of people," the letter said.

The Samiti also demanded the scrapping of NTPC's Tapovan-Vishnugad hydel project, holding the building of its tunnel responsible for the current crisis in Joshimath. The letter also mentioned a research paper published in an international journal in 2015 which said the tunnel was dug in the "fault zone".

"Percolation of water in the area began after a tunnel boring machine (TBM) got stuck



during the building of the tunnel and due to the pressure of water, fresh cracks appeared on the rocks and the old ones widened," says the research paper, adding that extensive grouting of cracks in the area had been suggested, but NTPC did not do so to save expenses.

JBSS activists reiterated that NTPC's Tapovan-Vishnugad hydel project should be scrapped immediately and a fine, which is the double of the project's total investment cost, be imposed

on it.

"An amount of Rs 20,000 crore recovered from the company should be distributed among people displaced by the NTPC project," the letter mentioned.

Residents of the town should be compensated on a home-for-home and land-for-land formula and a high-powered committee, including locals and Sangharsh Samiti members, should be set up for the construction of a new and modern Joshimath, it further said.

# EOW busts inter-State job racket in UP, kingpin held

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Police claimed to have achieved a major success after busting an inter-state job racket in Aligarh. The arrests were made in many states that one of the accused is reportedly an IT engineer belonging to Madhya Pradesh.

Inspector General of Economic Offences Wing (EOW) in Aligarh, Jay Narayan Pankaj, told the media, "The EOW busted the country's biggest job fraud racket, which was being operated by some engineers from Aligarh. In this case, we arrested an engineer, Arpit Panchal, from MP's Ratlam on Sunday. He developed nine websites which looked like government websites."

Arpit Panchal, a resident of Jaora in Madhya Pradesh's Ratlam, is an IT expert and he developed nine websites and used them to lure youths for government jobs and dupe them of hefty amounts.



"In connection with a job fraud racket, busted by EOW in the last week of 2022, and which was operated by Aligarh-based engineers, we have arrested another operative of the racket, who is also an engineer," Pankaj said.

"Arpit Panchal was a website developer in the racket and had developed nine websites for the gang. The websites were designed in such a manner that they looked like government websites, and advertised government jobs for the people on the fake website portal," the senior officer said, adding that they had got a list of around 22,000 persons who were victims of these websites.

According to the police, the victims or the job seeker youths were from Odisha and Gujarat. The police are investigating victims from other states like Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Karnataka.

Arpit Panchal was produced before the Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate Court of Bhubaneswar to seek transit remand of the accused. The police investigation is underway.

Earlier, the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of Odisha Police said it unearthed a huge job fraud scam being run from Aligarh in Uttar Pradesh. Those running the racket targeted unemployed youth in at least five states -- Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Odisha.

According to Odisha Police, EOW arrested one of the primary accused namely Zafar Ahmed (25) a resident of Civil lines, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh in connection with the case.

# 3-member Cong panel arrives in Gujarat to evaluate dismal Assembly poll performance

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

A three member Congress panel arrived in Gujarat on Monday to evaluate the party's dismal performance in the December polls, which saw the Bharatiya Janata Party winning a record 156 seats in the 182-member Assembly.

The Congress got just 17 seats with a vote share of 27.28 per cent, its worst performance since the state was formed in 1960, down from 77 seats in the 2017 polls.

The fact-finding committee, comprising former Maharashtra leader Nitin Raut and leaders Shakeel Ahmed and Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka, was formed on January 4 and has been asked to submit its report to the party within two weeks.

The three member panel has come to Ahmedabad on a



two day visit starting Monday. They have met Assembly election candidates from Ahmedabad and North Gujarat during the day.

Tomorrow they will meet candidates from Surendranagar, Morbi, Botad, Bhavnagar, Amreli, Dang, Jamnagar, Tapi, Navsari, Narmada, Valsad, Surat, Kutch, Somnath, Dwarka, Junagadh and Rajkot districts," Congress spokesperson Hiren Banker

said.

"They also met some of the candidates who won the elections. The fact-finding committee will visit the state once again and spend 10 days here before submitting their report. The dates of the next visit has not been finalised as yet," Banker added.

The two-phase Assembly polls were held on December 1 and 5 and the results were declared on December 8.

# CM Yogi assures speedy redressal of problems



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath listened to the grievances of over 300 people and assured them of resolving "every problem quickly and efficiently" during the Janata Darshan programme held in Gorakhpur on Monday.

Earlier in the morning, the chief minister performed 'Rudrabhishek' and prayed for the well-being and prosperity of the people.

On the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti on Sunday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had offered 'kheer' at the Gorakhnath Temple. On Monday morning, the chief minister performed 'Rudrabhishek' with sugarcane juice and prayed to 'Mahadev' for the welfare of the public. The 'Rudrabhishek' was performed in the Shakti Mandir located on the first floor of Goraksha Peeth Math.

# Cong promises ₹2k/month to woman head of households if voted to power

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The Congress in Karnataka on Monday promised Rs 2,000 a month to every woman head of households if the party is voted to power in the State in the coming Assembly election.

The announcement was made at a convention attended by Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who said Rs 24,000 a year would be directly credited to their bank accounts under "Gruha Lakshmi Yojana", an "unconditional universal basic income".

The promise comes within days of the Congress making an announcement to provide 200 units of free power every month to each household in the State, where Assembly elections are due by May.

"Gruha Lakshmi Yojana" is an attempt of the Congress party to share the "burden of the exorbitant" LPG prices and the "costly daily expenses" that a



I am told that your Ministers are taking 40 per cent commission on jobs," Vadra said during the women-centric event titled "Na Nayaki" (I am a woman leader).

She alleged that Rs 1.5 lakh crore of public

money has been looted in Karnataka.

"Think about some development that has to take place in Bengaluru for Rs 8,000 crore and Rs 3,200 crore is going into commission," Vadra alleged.

Referring to the alleged police sub-inspector recruitment scam, Vadra said, "Nothing moves without paying bribes in Karnataka."

"There are shameful scams like the PSI scam where the police posts are being sold. You educate your children, the young boys and girls to get them jobs. Is this what you expect from the people in power," the Congress leader asked.

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# Raj Govt should act against 'big sharks' behind paper leaks: Pilot

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Indirectly targeting his own party's government in Rajasthan, Congress leader Sachin Pilot on Monday said the state should take action against the "big sharks" behind the string of recruitment exam paper leaks reported recently.

Addressing farmers and the youth at a Kisan Sammelan in Nagaur's Parbatsar, the former deputy chief minister also called for a legal guarantee on minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

Pilot, who is involved in a power tussle with Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, said paper leak incidents hurt the aspirations of the youth who prepare for the exams in adverse conditions while their parents struggle to arrange money for books and fees.

He said in the time to come, petty middlemen and kingpins involved in paper leaks should be caught. "To instill confidence in the youth, the government should take action against the big sharks responsible for paper leaks," Pilot added without naming anyone.

Meanwhile, addressing a press conference in Jaipur, Food and Civil Supplies Minister



Pratap Singh Khachariyawas said, "Sachin Pilotji is a former deputy chief minister of our party. Even if Sachin Pilot gives the name of one accused, he will not be spared. Pilot sahab is also our family member."

"If he has any suggestion, we will take it. Pilot sahab is our senior leader, there is no problem," he added.

The Rajasthan second grade teacher recruitment exam paper was leaked last month, following which the test was cancelled. More than 50 people, including candidates, were arrested for their alleged involvement.

# Shivpal in line for 'big responsibility' after meeting with Akhilesh

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav on Monday met uncle Shivpal Singh Yadav at his residence amid speculation that the Jaswantnagar MLA would be given major responsibility in the party.

Akhilesh Yadav reached Shivpal Yadav's residence at Vikramaditya Marg where he is said to have discussed strengthening of the party's organisation.

"Akhileshji met Shivpalji at his residence in the evening. I don't know about the discussions between them. This is a matter of the family," Rajendra Chowdhury, the Samajwadi Party's chief spokesperson, told PTI.

When asked if Shivpal Yadav would be given a major responsibility in the party, Chowdhury said, "Yes. Shivpalji



will be given a big responsibility." He said the constitution of the party's national and state executives would be done soon, maybe this month.

Akhilesh Yadav dissolved all party units, only retaining

state unit chief Naresh Uttam, last July.

One party leader said Shivpal Yadav might be given responsibility at the national level and his experience utilised for the 2024 General Elections.

# 2 LeT operatives chargesheeted for grenade attack in J&K's Rajouri



PTI ■ JAMMU

was filed before the court of third additional sessions judge, Jammu, he said.

Qasim, originally a resident of Angrala village of Mahore in Reasi district, is absconding and his name cropped up during investigation of the case, exposing the terror network in Jammu and Kashmir and PoK.

Three-year-old Veer Singh was killed and six of his family members, including a woman, injured in a grenade attack by terrorists on the house of a BJP functionary at Khandli chowk in Rajouri on August 13, 2021.

Two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) operatives were on Monday chargesheeted in a case related to grenade attack on a house in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir in 2021, resulting in the killing of a minor boy and injuries to several others, an official said.

The chargesheet against the arrested accused, Altaf Hussain Shah of Draj village (Rajouri) and his Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)-based associate Mohd Qasim alias Suleiman,

# Bengal facing discrimination over MGNREGA fund disbursement: Mamata

PTI ■ SAGARDIGHI

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday alleged that the BJP-led Union government was discriminating against the state over the disbursement of MGNREGA funds.

She claimed the Centre owes West Bengal Rs 6,000 crore for the scheme.

"The central government is not releasing MGNREGA funds to West Bengal. It owes us Rs 6,000 crore. BJP-ruled states, however, are getting funds for the 100 days' work scheme."

Why is West Bengal facing such discrimination despite being number one in MGNREGA implementation? We are running the scheme without any central assistance," Banerjee said at an administrative review meeting at



Sagardighi in Murshidabad district.

On the visits of central teams to West Bengal to oversee the implementation of various schemes, Banerjee alleged they were being sent "to harass" the state government.

"A central team is sent to West Bengal even if a firefly enters a BJP leader's house. Why are such teams not sent to Uttar Pradesh, Delhi or Gujarat over any incident? The Union government is harassing West Bengal by sending central teams over trivial matters," she added.

# Irregularities in Covid centre contracts: ED records BMC chief's statement

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai civic chief Iqbal Singh Chahal said jumbo COVID-19 care centres were set up on the Maharashtra government's orders as he recorded his statement with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday in connection with alleged irregularities in award of contracts for health facilities during the pandemic.

Talking to reporters after emerging out of the ED office, where he recorded his statement for more than four hours, Chahal said the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) was extending all cooperation to the central agency.

The BMC commissioner reached the ED office at Ballard Estate in south Mumbai around 11.40 am and walked out shortly after 4 pm. The central financial crime probe agency had earlier sum-



moned the senior bureaucrat to record his statement in the matter.

The IAS officer spearheaded the BMC's response to the pandemic in the metropolis, where special health facilities were set up to treat coronavirus patients as the cases mounted.

The civic chief told reporters the situation could have gone out of control if quick preparations were not made to tackle COVID-19 in Mumbai, which recorded its

first case in March 2020.

The BMC had started jumbo COVID-19 centres with instructions from the state government by acquiring some places and handing them over for setting up field hospitals, he said.

"The municipal corporation outsourced the required staff to meet the requirement of COVID-19 field hospitals. Due to this lives of lakhs of people were saved as they got timely medical treatment," Chahal said.

# Delivery agent chased by dog jumps off building, dies

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

A food delivery executive, who had suffered critical injuries after jumping off the third floor of an apartment building here out of fear of being attacked by a chasing pet dog of a customer, succumbed at a hospital here, police said on Monday.

The 23-year-old man sustained head injuries and was hospitalised following the incident on January 11 died on Saturday, even as the dog's owner has been booked on charge of causing death by negligence, the police said.

The man, working with a food ordering and delivery platform, had gone to deliver a food parcel to the customer (dog's owner) at the apartment and the dog lunged at the door after it was opened. Scared of the dog, he ran. As he ran, the dog chased him after which he jumped



off the building and suffered head injuries, a police official said.

Following a complaint by the man's brother, the police filed a case under section 336 (act endangering life or personal safety of others) against the dog owner. Following the man's death, the FIR was now altered to Section 304A (causing death due to negligence) of the IPC, the official said.

The Telangana Pavement Workers Union demanded compensation be given to the man under the Workmen Compensation Act and both the dog owner and the food delivery platform should provide Rs 21,99,500 as compensation.

A social media user also demanded that compensation be given by both the food delivery platform and the customer.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Dialogue needed

It would be better if Government and judiciary sort out the collegium issue without much fuss in public

Law Minister Kiren Rijiju's letter to Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud, seeking Government representatives in the Supreme Court collegium, can yield good results. The Law Minister is right that this move will "infuse transparency and public accountability" in the process. However, the desirable outcome is predicated upon respect for each other and healthy dialogue between the executive and the judiciary. That, sadly, doesn't seem to be evident. Government functionaries and other luminaries who are the partisans of the ruling establishment have been regularly taking potshots at the judiciary over the issue of collegium. While the judiciary favours the present system of collegium for the appointment of judges, the Government opposes it on the ground that judges appoint judges. Currently, the Supreme Court collegium comprises the CJI and Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, KM Joseph, MR Shah, Ajay Rastogi, and Sanjiv Khanna. The Government had come up with a new system, that of the National Judicial Appointment Commission (NJAC), but it was struck down by the apex court — an act that the Government has not forgotten. Seldom does a day pass when someone or the other doesn't rake up the issue on one pretext or the other.



A few weeks ago, Rijiju told the Rajya Sabha that the issue would not be resolved until a "new system" on appointments is evolved. He not only called the collegium system to be "opaque" but also told the

Rajya Sabha that there is a feeling among people that the courts' long vacation is not very convenient for justice-seekers. Once Rijiju said that the collegium system was "alien" to the Constitution. Others joined in the fun. One of Jagdeep Dhankhar's first statements after becoming Vice-President and Vice-President was a criticism of the Supreme Court's 2015 decision which annulled the NJAC Act. This, Dhankhar said, was a "severe compromise" of parliamentary sovereignty and disregard of the "mandate of the people." Last week, he put parliamentary sovereignty on a still higher peak, doubting the very authenticity and genuineness of the basic structure doctrine—something even the Congress, against whose authoritarian policies the doctrine was aimed at, did not do. Against this backdrop, it would not be surprising if Rijiju's letter is received coldly by the judiciary. CJI Chandrachud has shown willingness to reconsider the collegium system. A writ petition seeking the revival of the NJAC is likely to be listed in due course. So why is there such haste to do away with the collegium system? Can't Rijiju and others wait for the reconsideration? The judiciary, on its part, can also try to expedite the matter, for moving towards the NJAC, or a similar structure, doesn't mean that the Government would get an overriding power to have its way in the appointment of judges. It would be better if both organs of the State sort out the matter without airing their views in public.

### PICTALK



Labourers work at a brick kiln during a cold and foggy winter morning, in Nadia

# USA gets the taste of 'Samosa' caucus



BHOPINDER SINGH

With influential Indian Diaspora, Indian point of view gets more pronounced in the policy decisions in the US. India is not complaining

Bipartisan pressure groups are not unknown in democracies, as the personal backgrounds or similarly held beliefs and concerns, can cut across partisan lines. These formal or informal caucuses are a novel way of protecting rights of/against a specific community, group, or sovereign. American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is a powerful pro-Israeli and bipartisan lobbying group with a 'vast pool of donors' that seeks to protect Israeli-Jewish interests in the legislative and executive branches of the United States. Similarly, the much-banded 'Squad' (initially with 4 women elected to the US House of Representative, now joined by another 4) is a informal 'progressive/left wing' caucus of young senators, albeit from Democratic ranks only, who are especially keen to push their generational agenda like Medicare for All, New Green Deal etc.



omy often leads to it practicing its own dynamics and equations with allies like Russia, Iran etc., to the frequent queasiness of Washington DC, just as US's continuing support like tactical spares for Pakistan's F-16 fighters (implausibly for 'anti-terrorism'), riles up Delhi.

But like all participative democracies, internal (political) and even ostensibly moral concerns can pit the leaderships of two countries in awkward positions of having to take a stand against each other, or at least disallowing any preferential/lenient treatment, onto each other. This necessitates compelling pressure groups within the corridors-of-powers in Washington DC and Delhi That can cut across the partisan divide and address the temporary impasse. Today, the US House of Representatives hosts a record five Indian-Americans, as also several in the State legislatures. It is a considerable distance covered since the special commission established by the U.S. Congress whose 1911 report declared that Hindus were "universally regarded as the least desirable race of immigrants thus far admitted to the United



TODAY, THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HOSTS A RECORD FIVE INDIAN-AMERICANS, AS ALSO SEVERAL IN THE STATE LEGISLATURES.

States." How the Indian Americans choose to deploy their influential numbers in the corridors of power, remains an open question. They could be effectively neutral e.g., Vice President Kamala Harris, they could regrettably seek to downplay their Indianness a la Bobby Jindal, or hopefully form a pressure group that bats on behalf of the land of their ancestors, as done by most ethnicities, as an emotional commitment.

Subramanian Raja Krishnamoorthi, the U.S. representative for Illinois's 8th Congressional district coined the term 'Samosa Caucus' to define the growing numbers of desi Indian-American lawmakers community. Besides Raja, others include Ro Khanna, Pramila Jaipal, Shri Thanedar and Ami Bera, all from Democrat ranks. Krishnamoorthy has certainly been one of the most enthusiastic supporters of robust relations with India, and even if 'Samosa Caucus' is not a formal caucus as such, the denominational affinity makes outreach to the US Congress, more accessible. Ro Khanna echoed, "Representation is crucial to serving Indian American communities and working to strength-

en America's defense and strategic partnership with India", just as Krishnamoorthy promised to, "address the key issues facing our community, including high-skilled immigration reform and strengthening the partnership between the US and India."

All 5 from the current 'Samosa Caucus' are Democrats and with Joe Biden Presidency, it is perhaps the more useful partisan identity — but for this caucus to be truly meaningful, it needs to be bipartisan, in the long run. While Indian Americans tend to historically gravitate towards Democrats, the Republican regimes have always been more accommodative and responsive towards India's strategic concerns, including that of Donald Trump's. Taking a leaf out of the Jewish-Israeli AIPAC, the idea besetting the 'Samosa Caucus' must have far wider, deeper, and diverse entrenchment in American politics. Seemingly, the Indian party with the 'Samosa Caucus' has just begun.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### MV GANGA VILAS IS GOOD NEWS

Sir — One Good news makes all day good" MV Ganga Vilas is on its avtaar by establishing mass employment generation, tourism points as well as a fortunate friendship with Bangladesh. Besides all these positive steps now it has been obligatory for each one of us to take proper care of our rivers. As we know rivers play a very crucial role in all of our lives. Now the question is what should we do to contribute our step towards this initiative? We just need to follow the instructions which are given to us by the respective government, by just following this we can contribute from our side to the government. "Governments policies only stay in the long run when their people support them to the fullest".

Shivakti Jaiswal | Ujjain

### CHINA'S TIMID HANDLING OF COVID

Sir — In the 36-day period from December 8, 2022, to January 12, 2023, there were a total of 59,938 deaths, Jiao Yahui, director of the National Health Commission's medical affairs department, said. This included 5,503 deaths from respiratory failure directly caused by COVID-19 and 54,435 deaths of those who had underlying conditions and were then infected. According to the NHC, the average age was 80 while 90% were aged 65 and above. As of end-November, shortly before China's abrupt change in policy and almost overnight lifting of restrictions and ending of lockdowns, only 40% of the 30 million above-80 population had completed the full three doses of Chinese vaccines required to prevent hospitalization and death, according to data from Hong Kong. While most cases have been reported as mild, the unvaccinated elderly population has been vulnerable amid the rapid spread of cases, leading to huge pressure in recent weeks on the medical system. There is no concern about a spread of cases to rural areas as many return home ahead of the January 22 Chinese New Year. Thus far, China's handling of covid 19 cases was the most

### Stop crime against women



The violence against women has not lessened but increased. Be it an acid attack on a girl in Delhi, be it a girl being dragged by a car for 13 km, be it a girl was killed by her boyfriend and her body chopped into pieces and disposed of across the length and breadth of roads, be it an owner of a resort killing their receptionist for refusing to indulge in prostitution with resort guests or a college student being killed before the other students for not accepting his love, the gruesome attacks on women are increas-

ing day by day. Crime against women which includes rape, assaults, kidnapping, domestic violence, and dowry deaths has seen an increase over the last six years from 2016. India ranks as the ninth most dangerous country for women. This shows that India, as a society and its government has utterly failed for the safety of women. It is said that women are not safe even in her house.

Our leaders talk about Nari Shakthi but the same leaders failed to urge to stop from giving nod to the release of 11 convicts of gang-raping a pregnant Bilkis Bano and slaughtering several members of her family, including an infant. What is disgusting is that the convict rapists of Bilkis Bano are not only released but feted. After ten years of the "Nirbhaya" case, women are still waiting for sweeping changes in law and society so that women would feel safe and crimes against women would reduce.

Zeeshaan | Kazipet

unprofessional and the Chinese vaccine is the most ineffective one in the market. The biggest problem with the Chinese approach is to hide things from the world and give false picture that everything is alright. But this approach has a huge human cost as till the world knows about the real picture which is hard to get as Chinese media also is government controlled, it can neither help chinese people nor can take proper measures to check the spread of the disease to other parts of the world. It is high time China opened up and gave the right picture.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

### INDIA'S WIN

Sir — India on Sunday, January 15 trounced Sri Lanka with a record 317-run win in the third ODI to sweep the series as Virat Kohli smashed 166 not out off 110 deliveries in Thiruvananthapuram. Skipper Rohit Sharma (42 off 49) and Shubman Gill (116 off 97) shared a fluent 95-run opening partnership before Kohli (166 not out off 110) propelled

India to a daunting 390 for five with his 74th international hundred and 46th in the 50-over format. Sri Lanka succumbed to the high-quality fast bowling of Mohammed Siraj who struck four times inside the 10 overs to shut the door on the opposition. Sri Lanka was all out for a meager 73 in 22 overs, highlighting the gulf between the two teams. It was the biggest margin of victory by runs in the history of men's ODIs. The night well and truly belonged to King Kohli. The 34-year-old, who had ended a nearly three-year wait for an international hundred in the Asia Cup last year, showed that he is back to his best. Kohli is now only three short of equaling Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 ODI centuries. Kohli's conversion ratio is remarkable as he got to his 46th ton in 259 innings while Tendulkar had taken 452 innings to get to 49 centuries.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## SOUND BITE

Vande Bharat is a true replica of India which is coming out of the mentality of dependence and moving towards Atmanirbharta (self-reliance).



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi

It's time we demolish the convenient myth that tax cuts for the richest result in their wealth somehow 'trickling down' to everyone else.

Executive director Oxfam — Gabriela Bucher

My wife Rama, she is a costume designer of my films but more than that she is the designer of my life. If she is not there, I am not here today.



Filmmaker — Rajamouli

(Mohammed) Shami has always been there for us but the way Siraj has come in and done with the new ball has been outstanding.

Indian cricketer — Virat Kohli

Most of the opposition parties have decided to oppose the Election Commission's (EC) proposal on the remote electronic voting machine (RVM) as it is sketchy and not concrete.



Senior Congress leader — Digvijaya Singh

## Castigating politics

The caste politics in Kerala shows no signs of waning, in fact, it is getting more pronounced

A flippancy statement by one of the caste leaders in Kerala has shocked the people in the State. G Sukumaran Nair, general secretary, Nair Service Society, declared the other day that Shashi Tharoor, the Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram is the only Prime Ministerial candidate in the country as he was a Tharavadi Nair (Malayalam for aristocratic Nair). The Nair community constitutes 18 per cent of the electorate in the State and the NSS is a privately held cabal of caste leaders specializing in vote trading during the time of election. Sukumaran, who declares himself the Pope of Perunna (the headquarters of NSS) also claims that the entire Nair community dances to his tunes. He had claimed that Ramesh Chennithala, who hails from the community was appointed as home minister in the Oommen Chandi-led Government (2011-2016) at his bidding. Sukumaran's latest version was that V D Satheshan, who too is from the Nair community, got elected to the assembly following his diktat to the voters. It is true that all candidates, irrespective of the party to which they are affiliated, call on community leaders to solicit their support during the elections. It looks like the pleading by the politicians has gone over to the head of Sukumaran, societal dross.



What he has done is Constitutional impropriety by declaring that only candidates born in a particular caste were eligible to be elected to the top job in the country. Tharoor became a Member of Parliament not because he was born into a Nair family. All people in the country have aristocratic lineage and categorization based on aristocracy is communalism of the worst kind. R Sreelekha, the first woman IPS officer from Kerala, recounted a shocking experience with the NSS leaders in 1984 when she went for an interview for the post of lecturer in a college run by the society. Though she was the top rank holder in the University as well as in the interview, the then general secretary had asked her to pay Rs 25,000/ as a bribe for the job. It was a princely amount and Sreelekha bluntly refused to pay the bribe. She asked the gentleman if this was the kind of service they rendered to the community; she was told that the money was meant for NSS leaders. Caste leaders like Sukumaran should be prosecuted and banished from society to make our national psyche clean and pure. They should be taught the basics that people are not commodities.





## FIRST COLUMN

### HUMAN GREED SINKS TOWNS IN HIMALAYAS

Scientific warnings were ignored in Uttarakhand



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Heaven is literally falling to greed. It is just not Joshimath but even Tehri Garhwal, Karnaprayag, and Mussorie that are also sinking and so may be many other parts at the crest of the Uttarakhand Himalayas. The Rs 12,000-crore Char Dham (CD) all-weather road projects spurring real estate are gobbling up all.

Latest reports say that still the earth movers are digging around Joshimath and other areas even as over 4,000 persons have been evacuated and most houses are crumbling. Tragedies do not stop the road to hell. In 2013, the Uttarakhand Government had sought Rs 21,000 crore for ruthless reconstruction after the Himalayan deluge. It seems to be the catalyst for the present disaster.

The Tehri district is the latest to report cracks and land subsidence. An IIT Roorkee team is studying Karnaprayag. Chamba in the Tehri, around a CD tunnelling is the worst hit with houses crumbling. Seepages at Tehri dam are common, reports SP Rai of National Institute of Hydrology. Now a road from Mana to Lipulekh through sensitive hills with rare virgin forest is the latest to be in danger. In June 2013, after the Kedarnath tragedy this scribe mentioned "in all there are 244 hydel projects (HEP) of var-



ious sizes planned to be constructed in the state. Some of these are already on the streams. Others are coming up. Pancheswar dam being planned in Tanakpur is likely to be bigger than Tehri and biggest in India. Does that mean more disasters are awaiting the region?" Unfortunately, it is so. Nobody listened to the cries of former minister Uma Bharati to not dislodge the image of presiding deity, Dhari Devi before the June 18, 2013 cloudburst. The CAG reviewed 42 hydel projects in 2009.

It noted that over 200 more projects were coming up - almost every five to seven km. The yearning for making Uttarakhand the "Urja Pradesh" has led to reckless development. Ravi Chopra, former head of the High-Power Committee for CD roads, says that a bypass around Joshimath was opposed by the townspeople. The 10-metre-wide road all around the state weakens the hills with digging, blasting, removal of green cover and aquifers. In 2010, HNB Garhwal University study said a tunnel boring machine punctured an aquifer on December 24, 2009, releasing millions of litres of water daily from NTPC's Tapovan-Vishnugad 520 MW hydel project.

The researchers warned of the mishap's potential for "initiating ground subsidence". It was forgotten till December 2022 when the looming nightmare became a reality around Joshimath. This punctured aquifer gushing out water is the cause for Joshimath sinking, confirms Garhwal Commissioner Sushil Kumar. In February 2021, around 200 people went missing as Dhaultiganga and Rishibhanga rivers flooded Tapovan head race tunnel. Warnings of 1930 Swiss scientists, 1976 Commissioner MC Mishra on haphazard constructions and the Supreme Court appointed committee of 2013 for seismically sensitive Main Central Zone advice against hydel projects were ignored.

Incidents of glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF), a UNDP and European Commission study mentioned, are happening regularly. Notable incidents occurred in 1997, 2000 and 2005 in the Sutlej basin and in 1970 and 1978 in Alaknanda and Bhagirathi basins. In 2000 and 2005, it hit the Pong Dam, in Himachal, severely damaging roads, habitations and scores of bridges. The Himalayas all around are crumbling. Dams and roads benefit the industry-real estate mafia damning the sensitive geology and livelihood. If unchecked it may have disastrous consequences and even desertify the cradle of the civilisation in the Ganga valley. The country must rise to stop it.

(The author is a senior journalist)

# Japan's swift response to Chinese threat

## India and Japan have common objectives in forging military agreements beyond military exercises and trade



NISHTHA KAUSHIKI

China poses an active threat to the countries of the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. By avoiding contact warfare, it wishes to avoid heavy casualties and the associated international repercussions, especially the tag of a 'war initiator'. Hence, its strategies of wolf warrior diplomacy and salami slicing aim for a fait accompli, i.e., situations in which the revisionist power can revise the current system without a direct confrontation.

Xi Jinping's 'China Dream' encompasses "informatised local wars" with disruptive technologies of artificial intelligence (AI), unmanned systems, and directed-energy weapons. Thus, adopting an 'Integrated Network Electronic Warfare' blends computer network attacks and electronic warfare. This dominance is seen as a force multiplier in the capabilities of the PLA.

For this purpose, China has adopted a leapfrog approach in making advancements in non-kinetic physical directed energy weapons (DEW), which could be a future game changer. A plethora of DEW platforms, such as targeted high-powered lasers and wave emitters or particle beam waves, enhance Beijing's electromagnetic warfare capabilities. DEWs can disable the satellite sensors and jam automated signal and communication systems.

Washington's Defence Intelligence Agency Report, Challenges to Security in Space (2022), assessed that Beijing owns "multiple ground-based laser weapons of varying power levels to disrupt, degrade, or damage satellites that include a current limited capability to employ laser systems against satellite sensors". Thus, it has the capability to produce reversible and non-reversible effects against the space systems of its adversaries.

Beijing's Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) satellite fleet, which has doubled since 2018, stood at 250 systems in 2022. These satellites allow the PLA to monitor and map the maritime and terrestrial bodies in the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea and the Korean peninsula. At an international level, Russia and China are leaving no stone unturned in implementing their "no limits partnership" and jointly continue to develop and test their ASAT weapons in their military exercises. Given the technological developments related to the PLA, East and South Asia's overall balance of power has been disturbed.

In East Asia, Japan is trying to stand up against the Chinese threats to what it calls "the most severe and complex security environment since World War II". It understands that it is becoming crucial to counter China at two fronts simultaneously, i.e. first, to counter its naval expansion along with its numerical superiority, and second its expanding scope of electromag-



WASHINGTON'S DEFENCE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY REPORT, CHALLENGES TO SECURITY IN SPACE (2022), ASSESSED THAT BEIJING OWNS 'MULTIPLE GROUND-BASED LASER WEAPONS OF VARYING POWER LEVELS TO DISRUPT, DEGRADE, OR DAMAGE SATELLITES'

(The author is Associate Professor in Central University of Punjab, Bathinda)



netic warfare.

Consequently, the change in Tokyo's strategic stance on Beijing from an economic partner to an active military threat has given the leadership strategic clarity of its security requirements and policy formulation. By 2026, Japan intends to deploy Lockheed Martin's Tomahawk and Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff missiles at several bases. On the other hand, it is also going ahead with its military-civil integration with Mitsubishi Heavy Industry, aiming to develop a surface-to-ship guided missile.

Moreover, Japan has contemplated a possible Chinese electromagnetic attack that can disable power grids and other critical military assets like jet aircraft even before hostilities are initiated. It has incorporated the new technologies under "multi-domain defence force" for "cross-domain operations". For its immediate need, Japan has plans to deploy an Electronic Warfare unit to Yonaguni, Okinawa prefecture, to enhance its analytical and data collection capabilities.

From an international political perspective, Japan has rapidly moved beyond the partnership domain and entered formal institutionalised security cooperation. Thus, it is no longer in the stage of a 'reluctant realist'. The foundations laid by late PM Shinzo Abe are now reaping fruits which make Japan more secure and allow it to stand up against the Chinese threat.

Two crucial developments last

year are much appreciated. First, Japan and Germany agreed to set up a "legal framework to facilitate joint activities between Japan's Self-Defence Forces and the German military". With agreements in place for intelligence-sharing mechanisms and promoting transfers of defence equipment and technology, interoperability between Japan and Germany would be a welcome step.

Second, Japan signed a bilateral security agreement with Australia that encompasses "practical cooperation and interoperability" in the emerging domains. These areas include intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance... advanced defence science and technology, defence industry and high-end capabilities".

Although 2023 has just begun, Japan is already in action. The recent Japan-UK Reciprocal Access Agreement for "cooperative activities" will expand the narratives of a "free and open Indo-Pacific", thereby having profound consequences for the region. Also, the US-Japan agreement for "exploration, science, and research" in deep space has provisions for joint activities between the two countries in various areas such as space operations and technology, space transportation, safety and mission assurance.

Against the above backdrop, there are important messages for India, as it also faces an aggressive China on the land and in the maritime domain. A possible Sino-Pak collaboration, apart from challenges from the sea, can make the

situation for India worrisome. Thus, it is time for India to come out of its reluctant approach and initiate dual-use critical technologies agreements with credible partners like Japan, France and Germany.

India should not be left behind in institutionalising multi-faceted security agreements. Although there are unsaid similarities in the objectives of Quad and the AUKUS, a very different approach shouldn't make the geographical contours of Quad more vulnerable to the Chinese threat. Needless to say that Galwan and Tawang skirmishes have demonstrated that the future of the India-China relationship does not seem to be stable at all, thereby posing multiple tactical as well as strategic challenges for the country.

India and Japan have common objectives in forging military agreements beyond military exercises and trade. Various dimensions of security agreements, such as joint research and production of technologies in the electromagnetic spectrum, increase the interoperability between the two forces, apart from developing cyber offensive mechanisms that can bring stability and peace in the Indo-Pacific orbit.

China, in future conflicts, will provoke either of the two countries at one point in time and would naturally expect stability at the other international border. Thus, it becomes essential to frustrate China in its own game; hence, Indo-Japan defence relations need to be boosted.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

IF SOMETHING IS FOUND, IT'S A RAID... IF NOTHING IS FOUND, IT'S NOT. IT'S THE DEPUTY CM'S OFFICE, NOT INDIA GATE THAT ANYBODY WOULD GO THERE.

— DELHI DEPUTY CM MANISH SISODIA



AAP LEADERS SAY THAT THEY WELCOME PROBE BY ANY AGENCIES BUT WHEN THE SAME AGENCIES PROBE THEY RAISE HUE AND CRY AND PLAY THE VICTIM CARD.

— DELHI BJP PRESIDENT VIRENDRA SACHDEVA

# Governors should be impartial and appear to be so

It is time political parties reached a consensus on the appointment and role of governors, and restored the dignity of the post

Decades ago, the first DMK chief minister, CN Annadurai, called the post of a governor redundant. It was after prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru dismissed the EMS Namboodiripad government on the recommendations of the then Kerala Governor on July 31, 1959.

Once again, the role of governor has come into question with the emergence of multiple regional parties. The issues between some chief ministers and governors include: selection of governor; time for proving a legislative majority; taking a long time to give consent to Bills; adverse comments on the state's policies; and the role of chancellors of state universities.



KALYANI SHANKAR

(The author is a senior journalist)

The lousy chemistry between chief ministers and governors is not new, as it has been around for a while. Political parties, mainly the DMK and the CPI-M, have even called for the abolition of the post. Some argue that they are superfluous in a democracy.

During the last few years, the governors of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Maharashtra and West Bengal, and the lieutenant-governors of Delhi and Puducherry, among others, have not got along with the non-BJP chief ministers. That is why the Chief Ministers like Mamata Banerjee, K Chandrashekar Rao, ML Stalin and P Vijayan shout in a chorus for the abo-

lition of the post. They have argued that the governors function as an agent of the Centre and have no accountability except for those who appointed them. Above all, they are unelected.

Abolishing the post of governor might be a distant dream, but the issue could be addressed. The Centre-state relationship and the role of governor must be further refined. The governor is the link between the Centre and states. He acts as a medium in a country which promotes cooperative federalism. He is a nominal head and has a five-year tenure but remains at the 'pleasure' of the President. The governor summons and prorogues the legislature on the advice of the council of ministers. The real

power rests with the elected chief minister.

His other duties include giving and withholding assent to a bill. He determines the time for parties to prove their majority. The Constitution and not political considerations must guide him.

The architect of the Indian Constitution, BR Ambedkar, had assured the Constituent Assembly that the governor would have no powers of his own. However, he would have duties.

It is not as if all governors were terrible, as the contribution of some governors has been good. Earlier, people of eminence occupied Raj Bhavans. Some did stellar work, were non-controversial, and had a good rapport with the chief ministers.

The truant governors include the late Ram Lal, who dismissed the NT Rama Rao government in Andhra Pradesh in 1984. Indira Gandhi had to sack Ram Lal and reinstate Rao, who had a majority.

The Goa governor, Late Bhanu Pratap Singh, sacked two chief ministers and reinstated one, all within a fortnight. As a result, the Centre sacked him.

The Kerala Assembly passed a resolution against Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, asking the President to recall him.

The latest row between the DMK-led government and Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi took an ugly turn on January 9 in the Assembly's inaugural session. In an

unprecedented manner, Ravi omitted the references to BR Ambedkar, Dravidian leaders, and the Dravidian governance model in his speech. He also suggested changing the name of Tamil Nadu to Tamizhagam.

The Governor walked out of the House in a huff. Chief Minister Stalin moved a quick resolution against the Governor, putting the records straight that only the written speech should go into the records.

Prime minister Indira Gandhi imposed governors on various states. A healthy system of consulting the chief minister on the appointment of governors changed. She merely informed them. At least 50 times during her two stints, she sacked chief

ministers.

The successive governments carried this forward until the Bommai judgment stipulated that the floor test should be the final for deciding on the majority of a government.

It is high time political parties reached a consensus on the appointment and role of governors, and brought back the dignity and respectability of the post. The Centre, while appointing governors, must consult the chief minister as recommended by the Sarkaria Commission. They should be persons of eminence and not play partisan politics. They should not only be fair but also appear to be impartial. This may check the truant governors.



# Ukraine strike deaths hit 40; Russia seen preparing long war

**AP ■ KYIV**  
The death toll from a weekend Russian missile strike on an apartment building in the southeastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro has risen to 40, authorities said on Monday, as Western analysts pointed to indications the Kremlin was preparing for a drawn-out war in Ukraine after almost 11 months of fighting.  
About 1,700 people lived in the multi-story building, and search and rescue crews have worked nonstop since Saturday's strike to locate victims and survivors in the wreckage.  
The regional administration said 39 people have been rescued so far and 30 more remained missing. Authorities said at least 75 were wounded.  
The reported death toll made it the deadliest single attack on Ukrainian civilians since before the summer, according to The Associated Press-Frontline War Crimes Watch project.  
Residents said the apartment tower did not house any military facilities.  
The European Union's foreign

policy chief, Josep Borrell, called the strike, and others like it, "inhumane aggression" because it directly targeted civilians.  
"There will be no impunity for these crimes," he said in a tweet on Sunday.  
Asked about the strike on Monday, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Russian military doesn't target residential buildings and suggested the Dnipro building was hit as a result of Ukrainian air defense actions.  
The strike on the building came amid a wider barrage of Russian cruise missiles across Ukraine.  
The Ukrainian military said on Sunday that it did not have the means to intercept the type of Russian missile that hit the residential building in Dnipro.  
Fierce fighting continued to rage on Monday in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk province, where military analysts have said both sides are likely suffering heavy troop casualties. No independent verification of developments was possible.  
Donetsk and neighbouring



Luhansk province make up the Donbas, an expansive industrial region bordering Russia that Russian President Vladimir Putin identified as a focus from the war's outset.  
Moscow-backed separatists have been fighting Kyiv's forces there since 2014.  
The Russian and Belarusian air forces began a joint exercise Monday in Belarus, which borders Ukraine and served as a staging ground for Russia's February 24 invasion of Ukraine.  
The drills are set to run through February 1, the Belarusian Defence Ministry said. Russia has sent its warplanes to Belarus for the drills.  
The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, reported signs of the Kremlin taking steps to turn its Ukraine invasion into "a major conventional war" after months of embarrassing military reversals.  
What Moscow calls "a special military operation" aimed to capture the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, within weeks and to install a Kremlin-friendly regime there, but Russian forces ultimately

withdrew from around Kyiv, the think tank said.  
Then came a successful Ukrainian counteroffensive in recent months before the onset of winter slowed military advances.  
"The Kremlin is likely preparing to conduct a decisive strategic action in the next six months intended to regain the initiative and end Ukraine's current string of operational successes," the Institute for the Study of War said in a report late on Sunday.  
It noted reports indicating the Russian military command was in "serious preparations" for an expanded mobilisation effort, conserving mobilised personnel for future use, while seeking to boost military industrial production and reshuffling its command structure.  
That means Ukraine's Western allies "will need to continue supporting Ukraine in the long run," the think tank said.  
NATO member nations have sought in recent days to reassure Ukraine that they will stay the course.

The United Kingdom has pledged tanks and the US military's new, expanded combat training of Ukrainian forces began in Germany on Sunday.  
**OTHER DEVELOPMENTS ON MONDAY:**  
■ Russian forces shelled the city of Kherson and the Kherson region, killing three people and wounding 14 others over the last 24 hours, regional Gov. Yaroslav Yanushevych said.  
In the city of Kherson, the shelling damaged a hospital, a children disability center, a shipyard, critical infrastructure and apartment buildings.  
■ Russian forces struck the city of Zaporizhzhia, damaging industrial infrastructure and wounding five people, two of them children, the deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office Kyrylo Tymoshenko reported.  
■ Russian air defences downed seven drones on Monday over the Black Sea near the port of Sevastopol in annexed Crimea, Mikhail Razvozhayev, the Russian-installed head of Sevastopol, reported.

# Poland's PM calls on Germany to send more weapons to Ukraine

**AP ■ WARSAW**  
Poland's prime minister said on Monday that he wants the German government to supply a wide range of weapons to Kyiv and voiced hope that Germany would soon approve a transfer of battle tanks to strengthen Ukraine's defence against Russian forces in the war.  
The comments by Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki came as German Chancellor Olaf Scholz faces mounting pressure to approve German-made battle tanks for Kyiv.  
Germany's government has given Ukraine substantial military aid since Russia invaded, but has also faced criticism, including from inside Germany's governing coalition, that it could be doing far more.  
Morawiecki said that he

believed that the German government would respond to growing international pressure to provide battle tanks to Ukraine as Russia carries out relentless attacks on civilians, apartment buildings and power infrastructure.  
"I can't imagine that Germany would make us wait long for such an agreement," Morawiecki said as he was departing for Germany.  
He noted that Germany promised a Patriot air defence system after pressure, including from Warsaw.  
Poland's president said recently that his country wants to send a company of German-made Leopard 2 tanks, meaning 14 tanks, to Ukraine, but wanted that transfer to be part of a coordinated effort by NATO allies.



"I call on the German government to act decisively and deliver all types of weapons to Ukraine," Morawiecki said, according to statements reported by the Polish state news agency PAP.  
He was in Berlin to honor Wolfgang Schäuble, the conservative politician who was marking 50 years in the Bundestag.  
The Polish leaders visit came as German Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht announced her resignation on Monday.  
Lambrecht was overseeing a ministry seeking to modernise the military and expand military aid for Ukraine.  
Poland is also waiting for a delivery of German Patriot systems, something Berlin offered after a stray missile fell in Poland near the Ukraine border in November and killed two Poles.  
The German press agency dpa reported that the deployment of the Patriot systems and German soldiers would begin on Monday.  
At one point, Polish officials said that Germany should send its Patriots to Ukraine instead of Poland, creating some tensions between the two governments before Warsaw finally said it would accept them.



In this photo released by State Emergency Service of Ukraine on Monday, a Ukrainian State Emergency Service firefighter carries a wounded woman out of the rubble from a building after a Russian rocket attack on Saturday in Dnipro, Ukraine (AP)

**G20 NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**1<sup>st</sup> CORRIGENDUM NOTICE**  
No. 128-W/280/e Tender notice/NIT-106/2022-23/W-3 Dated: 16.01.2023  
The advertised tender notice no. No. 128-W/280/e Tender notice/NIT-106/2022-23/W-3 dated 12.01.2023 for the work namely "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." Contract value has been changed to Rs. 1,78,58,636.62/- and EMD has been changed to of Rs. 2,39,300/- on IREPS on administrative ground.  
181/2023  
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

That public statement by President Andrzej Duda in Lviv, Ukraine, was seen as part of the growing international pressure on Germany to better arm Ukraine.  
Under common arms sales rules, the German government would need to give its approval for Poland and any other countries to provide the German-made tanks to a third country.

The German government spokeswoman Christiane Hoffmann said Monday that Poland hasn't asked Germany yet whether it can ship its own Leopards to Ukraine.  
In Berlin, Morawiecki argued that the West must do much more for Ukraine, because "today Ukrainians are fighting not only for their freedom, but also in defence of Europe."

**G20 CANCELLATION/DIVERSION/REGULATION OF TRAINS DUE TO TRAFFIC BLOCK**  
It is notified for the information of railway passengers that Railways will undertake the New Electronic Interlocking and Yard Remodelling work at Sanehwal station. As a result following trains will be affected as under:-  
**CANCELLATION OF TRAINS**

Train No. & Train Name	Date of Cancellation (from originating station)
04503/04504 Ambala Cantt-Ludhiana-Ambala Cantt Special	Upto 30.01.2023
04591/04592 Ludhiana -Chheharta-Ludhiana Special	Upto 30.01.2023
04579 Ambala Cantt.- Ludhiana Special	Upto 30.01.2023
04582 Ludhiana - Ambala Cantt Special	Upto 30.01.2023
04690/04689 Jalandhar City-Ambala Cantt-Jalandhar City Spl.	Upto 30.01.2023
12497/12498 New Delhi-Amritsar-New Delhi Shan-e-Punjab Exp.	Upto 24.01.2023
22429/22430 Delhi - Pathankot-Delhi Express	24.01.2023
04651 Jaynagar-Amritsar Special	17.01., 20.01., 22.01., & 24.01.23
04652 Amritsar - Jaynagar Special	18.01., 20.01., 22.01., & 25.01.23
04653 New Jalpaiguri-Amritsar Special	20.01.2023
04654 Amritsar -New Jalpaiguri Special	18.01.2023
22445 Kanpur Central-Amritsar Express	23.01.2023
22446 Amritsar -Kanpur Central Express	17.01.2023 & 24.01.2023
14606 Jammu Tawi-Yog Nagari Rishikesh Express	22.01.2023
14605 Yog Nagari Rishikesh -Jammu Tawi Express	23.01.2023

**DIVERSION OF TRAINS**

Train No. & Train Name	Diverted Route	Date from originating station
14649 Jaynagar-Amritsar Saryu Yamuna Exp.	Via	17.01.2023 & 24.01.2023
12549 Durg-Jammu Tawi Express	Ambala Cantt.- Chandigarh	17.01.2023 & 24.01.2023
22705 Tirupati-Jammu Tawi Humsafar Exp.	Sanehwal-Ludhiana	17.01.2023 & 24.01.2023
12407 New Jalpaiguri-Amritsar Karmabhoomi Express		18.01.2023
20847 Durg-Udhampur Express		18.01.2023 & 25.01.2023
15708 Amritsar-Katihar Express	Via Ludhiana-Dhuri-Rajpura	24.01.2023

**REGULATION OF TRAINS**

Train No. & Name	Regulation of Trains (from originating station)
22125 Nagpur-Amritsar AC Superfast Exp.	Train will be Regulated for 60 min. from Nagpur Station on 21.01.2023
12920 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-Dr. Ambedkar Nagar Malwa Express	Train will be Regulated for 145 min. from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Station on 24.01.2023
12472 Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-Bandra T. Swaraj Express	Train will be Regulated for 80 min. from Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra Station on 24.01.2023
12407 New Jalpaiguri-Amritsar Karmabhoomi Express	Train will be Regulated for 25 min. from New Jalpaiguri Station on 25.01.2023
14649 Jaynagar-Amritsar Saryu Yamuna Express	Train will be Regulated for 195 min. from JayNagar on 22.01.2023

# Germany's Defence Min resigns amid Ukraine criticism

**AP ■ BERLIN**  
Germany's much-criticized defence minister announced her resignation on Monday, as her department steers the massive project of modernising the country's military and oversees expanding weapons deliveries to Ukraine.  
Christine Lambrecht said in a written statement that she had submitted her resignation request to Chancellor Olaf Scholz, adding that "months of media focus on my person" had stood in the way of a factual debate about the military and Germany's security policy.

"The valuable work of the soldiers and many people in my department must stand in the foreground," she said.  
A spokesperson for Scholz said the chancellor had accepted Lambrecht's resignation.  
"The chancellor respects the decision by Ms. Lambrecht and thanks her for her good work in these difficult and challenging times," Christiane Hoffmann told reporters in Berlin.  
She said a replacement would be announced "soon."  
Hoffmann added that it was important to Scholz to ensure gender parity among ministers, but declined to comment on a possibility of a wider Cabinet reshuffle.  
The 57-year-old Lambrecht has been defence minister since Scholz became chancellor in December 2021.  
Critics have long portrayed



her as out of her depth. But Scholz stood by her, describing her last month as "a first-class defence minister."  
Pressure on her mounted recently after an ill-judged New Year's video message.  
Lambrecht's resignation comes at a sensitive moment, as Scholz faces mounting pressure to make another significant step forward in German military aid to Ukraine by agreeing to deliver Leopard 2 battle tanks.  
Earlier this month, Germany agreed to provide 40 Marder armoured personnel carriers and a Patriot air defence missile battery to Kyiv.

Germany has given Ukraine substantial support in recent months, including howitzers, Gepard self-propelled anti-aircraft guns and the first of four IRIS-T surface-to-air missile systems.  
But critics, some inside Germany's governing coalition, have long complained of Scholz's perceived hesitancy to step up aid. Lambrecht was overshadowed on the issue by the chancellor, who made most major announcements.  
Lambrecht was then Finance Minister Scholz's deputy before being appointed justice minister in 2019.

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# High-ranking Wagner Group member seeks asylum in Norway

**AP ■ COPENHAGEN**  
A Russian man who reportedly is a former high-ranking member of the Russian private military contractor Wagner Group, has sought asylum in Norway, authorities said on Monday.  
The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, also known by its Norwegian acronym UDI, confirmed to The Associated Press that Andrey Medvedev has sought shelter in Norway.  
"For reasons of security and privacy, the UDI cannot comment further on this matter," UDI said in an email to the AP.  
Medvedev's Norwegian lawyer, Brynjulf Risnes, was not immediately available for comment.  
The case was handed to the Norwegian immigration police and the man was transferred to Oslo, where he was placed in a centre for violators of migration



illegally.  
It is believed that person was identical with Medvedev, who according to the Norwegian news agency NTB on Monday has been on the run since he defected from the Wagner Group on July 6.  
He reportedly has told a Russian human rights group that he is ready to tell everything he knows about the Wagner Group, its activities and its owner Yevgeny Prigozhin, a millionaire with ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin.  
The Wagner Group includes a large number of convicts recruited in Russian prisons who have spearheaded attacks in Ukraine.  
The group has become increasingly influential in Africa, where it has been pushing Russian disinformation, building alliances with regimes and gaining access to oil, gas, gold, diamonds and valuable minerals.

# Cambodian experts begin training Ukrainian deminers

**AP ■ PHNOM PENH**  
Fifteen Ukrainian deminers are being trained by experts in Cambodia who are among the world's best because of experience from clearing the leftovers of nearly three decades of war.  
The Ukrainian deminers are being hosted by the Cambodian Mine Action Centre, a government agency that oversees the clearing of land mines and unexploded ordnance in Cambodia. The week-long program began Monday and is supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency.  
Heng Ratana, the demining centre's director general, said the Ukrainians will be trained by Cambodian experts at the Mine Action Technical Institute in the central province of Kampong Chhnang.



# Flight data, voice recorders retrieved from Nepal crash site

## At least 69 of 72 people aboard were killed in accident

AP ■ POKHARA, NEPAL

Search teams retrieved the flight data and cockpit voice recorders Monday of a passenger plane that plummeted into a gorge on approach to a new airport in the foothills of the Himalayas, officials said, as investigators looked for the cause of Nepal's deadliest plane crash in 30 years.

At least 69 of the 72 people aboard were killed, and officials believe the three missing are also dead. Rescuers combed through the debris, scattered down a 300-meter-deep (984-foot-deep) gorge, for them.

Many of the passengers on the flight were returning home to Pokhara, though the city is also popular with tourists since it's the gateway to the Annapurna Circuit hiking trail. A pharmaceutical marketing agent was traveling to be with his sister as she gave birth, and a minister of a Korean religious group was visiting the school he founded.

On Monday evening, relatives and friends were still gathered outside a local hospital. Many consoled one another, while some shouted at officials to speed up the post mortems so they could take the bodies of their loved ones home for funerals.



It's still not clear what caused the crash, which took place less than a minute's flight from the airport on a mild day with little wind.

Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority said the aircraft last made contact with the airport, which began operations only two weeks ago, from near Seti Gorge before crashing.

A witness who recorded footage of the plane's descent said it looked like a normal landing until the plane suddenly veered to the left.

"I saw that, and I was

shocked," said Diwas Bohora. "I thought that today everything will be finished here after it crashes, I will also be dead."

After it crashed, red flames erupted and the ground shook violently, Bohora said. "Seeing that scene, I was scared," he added.

Amit Singh, an experienced pilot and founder of India's Safety Matters Foundation, said Bohora's video appears to show a stall, a situation in which a plane loses lift, especially likely at low airspeeds.

The twin-engine ATR 72 aircraft, operated by Nepal's Yeti Airlines, was completing the 27-minute flight from the capital, Kathmandu, to Pokhara, 200 kilometers (125 miles) west. It was carrying 68 passengers, including 15 foreign nationals, as well as four crew members, Nepal's Civil Aviation Authority said in a statement. The foreigners included five Indians, four Russians, two South Koreans, and one each from Ireland, Australia, Argentina and France.

Jagannath Niraula, a spokesman for the authority, said the flight recorders will be handed over to investigators. Pemba Sherpa, spokesperson for Yeti Airlines, confirmed that both the flight data and the cockpit voice recorders were found.

Nepal is home to eight of the world's 14 highest mountains including Mount Everest. A pilot who routinely flies an ATR 72-500 plane from India to Nepal said the region's topography, with its mountain peaks and narrow valleys, raises the risk of accidents and sometimes requires pilots to fly by sight rather than relying on instruments.

The pilot, who works for a private Indian airline and insisted on anonymity due to company policy, called the ATR 72-500 an "unforgiving aircraft" if the pilot isn't highly skilled and familiar with the region's terrain and wind speeds.

Hundreds of people have gathered outside the Pokhara Academy of Health and Science, Western Hospital, where the bodies are being kept. Bimala Bhandari said was planning to meet her friend, Tribhuban Paudel, on Tuesday when she heard that his flight had crashed. "I'm so sad, I can't believe it still," she said in tears.

Bikash Jaiswal said he could only identify his wife's brother only by the ring he wore, and that he had yet to tell his wife, who just gave birth to their daughter.

Sanjay Jaiswal, who worked as a marketing agent for a private pharmaceutical company in Kathmandu, was flying to Pokhara for the birth. More than 24 hours after the crash, his body lay in the same hospital where his niece was born.

"He was a hardworking person, and now there's no one left in his family to earn," Bikash said.

Park Dae-seong, a minister and spokesperson of the Won Buddhist order, confirmed on Monday the deaths of Arun Paudel and his daughter, Prasadidi.

# France: March, Eiffel Tower display to back Iran's activists



AP ■ PARIS

Activists gathered Monday near the EU parliament in the French city of Strasbourg in support of Iran's anti-government protesters as Paris prepared an Eiffel Tower tribute to the death of Mahsa Amini, whose death in September prompted the demonstrations.

The Strasbourg march comes after over 100 MEPs signed a letter last week calling on the European Union to take a firmer stance against Iran.

The European parliament's plenary session is to debate the EU's response this week to the protests and executions in the Islamic Republic.

A non-binding resolution is to be voted on Thursday.

The MEPs' letter to Josep Borrell, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, called on the bloc to designate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps "in its entirety as a terrorist organisation."

The IRGC was designated a foreign terrorist organisation by the U.S. In 2019, Paris City Hall said in a statement that the words "Woman. Life. Freedom." "#StopExecutionsInIran" will be displayed on the Eiffel Tower on Monday and Tuesday evening to mark four months from the death of Mahsa Amini, in a "homage to those who are bravely fighting for their freedom as the (Iranian) regime is continuing executions of protesters."

Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo and some deputy mayors are expected to go to the Eiffel Tower Monday in a show of support. Paris posthumously declared Amini an honorary citizen in October.

Iran has been rocked by protests since the Sept. 16 death of the 22-year-old, who died after being detained by the morality police. The protests have since become one of the most serious challenges to the theocracy installed by the 1979 Islamic Revolution.



# UK Govt may veto Scotland's gender self-recognition law

AP ■ LONDON

The British government is considering blocking a new law that makes it easier for people in Scotland to legally change their gender — a move that would spark conflict with transgender rights advocates and the nationalist Scottish administration in Edinburgh.

The Financial Times reported Monday that Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative administration was set to veto the Scottish law.

The government said no decision has been made but that it had concerns about the law, "particularly around safety issues for women and children."

The law approved by the Scottish parliament last month allows people age 16 or older to change the gender designation on their identity documents by self-declaration, removing the need for a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria.

It also cuts the time trans people must live in a different expressed gender before the change is legally recognised, from two years to three months for adults and to six months for people ages 16 and 17.

The law sets Scotland apart from the rest of the United Kingdom, where a medical diagnosis is needed before individuals can transition for legal purposes.

# South Korea president, in UAE, backs return to nuclear power

AP ■ ABU DHABI

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said Monday that his nation's efforts to be carbon neutral by 2050 would rely in part on returning to nuclear power, even though his predecessor had tried to move away from atomic power. Yoon's comments at a summit in the United Arab Emirates, made in front of the country's leader, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, served to underline Seoul's commitment to nuclear power as it works to finish the Arabian Peninsula's first atomic power plant.

That could see South Korea in line for lucrative maintenance contracts and future projects in the UAE, which Seoul has grown closer to over recent years.

"Korea has ... Declared its 2050 carbon neutrality goal," Yoon said in an address at Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week. "To achieve this goal, we are working to rapidly restore the nuclear power system, which supplies carbon-free electricity."

"If our two countries join efforts in clean



energy development ... it will not only enhance our two countries energy security but also will contribute to global energy market stability," Yoon added.

Yoon's predecessor, President Moon Jae-in, sought to move South Korea away from nuclear power amid safety and graft scandals and Japan's 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster. But the renewed global focus on climate change — and the surge in fossil fuel prices after the lockdowns of the coronavirus pandemic and Russia's war on Ukraine — has some reconsidering nuclear power.

The UAE also promises to be carbon neutral by 2050 — a target that remains dif-

icult to assess and one that the Emirates still has not fully explained how it will reach. The USD 20 billion Barakah nuclear power plant, Seoul's first attempt to build atomic reactors abroad, will one day account for nearly a quarter of all of the Emirates' power needs.

Yoon's embrace of nuclear power also provides a guarantee of sorts that South Korea remains invested in servicing the Barakah plant. France, also home to nuclear power plants and another Emirati business and military ally, has sought contracts here as well.

Already, Yoon's four-day trip the UAE has seen a promise from Sheikh Mohammed to invest some USD 30 billion in the country. Heavyweight business leaders from Hyundai, Samsung and other companies also are taking part in the state visit.

During his trip, Yoon also visited South Korean special forces stationed in the United Arab Emirates, a murky deployment that grew out of Seoul's deal over the nuclear power plant. The Akh unit is comprised of some 150 troops.

## PUBLIC NOTICE

**Loss of ID Card:**  
This is to bring to the notice of the general public that one ID Card of **Mr. RAMESH KUMAR SHARMA** issued by SBI Bank Ltd. having ID card no. **640585** has been found missing and/or lost on 15-Jan-2023. Anyone, who finds the said ID card, is requested to return the said ID card to SBI CPSL 401, 402, 4th Floor Aggarwal Millennium Tower, E-1, 2, 3 Netaji Subhash Place, New Delhi-110004.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is to inform to the public at large **MS. ARZOO SIROHI** who is purchasing the **PLOT OF LAND AREA MEASURING 250 SQ. YDS., OUT OF KHASRA NO. 1058/1, SITUATED AT VILLAGE MEHRAULI, PARGANA LONI, TEHSIL & DISST. GHAZIABAD.** From Mr. Tejpal Singh S/o Mr. Amichand, who had owner through Khatouni Record, and same to be financed & mortgaged by **Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Ltd.** If any Person having any type of claim/right/interest over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 07 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien, disputes etc.

**Lucem Legal LLP**  
B-93B, Second Floor, Opp. SBI Bank Sector 2, Noida, UP-201301 Contact#0120-4289379

## PUBLIC NOTICE

**TATA ELXSI SHARES CERTIFICATES**  
Reg. Office: TSR Consultants Pvt Ltd No.6-10, Haji Moosa Patrawala Ind. Estate, 20, Dr. E Moses Road, Mahalaxmi Mumbai-400011, Maharashtra.  
Notice is hereby given that the certificate(s) for the undermentioned securities of the Company has/have been lost/misplaced and the holder(s) of the said securities/applicant(s) has/have applied to the Company to issue duplicate certificate(s).  
Any person who has a claim in respect of the said securities should lodge such claim with the Company at its Registered Office within 15 days from this date, else the Company will proceed to issue duplicate certificate(s) without further intimation.

Name(s) of holder(s)	Kind of Securities	No. of Securities	Distinctive No.(s)
Subhash Jain	10	200	EX50000315

Place: Noida, Dated: 17.01.2023 Subhash Jain

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Allotment letter No. 1074 dt. 01/05/2006 of property SKE 302, Shipra Krishna Vista, Ahinsa Khand, Indrapuram, Ghaziabad - 14, issued by Shipra Estate & Ltd & Jai Krishan Estate Developers Pvt Ltd. in the name of Mr. Rajeev Kumar S/o Sh. R. D. Thakur have been lost. If, found Please call Ankita Mohan (M) 9971559801.

## UJVN LTD.

H.O.: 'UJWAL', Maharani Bagh, G.M.S. Road, Dehradun-248006  
Telephones : 0135-2763808 & Fax : 0135- 2763508  
CN No. U40101UR2015SC022866, Website: www.ujvn.com

Letter No.49 e-Tender Notice Dated 16.01.2023  
Office of the Executive Engineer, (M&G) Pathri Power House, Bahadradab, Hardwar invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:-

1. Tender No.: 37/EE(Pathri)/2022-23 - Design, engineering, manufacture, supply, installation, testing and commissioning of Nitrogen gas based Transformer Explosion Prevention and Fire Extinguishing system for 2 No. 12 MVA, 66/11 kV Power Transformers with all fittings, accessories, associated equipment and spares at Pathri Power House. Estimated Cost: Rs. 45,29,500/- (GST extra)

Date of availability of bid document on website: 17-01-2023  
Last date for submission of bids on website: 07-02-2023  
For fuller & further details, kindly visit e-procurement portal "https://uktenders.gov.in"

**EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (M&G)**  
"Avoid Wasteful use of Electricity"

# Italy: No 1 wanted Mafia boss held after 30 years



AP ■ ROME

Italy's No. 1 fugitive, Matteo Messina Denaro, a convicted Mafia boss who ordered some of the nation's most heinous killings, was arrested Monday at a private clinic in Sicily after three decades on the run, Italian paramilitary police said.

Messina Denaro was captured at the Palermo clinic where he was receiving treatment for an undisclosed medical condition, according to Carabinieri Gen. Pasquale Angelosanto, who heads the police force's special operations squad.

A pair of Carabinieri officers, each holding an arm, walked him down the front steps of the upscale clinic and led him to a waiting black van in pouring rain. Messina Denaro was wearing a brown leather jacket trimmed in shearling, a matching white-and-brown skull cap and his trademark tinted glasses. His face looked wan and he stared straight ahead.

A young man when he went into hiding, he is now 60. Messina Denaro, who had a power base near in the western Sicilian port city of Trapani, was considered Sicily's Cosa Nostra top boss even while a fugitive.

He was the last of three longtime fugitive top-level Mafia bosses who had for decades eluded capture, and hundreds of police officers over the years had been tasked with tracking him down.

# New Israel army chief vows to keep politics out of military

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel's new army chief on Monday vowed to keep the military free of politics, days after his predecessor spoke out against planned changes to military operations in the occupied West Bank.

Lt. Gen. Herzli Halevi took office as the army chief of staff at a ceremony in Jerusalem.

He is the first West Bank settler to serve as the military chief. He succeeds Aviv Kohavi, who over the week-end spoke out in a series of interviews against dividing the military's authority, particularly in the occupied West Bank. Kohavi wrapped up a four-year term.

## Public Notice

The General Public at large is informed that my client **Mr. Mohammad Javed S/o. Mr. Ghulam Sabir, R/o. B-11-B, Okhla Vihar, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-25** and his wife **Gulshan Parveen** jointly booked a Plot No. C-101, Supertech Upcountry, Yamuna Expressway & Flat No.W2, Golf Village, Supertech Project situated at TS-5, Sec-22-D, Yamuna Expressway, GB Nagar, by M/s. Supertech Township Project Ltd. Due to the unfortunate demise of his wife on 24.04.2021, the property is going to be transferred to my client's name (**Mohammad Javed**).

If anybody has any objection, contact **Valbhav Mittal** of supertech Ltd, E-Square, Sector-96, Noida within 15 days of this notice.

**Wahid Hussain (Advocate)**  
623, Lawyers Block, District Court, New Delhi

# Thousands turn out to bid farewell to Greece's ex-king

AP ■ ATHENS

To chants of "long live the King" and "Constantine, Constantine" from a crowd of thousands, the casket carrying the former and last monarch of Greece emerged from Athens' metropolitan cathedral Monday after a funeral service attended by royalty from across Europe.

Constantine's wife Anne-Marie, the sister of Denmark's Queen Margrethe II, and his



eldest son Pavlos, followed at the head of the funeral procession.

The casket, draped with the Greek flag, was loaded into a hearse for the trip to Tatoi, the former royal estate north of Athens where Constantine will

be buried near his parents and ancestors.

Once a richly forested site popular with Athenians for picnics and nature walks, Tatoi was ravaged by a wildfire about two years ago and had been mostly blackened and derelict ever since.

Cleanup crews worked feverishly since Constantine's death last week at the age of 82 to clean up the site in time for Monday's funeral.

## THE HONGKONG AND SHANGHAI BANKING CORPORATION LTD.

**E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 r/w 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) that the below described immovable property, mortgaged with THE HONGKONG AND SHANGHAI BANKING CORPORATION LTD., the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of THE HONGKONG AND SHANGHAI BANKING CORPORATION LTD., will be sold by way of an E-Auction, on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis, on 7th Feb 2023

The said E-Auction is for the recovery of **INR 1,935,613.10 (Rupees Nineteen Lakh Thirty Five Thousand Six Hundred Thirteen and Ten Paise Only)** as on 11th Jan 2023 to THE HONGKONG AND SHANGHAI BANKING CORPORATION LTD. from **Gaurav Panwar and Sakshi Gandas**.

Name of the Borrowers.	Description of Property with Sq. Ft.	Reserve Price	EMD (10% of Reserve Price)
<b>Gaurav Panwar and Sakshi Gandas</b>	<b>Apartment K-801, admeasuring about 1226 Square Feet Super area alongwith open parking No. 241 in Umang Monsoon Breeze (Earlier Known as Canary Residency), Sector 78 Gurgaon, Haryana</b>	47,99,790/- (Fourty Seven Lakh Ninety Nine Thousand Seven Hundred Ninety only)	479979/- (Four Lakh Seventy Nine Thousand Nine Hundred Seventy Nine Only) EMD Date & time: 1st Feb 2023 Account Detail: A/C Number 010 909968 042 Beneficiary Name - E-Auction EMD Suspend account number IFSC Code: HSBC0400002
<b>Inspection Date &amp; time</b>	Inspection Date & time: 27th Jan 2023 12:30 PM to 4:00 PM		

Notice is hereby given that the said property shall be sold by e-auction and bidding shall take place through "Online Electronic Bidding" through the website <https://www.bankeauctions.com> (E Auction house website) on **7th Feb 2023**. The detailed terms and conditions of sale are available on the E Auction house website ([www.bankeauctions.com/](http://www.bankeauctions.com/)) HSBC website ([www.hsbc.co.in](http://www.hsbc.co.in))

The property will be sold on an "As is where is" "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" condition. The e-Auction advertisement does not constitute and will not be deemed to constitute any commitment or any representation of the Bank. The intending bidders are required to do their own due diligence. The Authorized Officer has the absolute right to accept or reject any bid or adjourn/postpone the sale without assigning any reason therefor.

For any details, support, help regarding the procedure of online bidding by way of the auction, prospective bidders may contact: **Mr. Vinod Chauhan, Mobile No. 9813887931, Email Id :delhi@cindia.com**

**Date: 17th January 2023**  
**Place: Delhi**

**Authorised Officer**



# Sensex, Nifty decline

## As metal, financials shares retreat amid FII outflows

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty gave up early gains to close lower on Monday due to selling in metal, oil and gas and financial stocks as FII outflows dampened the investor sentiment.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 168.21 points or 0.28 per cent to settle at 60,092.97 as 15 of its constituents dropped. The barometer opened higher and touched a high of 60,586.77 in morning session. Later in the day, it fell 297.35 points or 0.49 per cent to 59,963.83.

The broader NSE Nifty dipped 61.75 points or 0.34 per cent to end at 17,894.85 as 32 of its stocks dropped.

"The sluggish mood continued as markets moved in a narrow range with a negative bias. Investors are taking a cautious stance as the global macroeconomic scenario

remains bleak while FIIs continued to be sellers in domestic equities in the current month, thus dampening the market sentiment," said Shrikant Chouhan, Head of Equity Research (Retail), Kotak Securities Ltd.

From the Sensex pack, Axis Bank fell the most by 2.26 per cent. NTPC declined 1.16 per cent and HDFC by 1.03 per cent. Among others, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra and ICICI Bank also declined.

HDFC Bank declined nearly 1 per cent even as the firm reported 19.9 per cent jump in its net profit for the third quarter ended December 2022.

Auto major Maruti Suzuki also dropped after the company announced an average 1.1 per cent hike in prices of its models from January 16.

On the other hand, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies,

Infosys, Wipro, Tata Consultancy Services and Power Grid were among the major winners.

Wipro ended over 1 per cent higher after announcing its December quarter earnings post trading hours on Friday. Wipro reported a better-than-expected 2.8 per cent rise in consolidated net profit for December 2022 quarter to Rs 3,053 crore and exuded optimism about "strong" bookings for the fourth quarter despite global headwinds.

Markets have been facing selling pressure on the rise, showing uncertainty among the participants despite favourable cues, Ajit Mishra, VP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.34 per cent and smallcap index declined 0.10 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, metal dipped 0.98 per cent,



telecommunication fell 0.93 per cent, commodities declined 0.76 per cent, consumer discretionary (0.59 per cent), bankex (0.57 per cent) and financial services (0.55 per cent).

IT, utilities, power, teck and FMCG were the winners. Meanwhile, the wholesale price-based inflation declined to a 22-month low of 4.95 per cent in December 2022, mainly due to fall in prices of food articles, especially vegetables, and oilseeds.

India's exports in December 2022 dipped by 12.2 per cent to USD 34.48 billion as against USD 39.27 billion in the same month last year, according to the data released by the commerce ministry on Monday.

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

Equity exchanges in Europe were trading mixed in mid-session deals. Markets in the US had ended in the positive territory on Friday.

# Exports decline 12.2% in Dec on global headwinds

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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# Bank of Maharashtra Q3 profit more than doubles to ₹775 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) on Monday reported more than two-fold jump in its profit at Rs 775 crore in the quarter ended December 2022 due to increase in net interest income and improved asset quality.

The Pune-based bank had posted a net profit of Rs 325 crore in the same quarter a year ago.

Speaking about quarterly number, BoM managing director A S Rajeev said the net profit surged by a 138.76 per cent and operating profit has shown a growth of 35.94 per cent to Rs 1,580 crore as against Rs 1,162 crore in the same quarter a year ago.

He said the bank aims to protect the profit growth in the current quarter and also maintain the Net Interest Margin (NIM) at the current level of 3.6 per cent.



Net Interest Income (NII) of the bank grew by 29.65 per cent on a year-on-year basis to Rs 1,980 crore as against Rs 1,527 crore in the third quarter of the previous fiscal.

The bank's total income increased to Rs 4,770 crore in the latest December quarter from Rs 3,893 crore in the year-ago period.

On the asset quality front, the bank recorded an improvement with gross NPAs (Non-Performing Assets) declining to 2.94 per cent, as compared to

4.73 per cent at the end of third quarter of previous fiscal.

At the same time, net NPAs eased below 1 per cent to 0.47 per cent, as against 1.24 per cent in the same period a year ago.

As a result, provisions for bad loans declined to Rs 539 crore as against Rs 587 crore during the same quarter a year ago.

He also said that the bank would maintain gross NPA below 3 per cent while net NPA below 0.5 per cent.

# NDDB, Amul, NAFED to be among promoters of national cooperative society for organic products

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), Amul and NAFED will be among the five promoters of the newly announced national-level cooperative society for organic food products, which will focus on enhancing farmers' income by improving production, certification and marketing system.

Last week, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved a proposal to establish three new national-level multi-state cooperative societies to promote organic products, seeds and exports.

A national-level cooperative organic society, a cooperative seed society and a cooperative export society will be registered under the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002.

According to sources, the National Cooperative Organic



Society, to be based in Anand, Gujarat, will be set up with an authorised share capital of Rs 500 crore. It will have an initial paid-up share capital of Rs 100 crore, sources said.

NDDB, co-operative NAFED, Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), which markets milk products under the Amul brand, National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) and National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Ltd (NCCF) have come forward to become promoters of this new society and they will contribute Rs 20 crore each for initial

paid-up share capital, sources said.

The NDDB will be the main promoter, they said, adding that these products would be marketed under the Amul brand. A new brand will also be unveiled for the marketing of the products globally.

Initially, the focus of this national-level society would be on improving the marketing system so that farmers get a better income for their organic produce. Gradually, the certification system and testing labs will also be strengthened.

"There are 8.54 lakh registered cooperatives in the country with more than 29 crore members. Cooperatives can be utilised for the development of organic clusters and its entire supply chain," a source said.

On the potential, sources said that India accounts for only 2.7 per cent of the world organic market and thus has a huge potential to expand.

# RBI tweaks norms related to acquisition for banks

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India on Monday tweaked norms related to acquisition and holding of shares in banks to ensure that their ultimate ownership and control remain well diversified and the major shareholders are 'fit and proper' on a continuing basis.

The central bank has issued 'Master Direction — Reserve Bank of India (Acquisition and Holding of Shares or Voting Rights in Banking Companies) Directions, 2023'.

"These directions are issued with the intent of ensuring that the ultimate ownership and control of banking companies are well diversified and the major shareholders of banking companies are 'fit and proper' on a continuing basis," it said. As per the Master Direction, any person

who intends to make an acquisition which is likely to result in major shareholding in a banking company is required to seek prior approval of the Reserve Bank by submitting an application.

"The decision of the Reserve Bank to (a) accord or deny permission or (b) accord permission for acquisition of a lower quantum of aggregate holding than that has been applied for, shall be binding on the applicant and the concerned banking company," it said. Subsequent to such acquisition, if at any point in time the aggregate holding falls below five per cent, the person will be required to seek fresh approval from the RBI if the person intends to again raise the aggregate holding to five per cent or more of the paid-up share capital or total voting rights, it added.

# Dec WPI inflation cools to 22-month low of 4.95% on lower food, vegetable prices

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The wholesale price-based inflation declined to a 22-month low of 4.95 per cent in December 2022, mainly due to fall in prices of food articles, especially vegetables, on easing supply side pressure and a higher base of last year.

This is the seventh straight month of declining Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation.

It was 5.85 per cent in November 2022 and 14.27 per cent in December 2021.

Even though declining prices of vegetables and onions pulled down inflation rate of food articles, wheat, pulses and potato remained expensive, along with protein-rich items like milk and egg, meat and

fish'. Inflation in food articles during December 2022 was (-)1.25 per cent. Inflation in vegetables and onion was (-)35.95 per cent and (-)25.97 per cent, respectively.

In non-food articles, oilseeds and minerals too recorded a decline in inflation by 4.81 per cent and 2.93 per cent, respectively.

"The decline in the rate of inflation in December 2022 is primarily contributed by fall in prices of food articles, mineral oils, crude petroleum & natural gas, food products, textiles and chemicals & chemical products," the commerce and industry ministry said in a statement.

The last low level of WPI inflation was recorded in



February 2021 at 4.83 per cent.

The deceleration in WPI comes in line with retail inflation data released last week, which showed CPI inflation eased to 5.72 per cent in December. The consumer price index (CPI)-based inflation remained within the RBI's upper tolerance limit of 6 per

cent for the second month in a row.

India Ratings and Research Principal Economist Sunil Kumar Sinha said easing of supply side pressure, especially with respect to fruits and vegetables, along with a favourable base effect helped in moderation of wholesale inflation.

# Startups witness decline in hiring; struggle with attrition: Study

PTI ■ MUMBAI

With a decline in hiring due to the drying up of funding following geopolitical scenarios, Indian start-ups also continued to struggle with the retention of talent during the 2022 calendar year, according to a study.

There has been a 44 per cent decline in hiring in the startups during October-December 2022 compared with the January-March quarter, following 'funding winter' in the sector, CIEL HR Services monthly forecast study - Latest Employment Trends in Start-ups revealed on Monday.

The sector also witnessed a high level of attrition as start-up employees preferred

stable jobs, higher pay and a better work-life balance, it noted.

According to the study, over 64 per cent of the respondents wanted to shift jobs for a 'stable job', it stated.

Over 47 per cent of the respondents said job security was a major concern, 27 per cent wanted better pay and 26 per cent wanted to work in established firms, it added.

The study is based on the analysis of responses from 60,704 employees working in top 60 start-ups operating in India. It further revealed that gender diversity in start-ups across levels is low, with an overall 24 per cent women representation and a negligible 11 per cent in leadership positions.

Lack of flexibility, shifting away from remote working and inadequate support for childcare and eldercare needs continued to be major hurdles for women to sustain and progress in the start-up ecosystem, it added.

"India continues to be the front-runner of the startup ecosystem despite the current threatening economic uncertainties. This downfall is only for a transient period, it will push the start-ups to be more serious in their overall operations and set new thresholds. In this context, we see startups preferring onsite work, with 94 per cent of job openings looking for 'work from office'," CIEL HR Services Managing Director and CEO Aditya Narayan

Mishra said. Startups are on the lookout for highly productive and skilled talent that can adapt quickly to the changes and stay ahead of the curve, he added.

Talking about cities, the study revealed that Bengaluru continued to remain the hottest destination for start-up talent, with 31 per cent of the job openings in this region.

Interestingly, Delhi/NCR is a very close second with 22 per cent of the total job opportunities in startups, it stated. Out of the total job openings, tier I cities accounted for around 94 per cent of the jobs, while tier II and III locations accounted for only 6 per cent of the total employment opportunities, it added.

# Swiggy rolls out ambulance service for delivery executives, dependents

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Food delivery platform Swiggy on Monday announced the rollout of an ambulance service for its active delivery executives and their dependents in the case of emergencies.

Delivery executives can reach out on a toll-free number or simply tap the SOS button without leaving the partner app in the case of an emergency before, during, or after a delivery to access the free ambulance service, Swiggy said in a statement. A study by government think tank NITI Aayog had recently estimated that in 2020-21, 77 lakh workers were engaged in India's gig economy, with the workforce expected to expand to 2.35 crore workers by 2029-30.



consultants, bloggers, etc., are all part of the gig economy, and face several challenges related to social security, gratuity, minimum wage protection and working hours, as they are engaged in livelihoods outside the traditional employer-employee arrangement.

"On the lines of Indonesia's initiatives in offering accident and other insurance to workers through digital mecha-

nisms, ride-hailing, delivery and e-commerce platforms may adopt such a model for providing accident insurance to all delivery and driver partners, and other platform workers across India.

"These may be offered in collaboration with the private sector or government, as envisaged under the Code on Social Security, 2020," the NITI Aayog study suggested.

# NPPA revises ceiling prices of 128 formulations

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Drug pricing regulator National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority has revised prices of 128 drugs, including antibiotics and antiviral medications.

The formulations for which the ceiling price has been fixed include antibiotic injections of Amoxicillin and Clavulanic acid; Vancomycin, asthma medication Salbutamol, cancer drug Trastuzumab, brain tumour treatment drug Temozolomide, painkiller Ibuprofen and paracetamol which is used to treat pain and fever.

As per the notification, the ceiling price of one Amoxicillin capsule has been fixed at Rs 2.18; one tablet of Cetirizine at Rs 1.68; Amoxicillin and Clavulanic acid injection at Rs 90.38;



Ibuprofen 400 mg tablet at Rs 1.07.

"All manufacturers of scheduled formulation, selling the branded or generic or both the versions of scheduled formulations at a price higher than the ceiling price (plus Goods and Services Tax as applicable) so fixed and notified by the government, shall revise the prices of all such formulations downward not exceeding the ceiling price," the notification said.

# Gold rises ₹314; silver zooms ₹1,173

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price rose by Rs 314 to Rs 56,701 per 10 gram in the national capital on Monday amid strong global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

The yellow metal had settled at Rs 56,387 per 10 gram in the previous trade.

Silver also zoomed Rs 1,173 to Rs 70,054 per kilogram.

"Spot gold prices in the Delhi markets traded at Rs 56,701 per 10 gram, up Rs 314 per 10 gram," said an analyst at HDFC Securities.

In the overseas market, both gold and silver were trading higher at USD 1,916 per ounce and USD 24.22 per ounce, respectively.



Reserve. Dollar index and US yields were also down by 2 per cent and 1.5 per cent, respectively, last week supporting the move in bullions," Navneet Damani, Senior VP - Commodity Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

Premiums for physical gold rose sharply in China last week, buoyed by optimism around the country's reopening before Lunar New Year festivities, while Indian traders offered steeper discounts as record-high local prices dented consumer sentiment, Damani said.

# Best Agrolife first Indian agrochemical firm to make Cyhalofop-Butyl

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Best Agrolife Limited has received the registration for the indigenous manufacturing of Cyhalofop-butyl by the Central Insecticides Board & Registration Committee. Cyhalofop Butyl is a post-emergence herbicide that controls grass weeds' growth in rice crops.

A herbicide that controls grass weed growth in rice crops can immensely help increase rice production in India. Vimal Alawadhi, MD, Best Agrolife Ltd, said, "Rice grain production in India suffers a yearly loss of more than 15 million tonnes due to weeds competition, mainly grassy weeds... A post-emergence, herbicide Cyhalofop-butyl is used for controlling weeds in rice plantations."



# RAFA BEGINS TITLE DEFENCE IN STYLE

## Nadal battles past Draper into Australian Open second round

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Defending champion Rafael Nadal battled past a man 15 years his junior and kickstart his bid for a record-extending 23rd Grand Slam title at the Australian Open Monday.

The Spanish top seed unleashed some of his trademark hammer forehands, but also 46 unforced errors, before wearing down Briton Jack Draper 7-5, 2-6, 6-4, 6-1 in blistering heat on Rod Laver Arena.

It put him into the second round for a 17th time and stretched his win-loss record at Melbourne Park to 77-15.

He will next play Mackenzie McDonald, who beat fellow American Brandon Nakashima in a five-set thriller.

"Super happy to be back here in Australia one more time. It's like the 19th season in the professional tour so very excited about this new beginning," he said.

"It's a victory I needed. I played against one of the toughest opponents possible in the first round. He's young, he has the power and I think he has a great future in front of him."

But it was a tough slog for the 36-year-old who had lost six of his past seven matches, including his opening two this year.

Little separated them in a first set notable for a bizarre incident in which Nadal complained one of his racquets had gone missing.

He kept his cool and waited for his chance, which came at 6-5 on Draper's serve when he earned a set point and converted with a searing cross-court winner.

But Nadal lost focus in the second set as Draper raised his game and raced to a 4-0 lead before sealing the set.

The Spaniard regrouped and broke early in the third set to move 4-1 in front, winning the long rallies. Draper needed repeated treatment on his upper right leg, but against the odds



broke back before Nadal again stepped up.

Draper was clearly struggling, grimacing in pain at times, and Nadal showed no mercy to race through the fourth set to victory.

Elsewhere, Frances Tiafoe won his first-round match at the Australian Open but it was the American's outrageously colourful kit which set tongues wagging.

The world number 17 wore a matching vest and shorts that had squiggly haphazard lines of blue, purple, red, yellow and white.

Tiafoe's brazen outfit in his four-set win over Germany's Daniel Altmaier was the talk of social media.

Tiafoe faces China's 17-year-old Shang Juncheng in round two at Melbourne Park.

Teenager Shang Juncheng created a slice of history by becoming the first male Chinese player to win an Australian Open main draw singles match, a feat he called "huge" for his

country. The 17-year-old qualifier, the youngest player in the men's draw, battled past Germany's Oscar Otte 6-2, 6-4, 6-7 (2/7), 7-5 in nearly three hours to progress.

After saving two break points in the opening set, he did not face another as he sealed the win on his third match point at Melbourne Park.

### TSITSIPAS SHOWS FIGHTING SPIRIT

Third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas credited his fighting spirit for helping bank a fifth straight win of the year Monday to speed into the Australian Open second round, as he targets a maiden Grand Slam title.

The 24-year-old Greek outplayed Frenchman Quentin Halys, ranked 61, to win 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) at Margaret Court Arena.

He will play either German qualifier Yannick Hanfmann or Australian wildcard entry Rinky Hijikata next.

## Kyrgios out with injury



AP ■ MELBOURNE

Nick Kyrgios pulled out injured from the Australian Open on Monday without hitting a ball, saying he was "devastated" to miss his home Grand Slam.

The Australian, considered an outside chance of win-

ning the title, had struggled with an ankle issue leading into the event.

But it was knee discomfort that forced him out, a day before he was due to face Russian Roman Safullin in the first round.

Kyrgios was also planning to defend his doubles title alongside Thanasi Kokkinakis. "I'm devastated, obviously," he said at a hastily arranged press conference at Melbourne Park.

"I've had some great tournaments here, winning the doubles last year and playing the tennis of my life probably going into this event.

"Pretty brutal, one of the most important tournaments of my year and it hasn't been easy," he added.

"There's a mixture of emotions... just bad timing, but that's life, injuries are part of the sport."

Tsitsipas led the ATP Tour for most matches won (61) last year and reached seven finals, winning two of them.

He has started 2023 in the same vein, winning all five matches so far this season after going 4-0 at the warm-up United Cup for Greece.

### PEGULA TRIBUTE TO HAMLIN

World number three Jessica Pegula raced through her first-round match at the Australian Open on Monday, then revealed she had still found time to watch her beloved Buffalo Bills win an NFL playoff match.

Pegula, whose billionaire parents own the Bills, was in ruthless form as she won 6-0, 6-1 against 161st-ranked Romanian Jaqueline Cristian.

She then drew a heart on a TV camera and wrote "Go Bills #3" in a tribute to Damar Hamlin, the Bills player who suffered a cardiac arrest on the field earlier this month.

## Gauff sets up blockbuster Raducanu clash in AO

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Coco Gauff raced into the second round of the Australian Open to set up a blockbuster clash with Emma Raducanu after a 6-1, 6-4 victory over Katerina Siniakova on Monday.

Former US Open champion Raducanu, who is unseeded at Melbourne Park, beat German Tamara Korpatich, 6-3, 6-2, barely 10 days after exiting the Auckland event in tears with an ankle injury.

Gauff, 18, won in Auckland and said she could empathise with the pressure the young British star comes under ahead of their first meeting on tour.

"I talk to her (Raducanu) pretty much at all the tournaments," seventh seed Gauff told reporters.

"Obviously I was a lot younger when I got the attention, so I definitely think handling it at an older age is a little bit easier than at 15.

"But also, at the same time, I didn't win a Slam. I'm not



British, and wasn't the first British woman to do that in I don't know how many years.

"I definitely can relate to bursting onto the scene and dealing with some pressure but I don't think to that level."

Raducanu, 20, who stunned the tennis world by emerging from qualifying to win the US Open in 2021 but has struggled on tour since, said she couldn't wait to test herself against Gauff.

"Yeah, I'm really looking forward to this match," Raducanu told reporters.

## Azarenka beats Kenin in battle of former champions



AP ■ MELBOURNE

Victoria Azarenka beat Sofia Kenin 6-4, 7-6 (7/3) on Monday to become the only former Australian Open champion left in the women's draw.

Azarenka, the 24th seed from Belarus, won her titles at

meant Kenin and Azarenka were the only two previous winners in the women's singles.

But Kenin has faced a torrid time since her only Slam triumph with form deserting her as she endured a spate of injuries.

Her ranking has slid to 203 in the world and she was bidding for a first win over a top-25 opponent since beating then number 11 Petra Kvitova at Roland Garros in 2020.

Nevertheless, the veteran world number 24 Azarenka admitted she had been on edge before the encounter on Margaret Court Arena.

"It's high pressure and you wouldn't think I'd be nervous, but it means so much to me," said the 33-year-old. "I try to work through those emotions but they happen."

## My coach put up his feeling: Sindhu on receiving support from Park

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

PV Sindhu's comeback from a five-month injury layoff ended in a first-round defeat to nemesis Carolina Marin. Mindful of her long absence from the court, coach Park Taesang shared an emotional post after the loss.

On Monday, the double Olympic medalist acknowledged the support she received from the foreign coach after the reverse in the Malaysia Open, saying making a comeback itself is difficult after an injury.

"Returned after 5 months. And unfortunate results. Everyone, her lack (of success) is my fault as a coach. We will prepare for the Indian Open in Delhi next week. Please encourage @pvsindhu rather than reprimand. I'll try harder," the coach wrote on Instagram.

Asked about the post, Sindhu said, "After the injury, comeback itself is a hard thing. My coach put up his feeling because for the last five months we haven't played. But we have to be happy that we attempted to play against Marin after the injury. I hope there will be good days."

As far as head-to-head goes, this was Sindhu's 10th defeat to



Marin, who also prevailed over the Indian ace in the final of the 2016 Rio Olympics.

On a comeback trail, Sindhu said she is satisfied with her recovery and hoped to display her new skills at the India Open Super 750 tournament, beginning here on Tuesday.

Sindhu had sustained a stress fracture on her left ankle on way to her Commonwealth Games gold in August last year. She suffered a narrow defeat against Marin in Kuala Lumpur last week.

"I have been on a break for 5 months, so when I was back in January, playing in Malaysia, I was happy to be back on court," Sindhu said on the eve of the India Open tournament.

"In Malaysia, I was happy I could play my best against

Marin. Overall, I was satisfied with my game. To play at a certain level, to get up there and play at that level after returning from injury is not easy. Winning and losing is part and parcel but you have to be satisfied."

In the first round, former champion Sindhu will be up against Thailand's Supanida Katethong, an opponent she had lost to in the last edition. "I am playing Supanida, you can't take her easy. I have played her a few times, and I have lost to her at India Open last time, so it is not going to be easy. Hope this time it will be the other way round.

"Every match will be harder for me as all top players will be here, so every round will be tough. I can't say I will win it but I will give my best.

## A fit Carolina Marin is not scared of any player

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two career-threatening knee injuries could break the resolve any athletes but Olympic champion Carolina Marin "accepted pain" and chose to fight instead of giving up.

The Olympic, World, and European champion, Marin was in a different zone before sustaining an Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) injury in her right knee during the 2019 Indonesian Masters final in January.

She made a comeback in 2020 and was preparing for Tokyo Games when she suffered another ACL and tore both menisci in her left knee in June 2021, jeopardising her career.

But she kept herself motivated, doing everything she could on the road to recovery and finally returned to action last year.

Since then she had a mixed bag of results.

On the eve of the India Open Super 750 tournament, Marin spoke about her battle with injuries.

"Last year was really really tough. I was coming from injury. No active badminton player is (still) playing after two serious injuries but I didn't want to give up because I have something on my mind. I want to win another medal at the Olympics,"



Marin said on Monday.

"It was tough physically but especially mentally. When you have to practice every day with pain, finally you have to accept it as otherwise it frustrates your mind.

"But now I feel really happy and comfortable with myself because around December, I

didn't have any pain. So finally I was able to do some good practise and prepare for one whole month."

Marin, who will open against Japan's Nozomi Okuhara in India Open, said she is in good shape and will look to improve.

"I did a good performance

## DHRUV-ARJUN SET TO MISS ENTIRE ASIAN CIRCUIT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Young Indian men's doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and MR Arjun will miss the entire Asian circuit, including the India Open Super 750 badminton tournament, due to an injury to the latter. Arjun had suffered a ligament tear in his ankle during training at French Open last year. He seemed to have recovered but felt discomfort again when he started training in December.

"We have pulled out of everything, so won't be playing India Open or any of the events in Asia. I'm still recovering from the ankle injury. It is okay now but I don't want to push myself too hard. I am doing my rehab and will start training from January 20," Arjun said.

"Since it is a long year and an important one with the Olympic qualification, we thought it was the right call. We would look to play the Senior nationals in February or European circuit, starting with All England Championships possibly."

The duo had also pulled out of last week's Malaysia Open. The 84th Senior National Badminton Championships is scheduled to be held in Pune from February 22 to 28. The Dhruv-Kapila pair rose from world number 42 to 19 in last 12 months, riding wins over more fancied opponents, quarterfinal finishes in big world tour events, including the BWF World Championships. They were also part of India's epic Thomas Cup win.

last week. I had three good matches even though I lost against Chen Yufei. I am ready for this week.

"I am looking forward to compete against any player. I am not scared to face on anyone. Now it's just small things I have to improve upon. I have to keep going and improving. I am

looking forward to this week." Marin has made many visits to India and said she feels at home playing in the country.

"I was surprised when I came here after the finals of Olympic final because I didn't expect people to love me after I beat Sindhu. It's like I take this gold medal from this country.

## PSG's Ligue 1 lead cut to three points Barca win Spanish Super Cup

AP ■ PARIS

Kylian Mbappé made his return from a post-World Cup holiday but Paris Saint-Germain went down 1-0 away to Rennes in Ligue 1 on Sunday, a result which leaves them just three points clear at the top of the table halfway through the season.

Rennes captain Hamari Traore scored the game's only goal in the 65th minute in the rain in Brittany to condemn PSG to a second successive away league loss after they went down 3-1 at second-placed Lens on New Year's Day.

Prior to that they had gone unbeaten through their first 23 matches this season in all competitions and this latest setback gives their rivals hope in the



title race. "I am disappointed with our performance because we conceded too many chances

and created nothing," said PSG coach Christophe Galtier, who complained of a "total absence

of a presence in the penalty box" after opting to leave Mbappé on the bench at kick-off.

This was the first time that Mbappé, Lionel Messi and Neymar had appeared on the pitch together since PSG's superstar attacking trio returned from the World Cup.

Mbappe was expected to start on Sunday but instead began on the bench as the 20-year-old Hugo Ekitike played in front of Messi and Neymar.

Without their leading scorer PSG were blunt up front and Rennes goalkeeper Steve Mandanda did not have a save of note to make until he kept out a Danilo Pereira header three minutes into the second half.

Mbappé replaced Ekitike in the 56th minute and did so to

applause from the home fans.

Yet Rennes went ahead soon after as their Malian right-back Traore swept in a cutback from Adrien Truffert, and Mbappé — making his 200th Ligue 1 appearance — then squandered a chance to equalise when he burst through on goal but blazed over with just the goalkeeper to beat.

With Neymar again ineffective and Messi not having the expected impact, it was Juan Bernat who came closest to equalising for PSG with a shot that was tipped over by Mandanda.

Galtier will hope his attacking trio can rediscover their early-season form quickly with a Champions League last-16 showdown with Bayern Munich now just a month away.

AP ■ RIYADH

Barcelona convincingly beat Real Madrid 3-1 in Saudi Arabia on Sunday to win the Spanish Super Cup, their first trophy since coach Xavi Hernandez took over.

Inspired by teenager Gavi, who scored himself and set up goals for Robert Lewandowski and Pedri Gonzalez, the Catalans produced one of their best performances in years against their bitter Clasico rivals.

Having enjoyed great success as a player at Barca, Xavi returned in November 2021 and after a summer of heavy spending this emphatic victory is a sign his project is moving in the right direction.

Karim Benzema netted a late consolation for Madrid,



who have been far from their best since the World Cup break and also fell three points behind Barcelona in La Liga last weekend. Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti suffered his first defeat in a

final since 2014, with Los Blancos surrendering the trophy they earned last season to Barcelona, who have now won the Super Cup a record 14 times.



# KOHLI CREDITS THROWDOWN SPECIALISTS FOR MAKING 'BIG DIFFERENCE' TO HIS BATTING

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Indian run-machine Virat Kohli has credited the team's throwdown trio of D Raghavendra, Nuwan Seneviratne and Dayanand Garani for making a "big difference" to his batting.

The throwdown specialists use a sidearm, a cricketing equipment in the shape of a long spoon, to hurl the ball at high speed (in the range of 140-150kmph) to test the batters at nets.

"All three of them have given us world-class practice every time we play. They challenge us in the nets like any 145 or 150kmph pace bowlers. They always try to get us out and make sure that they test us regularly," Kohli told young Indian opener Shubman Gill in an interaction on BCCL.Tv after the third and final ODI against Sri Lanka here.

"At times, it feels very intense. For me that has been the difference in my career, to be very honest.... From where I was as a cricketer before I started getting this kind of practice to where I am today."

Karnataka's Raghavendra, who is fondly known as 'Raghu' joined the BCCI from the National Cricket Academy, and was the first to join Team India. He would regularly give throwdowns to batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar and former Indian captain MS Dhoni.

India then hired left-handed Sri Lankan Seneviratne in



2018 to help them prepare for left-arm pacers.

A civic volunteer in Kolkata Police, Dayanand, who was with Kings XI Punjab, was roped in by Team India after Raghu tested positive for COVID-19 in 2020 and has become a permanent support staff since then.

"A lot of credit has to go to these guys, who have given us

practice regularly and their contribution has been unbelievable. You guys should remember their names and faces because, behind our success, a lot of effort has been put in by these guys," Kohli said.

Gill, who was interviewing Kohli, was quick to add: "These three combined would have had 1200 to 1500 wickets. They

prepare us for all kinds of conditions heading into the match."

India thrashed Sri Lanka by 317 runs in the final ODI to sweep the series 3-0, with Kohli notching two hundreds from three matches.

Terming it an ideal start to the ODI World Cup year, Kohli said: "It's been a great start. It's been a while since I started the

year like this... Getting a hundred and then scoring two hundreds in the series and also becoming the Man of the Series."

"I am just happy that in the World Cup year, I am able to start like this, and I know I can be consistent. When I start like this, and I start feeling confident, then things usually go well," he said. "The team is gelling well as

a batting unit, you guys have been phenomenal at the top."

Kohli went on to congratulate Gill for scoring his first century at home as the youngster converted his start to make a sublime 116 off 97 balls.

"Congratulations for your first hundred in India. You deserved to get one in the first match. Today also you played phenomenally well and many more at home and away will come in the future."

"I really enjoyed batting with Shubman. We haven't batted for very long many times. But today was the day where we had a good partnership and it really helped the team as well," said Kohli.

The duo shared 131 runs for the second wicket as India posted a massive 390/5 before skittling out Sri Lanka for 73.

"It was disappointing to get out in the first ODI. I was looking to go big in that match, but unfortunately, nahi ho paaya (could not)."

"In Kolkata too, I was playing well but failed to convert my start. Aaj yahi tha ki agar start milta hai to lamba jaane ki koshish karunga (Today I just wanted to take it deep). I have felt in Test matches as well that I left a bit of a run there."

Crediting Kohli for motivating him and changing the tempo of the match, Gill said: "While we were in the middle, you told me that today I am going to score big and you changed the rhythm right from the word go."



## Trying to be the Ajinkya I was in my initial days: Rahane

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Ajinkya Rahane is "trying" to be the batter he was in his younger days.

Far from the arclights and perks of being an India Test captain, the Mumbai skipper has embarked on a journey of self discovery, without any specific destination.

He feels it is working well for him as 532 runs in five Ranji games, with a top score of 204 and an average of 76, would suggest.

"I was thinking about old times and when I first came into Ranji team (back in 2007). How I used to play, what was my thought process. I have gone back to the drawing board and I am trying to be the Ajinkya what I used to be in my initial days," Rahane told PTI during an interaction on the eve of Mumbai's penultimate Ranji Trophy game against arch-rivals Delhi.

"The idea is to keep things simple," he added.

Having been out of favour since the tour of South Africa early last year, Rahane admitted to having brought about some changes in his technique.

"Small changes obviously. You have to evolve continuously as a player and continue to work and improve upon your strategies."

"No major changes but small changes, skill wise, now I have to be in the moment thinking for Mumbai and doing well for them. That's on my mind completely."

He also reminded that he can't be selfish and only think about his own batting.

"I am not thinking too much about my own batting but preparation matters a lot to me. Preparation has been real-

ly good even before Ranji season," said the 34-year-old who has played 82 Tests, 90 ODIs and 20 T20Is.

Having experienced the high of international cricket, Rahane understands Prithvi Shaw's ecstasy at getting an India recall (in T20Is) and Sarfaraz Khan getting ignored after back-to-back 900-run seasons.

So what is his advice for Prithvi or Sarfaraz ahead of an important Ranji game.

"My advice to them would be simple. Control the controllables and not dwell on things that are not in your hands. Just try and be in the moment and not think too far ahead," said Rahane.

He knows how setbacks affect players and as a Mumbai skipper, his "door remains open" for a chat with any player. He will also be there if anyone wants a sounding board.

"You have to put your arm around guys who are going through rough patch. Important to give them freedom to express themselves not only on the field but also off the field."

"The individual can come to me and talk to me about anything that's going on in his personal life," the skipper said.

He had a 400-plus stand with Shaw in the last game against Assam in which the latter scored a superb 379.

"Obviously, Prithvi we all know is an attacking player. He likes to take on the bowler every time."

"When you play a knock like 379, it is important not only to control that aggression and intent to play the shot but also your intent to leave the ball and defend. His determination was great to see from other end," he concluded.

## Viacom 18 bags media rights for Women's IPL for ₹951 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI on Monday announced that Viacom 18 has grabbed the media rights for the upcoming Women's IPL for a whopping ₹951 crore for five years after pipping other bidders, including Disney Star and Sony, in a closed-bid auction.

The auction for the T20 league was conducted by the cricket board in Mumbai on Monday. The inaugural Women's IPL is likely to begin in the first week of March. Five teams will compete and all the matches will be held in Mumbai.

The global rights comprise three categories — linear (TV), digital and combined (TV and digital) and Viacom 18 successfully bid for the combined rights.

In the men's IPL, separate rights are sold across regions.

"Women's cricket has been on the up since a few years and the recently concluded bilateral series against Australia is a great testament to how popular women's cricket has become in India," BCCI president Roger



Binny said in a release issued by the board. "It was only apt to get our own women's T20 league and give the fans more of women's cricket."

According to BCCI secretary Jay Shah, the fee per match will come to ₹7.09 crore for the next five years.

Viacom18 had won the IPL digital rights for ₹23,758 crore while Disney Star had retained the TV rights for ₹23,575 crore for a five-year period starting 2023 during a three-day auction held in June, 2022.

Some of the country's biggest stars in the women's game, such as national team skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and senior opener Smriti Mandhana, lauded the BCCI after the big announcement.

"Huge congratulations to Viacom18 and @BCCI, @JayShah for a historic day in women's cricket. Today marks a new era where our women cricketers will get the platform they deserve to thrive, excel and develop on the global stage. I'm sure you'll be mesmerized by the talent we have!" Harmanpreet tweeted.



## India crush UAE in Women's U-19 T20 WC

PTI ■ BENONI

Skipper Shafali Verma cracked a blistering 78 while opener Shweta Sehrawat sparkled with an unbeaten 74 as India outplayed UAE by 122 runs in the inaugural Women's U-19 T20 World Cup here on Monday.

Shafali (78 off 34 balls) was at her destructive best and joined forced with an equally belligerent Sehrawat (74 not out off 49 deliveries) before Richa Ghosh snacked a 29-ball 49 to help India post an imposing 219 for three at Willowmoore Park.

The Indian bowlers then restricted UAE to 97 for five, the result showing the gulf between the two sides. With the win, India have consolidated their top spot in Group D.

Invited to bat, Shafali, who has already played over 70 international matches for the senior team, including 51 T20Is, and

Sehrawat, stitched a 111-run stand for the first wicket.

Shafali was the aggressor in the partnership as she toyed with the opposition, hitting boundaries at will. She brought up her fifty in style with a four.

The UAE bowlers seemed clueless as Shafali sent the ball to the fence 12 times and over it four times in her fiery 34-ball innings. After hitting three sixes and a four in a span of five balls, Shafali's blazing knock came to an end as she was caught at long-off.

Sehrawat, who remained unbeaten on 92 in the previous game, played the role of sheet anchor to perfection. She brought up her second successive half-century and looked in complete control.

Misfields and dropped catches only compounded UAE's woes as they gave as many as four reprieves to Richa, who was promoted to number three.

## Road to recovery has begun and ready for challenges ahead: Pant

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Premier India wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant, who survived a horrific car crash on last December 30, on Monday gave his first official statement since that accident and said he is on the road to recovery after a successful triple surgery few days back.

Pant survived a horrifying car crash on NH-58 on December 30 last year when he was driving back home from

Delhi to Rourkee. He was first admitted in a hospital in Dehradun and then shifted to Mumbai, where he had three surgeries -- two on knee and one on ankle. He is expected to be out for one year.

"I am humbled and grateful for all the support and good wishes. I am glad to let you know that my surgery was a success. The road to recovery has begun and I am ready for the challenges ahead. Thank you to the BCCI, Jay Shah, and govern-

ment authorities for their incredible support," Pant posted on his official Twitter handle.

He added: "From the bottom of my heart, I also would like to thank all my fans, teammates, doctors, and the physios for your kind words and encouragement. Looking forward to seeing you all on the field."

The 25-year-old had injuries to his ligament muscles and was airlifted from the Dehradun at the BCCI's behest.

## Healy predicts India to win Border-Gavaskar trophy 2-1

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former wicketkeeper-batter Ian Healy has predicted a 2-1 win for India in the four-Test series against Australia beginning at Nagpur on February 9, provided the hosts don't prepare "unreasonable wickets".

The two sides will play four Tests for the Border-Gavaskar trophy with the series extremely crucial for India, as the World Test Championship



(WTC) final spot is at stake.

"They've (India) got a good team but I'm not too scared of their spinners unless they produce unreasonable wickets," Healy was quoted as saying by SEN on Monday.

"If they produce unreasonable wickets like they did half the series last time (we won't win), two wickets were just terrible, unfair, spinners jumping over your head on day one."

"So that type of thing they will play better on than we will, but if they get flat wickets that India used to put out, nice flat batting wickets and bowlers have to work really hard, I think we can do it. But (my prediction is) 2-1 India, if (Mitchell) Starc's unavailable in the first Test," added Healy.

The Australian pace-bowling stalwart will likely miss the first Test against India due to a finger injury to his bowling hand, which he sustained dur-

ing the second Test against South Africa recently.

However, the legendary wicketkeeper is much more optimistic about Australia's success in the Ashes.

Healy predicted that Australia will win 3-1 provided the visitors don't have any injury concerns.

"Now Ashes, if we haven't got any injuries in that bowling attack and we can play our top team, then 3-1 Australia. We're going to really attack Bazball and put Bazball under pressure."

"We'll see how much courage and bravery they can retain in that top order with England and their bowlers. I think for once we'll cope the best against (James) Anderson and (Stuart) Broad, Anderson is 40 years of age, we've got to really get some pressure back on him."

"Our best players for mine, Pat Cummins and Steve Smith will be our stars," added Healy.

## Insecurity among players reason for India's poor showing in ICC events

PTI ■ DUBAI

Former India player Robin Uthappa feels leaving Kuldeep Yadav out of the second Test against Bangladesh after his eight wickets in the opening game does not send the right message to players, and makes them insecure.

Uthappa believes selection decisions like these are the reason behind India's dismal performance in ICC tournaments.

India have not won a World Cup since the 2011 title triumph by the Mahendra Singh Dhoni-led side in the 50-over global showpiece.

Uthappa, who was a part of India's T20 World Cup-winning side in 2007, added that IPL teams like Mumbai Indians and Chennai Super Kings, which have made fewer changes to their squad over the years, have been the most successful sides only because of this reason.

"Kuldeep was 'Player of the Match' in first Test against Bangladesh and he was out of the team for the next match; it doesn't give (send) a good message," Uthappa said.



"Yes, you can explain things to Kuldeep once but this gives (sends) a wrong message to the young players that even after getting the 'Player of the Match', your place in the team is not assured," he added.

Kuldeep took eight wickets in the opening Test at Chattogram, but was dropped for the Mirpur Test, replaced by Jaydev Unadkat, who made his India return after 12 years.

Uthappa, who played his last two IPLs

for CSK and decided to call it a day at the end of the 2022 season, said the trend of making "constant changes" in the squad was making players feel unsafe.

"I think there is a lack of sense of security among the players in the team. There have been constant changes in the team for a long time, when a player does not feel safe, he always remains with the mindset of saving his place in the team."

Uthappa, who won the IPL three times, said, "I think it is important to give a sense of security to the players. What we are seeing is, for the last few years, too many changes are going on. And in crucial matches, their performance dips because they are not sure of their place in (the) team for the next match."

Citing the example of MI and CSK, the two most successful IPL teams having won five and four titles respectively, Uthappa added, "You look at IPL, most of the times such teams have won the titles which have made less changes in the playing XI. The success of Chennai (Super Kings) and Mumbai (Indians) also proves this."