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NEW DELHI, WEDNESDAY JANUARY 18, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3

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Reach out to all for Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas, Modi exhorts BJP

BJP is a social movement to uplift socio-economic conditions of all Indians, says PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday asked BJP members to reach out to every section of society, including minorities such as "Bohras", "Pasmandas" and Sikhs, without electoral considerations asserting that the party is "no longer merely a political movement" but a "social movement as well" working to transform "socio-economic conditions" in the country.

In his closing address to the two-day National Executive meet here at the NDMC centre, the Prime Minister said that India's best era is coming and "We should dedicate ourselves to its development".

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis told reporters that Modi, in his address to the BJP National Executive meet, emphasised on reaching out to all sections of society.

"The BJP is no longer merely a political movement but a social movement as well that is working to transform socio-economic conditions," Modi told the BJP delegates who, among others, included the top BJP leaders, including Central Cabinet ministers, BJP-ruled States Chief Ministers and State unit presidents.

Reminding BJP delegates that around 400 days are left for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Modi asked them to serve every section of society with full dedication.

The Prime Minister is understood to have spoken highly of "sufism" and also asked the BJP leaders to meet professionals from different walks of life and visit places like universities and churches to connect with them.

The Prime Minister said India's best era is coming and the party should dedicate itself to the country's development and turn "amrit kaal", the 25-year period till 2047, into "kartya kaal" (era of duties).

He also cautioned the party against any sense of "overconfidence" and cited an example of the BJP's loss in Madhya Pradesh in 1998 despite the unpopularity of then Congress Government led by Digvijaya Singh. Modi was then a key minder of the BJP's organisational affairs in the state.

Fadnavis said the Prime Minister emphasised on reaching out to each and every segment of the society of all communities.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi being greeted by BJP national president JP Nadda as he arrives for the second day of BJP's National Executive Meet, at NDMC Convention Centre in New Delhi on Tuesday

PTI

Modi meets BSY to end infighting in Karnataka BJP as election nears

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid reports that former Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa was keeping a "distance" from the party in poll-bound Karnataka, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a 15-minute meeting with him on Monday on the sidelines of the BJP National Executive here.

The PM-BSY interaction took place against the backdrop of heightened infighting within the BJP's State unit tainting the image of the State Government.

The infighting in the Karnataka BJP again came into public glare last week when a senior party leader attacked a State Minister on the Lingayat reservation issue.

In an indirect swipe at State Cabinet Minister and a Lingayat leader Murugesh Nirani, Karnataka BJP MLA Basangouda Patil Yatnal had said he did not need to follow cheap tricks to get a ticket to contest the next State election.

"One pimp minister did a press conference against me in Bijapur that Basangouda will not get a ticket. I want to tell him to watch your seat first. Unlike you, I haven't done cheap tricks. I didn't blackmail seers. I didn't pay seers," Yatnal had said.

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Nadda given term extension as chief to lead party into polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP National Executive on Tuesday extended the term of party president JP Nadda till June 2024, giving him the responsibility to steer the party in nine State Assembly polls this year and Lok Sabha polls next year.

Nadda, who has been praised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for working hard for the expansion of the BJP, has been constantly travelling across the country to strengthen the party organisations at the grass-roots levels.

With the approval of the National Executive to extend his term, Nadda will have to work out a strategy to retain States like Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Tripura where anti-incumbency could be a major challenge against the BJP Government.

The Opposition-ruled States like Rajasthan and Telangana would also pose a serious challenge to the BJP and test Nadda's ability to fight against odds.

In Rajasthan, the BJP is yet to settle the leadership issue and in Telangana it faces a well-entrenched BRS under Chief Minister KC Rao. The BJP will also face formidable challenges in Meghalaya and Nagaland.

Announcing the extension of Nadda's term, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the BJP will win the 2024 Lok Sabha polls with a bigger mandate than 2019 and hailed Nadda's leadership for securing BJP's victory in several Assembly elections.

Shah told media persons that Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, a former party president like him, moved the proposal of extending Nadda's tenure till June next year and the executive unanimously endorsed it.

With Nadda set to lead the party during the Lok Sabha polls, he will follow the footsteps of his predecessor Shah, whose tenure was also extended so as to allow him to spearhead the organisation during the 2019 polls.

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Sharif U-turn on 'serious' talks till Art 370 returns

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD

Sending contradictory signals, Pakistan on Tuesday first sought "serious" and "sincere" talks with India, but within hours took a U-turn saying negotiations between the two neighbours are not possible till India withdrew its August 5, 2019 decision to scrap Article 370 of the Constitution that granted special status to Jammu & Kashmir.

Making a candid outreach to New Delhi, Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif first said his country has learnt its lessons after three wars with India and sought "serious" and "sincere" talks with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi for the resolution of the "burning" issues, including Kashmir.

Sharif said the UAE could play a vital role in facilitating the resumption of dialogue between the two nuclear-armed neighbours adding Pakistan wants to live in peace with India.



Sharif made these comments during an interview with the Dubai-based Al Arabiya news channel on Monday. However, later the Prime Minister's Office in Islamabad said "talks can only take place after India reversed its illegal action of August 5, 2019. Without India's revocation of this step, negotiations are not possible."

"In ref. to PM Shehbaz Sharif's interview to Al Arabiya, the spokesman of the PM Office has said the PM has consistently maintained that Pakistan and India must resolve their bilateral issues, especially the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir, through dialogue and peaceful means. However, the Prime Minister has repeatedly stated on record that talks can only take place after India has reversed its illegal action of August 5, 2019. Without India's revocation of this step, negotiations are not possible," Pakistan PM tweeted.

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I can embrace Varun, not his ideology: Rahul



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi with party MP Jothimani and others during the party's Bharat Jodo Yatra in Hoshiarpur on Tuesday

PTI

PTI ■ HOSHIARPUR

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said he can meet and hug his cousin and BJP MP Varun Gandhi but cannot accept his ideology.

"My ideology does not match his ideology. I can never go to an RSS office. You can slit my throat, but I will not go. My family has an ideology, it has a thought system," Rahul said at a press conference on the sidelines of his Kanyakumari-to-Kashmir Bharat Jodo Yatra.

"At one time, Varun adopted that ideology, maybe still does, so I cannot accept that," Rahul added.

He was responding to questions on the possibility that he might reach out to his cousin, the son of Sanjay and Maneka Gandhi.

Varun Gandhi has in the past criticised the BJP Government's handling of issues like economy and agriculture — and triggering speculation that he might quit the saffron party.

The Congress leader said if Varun Gandhi walks into the yatra he might face a problem, implying that the BJP may not approve of it.

"I can meet him with love, hug him, but I cannot accept that ideology. That is impossible," Rahul said. Answering a related question, he said Varun once told him that the RSS was doing good work. The Congress leader recalled that he then told his cousin that if he had read about and understood what his family stood for, he wouldn't have said such a thing.

China population shrinks, sparks economic worry

PTI ■ BEIJING

China's demographic crisis deepened in 2022 as its population declined for the first time since 1961 due to a plunging birth rate, the country's statistics office said on Tuesday, amid a forecast that India is poised to overtake the Communist giant as the world's most populous country.

China's population in 2022 — 1.4118 billion — fell by 850,000 from 2021, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said.

The NBS announcement comes at a time when China's economic growth fell to its second-lowest in five decades, registering a paltry three per cent increase in 2022.

According to a recent



A man carries his grandchild preparing to leave after taking a family photo with his family members at a photo studio in Beijing on Tuesday

AP

report by the World Population Prospects 2022 by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, India is projected to surpass China as the world's most populous

country in 2023. India is projected to have a population of 1.668 billion in 2050, more than China's 1.317 billion by the middle of this century.

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Transformation! NCERT to break with gender binary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian schools can soon go for gender-neutral uniforms and a transgender-inclusive curriculum. A 16-member committee convened by NCERT's Department of Gender Studies head Jyotsna Tiwari has made these suggestions in a draft manual titled "Integrating Transgender Concerns in Schooling Processes".

"Some of the students, especially from Grade VI onwards, have preferences for clothes, particularly school uniform. They do not feel comfortable in a particular dress.

Schools can introduce gender-neutral uniforms which are comfortable, climate-appropriate, fit and do not conform to a particular gender," it said.

The panel has noted that these uniforms might be designed by design institutes.

"Many schools have introduced pants and shirts that can suit any gender and they are comfortable for all school activities. Reinforcement of gender binary in school structures, in terms of uniforms, use of toilets, participation in sports and extra-curricular activities, bullying and harassment from simply choosing to express themselves as opposed to social norms, are some of the glaring

concerns raised by transgender persons when it comes to barriers in their education," it added.

A year ago, the NCERT removed a document on diverse gender expressions following objections raised by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).

The NCERT's new manual says that "the present module specifically focuses on transgender persons by birth." The report also suggests there is recognition of people with diverse sexualities and sexual orientations, including LGBTQIA+ communities.

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DTF writes to DU VC against ad hoc teachers’ displacement

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi University teachers’ body has written to Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Singh against ‘mass scale displacements’ of working ad hoc teachers in colleges and appealed for justice.

In a letter to Singh, the Democratic Teachers’ Front claimed that the rate of displacement — especially of those teaching for the longest period — amounted to over 80 per cent in the likes of Hansraj College, Ramjas College and

Lakshmi Bai College.

These include temporary teachers appointed through regular selection committees, it alleged.

More than 4,500 teachers work as ad hocs in colleges and departments of the University of Delhi.

“We believe that, as the academic and administrative head of the University of Delhi, it is your responsibility to ensure that such mass-scale displacements do not take place and this situation, whereby the livelihood of ad hoc teachers is

under serious attack today, is brought to a stop,” the association said in its letter to Singh.

“We appeal to you to intervene immediately and ensure that no more displacement happens in colleges to ensure justice for ad hoc teachers. Not doing so will surely lead to more unrest in the University which will disrupt the teaching-learning process,” it added.

The Delhi University Teachers’ Association has also launched a struggle to procure a one-time regulation from the Centre.



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla meets Deputy President of Kenya Rigathi Gachagua during his visit, in Kenya on Monday PTI

Sharif U-turn on ‘serious...

From Page 1

“The settlement of the Kashmir dispute must be in accordance with the UN resolutions and aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The spokesman said the Prime Minister made this position very clear in his interview with Al Arabiya news during his recent visit to the UAE.

Sharif said in the interview, “My message to the Indian leadership and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is that let us sit down on the table and have serious and sincere talks to resolve our burning issues like

Kashmir.” Pakistan and India are neighbours and have to “live with each other,” he said.

“It is up to us to live peacefully, make progress or quarrel with each other, and waste time and resources. We have three wars with India and it only brought more misery, poverty, and unemployment to the people,” he explained.

“We have learned our lesson and we want to live in peace provided we are able to resolve our genuine problems.

We want to alleviate poverty, achieve prosperity, and provide education and health facilities and employment to our people and not waste our resources on bombs and ammunition, that is the message I want to give to Prime Minister Modi,” Sharif elaborated.

Nadda given...

From Page 1

Shah expressed confidence that the BJP, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Nadda, will achieve a bigger win than the last general elections.

The Minister lauded Nadda’s leadership, saying, “The party won many State Assembly polls under Nadda” and connected the party organisation with the service of people during the Covid-19 outbreak.

Shah further said that throughout Nadda’s term, the BJP has worked on the principle of ‘Seva Hi Sangathan’ right

from the booth till the national levels.

Noting that the party won many State Assembly polls under Nadda, Shah said the BJP won 73 assembly bypolls out of 120 held during his tenure.

It was under Nadda’s leadership that the BJP performed well in Bihar, and again formed the Government in Maharashtra and Haryana, he added.

The BJP won Assembly polls in Assam, Manipur, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh during Nadda’s tenure as the party president, Shah said, adding that it also formed the Government on its own for the first time in Goa.

In December, last year, BJP scored a big Assembly win in Gujarat but lost Assembly polls in Himachal Pradesh, the home State of Nadda.

China population shrinks...

From Page 1

“China and India are countries with a big population and we have ample resources in the working force. This is a strong internal dynamic for economic development,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said.

“The two countries should take advantage of their population dividend to develop each other’s respective national development and make greater contributions to the international community,” he said.

According to the NBS, China registered about 9.56 million new-borns last year, down from 10.62 million in

2021.

China’s birth rate stood at 6.77 births per 1,000 people in 2022, down from 7.52 in 2021, it said.

The last time China reported a population decline was in 1961.

China’s concern is not simply a declining population, which was accentuated by the decades-old ‘one child policy’, scrapped in 2016, but also a rapidly ageing population.

As per the revised policy, Chinese people can now have up to three children. China conducts a nationwide population census every decade, with the latest being done in 2020.

China implemented a third-child policy in May 2021 and rolled out a series of stimulus measures to boost population growth.

A number of cities,

provinces and regions across the country have rolled out incentive policies such as issuing subsidies to families with a second or third child.

From the perspective of gender, the male population was 722.06 million, the female population was 689.69 million and the sex ratio of the total population is 104.69.

As per the official data, in terms of age structure, the working-age population between 16 and 59 stood at 875.56 million, accounting for 62 per cent of the national population, and the population aged 60 or above reached 280.04 million, accounting for 19.8 per cent of the total population.

Around 209.78 million were aged 65 or above, accounting for 14.9 per cent of the total population, the NBS said.

Trans-formation! NCERT to...

From Page 1

The new report underlines that diverse gender expressions have a long history of visibility and acceptance in India, where it was documented in various art forms and multiple texts of ancient period, including epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, but it steers clear of any engagement with the role of caste system or patriarchy in perpetuating stigmas.

The panel has also stressed that while introducing transgender-inclusive curriculum, it is best to do so collectively as a school community, led by the administrative and school leaders.

It is also recommended that the decisions in this regard

be communicated through gender-specific professional development for educators and community members at the start of each academic year.

The panel has suggested that educators could identify the spaces and scope of integrating gender, especially transgender concerns, in their pedagogy and textbook content wherever they feel the gap in the existing text books.

“Such practices should be shared with fellow teachers (subject or stage specific) to collectively evolve best practices which are context specific.

Issues of masculinity, equality and empowerment must be addressed through a careful choice of themes in our textbooks as well as through other pedagogies such as role play, debates, creative writing, development of short films, etc.

“If students are noticed to be gender non-conforming or emerge as transgender at this stage, help them to form healthy, supportive alliances with peers and generate a gender sensitive school environment so that such a student feels supported.

Health educators should be gender sensitive and use gender inclusive practices while educating on puberty, sex education and health education,” the manual read.

Noting that due to society’s marked intolerance of gender nonconformity, those who do not conform to gender norms are more likely to suffer from violence as compared to other gender conforming students from an early age, the panel said it could be inflicted upon them within different contexts through various social interactions.

Reach out to...

From Page 1

The PM said people in the 18-25 age group have not witnessed the political history of India and are not aware of ‘corruption and wrongdoings’ that took place under previous governments.

“So, they need to be made aware. Let them know about the good governance of the BJP,” he said in an apparent swipe at the previous dispensations at the Centre.

Fadnavis said Modi also advised the party to conduct special programmes of its different ‘morchas’, especially in border villages so that it can connect with people there more and ensure that the Government’s developmental

schemes reach them.

“The Prime Minister’s speech was inspirational. It guided us as well as showed us a new roadmap. He asked us to dedicate every moment of our life to advance the country’s development. Only by converting the ‘amrit kaal’ into ‘kartavya kaal’, can the country be taken forward,” the Maharashtra leader said.

While asking the party to make deeper contacts, Modi sought party leaders to approach all sections, including the Muslim minorities, particularly the marginalised ones like “Bohras” and “Pasmandas”.

On the last day, the National Executive also passed a socio-economic resolution praising Modi’s leadership for transforming India into the fifth largest economy from a ‘Fragile Five’ economy.

The resolution underlined that now the country is moving towards politics and governance of saturation, suggesting that the

government’s programmes are fulfilling the requirements of the people.

Addressing a press conference, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said that the resolution was proposed by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. The BJP’s national executive also expressed its gratitude towards Prime Minister Modi for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, he said.

The resolution was seconded by Union Minister V Muralleedharan and BJP MP from Haryana Sunita Duggal.

“The opposition used to ridicule the BJP asking the date for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Now, the temple is under construction and its date has also been announced,” Pradhan said.

In the last eight and half years, the government has made the Indian economy and society

more inclusive and self dependent, the BJP leader said as he underlined that “Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas” is not merely a slogan but philosophy for his party.

“When we came to power, India was in the ‘Fragile Five’ and now, when we are completing 75 years of independence... (it) became the fifth largest economy, leaving behind the United Kingdom,” he said.

Pradhan said the resolution talked about welfare measures such as free ration to the poor, housing for all and free of cost vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that under the Modi Government, India’s contribution to the world GDP rose to 3.5 per cent from 2.6 per cent.

The resolution also hailed the Modi Government for developing a digital transaction ecosystem and stated that 40 per cent of global digital transactions are happening in India, according to Pradhan.

LeT’s...

From Page 1

The Sanctions Committee provided a narrative summary of reasons for Makki’s listing in which it said Makki and other Lashkar-e-Taiba/Jamaat-Ud-Dawa operatives “have been involved in raising funds, recruiting and radicalising youth to violence and planning attacks in India, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir.

Former Indian diplomats hailed Makki’s listing as a huge success for the country’s diplomacy. Responding to the development, India’s former Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T S Tirumurti told PTI that Makki’s listing is a “huge success” for Indian diplomacy.

“First terrorist listing proposal by India in the Security Council to be approved and, further, expressly mentioning terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir emanating from Pakistan. India’s presence in the Council and as Chair of the Counter-terrorism Committee has considerably enhanced the focus on terrorism, including cross-border terror-

ism,” Tirumurti said.

Notably, the proposal in June 2022 by India to list Makki under the UNSC sanctions committee was made under Tirumurti’s tenure as India’s Ambassador to the UN.

India was a member of the UN Security Council for the 2021-22 term and Tirumurti was Chair of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee last year before retiring from the Indian foreign service.

India’s former Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Syed Akbaruddin said in a tweet, “I more success for @IndianDiplomacy. Abdul Rahman Makki designated by @UN Sanctions Committee... The pursuit of the rest continues.”

It was under Akbaruddin’s leadership at India’s Permanent Mission to the UN here that India won a huge diplomatic win in May 2019 when the global body had designated Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist, capping a decade-long relentless effort by New Delhi to sanction Azhar, the mastermind of the attack on the air base in Pathankot in January, 2016.

Modi meets BSY to end...

From Page 1

The Central BJP leadership which replaced him as Chief Minister by another Lingayat leader Basavaraj Bommai, tried to placate him by inducting him into the Parliamentary Board, the highest decision making body of the BJP.

However, BSY recently skipped some of the meetings and functions of the top BJP leaders, including that of Prime Minister while the latter visited the state.

The Prime Minister is understood to have conveyed to the Karnataka leadership to give right momentum to the campaign and iron out differences, if any, according to sources.

Yediyurappa, a tall Lingayat leader, can sway the community votes for the BJP and apparently seeks to have “greater say” in the decision-making process in the run up to the Karnataka poll.

Karnataka is one of the States going to polls this year. Poll strategy for these nine States was the key agenda of the two-day executive meet in New Delhi. Karnataka State unit on Tuesday presented an assessment and strategy report before the National Executive.

RFP for Selection of an Agency for Stage II Police Recruitment Examination
मु.सू./२/चयन/स-३/७७/२०२३
३. Request for Proposal Notice
Request for Proposal - Notice

The Assistant Inspector General (AIG), Selection and Recruitment, Police Headquarters (PHQ), Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal invites e-tenders on behalf of the Director General of Police, Madhya Pradesh for RFP for Selection of an Agency for Stage II Police Recruitment Examination 2023.

For detail scope of work and other terms and conditions, please refer the RFP document available at www.mppolice.gov.in and <https://mptenders.gov.in>. Document fees of Rs 15,000 (Non-refundable) and EMD of Rs 5,00,000 (Five Lakhs Only) needs to be submitted through online mode through <https://mptenders.gov.in> portal only.

An interested agency who qualifies as per the criteria mentioned in the RFP document may submit their proposals only online through the e-tendering Portal latest by 30/01/2023 till 3 pm.

4. Fact Sheet

S/N	Particulars	Description
1.	Nature of Work	RFP for Selection of an Agency for Stage II Police Recruitment Examination
2.	Proposals Invited by	Assistant Inspector General, (Selection and Recruitment), Police Headquarters, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
3.	Date of issue of RFP document	11/01/2023
4.	Last Date for sending Pre-Bid Queries	17/01/2023
5.	Date of Pre-Bid Meeting (Following social distancing norms)	18/01/2023 at 3 pm at the Office of Assistant Inspector General, (Selection and Recruitment) Police Headquarters, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
6.	Start date of Submission of Bids	21/01/2023 from 10:30 am onwards
7.	Last Date for Submission of Bids	30/01/2023 till 3 pm
8.	Date of Opening of PQ cum Technical Bids	31/01/2023 at 4 pm
9.	Date of Technical Presentations	Would be communicated to the PQ qualified bidders.
10.	Date of Opening of Financial Bids	Would be communicated to the shortlisted bidders.
11.	Websites for downloading RFP Document, Corrigendum/s, Addendums etc.	https://mptenders.gov.in
12.	Cost of RFP Document	Rs. 15,000 (Fifteen Thousand Only) To be paid online through e-procurement portal
13.	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs. 5,00,000 (Rupees Five Lakhs Only) To be paid online through mptenders portal.
14.	Validity of Proposal	Proposals must remain valid for 180 days from the Bid submission date
15.	Performance Guarantee Value	5% of contract value
16.	Performance Guarantee validity period	3 Months beyond the contract period
17.	Method of Selection	“QCBS (Quality and Cost Based Selection) 60% weightage to Technical Score (TS) and 40% weightage to Financial Score (FS)

Notes:

- Police Headquarters (PHQ) reserves the right to change any schedule of bidding process
- The mode of submission of bid is only online through e-procurement portal (<https://mptenders.gov.in>). No physical submission of the bids shall be entertained.
- Any future Corrigendum/Information shall be posted only on e-Procurement portal of GoMP Bidders are advised to keep visiting the e-Procurement portal for further updates

5. Background

An advance in technology in the Police recruitment has brought about greater transparency, objectivity and efficiency in conducting the examination. Police Headquarters (PHQ) invites Request for Proposal (RFP) for selection of agency to work for PHQ as an Agency on record through an open competitive selection process in accordance with the procedure set out herein to help in conducting the stage II of the Police recruitment examination.

The objective is to leverage digital and IT tools to efficiently conduct the physical proficiency test and Stage II Practical /trade examination.

The agency will provide dedicated product and technology driven solutions, and qualified manpower to conduct the stage II of the Police recruitment examination as and when needed by the PHQ. The reports will be designed as directed by the PHQ and provide necessary support/tools to help to make informed decisions. The detailed scope of work is mentioned in this document.

Police Headquarters, Bhopal
Madhya Pradesh

G-21756/22

ICICI Bank

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

PUBLIC NOTICE: Builder Cancellation

This is to bring to your notice that VINET KUMAR GUPTA / PRATIBHA GUPTA (borrower/s) has availed Home loan facility vide facility agreement number LBNOD00002051279 located at Flat No 16 B, 1st Floor, Amritsar One, Tower K1 Shubham Enclave, Amritsar 143001. The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement.

The Bank had informed the same to the borrower through letter dated January 12, 2023 informing that ATM ESTATES PVT. LTD. has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication.

Please take further notice that post cancellation of the allotment of the said property ICICI Bank shall not be boundand/or responsible for any other allotment done by the builder.

Dated: January 18, 2023
Place: Delhi/ NCR

For ICICI Bank Limited
Sd-

ICICI Bank

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

PUBLIC NOTICE: Builder Cancellation

This is to bring to your notice that VEERPAL SINGH/ HEMA SINGH (borrower/s) has availed Home loan facility vide facility agreement number LBGUR00004915551 located at UNIT NO LG25, FLOOR 1SIGNUM 36, SECTOR 36, GURGAON. The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement.

The Bank had informed the same to the borrower through letter dated January 12, 2023 informing that STERNAL BUILDCON PRIVATE LIMITED has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication.

Please take further notice that post cancellation of the allotment of the said property ICICI Bank shall not be boundand/or responsible for any other allotment done by the builder.

Dated: January 18, 2023
Place: Delhi/ NCR

For ICICI Bank Limited
Sd-

ICICI Bank

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

PUBLIC NOTICE: Builder Cancellation

This is to bring to your notice that VIKRAM MALHOTRA/ VINOD MALHOTRA/ USHA MALHOTRA/ RACHITA MALHOTRA (borrower/s) has availed Home loan facility vide facility agreement number LBAMT00002918093 located at Flat No A 301, Amritsar One, Tower A, Shubham Enclave, Amritsar 143001. The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement.

The Bank had informed the same to the borrower through letter dated January 12, 2023 informing that ATM ESTATES PVT. LTD. has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication.

Please take further notice that post cancellation of the allotment of the said property ICICI Bank shall not be boundand/or responsible for any other allotment done by the builder.

Dated: January 18, 2023
Place: Delhi/ NCR

For ICICI Bank Limited
Sd-

ICICI Bank

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

CORRIGENDUM

Notices under SARFAESI Act for Loan Account No. LBDEL00004310330, Name of the Borrower/ Co-borrower MANMOHAN NARANG/ VARUN NARANG Demand Notice under section 13(2) dated April 16, 2022 published in News Paper The Pioneer (Eng.) & Pioneer (Hindi) dated June 22, 2022. We wish to mention that inadvertently and unintentionally a typographical error has occurred in the said notices and property address was mentioned as DDA LIG FLAT NO- 27-B, SECOND FLOOR, BLOCK-BD, WEST SHALIMAR BAGH, DELHI instead of DDA LIG FLAT NO 27-B, SECOND FLOOR, BLOCK-B, POCKET-D, SHALIMAR BAGH, DELHI 110088. We therefore, request you to please read the same as DDA LIG FLAT NO 27-B, SECOND FLOOR, BLOCK-B, POCKET-D, SHALIMAR BAGH, DELHI 110088. All other details mentioned in the said Notice dated will remain same. We sincerely regret the inconvenience caused to you in this regard.

Date: January 18, 2023
Place: Delhi/NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

ICICI Bank

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

PUBLIC NOTICE - TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET

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

This E-auction Sale notice for sale of immovable assets is being issued by ICICI Bank Ltd. (on underlying pool assigned to ICICI Bank by Dewan Housing Finance Ltd.) in relation to the enforcement of security in respect of a housing loan facility granted pursuant to a loan agreement entered into between DHFL and the following borrower(s) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of ICICI Bank Ltd. will be sold on “As is where is”, “As is what is”, and “Whatever there is” as per the brief particulars given hereunder:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No.	Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any	Amount Outstanding	Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit	Date and Time of Property Inspection	Date & Time of E-Auction
(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
1.	Mr. Durga Prasad Tiwari (Borrower), Mrs. Shobha Devi (Co-borrower) QZNO00005016405	Property No. C-8A, 2nd Floor Rear Side Without Roof Right, Block- C, Khasra No. 333, Village Bindapur, Subhash Park, Uttam Nagar, Delhi - 110059. Area: 360 Sq.Ft.	Rs. 19,38,219/- as on January 12, 2023	Rs. 11,80,000/- Rs. 1,18,000/-	January 25, 2023, From 12:00 Noon to 02:00 PM	February 09, 2023, From 11:00 AM Onwards

The online auction will take place on the website of e-auction agency M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited (URL Link-<https://disposalhub.com>). The Mortgagors/ noticee are given a last chance to pay the total dues with further interest till February 08, 2023 before 5:00 pm failing which, this secured asset will be sold as per schedule.

The Prospective Bidder(s) must submit the Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Demand Draft (DD) (Refer Column E) to ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before February 08, 2023 before 5:00 pm and thereafter they need to submit their offer through the above mentioned website only on or before February 08, 2023 before 5:00 pm along with scan image of Bank acknowledged DD towards proof of payment of EMD. Kindly note, in case prospective bidder(s) are unable to submit their offer through the website then signed copy of tender documents may be submitted at ICICI Bank Limited, 3rd Floor Shal Tower, New Rohtak Road, Karol Bagh, Delhi-110005 on or before February 08, 2023 before 5:00 pm. Earnest Money Deposit DD/PO should be from a Nationalised/Scheduled Bank in favour of “ICICI Bank Limited” payable at Delhi.

For any further clarifications with regards to inspection, terms and conditions of the E-auction or submission of tenders, kindly contact ICICI Bank Limited on 8126013708/7304914763.

Please note that Marketing agencies 1. M/s NexXen Solutions Private Limited., 2. Augeo Assets Management Private Limited, have also been engaged for facilitating the sale of this property.

The Authorised Officer reserves the right to reject any or all the bids without furnishing any further reasons. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please visit www.icicibank.com/n4p4s

Date : January 18, 2023
Place : Delhi

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

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L-G has feudal mindset: Kejriwal

‘Saxena does not want good education for poor children’

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a scathing attack on Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday alleged that L-G saheb suffers from a ‘feudal mindset’ and does not want good education for poor children in the city. Terming L-G’s intrefere-ence and behaviour as ‘Begaani shaadi me Abdullah deewana’ (an adage in Hindi which roughly translates to — An outsider getting much involved at a stranger’s wedding”), Kejriwal said the LG is not my head-master.

“Not even my teachers checked my homework as the L-G scrutinises my files. I was a good student... My school teachers did not check my homework this way LG is checking — this spelling is wrong or the handwriting is not good. He is not my head-master. Who is LG, where has he come from? He is sitting on our heads. How can he stop us? What powers does he have? People have elected me as Chief Minister. Begaani shaadi mein Abdullah deewana (a stranger who takes too much interest in the affairs of others),” lashed Kejriwal while speaking

in the House during the second day of the ongoing winter session on the issue of the LG’s alleged interference in his Government’s work.

Kejriwal further claimed the L-G told him during a meeting that the BJP won 104 seats in the MCD polls because of him and that the BJP would win all the seven Lok Sabha seats in Delhi in the next general elections. The Chief Minister alleged that the LG “suffered from a feudal mindset and doesn’t want that the poor children in Delhi get good education”.

Raj Niwas and the AAP led Delhi Government’s relationship has been rocky since he took over in May 2022. They have been at loggerheads over many issues including municipal appointments, the release of payments of salaries to government employees, the clearance for free lab tests at Mohalla clinics, and policy issues ranging from excise to transport. The Delhi and Union Governments are also in the middle of a legal battle.

Kejriwal compared LG to the Viceroy as they were appointed during the British rule. “Viceroy used to say: You bloody Indians don’t know



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal speaks during a session of the Delhi Legislative Assembly, in New Delhi on Tuesday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

how to govern! Today LG is saying: You Dilwallas don’t know how to govern!” he added.

“The L-G is openly threatening the Chief Minister. His target is not to work, but to stall the functioning of the elected government and defame CM and the AAP,” Kejriwal said.

Stating that he looks at the children of Delhi as his own children, Kejriwal said, “So many BJP MPs and MLAs have studied abroad. Did their parents do any cost benefit

analysis?...I don’t object to that. I object to the mindset of not allowing children of the poor to get good education. L-G saab has the same mindset.” The Chief Minister also showed a list of “children of BJP MPs, MLAs and ministers who have studied abroad”, and said everyone should have access to the best education.

“Nothing is permanent in life. We may be in power at the Centre tomorrow, with our LG. . Tomorrow, if God wills, we may have a Government in

the center and our L-G also...We respect the will of the people, democracy and constitution. Our Government will not harass people,” Kejriwal said.

“If CM and Education Minister decide that teachers will go for training in Finland, that should be the end of the matter,” said Kejriwal. “L-G sent objections on the file not once but twice. This means when it goes for the third time, he will object it again. The intent is bad. They don’t want to send teachers to Finland,” he said.

The claims mark an escalation in the running battle between the government and the LG over primacy in administering the capital. Kejriwal on Monday led a march from the Delhi Assembly to L-G’s office against the Union Government-appointed LG’s interference in governance including over the training programme.

He said the LG does not have the power to make decisions on his own. “The Supreme Court has clearly said that he cannot take a call on issues barring the police, land and public order,” Kejriwal added.

Panchayats uphold federalism, then why not UTs: SC to Govt

‘Your stand that federal structure not for UTs difficult to understand’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday observed orally it was difficult to accept the Centre’s submission that the concept of federalism does not apply to a Union Territory as even ‘panchayats’ are an example for “decentralisation of power”.

A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, which continued the hearing for a fourth day on the vexatious Centre-Delhi Government row over control of services, was told by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Central Government, a “crafted perception” has been created that the Delhi Government has no powers.

The law officer said, “My fundamental submissions are that we cannot lose sight of the fact that we are dealing with the capital of the nation and the Central Government has a huge part to play in its administration.”

He said services and the control over them are not applicable to Union Territories (UTs) at all. “The Union Territory represents and is the



extension of the Union and hence, there is no concept of federalism between the Union and its extended area,” he said.

“It may be difficult to accept your (Centre’s) submission that federalism only applies to States and the Union. There may be a different degree of federalism between UTs and Union. It may not have all features of federalism but may have some,” orally observed the bench which also comprised Justices M R Shah, Krishna Murari, Hima Kohli and P S Narasimha. The concept of federalism, the bench said, was prevalent even in panchayats.

“Some characteristics of federalism are prevalent even in relations with UTs. Even in ‘panchayats’, the concept of federalism is reflective of the need of the local government, decentralisation of power,” the bench said.

Referring to the constitutional and legal provisions, the

solicitor general said those who are working for the affairs of the government of the national capital are working for the Centre and, moreover, India is a “quasi-federal” State.

At the flag end of the hearing, the bench specifically asked senior advocate A M Singhvi, appearing for the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Government, as to what the Delhi Government wanted from this court.

“I am seeking what is rightfully mine, my legislative rights in Entry 41 (State public services; State Public Service Commission) of the State list. I seek all my legislative rights under all entries of the State list minus three entries (Public order, Police and Land),” he said.

At the outset, the solicitor general raised the issue of the ongoing protest by AAP MLAs led by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal against the alleged interference by the Lieutenant Governor’s office in the Delhi Government’s works and termed them “undesirable”.

“Let me demolish the crafted perception that we (Delhi Government) have no power,” the law officer said.

BJP protests in black, demands CM’s resignation over ‘scams’, ‘corruption’

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Wearing black clothes and turbans, BJP MLAs arrived in the Delhi Assembly to protest against the alleged corruption and scams of the AAP Government and demanded the resignation of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Leader of Opposition in Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said party legislators wore black clothes to express “grief over the murder of democracy in the House”. He rued that the speaker did not allow Opposition MLAs to speak on corruption in the Kejriwal Government.

“The Kejriwal government is strangling the opposition by adopting a dictatorial and arbitrary attitude,” he alleged. “BJP MLAs had requested to raise this issue of corruption as per rules and it was also included in the agenda, but the speaker did not allow us to speak,” he alleged.



Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri along with Party MLAs wearing black clothes to protest after walkout from Delhi Vidhana Sabha against Delhi Govt in New Delhi on Tuesday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

“Sufficient evidence has come to light that AAP leaders pocketed thousands of crores of

rupees in the liquor scam. The Central Vigilance Commission itself has given a report on the

scam in the construction of classrooms. “The Kejriwal government had to cancel the

work order after the scam in the purchase of DTC buses came to light,” a statement quoting Bidhuri said.

BJP member Ajay Mahawar alleged corruption in the purchase of buses, excise policy and the working of the Delhi Jal Board. He said the “dishonest” Government of Kejriwal is shielding Manish Sisodia, who is “accused of gross corruption”, while one of his ministers, Satyendar Jain, is in jail on corruption charges.

“We are against the corrupt Government of Delhi. Scam in making classrooms, in buses and in liquor policy, overall this Government is only doing corruption and the Chief Minister should resign. We demand that he should be removed. We are wearing black clothes to mark our protest against this corrupt Government,” BJP MLA Vijender Gupta said. BJP MLA Vijender Gupta said there is a scam in the construction of classrooms, purchase of buses and liquor policy.

Speaker suspends 5 BJP MLAs for day over protest during proceeding

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Assembly Speaker Ram Niwas Goel on Tuesday suspended five BJP MLAs for the day after they protested against AAP MLA Atishi’s calling attention motion on the issue of alleged “illegal interferences” of Lieutenant Governor (LG) V K Saxena in the education of children and training of teachers. BJP MLAs Ajay Mahawar, Jitendra Mahajan, OP Sharma, Abhay Verma and Anil Bajpai were marshalled out of the House on Goel’s directions while Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri and Vijendra Gupta boycott the proceeding in protest of Speaker’s decision to marshalled out BJP MLAs.

BJP conspiring for demolition of slums, says AAP

Court ordered removal of Tughlaqabad village slums, retorts BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP on Tuesday alleged that the BJP is conspiring for demolition of slums in the city after its defeat in the MCD polls. Development Minister Gopal Rai asserted in the Assembly that the Kejriwal Government stands with the slum dwellers.

Rai said it was a clear view of the AAP Government that unless rehabilitation is carried out, no new demolition can take place.

Hitting back, Leader of Opposition Ramvir Singh Bidhuri charged that the AAP MLAs “lied” in the Assembly without presenting complete picture of the issue. He said there were court orders for removal of slums in Tughlaqabad village and Mehrauli area.

Rai, participating in a debate in the House over a calling attention motion on “demolition notices received by residents of Tughlaqabad village”, said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government will take up the issue and it will not hesitate to take to streets to stop demolition of slums if need be.

“We will stop it. The government stands with the slum dwellers. It was our view even in 2015 when the AAP formed government in Delhi that there should be no encroachment but

no slums should be removed unless people living there are rehabilitated,” he told the Assembly. Initiating discussion on the motion, Tughlaqabad MLA Sahiram demanded registration of FIRs against officers who allowed development of the affected colony in his constituency.

“What were the officers doing when the colony was developing? Around 10,000 houses have been constructed there. There are 20,000 residents having voter ID cards and they have been given 15 days’ time to vacate,” Sahiram said urging the Speaker and Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to take up the issue with the Centre to stop the demolition.

Several other AAP MLAs complained of notices served on residents of slums under their constituencies by different agencies.

Kalkaji MLA Atishi said the notices started being issued a few weeks after the BJP lost the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) polls, for demolition of slums in several parts of the city.

“It is a pre-planned conspiracy of the BJP to clear slums in Delhi. I want to tell the BJP, LG and DDA no matter how many notices they issue, no bulldozers will be allowed by the Kejriwal government and the AAP,” she asserted.

She claimed that the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has served eviction notices on residents of even Subhash Camp slum under Bidhuri’s constituency Badarpur.

Bidhuri, however, said the Subhash Camp in his constituency was settled on a pond land and it was to be removed in compliance of a Supreme Court order

Sisodia approves road projects worth ₹18 Cr

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Tuesday approved the projects worth ₹17.79 crore.

The projects include the strengthening of Anuvrat Marg in the South Division, strengthening and raising of the road from Deenpur to Kachha Talab and Tazpur Mod to the Police Checkpost on Goyala Deenpur Road and remodelling of the drain along GT Road.

Sisodia also directed the officials to follow the global standards of street design and also ensure compliance with all safety and security standards during the maintenance work of roads.

Sisodia said that to make the infrastructure of Delhi beautiful, safe and world-class, the government is working on



mission mode to strengthen and improve the infrastructure across the city. To make the roads of Delhi world-class the Government is also getting the assessment of roads done by experts and preparing a blueprint for them.”

“The Delhi Government is working in a phased manner to strengthen the roads of Delhi. As these roads were constructed a long ago, the quality of the roads has deteriorated in these areas and that affect the commuters. Following the same, the maintenance and beautification work of roads is being started.

To avoid any further inconvenience to the commuters, PWD officials have been asked to complete the work on the stipulated time,” Sisodia said.

Deputy CM said that the road strengthening project on Anuvrat Marg costs ₹7.82 crores for 2.50km and the strengthening/raising of Goyala Deenpur Road costs ₹8.07 crores for 4.2km. “Regarding Goyala Deenpur road which is in a low-lying area, the Government has asked the PWD to raise the height of the road to eliminate the issues of waterlogging in the area during monsoon season,” he informed.

Another project approved by Deputy CM includes remodelling of the drain alongside GT road from opposite Mansarovar Park to Kendriya Vidyalaya at the cost of ₹1.90 crores.

AAP dreaming of forming Govt at Centre in 2024 when it has not MP in LS now: BJP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Hours after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal launched a tirade against Lt Governor VK Saxena, the BJP dubbed the AAP chief an “extreme egoistic leader” who believed that winning an election had given him the “right to misinterpret and override Constitutional provisions”.

In a statement, the BJP’s Delhi unit Working President Virendra Sachdeva quipped that it is shocking that a party that does not have a single MP in Lok Sabha is dreaming of forming a Government at the Centre.

Addressing the Delhi Assembly on Saxena’s alleged interference in his government’s work, Kejriwal said, “Not even my teachers checked my homework as much as the

LG scrutinises my files.” “The LG is not my headmaster. The people have elected me as chief minister,” he said.

Kejriwal further claimed that Saxena had told him during a meeting that the BJP won 104 wards in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi elections because of him and that the safe from party would win all seven Lok Sabha seats in the national capital in the next General Elections.

The Delhi Chief Minister added that the Lt Governor did not have the power to make decisions on his own. “The Supreme Court has clearly said that he cannot take a call on issues barring the police, land and public order,” he said.

In a sharp rebuttal to Kejriwal’s speech, Sachdeva said everything Kejriwal and his party has been doing post

its “crushing defeat” in the Gujarat Assembly elections indicated that he has lost his political balance and mental peace.

“The way CM Kejriwal is debating with the Lt Governor of Delhi and trying to misinterpret the Supreme Court’s observation as orders, it shows that Kejriwal has lost his political confidence after exposure of corruption and nepotism, in his Government, through several inquiries ordered by the present Lt Governor be in liquor scam, classroom construction, Jal Board scam and above all advertisement recovery case,” Sachdeva said in a statement. “It’s really shocking that a party which is not a single MP in Lok Sabha, its president Kejriwal is dreaming of forming government at the Centre soon,” he added.

Seventh day of cold wave as minimum temp settles at 2.4 degree celsius in Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi recorded the 7th day of cold wave in the month on Tuesday with the minimum temperature settling at 2.4 degree Celsius, a degree above the 1.4 degree as reported on Monday. In comparison, the minimum temperature in Nainital was lower at 6 degrees Celsius and so was in Mussoorie at 2.5 degrees Celsius.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted that the cold wave spell will continue till Thursday while light to moderate rain and a hailstorm with winds gusting up to 50 kilometers per hour is likely to lash northwest India, including Delhi, next week. The IMD said an active Western Disturbance is very likely to affect northwest India from January 21 to January 25. The maximum temperature on Tuesday recorded 19.7 degree Celsius which gave much relief from cold wave in the day. Safdarjung had recorded a minimum temperature of 1.1 degree Celsius on January 1, 2021. It logged a minimum of 1.9 degrees Celsius on January 8 this year.

Traffic snarls in Lutyens’ Delhi due to R-Day parade rehearsals

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The office goers and commuters faced traffic hassles as roads in and around Lutyens’ Delhi remained clogged on Tuesday morning due to the ongoing rehearsal and preparations for Republic Day.

Traffic congestion was reported from areas such as Sansad Marg, Mandi House, ITO and Kartavya Path where the rehearsals are being conducted. Other stretches — Akbar Road, Kamraj road, Rajaji Marg, Safdarjung Road leading to Central Delhi also remained clogged.

Various roundabouts in



Central Delhi and the road towards Le Meridien was completely blocked. Commuters and office goers had little choice but to wait for more than 20 minutes at each stretch as their vehicles crawled on the streets.

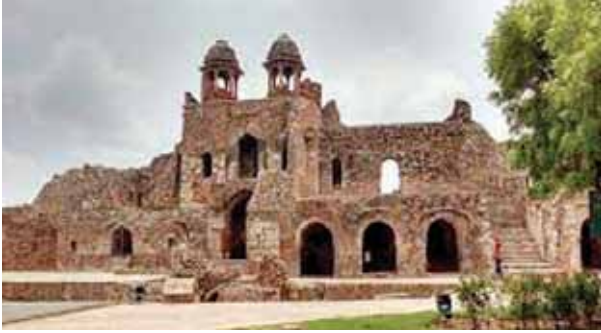
No traffic advisory was issued by the police which added to the congestion.

ASI dig at Purana Qila to trace Mahabharat link

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is set to begin excavation at Delhi’s Purana Qila to trace the evidence of ‘Mahabharat’. The ASI will begin excavation to trace the Painted Grey Ware period (c. 600–1000 BCE), commonly known as the ‘Mahabharat’ period.

The objective of the excavation, under the supervision of ASI Director Vasant Swarnkar, is the preservation of the trenches that were excavated between the years 2013-14 and 2017-18. During this season’s excavation, the focus would also be to accomplish the traces of Painted Grey



Ware findings in a stratigraphical context, according to a statement from the ASI here.

During the closure of the previous season’s excavation, evidence of layers predating the Mauryan period was found.

During the pre-Mauryan era, India was divided into 16

Mahajanapadas. These Mahajanapadas included kingdoms like Kuru, Panchal, and Anga. These states are believed to be linked with Pandavas, Draupadi and Karn.

The findings and artefacts unearthed in earlier excavations comprise painted grey

ware, belonging to 900 BC, an earthen pottery sequence from Maurya to Shunga, Kushana, Gupta, Rajput, Sultanates and Mughal periods. Excavated artefacts such as sickles, terracotta toys, kiln-burnt bricks, beads, terracotta figurines, seals, dealings, etc. excavated earlier are now displayed at the Archaeological Museum in the fort complex, the statement said.

Purana Qila, a 16th-century fort, was built by Sher Shah Suri and the second Mughal emperor, Humayun.

The fort is standing on a site with thousands of years of history. Padma Vibhushana Prof. BB Lal also carried out excavation works inside the fort and its premises in the year 1954 and 1969-73.

Stop forced conversion, marriages: UN to Pak

Rights experts express concern over conversion of minor girls of minorities



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ GENEVA

Expressing concern over reported forced marriages and religious conversion of underage girls of religious minorities in Pakistan, the United Nations has urged Islamabad to take immediate steps to check this practice and provide protection as per law.

The UN experts also said it was imperative that all victims, regardless of their religious background, are afforded access to justice and equal protection under the law.

"We urge the Government to take immediate steps to prevent and thoroughly investigate these acts objectively and in line with domestic legislation and international human rights commitments. Perpetrators

must be held fully accountable," the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said in a statement.

UN Special Procedures wrote in a tweet " #Pakistan: UN experts express alarm at the reported rise in abductions, forced marriages and conversions of girls and young women from religious minorities and call for urgent action."

"We are deeply troubled to hear that girls as young as 13 are being kidnapped from their families, trafficked to locations far from their homes, made to marry men sometimes twice their age, and coerced to convert to Islam, all in violation of international human rights law," UN experts said.

"We are very concerned that such marriages and conversions take place under threat of violence to these girls and

women or their families," they said. Special Rapporteurs and other independent experts are part of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council.

According to a UN Human Rights Office statement, the experts deplored the lack of access to justice for victims and their families while noting Pakistan's previous attempts to pass legislation prohibiting forced conversions and protecting religious minorities.

They also highlighted the reports alleging involvement of religious authorities and the complicity of security forces and the justice system in these so-called marriages and conversions.

The experts also alleged that courts have on occasion misused interpretations of religious law to justify victims remaining with their abusers.

"Family members say that victims' complaints are rarely taken seriously by the police, either refusing to register these reports or arguing that no crime has been committed by labelling these abductions as "love marriages," the experts said.

Abductors force their victims to sign documents which falsely attest to their being of legal age for marriage as well as marrying and converting of free will. These documents are cited by the police as evidence that no crime has occurred, they said.

UN welcomes India's largest all-women peacekeeping contingent



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/ UNITED NATIONS

With India deploying its biggest-ever all-women contingent for a peacekeeping mission in Sudan, the United Nations peacekeeping chief has welcomed them saying female troops mean efficient operations.

"Pleased to see the largest contingent of women peacekeepers from #India arriving in #Abyei where they will be #ServingForPeace with @UNISFA_1. More #Women InPeacekeeping means more efficient operations and they help better reflect the people we serve," UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix said in a tweet late on Monday.

The women peacekeepers, the single-largest all-women platoon from the Indian Army in recent years, arrived in Abyei on Saturday last to begin their deployment with the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). Abyei is disputed zone on the border of South Sudan and Sudan, and has been

accorded a "special administrative status."

"UNISFA is excited to welcome the deployment of the single largest all-women platoon of peacekeepers in recent years from #India. They join @IndBatt serving in #Abyei @UNISFA_1. The deployment reaffirms #India's continued commitment to implementation UNISFA mandate @UNPeacekeeping," the mission said in a tweet Monday.

The platoon, comprising two officers and 25 other ranks, is part of an engagement platoon and specialises in community outreach. It will perform extensive security related tasks as well.

Hailing the development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had said on January 6, "Proud to see this. India has a tradition of active participation in UN peacekeeping missions. The participation by our Nari Shakti is even more gladdening."

He was reacting to an Army tweet that said, "Indian Army deploys its largest contingent of women peacekeepers in United Nations mission at Abyei, UNISFA."

CBI raids ex-Rly officer's premises, lockers in DA case

17 kg gold, ₹1.57 cr cash, savings instruments worth over ₹5.3 cr seized

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI on Tuesday seized 17 kilograms of gold worth Rs 9.5 crore, Rs 1.57 crore in cash and savings instruments worth over Rs 5.3 crore besides property documents following searches and locker operation against a retired Railway Principal Chief Commercial Manager in Bhubaneswar, Pramod Kumar Jena, accused of possessing disproportionate assets.

"A cash amount of Rs 1.57 crore, postal saving instruments/bank fixed deposits (FDs) of Rs 3.33 crore, bank balance of Rs 1.51 crore, mutual fund of Rs 47.75 lakh, gold bars, gold biscuits/coins and gold jewellery of 17 kg (value at approximately Rs 9.5 crore) and documents related to immovable properties were found from the bank locker/premises of accused and others including family members/relatives etc.," the CBI said in a statement.

Jena, a 1989-batch Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS) officer who retired in November last year, has been booked for allegedly amassing assets disproportionate to his known sources of income.

The CBI had registered a case on January 3 against then Principal Chief Operation Manager (IRTS officer), East Coast Railway, Bhubaneswar on the allegations of possessing disproportionate assets worth Rs 1.92 crore during the check



period April 1, 2005 to March 31, 2020 in his name and his family members, the CBI said in a statement.

Searches were conducted at various places including Bhubaneswar, Jagatsinghpur (both in Odisha) and Kolkata.

"During searches, three locker keys of lockers in the name of the wife of the accused and other five locker keys of lockers whose owners' names were not readily available. Therefore, after strenuous efforts, the name of the owners of the lockers as well as the locker numbers and bank branches were found out. Seven lockers have been operated till now and the remaining locker is being operated," it said.

"The accused railway official's wife Rosina Jena is a housewife with no big source of income, but she regularly files ITR (Income tax returns). PK Jena had no other source of income except his own salary and rental income. The daughters of Jena are also filing IT returns," an official said, quoting from the FIR.

In locker after locker, the illicit wealth kept coming out, officials said, adding that the searches are still going on and some more lockers will be checked.

In its FIR, the agency alleged that at the start of the check period on April 1, 2005, Jena had assets worth Rs 4.53 lakh in the form of bank balances and plots, which spiralled to over Rs 4.33 crore at the end of the period on March 31, 2020, they said.

"Information disclosed that after giving the benefit of incomes as mentioned in their Income-Tax Returns, the total income of PK Jena and his family members from all known sources was to the tune of Rs 3.25 crore during the check period from April 1, 2005, to March 31, 2020," it alleged.

After calculating his income and expenses incurred during the corresponding period, the CBI alleged that there was no satisfactory explanation for Rs 1.92 crore of assets which it said were 59.09 per cent over his genuine sources of income.

PM TO OPEN 'SAANSAD KHEL MAHAKUMBH'
New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Wednesday virtually inaugurate the second phase of the 'Saansad Khel Mahakumbh' being organised in Uttar Pradesh's Basti district. The 'Khel Mahakumbh' is a novel initiative that provides an opportunity and a platform to the youth of Basti and neighbouring areas to showcase their sporting talent and motivates them to take sport as a career option.

EX-BSF CHIEF TO BE DEPUTY NSA
New Delhi: Retired BSF Director-General Pankaj Kumar Singh was on Monday appointed as Deputy National Security Adviser (NSA). According to an official order, Singh, a 1988-batch IPS officer of the Rajasthan cadre, has been appointed on a re-employment contract for a period of two years. Singh retired as BSF chief on December 31, 2022.

SC TO HEAR RANA AYYUB'S PLEA
New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear the petition of journalist Rana Ayyub challenging the summons issued to her by a special PMLA court in Ghaziabad in a money laundering case lodged against her by the ED. A Bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice PS Narasimha agreed to hear the plea on January 23, after advocate Vrinda Grover, appearing for Ayyub, urged the court for urgent listing.

ARMY FELICITATES HACKATHON WINNERS
New Delhi: In an effort to deal with the threat of cyber warfare, the Indian Army on Tuesday honoured winners providing innovative solutions in the field of cyber security in the second edition of a hackathon aptly named "Sainya Ranakshetram 2.0". The prize winners were felicitated by Army chief General Pande in a virtual function here.

SC TO HEAR RAPIDO PLEA AGAINST HC ORDER
New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear on January 23 a plea of bike taxi aggregator Rapido against the Bombay High Court order directing it to suspend its services in Maharashtra immediately for operating without a licence from State.

NEW PIL AGAINST BIHAR'S CASTE SURVEY
New Delhi: A fresh petition was filed before the Supreme Court on Tuesday against the Bihar Government's decision to conduct a caste survey in the State, claiming the State's action was violative of the basic structure of the Constitution.

India's image transformed globally under Modi: EAM



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aiming to showcase the G-20 summit in India in 50 places and involving civil society in the year-long event, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday made a statement on India's presidency of the global grouping at the party's national executive meeting, affirming that the country's image had transformed globally under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The party also placed another statement in the National Executive on "garib kalyan" (ruling party's welfare policies) at the Centre and in States where it is in power. The statement on the welfare policies was made by Samrat Chaudhary, an OBC leader who heads the party's Legislators in the Bihar Legislative Council.

The BJP's Parliamentary Board member Sudha Yadav dismissed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's criticism about concentration of wealth with a few individuals in the country.

Addressing a press conference along with BJP vice-president Jay Panda, Yadav said the Congress leader keeps raising the same issue without looking at figures about crores of people benefitting from the Government's welfare policies, she said, accusing him of making false claims.

The attention given to the SC, ST, poor and backwards in the last nine years is unprecedented, she said. Yadav said from providing housing, electricity and water to the poor, the BJP Government has launched numerous schemes to help different segments of the society. BJP Governments in different

States have also worked on these lines to uplift poor and marginalised, she said.

Briefing reporters on the statement made by Jaishankar in the closed-door meeting, Panda quoted the Minister, saying the world's view of India has changed in the last nine years.

When the Covid pandemic broke, there were concerns that India will be one country which may not manage it but now the G20 and the world in general is "full of admiration" as it not only dealt with the crisis but also reached out with help to other countries, he said.

India used to depend on other countries during earlier crisis but it not only met the challenges of the pandemic on its own but also helped others, Jaishankar said.

Panda said BJP workers will in their individual capacity work to connect the society as the country hosts over 200 G20-related events over 50 places. It is an opportunity to connect the society and showcase India's progress and its rich heritage as delegates from not only the elite bloc of 20 leading economies but also many multilateral bodies like IMF will visit the country, he added.

India has also succeeded in keeping its economy strong, he said.

Production of AK-203 rifles begins at factory in Amethi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Russia have started the production of AK-203 Kalashnikov assault rifles in a joint venture at a factory in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh. Army chief General Manoj Pande had said last week that the first batch of 5,000 rifles will be delivered to the Army by March.

Giving details of the commencement of production by a joint venture named Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited, Alexander Mikheev, Director General of Rosoboronexport of Russia said on Tuesday that the

Korwa Ordnance Factory in Amethi has produced the first batch of 7.62 mm Kalashnikov AK-203 assault rifles. The



beginning of deliveries to the Indian Army is expected soon.

At the same time, the factory's capacity makes it possible to fully equip the personnel of other law enforcement agencies in India with AK-203 assault rifles, which, due to their high adaptability, are suitable for various operators, he stated adding that in addition, the joint venture will be able

Covid jab side-effects denied by Govt

Media reports ill-informed, says Centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Tuesday termed as "ill-informed and erroneous" media reports claiming admission of "multiple side-effects of Covid-19 vaccines" by ICMR and CDSCO officials.

The Ministry said the proactive disclosure aligned with

global scientific evidence in the public domain and responses to questions in the RTI related to advantages and disadvantages of Covid-19 vaccines.

"The ICMR response simply provided links of reputed websites of World Health Organization (WHO), Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India where compiled global evidence on various Covid-19 vaccines is available," the Ministry said.

As is the case with all other vaccines, those who get vaccinated with different Covid-19

vaccines may experience mild symptoms like injection site tenderness, pain, headache, fatigue, myalgia, malaise, pyrexia, chills, arthralgia etc, the Ministry said adding that rarely, few individuals may experience severe adverse events depending upon certain pre-disposing conditions, it added.

Global research studies have shown that Covid-19 vaccination has helped in reducing severity of disease by preventing hospitalisations and deaths due to Covid-19 and benefits of the vaccines overwhelmingly outweigh any adverse effects.

In India, NTAGI (National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation) has periodically reviewed the benefits and side effects of Covid-19 vaccines used in India and has endorsed the above findings, the Ministry said.

In addition, CDSCO stated as part of the RTI reply that the list of Covid vaccines approved by the national Drugs Controller General is available on the website (cdsco.gov.in) while ICMR has not commented on any of the documents, links of which have been shared as part of the RTI response.

Centre delaying judges' appointment: Cong

Trying to create schism and logjam till people favourable to its ideological masters are appointed: Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday alleged that the Modi Government is deliberately delaying the appointment of judges to create a "designed schism and a consequent logjam" till people favourable to its "ideological masters" are appointed.

The party's fresh attack comes a day after it said the

Government was intimidating the judiciary in a bid to totally capture it and alleged that Law Minister Kiren Rijiju's suggestion to restructure the Collegium system is a "poison pill" for the judiciary.

Congress general secretary Randeep Surjewala said the BJP-led NDA Central Government is following a policy of "deliberately withholding Collegium recommendations for months and years" to keep the fate of named judges in limbo. "This is a designed attack to avoid accountability by the Government and with the main intent to capture the judiciary," Surjewala, himself a lawyer, stated.

"The Prime Minister, Law Minister and other Constitutional authorities are deliberately attacking the integrity and independence of the judiciary by a design," he said on Twitter.

"The idea is to create a designed schism and a consequent logjam bringing the judi-



cial appointments and transfers to a standstill until people favourable to the thinking of the Modi Government and its ideological masters find a place in the list of appointees," Surjewala said.

Rijiju wrote to Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud suggesting the inclusion of representatives from the Union and State Governments in the Supreme Court and High Court collegiums. The Minister backed his suggestion, saying it

will help infuse transparency and public accountability in the selection of judges.

Surjewala said according to the Law Minister himself, six Supreme Court judges' posts and 333 High Court judges' posts were vacant as of December 2022.

"Yet, out of 21 names recommended for various High Courts, the BJP Government has returned 19 to the Collegium for reconsideration. This is despite 10 of the names having been reiterated by the Collegium. It is, thus, clear who is responsible for the delays in appointment of judges," Surjewala claimed.

Several Union Ministers, Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla have slammed the 2015 scrapping of the National Judicial Appointment Commission (NJAC) by the apex court and claimed that the judiciary was encroaching upon the domain of the Legislature.

CDS visits NCC's R-Day camp

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a first initiative of its kind, the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan visited the ongoing National Cadet Corps (NCC) Republic Day Camp on Tuesday. Till now, chiefs of three Services every year visit the camp.

A contingent of all the three wings namely Army, Navy and Air Force presented a 'Guard of Honour' to the CDS on his arrival. The NCC cadets there- after presented a fine band display. The CDS also visited the 'Flag Area' prepared by the NCC cadets, depicting various social awareness themes and cultural activities. The cadets briefed him in detail about their respective State Directorate themes.

Speaking on the occasion, General Chauhan underscored that from a humble beginning the NCC has grown into a volunteer organisation of 17 lakh



cadets. "Its contribution in inculcating the qualities of discipline, leadership and camaraderie among the youth of this country is exemplary", he said.

Highlighting the immense contributions of NCC in social awareness activities, he mentioned about the 'Puneet Sagar Abhiyan' launched with the aim to clean up sea shores and beaches and remove and recycle plastic and other waste and spread awareness about the need for clean and pristine beaches and hazards of plastic

pollution.

"The drive has caught the imagination of the public and till date approximately 13.5 lakh NCC cadets have participated in the Abhiyan and collected almost 208 tonnes of plastic waste out of which 167 tonnes have been sent for recycling," said General Chauhan.

The CDS complimented the NCC for its 75th year of selfless service to the nation. He also applauded the exceptional performance displayed by NCC cadets in various sports events.

It's for legislature to enact law for terminally-ill people: SC

Court to modify 2018 guidelines on 'Living Will'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

More than four years after its landmark order on passive euthanasia, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday it is for the legislature to enact a law for terminally ill patients choosing to stop treatment but agreed to modify its 2018 guidelines on "Living Will", an advance medical directive on end of life treatment.

The apex court's order notwithstanding, people wanting to get a "living will" registered have been facing problems due to cumbersome guidelines.

Observing that the legislature is much more endowed with "skills and sources of knowledge" to enact a relevant law, the Supreme Court said it will limit itself to improving the guidelines it had laid down on "Living Will". A five-judge Constitution bench headed by Justice K M Joseph said there can only be a little tweaking of the

PASSIVE EUTHANASIA



guidelines or else it will become a review of its own 2018 judgment. The bench said the advance directive can be applied only in the narrow area where patients become so terminally ill that they are not in a position to say that the treatment must stop.

"We are only here to consider improving the guidelines. We should realise the limitations of the court also. The judgment clarifies that till a law is made by the legislature.....Legislature is much more endowed with skills, talents and sources of knowledge. We are not experts in medicine. We have to be careful in that," the bench, also comprising Justices Ajay Rastogi, Aniruddha Bose, Hrishikesh Roy and Justice CT Ravikumar said. The five-judge Constitution bench was considering

a plea seeking modification of the guidelines for Living Will/Advance Medical Directive issued by it in 2018.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for NGO Common Cause, said everybody has an indefeasible right to refuse treatment. "Here the question arises that if a person is unconscious and incapable of expressing his will as to whether he wants to be put on ventilator or not. The whole purpose of the advance directive is that no one, not even his next of kin, can force him to be put on a ventilator. The problem that has arisen now is that the execution of the Living Will is very cumbersome," he said.

Senior advocate Arvind P Datar, appearing for The Indian Society for Critical Care, submitted that the procedure under the SC guidelines had become unworkable due to the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the process. In accordance with the SC directions, he said, a medical board has to first declare that the patient has no scope of recovery or is brain dead. The procedure then enumerates that the district collector has to constitute an independent medical board to obtain a second opinion, after which the matter is referred to a judicial magistrate, first class, he said.

2 LeT terrorists on run for week shot dead in Budgam encounter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ SRINAGAR

Two Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) terrorists, on the run since last one week, were gunned down by the joint team of security forces near the court complex in the Central Kashmir district of Budgam on Tuesday.

As per police records, both the killed terrorists were categorized terrorists and part of groups involved in several terror crime cases. According to police these terrorists were tasked to carry out some sensational terror incident in Budgam district ahead of forthcoming Republic Day.

The movement of these terrorists was tracked down by the intelligence agencies after they had managed to give a slip to the security forces during a brief exchange of fire in the Magam area on January 15.

According to a Srinagar based Defence Spokesman, based on specific information about the movement of these



terrorists in the area of Budgam a joint mobile vehicle check post was launched by the Indian Army and J&K police on Tuesday.

The Defence Spokesman said, "around 9.40 a.m, a suspected Tata Sumo was intercepted by the security forces. On being challenged, the terrorists in the vehicle in an attempt to flee, opened indiscriminate fire on the security forces". "They did so to create chaos by inflicting casualties to security forces & civilians in the

crowded area". However, the security forces exercised complete restraint and cordoned off the terrorists in the nearby shops, where they had sought shelter, added the defence spokesman.

To avoid any collateral damage in the crowded market area the security forces evacuated the locals to safety before tightening the cordon.

According to a Defence Spokesman, "the terrorist however continued with indiscriminate fire on the security

forces who were evacuating the locals. In the ensuing firefight, both the terrorists were eliminated by the security forces".

The neutralised terrorists have been identified by the Jammu and Kashmir police as Sahid Rashid Sheikh, r/o Kisrigom, Kakapora and Arbaz Ah Mir, r/o Putrigam, Pulwama, both belonging to LeT.

The search of the area resulted in recovery of one AK series rifle, one pistol and other indiscriminating material.

Minorities' identification: SC gives 6 States, UTs last chance to respond to Centre's query

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed displeasure over six States and Union Territories (UTs), including Jammu and Kashmir, not giving their comments to the Centre on the issue of identification of minorities at the State level.

The status report, filed in the apex court last week, said that comments from six States and UTs — Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Lakshadweep, Rajasthan and Telangana — are still awaited.

"We fail to appreciate why these States should not respond. We give last opportunity to the Central Government to obtain their responses failing which we will presume that they have nothing to say," said a Bench comprising Justices SK Kaul, AS Oka and JB Pardiwala.

Attorney General R Venkataramani, appearing for the Centre, referred to the recent status report filed by the Ministry of Minority Affairs which said that 24 States and six UTs have so far furnished their comments on the issue.

When Venkataramani told the Bench that six States and UTs have not yet given their comments on the issue, the Bench said, "They cannot keep on not giving their responses. We will presume that they do not want to give responses".

The counsel appearing for one of the petitioners said that in Jammu and Kashmir, Hindus are in minority.

The bench observed that UTs are being administered by the Centre.

CIC order seeking CBDT info on Janmabhoomi Trust stayed: HC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday stayed an order of the Chief Information Commission (CIC) directing the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) to provide information relating to Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, which is looking after construction and management of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Justice Pratibha Singh granted the interim relief while noting that the CIC had not issued notice to the trust whose information was sought, which is mandated under the provisions of the RTI Act.

The High Court, in its order, said the CIC has not considered the fact that the information relating to the income tax records is exempted under Section 138 of the Income Tax Act, 1961 which is a special law. The court was hearing a plea by the Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) of CBDT seeking quashing of the November 30, 2022 order of the CIC which had directed that the CPIO would revisit certain points made in the application under the Right to Information Act and provide information within 15 days from the receipt of the order.

The RTI applicant had sought a copy of complete application (with all annexures) filed by the trust for getting exemption or deduction under the relevant provisions for its donations. He had also sought a copy of the trust deed of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra which was filed with the application for getting exemption or deduction for its donations.

'Like Joshimath, Bengal's Raniganj is sinking' Centre's neglect accounts for mining town on verge of disaster: Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister continued to attack the Centre for the second consecutive day on Tuesday holding it responsible for the "very dangerous" situation in which the people of Joshimath find themselves today.

Drawing a comparison between the pilgrimage town of Uttarkhand and coal township of Raniganj in Asansol, Banerjee said that despite repeated requests for funds New Delhi had not paid a single penny in last one decade to revive Raniganj which too was sinking because of the mining activities carried out by the Eastern Coal Fields, a Central

Government undertaking.

On Joshimath she said, "the situation is very dangerous" and held the Centre responsible for trying to bolt the doors when the horses had fled. "Why did not they take action when there were warning of possible landslides ... the situation is very dangerous in Joshimath, "for which the people (of Uttarakhand) are not at all responsible... the Government should have taken steps when the alarm was raised earlier," Banerjee said adding "the Government must take steps on war footing.

Accusing the Centre of turning a blind eye on Raniganj which too was sinking due to heavy mining by the ECL,



Banerjee said, "we have been fighting for the past 10 years ... the ECL is mining on the land but no money is being given by the Centre so as to protect the township and save the people's lives ... much like Joshimath at least 30,000 people will be affected as Raniganj is sinking,"

Reminding the Centre about its duties towards the

HC seeks CBI status report in probe against Chidambaram family role in hotel grabbing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday directed the CBI to file a status report in its probe against former Finance Minister P Chidambaram's family's involvement in a case of hotel grabbing in collusion with Indian Overseas Bank officials by dubiously declaring the hotel an NPA.

The CBI in September 2020 informed the Court that they are going to register a regular case after the preliminary enquiry found the role of Chidambaram's wife Nalini and her sister Padmini in grabbing the hotel named as Comfort Inn in Tirupur in Tamil Nadu in connivance with certain IOB officials, when



Chidambaram was the Finance Minister in 2007.

The agency also said that they have sought sanction for prosecution against certain bank officials. In 2016, the High Court had ordered CBI to probe the incident when the hotel's promoter Dr. Kathirvel approached the court citing how his business was dubiously declared as NPA and Sarfesi Act was misused to capture his hotel by Nalini's sister Padmini and Nalini's interventions by

giving compensations and Chidambaram's letters to him in Finance Minister's letter head.

Advocate Yatinder Chaudhary, representing Kathirvel told the Court that for more than two years CBI has not converted the preliminary inquiry into a regular case, after saying irregularities were found and sanction for prosecution were sought against bank officials.

Justice Yogesh Khanna ordered the CBI to file the status report in four weeks. During the hearing the IOB objected to seeking sanction for prosecution and Chidambaram's family members argued that hotel promoter Kathirvel's allegations were wrong.

Row over Tharoor's PM candidature in Kerala

KOCHI: While G Sukumaran Nair, a caste leader, portrayed MP Sashi Tharoor as the Prime Ministerial candidate of the Indian National Congress because of him being a Tharavadi Nair lineage, leader of another caste which is numerically stronger than the

Nairs lambasted the move as premature, against ground realities and facts.

Vellappilli Natesan, general secretary, SNDP, a caste outfit representing the Eezhava community, described Tharoor as anti-backward as well as anti-Harijan. "Isn't he the

same Sashi Tharoor who fought against Mallikarjun Kharge, a widely respected Harijan leader in the Congress presidential election? If Tharoor had an iota of concern for the Harijans, would he have opposed the candidature of Kharge asked Natesan. *PNS*

Row over meat shops turns violent, takes communal colour in Aligarh

PNS ■ ALIGARH

The dispute over meat shops in Sarai Sultani in Aligarh, took communal colour after people from two communities confronted and pelted stones at each other. Three people have been injured in the incidence.

The market was closed due to panic. The accused fled the spot after the police came. People of a community raised slogans and demanded action against the accused.

In protest against the incident, the workers sat on a dharna and demanded removal of meat shops from the road and stringent action against the accused. The matter calmed down when IG Deepak Kumar, DM Indravikram Singh and SSP Kalanidhi Naithani arrived the place and complaints were lodged.

IndiGo flight's emergency gate unlocked, probe on

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In yet another inflight incident, a passenger on board a Tiruchirappalli-bound IndiGo flight opened the emergency door, triggering panic among the co-passengers.

The incident took place on Flight 6E 7339 from Chennai to Tiruchirappalli on December 10, 2022. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), however, said that the event was duly reported and that no safety was compro-

mised. A senior DGCA official stated that the matter is being investigated.

The DGCA statement comes after allegations surfaced that it was Tejaswi Surya, first-time MP from Bengaluru South constituency and the National president of the BJP Yuva Morcha, the youth wing of the BJP, who unlocked the emergency exit door. The statement issued by the DGCA and IndiGO did not reveal the identity and details of the passenger.

The issue came to light when Tamil Nadu Electricity Minister V Senthil Balaji tweeted on December 29 2022 about the opening of an emergency exit door on a Chennai-Trichy flight, with heavy hints incriminating Tejaswi Surya and BJP Tamil Nadu chief Annamalai.

"The BJP VIP Brats ! How dare the airline complain? Is it the norm for the BJP power elite? Did it compromise passenger safety? Ohhh! U can't ask questions about BJP's entitled VIP's !" Congress Randee

Singh Surjewala tweeted on Tuesday.

The ATR 72-600 aircraft flying from Chennai to Trichy was scheduled to take off at 10.05 am on December 10, 2022 but was delayed by 142 minutes after a passenger "accidentally" pulled down the lever and unlocked the emergency exit.

The DGCA official said it appears that by mistake, the Right Hand emergency exit got opened by a passenger while the aircraft was on

ground. "The crew took note and resultantly, all appropriate airworthiness action such as reinstalling of door, pressurization check etc were carried out before the release of the aircraft for departure. No safety was compromised," the official added.

In a statement on Tuesday, IndiGo said a passenger travelling on flight 6E 7339 from Chennai to Tiruchirappalli on Dec 10, 2022, accidentally opened the emergency exit during the boarding process.

Desi biopesticide to kill mosquito larvae to hit markets soon

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In what could be a game-changer not only in curbing mosquito-borne diseases which are on the rise but also in saving foreign exchange, the technology for India's indigenously developed eco-friendly bio-pesticide VCRC Bti B-17 is now available for commercial sale.

After successfully holding a string of clinical trials at various locations including in India, Indonesia and the USA of its indigenously developed bio-pesticide VCRC Bti B-17

for the past several years, the ICMR is now seeking commercial production of the bio-control agent that is majorly being imported. It has very high larvicidal activity against mosquito species belonging to Culex, Anopheles and Aedes, as assessed by the Institut Pasteur, Paris and designated as 'Indian standard strain' by the Central Insecticide Board (CIB).

The ICMR has now floated an expression of interest in this regard, seeking proposals from the industry in the bio-pesticide sector to manufacture Bacillus thuringiensis var. israelensis (Bti) VCRC B17 way back in 1980.

lensis (VCRC B17) useful for the control of mosquitoes and black flies. It is found to be safe against honey bees, silk worms, mammals and also non-target organisms occurring in the mosquito breeding habitats.

Vector Control Research Centre (ICMR-VCRC), Puducherry is one of the constituent Institutes of the ICMR had indigenously isolated a strain of Bacillus thuringiensis var. israelensis (Bti) VCRC B17 way back in 1980.

"The isolate was further characterized by sequencing its toxin genes. A simple and low-



cost pilot-scale fermentation technology for the production of this bacterium, using locally available raw materials has been developed. Two formulations viz., aqueous suspension (AS 5.0%) and water dispersible powder (WP) formulations of the biolarvicide have been

developed.

"The formulations have been tested, both in the laboratory and under field conditions in different climatic conditions, extensively and found to be highly effective in controlling the larvae of disease and nuisance causing mosquitoes," said an official from the ICMR.

The technology based on a bacterium, Bacillus thuringiensis var. israelensis (Bti) ICMR-VCRC B17), was isolated in 1980 from a soil sample collected from Puducherry.

In laboratory tests the bio-

larvicide, Bti ICMR-VCRC B17, was found to be highly toxic to larvae (water stages) of mosquitoes transmitting malaria (Anopheline sp.), filariasis and Japanese encephalitis (Culicine sp.), dengue, chikungunya and Zika diseases (Aedes spp.).

Bti ICMR-VCRC B17 kills mosquito larvae by destroying their gut, within 10-30 min upon treatment. Its identity and larvicidal activity were confirmed by the WHO Reference Centre, Institut Pasteur, Paris, and rated equivalent to the global standard strain ONR

60A (WHO).

A pilot-scale (100 litres capacity) technology for the production of the biolarvicide has been perfected at ICMR-VCRC. The biolarvicide can be produced using locally available agriculture-based raw materials and hence it is cost-effective and environmentally friendly, the official shared.

Blackflies transmit river blindness in African countries. Hence, there is enough scope for its export to other countries, including the African continent for the control of mosquitoes and blackflies, he hoped.

Pressure works

China has withdrawn its shield for terrorist Makki and Pakistan has expressed desire to have dialogue

Can the leopard change its spots? Or Pakistan cease to be a sponsor of jihadist terror? Or China as the backer of Pakistan? The answer to all the three questions is in the negative, for just as the genetic code of a beast cannot be changed, the nature of nation-states cannot be altered. Especially if they emerge as two dangerous rogue states, exporting terror (in the case of Pakistan) and disease (Covid-19) to all parts of the world. No, we can't change their nature, but we can force them to behave themselves. The world has seen enough of Islamic terror flowing out of Pakistan to be fooled by its lies that it is checking jihadists (though Pakistan did succeed in convincing the Financial Action Task Force or FATF to remove it from the "grey list" in October last year). It is to the credit of India's foreign policy that it managed to win over 14 out of the 15 members of the UN Security Council to its side, thus forcing China to give up the "technical" hold on the designation of Lahore-based Lashkar-e-Toiba's deputy chief Abdul Rehman Makki as a global terrorist. Makki, on whose head the US Justice Department had put a bounty of \$2 million, is brother-in-law to the designated terrorist and LeT chief Hafiz Saeed. Makki's expertise was raising money from the Middle East.

Indian diplomats' perseverance and persistence over Makki proved too much for China, which is a permanent UNSC member with veto power. In July

2022, China managed to put a technical hold on listing Makki as a global terrorist in the 1267 committee. New Delhi has another demand: listing the 26/11 murderer Sajjid Mir of LeT as a global terrorist by the same committee. It is a well-known fact that China has been shielding its 'all-weather friend' Pakistan in the UNSC from India's actions targeted at Islamic terror. For instance, China torpedoed the efforts to designate Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. Ditto with Hafiz Saeed's case. As blue-eyed boys of the Pakistani deep state, they have caused enough bloodshed in India; at the same time, however, they have also helped make Pakistan a beggar. This is the reason that Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif now wants peace with India. In an interview with Dubai-based Al Arabiya TV, he said that his country has learned its lesson after three wars with India which "brought more misery, poverty, and unemployment." Sharif went on to say, "My message to the Indian leadership and Prime Minister Modi is that let's sit down on the table and have serious and sincere talks to resolve our burning points like Kashmir. It is up to us to live peacefully and make progress or quarrel with each other and waste time and resources." Just like China, Pakistan is also under duress to act sensibly. Being a peace-loving country, India can engage with Pakistan but we should never forget that it has become slightly amenable only because of pressure.



Flautists including blind kids | rehearse for Bansuri festival in Mumbai

Disparities rising

Oxfam reports states the obvious – the gulf between the rich and poor is getting wider

The gulf between the haves and have-nots have only widened in the country over the years and the pandemic made it worse. That is a general observation and now Oxfam report indicates the same. This does not augur well for the country which seeks to build an egalitarian society. According to the Oxfam report, economic inequality in India has sharply risen in the past five years. The COVID-19 pandemic only worsened the situation. The report cites various reasons for it including caste and class disparities, physical isolation of Scheduled Tribes (STs) from resources, caste entitlements and of course the skewed nature of economy.

One of the major indicators of economic inequality is income disparities which sharply rose due to the pandemic. COVID-19 has led to the diminishing of wealth for the bottom 50% of the Indian population. In 2020, their income share was only 13% of national income, and just 3% of national wealth. The pandemic accelerated the process of inequalities by throwing a large section of the society out of jobs due to lockdowns and fear psychosis. Thus the pandemic contracted the income and wealth of the bottom 50% of India. This is largely true for a large section of people are engaged in manual work which require presence on the work site like factories, shops, fields etc. Since most of these establishments were either closed or operated at bare minimal levels, the large sections were rendered jobless and had to survive on their savings. On the other hand people engaged in white collar jobs had their work going as the office work quickly shifted to online mode enabling them to 'work from home'.

Unfortunately the government didn't do much to assuage the woes of the people engaged in blue collar jobs. Besides, we have an economy which is largely controlled by few individuals. The top 30% owns over 90% of India's wealth. These figures top those of the pre-pandemic years (2018-19), which shows that the richest have only gotten richer during the pandemic. Another factor related to economic inequality in India is the hiking of the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The govt had reduced corporate tax slabs from 30% to 22%. but increased the excise duties and GST on the prices of petroleum and diesel leading to price rise which further took away money from the pocket of the common man making him poorer and transferring money from his pocket to the rich making them richer.

Onerous times for Afghan women

The women in Afghanistan are not allowed in schools. It is high time the world community took note and did something about it.

Historical evidence shows that circumstantial adversaries and crisis situations such as the pandemic, humanitarian and security threats, as well as climate change, have tested and even reversed the progress in expanding women's rights and opportunities across the world. There is also evidence that reversal of democratic processes has adversely impacted the rights of women. The takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban can be seen as one such adversary that has not only stunted the progress but also reverted the established democratic environment. The recent decisions by the Taliban for a nation-wide ban on university education for girls can be seen as a violation of Afghan women's right to education and freedom.

Derailement of Women Rights

Over the past one year, Afghanistan has witnessed heightened restrictions and a rapid reversal of women's rights, impacting their future in terms of education, employment, healthcare, freedom of movement and even participation in public and political life. Various policies announced by the Taliban regime is indicative of systematic exclusion of women from public life such as the recent nation-wide ban on education, dissolution of ministry dedicated to women's interests and welfare, the absence of women in the cabinet, restraints on women's free movement who are to be accompanied by a male relative (mahram) and to cover faces in public, and depriving women their right to work as enshrined in the 2004 Constitution. Women's position in the media landscape has changed rapidly too. For instance, in November 2021 a media restriction introduced by the Taliban regime prohibited women from appearing in television dramas.

On account of the regressive and repressive policies of the Taliban regime Afghanistan ranked last (170 out of 170 countries) on the Global



Women, Peace and Security Index 2021, reflecting the abysmal situation of women and girls across many provinces in the country. According to UN Women, approximately 60% of children who are out-of-school are young Afghan girls and only 4.9% of women are accessing tertiary education, compared to 14.2% of men. Further, according to a UNDP report, Afghanistan may incur an immediate economic loss of up to US\$1 billion — or up to five percent of the country's GDP due to restrictions of women from work.

Domestic Resistance

When the Taliban took over Afghanistan, Ms Pramila Patten, Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, urged the international community to sustain its attention and action to ensure women's rights are non-negotiable. The restrictive policies of the Taliban in Afghanistan specifically aimed at the rights and freedoms of Afghan women and girls have disrupted the cycle of women development, examined at the 9075th UNSC meeting. Speaking to the UNSC, Yalda Hakim, international correspondent and news presenter for BBC News, underscored

“OVER THE PAST ONE YEAR, AFGHANISTAN HAS WITNESSED HEIGHTENED RESTRICTIONS AND A RAPID REVERSAL OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS, IMPACTING THEIR FUTURE IN TERMS OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, HEALTHCARE, FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

that "Afghanistan is now the only country in the world where girls are prevented from getting an education, locked out of their classrooms, simply because of their gender".

The international community needs to understand that the repercussions of depriving women of the right to education, employment, freedom of movement and expression in Afghanistan will be felt world-wide. The most discernible impact with global effects will be felt in the performance of the country in terms of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) committed to promote gender equality, women empowerment, and women led development, which has severely deteriorated in Afghanistan in the last one year since the Taliban takeover.

Considering the recent curtailment of women's rights to education, the global players need to bring a consensus on mainstreaming Afghan women rights. In achieving this, multilateral forums such as the W20 (Women 20) platform, under the current G20 presidency of India can prove instrumental. Second, the international community must collectively strengthen

international cooperation in upholding UNSC Resolution 2593 to uphold women's rights and their full and equal participation in the political settlement of Afghanistan. To achieve this, the neighbouring countries, in collaboration with the international community, need to be more proactive on the diplomatic and security front and insist on guaranteeing respect in the full spectrum of women's rights as a priority, aligning national and international interest. Third, to foster 'gender equality' the world community needs to stand with the Afghan women and support their cause to fight against the systematic exclusion of women from public life enforced by the Taliban regime. This may also help the regime to realize and acknowledge that participation of women at all levels is paramount for the country as inclusive development cannot be based on exclusive policies in complete disregard of the contribution of women to the society at large.

(The writer is a Delhi based researcher. She worked as Senior Researcher at Public Policy Research Centre (PPRC), New Delhi. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BANGLA JOURNALIST KILLED

Sir — New Year brings sad news as a young Bangladeshi journalist was killed in January. Ashiqul Islam (27), who worked for Dainik Parjabeekshon from Brahmanbaria locality (which is adjacent to India's north-eastern State of Tripura) was hacked to death on 9 January by a group of miscreants. Press Emblem Campaign (PEC), the global media safety and rights body, condemned the killing and demanded a fair probe to book the culprits under the law.

"We have just passed a deadly year for working journalists with 116 casualties across the world. Ukraine has lost 34 media persons followed by Mexico (17), Haiti (8), Pakistan (6), Philippines (5), Colombia, India (4 each), Bangladesh, Israel/Palestine, Honduras, Yemen (3 each), etc in 2022," said Blaise Lempem, president of PEC (www.presseemblem.ch). Urging Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for a high level enquiry to investigate the motive of perpetrators, Lempem also called for an international convention over the matter of journalist murders. PEC's south Asia representative Nava Thakuria reveals that Ashiqul was returning home attending an evening function when he was targeted by a group of assailants.

T Navajyoti | Kolkata

ECOLOGICAL DISASTER

Sir — In the aftermath of ecological disaster at Joshimath, ISRO ground report putting subsidence at 5.4 cm in 12 days in parts of Joshimath is startling. In this context, the NDMA issued a gag on government officials and bodies not to share data on social media regarding subsidence until the final report from the expert group who are on the task to ascertain the cause of disaster of such magnitude in Joshimath cannot be faulted. Notwithstanding the outcome of the report, aggressive construction activities carried out so far knowing that Joshimath is in the seismic zone, successive governments not heeding to warnings from experts given from time to time about

Deadliest plane crash



In Nepal's deadliest aviation disaster in 30 years, at least 68 passengers were killed when the aircraft they were in crashed before landing at Pokhara International Airport in Nepal, civil aviation sources in Kathmandu confirmed on

January 15. The aircraft belonging to Yeti Airlines had 72 people onboard including four crew members and 15 foreign passengers on board. Officials said that four bodies are yet to be recovered. Nepal's air transport sector has been plagued by accidents due to poor maintenance, insufficient training and lax standards. The country also has some of the world's most remote and tricky runways, with approaches flanked by towering mountains that challenge even accomplished pilots. According to the Aviation Safety database, there have been 27 deadly plane crashes in Nepal over the last three decades killing over 600 people in total.

CK Ramanathan | Ghaziabad

peril awaiting is shocking. It is imperative that the state and the centre act on priority upon submission of the final report by implementing eco-friendly measures on a war-footing in order to prevent land subsidence that led to ecological disaster in Joshimath and other towns in this hilly region.

KR Srinivasan | Secunderabad

BAAT BHARAT KI

Sir — Addressing a gathering of senior Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) leaders at an event, 'Baat Bharat Ki', to mark 75 years of Panchjanya, the RSS-affiliated Hindi weekly magazine, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh tears into - Congress, which was then in power, had banned Panchjanya (but who, none other the present Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and RSS loveable but all time Congress man Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel) within a month of its launch, taking advantage of the atmosphere created after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination. Targeting critics of the Modi government, Rajnath Singh said the country's first Prime Minister (PM) Jawaharlal Nehru even amended the Constitution to curb free speech while the Narendra Modi or the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government neither imposed any ban on any media house nor curtailed

anyone's right to free speech and expression in any way.

But unable to understand if so, then why India is ranked 150 out of 180 countries when it comes to freedom of the press? Or why BJP governments across India have targeted and arrested a number of journalists, and no Union ministers have spoken up in those cases. How one forgets that India too continues to remain at a record high for the second consecutive year, with seven journalists behind bars, including six charged under the stringent UAPA. Interestingly, Mr. Singh said the Modi or Vajpayee government never imposed any ban on any media house, but the Modi government's ascension to national power in 2014 led to the taming of India's media. The previous generation of senior editors, who were viewed as more devoted to India's liberal outlook than the BJP's Hindu nationalist ideology, were moved out, and new channels and news leaders with devotion to the BJP and Modi were developed." It's a pity, even after all these India is still one of the top countries fighting for freedom of speech and journalists.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Pained by the tragic air crash in Nepal in which precious lives have been lost, including Indian nationals. In this hour of grief, my thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved families.



Prime Minister — Narendra Modi

This is an ongoing process under review by [the Department of Justice], so we are going to be limited in what we can say at this time.

Spokesman White House Counsel — Ian Sams

I am strictly against live tweeting because if you are tweeting while watching a film, then it means your attention is not on the film. You might not be able to judge the film in totality.



Film critic — Taran Adarsh

Argentina captain Lionel Messi has reached an 'agreement in principle' to renew his contract at Paris St-Germain.

Spanish sports journalist — Guillem Balague

2023 is a crucial year and the party has to fight to win 9 state elections this year & then general elections in 2024.



BJP president — JP Nadra

FIRST COLUMN

IN NATUROPATHY,
INDIA IS THE BEST

India has branded itself as destination for alternative healthcare

VINODA KUMARI

Naturopathy happens to be an ancient healthcare mechanism that combines traditional and natural forms of medicine with modern scientific knowledge. The ancient healing technique stimulates the body's natural ability to heal itself. It is the science of disease diagnosis, treatment, and cure using natural therapies, including botanical medicine, dietetics, homeopathy, exercise, fasting, lifestyle counseling, detoxification, clinical nutrition, naturopathic manipulation, hydrotherapy, environmental assessment, and spiritual healing. While the science of naturopathy is gradually gaining prominence all over the world, it comes as no surprise that this curative approach is vastly popular in India where herbal remedies based on Ayurveda have been in use since ancient times. As a result, India has quickly emerged as the preferred naturopathy destination among foreign patients who wish to seek non-surgical and non-pharmacological treatment for different ailments.

Nurturing the ancient practices of Yoga, Ayurveda, Sidha and Naturopathy, India has established itself as an important wellness retreat among its domestic and international tourists. India has positioned itself as the focal point of Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Sidha, Homoeopathy (AYUSH), naturopathy, Vedanta, and Meditation techniques, curated and restored from the most ancient of sciences and arts. The strong branding of AYUSH by the government is drawing patients to India from across the world.



While the system of yoga and naturopathy flourished in India mainly due to non-government activities, later the government also recognised the need for systematic research for the development of yoga and naturopathy systems and thus formed three organisations to look after the development of these systems. These include the Central Council for Research in Yoga & Naturopathy (CCRYN), New Delhi, the National Institute of Naturopathy (NIN), Pune and the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga (MDNIY), New Delhi. Naturopathy has also been accepted as an independent system of medicine and presently, there are 12-degree colleges that are imparting a five and half year degree course of Bachelor of Naturopathy & Yogic Sciences (BNYS).

India is no stranger to naturopathic treatments and there is a myriad of naturopathic centres located all over the country. From naturopathy institutes to wellness centres to spas offering naturopathic treatments, people are usually spoilt for choices when they visit India for naturopathic treatments. While all these centres are aimed at providing rejuvenation, relaxation, and detoxification in a natural environment, people can select the destination and duration as per their needs.

The majority of naturopathy institutes blend traditional Yoga with naturopathy for the most calming and rejuvenating experience. And they believe that there's no better place to learn Yoga than at its birthplace, India. People seek Yoga for various reasons. Some look at it initially as purely physical and to get bodily fit while some might look at it as a way to calm and quiet the mind.

With plenty of naturopathy and Yoga centres offering an array of services suitable for anyone from beginners to seasoned yogis, it's no wonder why hordes of tourists from all over the world travel to India. Home to mountains, deserts, valleys, beaches and many other stunning landscapes, India offers magnificent diversity to its visitors. Interestingly, most of the naturopathy centres are located in idyllic locations ideal for finding and reconnecting with oneself. People can visit some of the most enchanting and exotic locations as well as engage with the locals which makes the journey even more fascinating. India is a haven for people looking for holistic natural therapies to get cured while finding mental and emotional peace. There is no dearth of naturopathic centres in this country offering the finest care possible.

(The author is Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Jindal Naturecure Institute)

Greed, not nature behind Joshimath

Unbridled construction in the name of development is becoming the a recipe for environmental mishaps



ASHWANI MAHAJAN

Adi Shankaracharya had founded the city in the eighth century where the holy Jyotirlinga is located, which is known as Joshimath (Jyotirmath). The news of the sinking of Joshimath has shaken not only Uttarakhand but the whole country.

While on the one hand a large number of people are going to be displaced due to the sinking of Joshimath, on the other hand, no political party is coming out with solutions. They are only engaged in blaming each other. Meanwhile, the works at the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) has been stopped as per the order of the district administration to stop the construction of the Tapovan Vishnugarh Hydro Power Project, which also includes the Helang bypass road, due to the movement of 'Joshi Math Bachao Sangharsh Samiti'. The work of Asia's longest ropeways has also been stopped.

Even though these steps have been taken in view of this crisis, experts believe that the sinking of Joshimath cannot be stopped. That is, the downfall of this first Jyotir Math established by Adi Shankaracharya cannot be stopped now. This is not the first time that such a tragedy has happened in the Himalayan region. Earlier in the year 2021 also, 200 people, including the laborers of Tapovan dam had died in the Chamoli flood.

Earlier in 2013 too, a large number of bridges, roads and buildings had collapsed due to floods in the Ganga, Yamuna and its tributaries in the region after heavy rains. There has been a huge increase in the number of such disasters in the Himalayan region in recent years. These natural calamities cannot be taken lightly. It is believed that indiscriminate construction work in the name of development is behind the increasing number of disasters. This means that these disasters are not natural but are man-made.

In view of this type of rapid destruction in the past, it has become necessary to consider that the so-called development driven by human greed cannot be continued in this way. Uncontrolled construction work on such dilapidated and fragile mountains is the reason for the collapse of Joshi Math. It is worth mentioning that the way the mountain was cut at the foothills of Joshimath for the construction of Char Dham Marg and NTPC dug a tunnel in the middle of the mountain for its hydro project, due to which this fragile mountain was destroyed.

The question is not only about Joshimath. In the name of development, construction work and tampering with nature is going on continuously all over Uttarakhand. Due to the cutting of trees, there is hardly any greenery left on the mountains; and due to this, landslides have become a common feature in these dilapidated mountains. The whole of Uttarakhand and especially the centers of tourist attractions



THE COST OF ELECTRICITY GENERATED FROM THIS HYDRO PROJECT IS ESTIMATED TO BE AROUND RS 25 PER UNIT, WHILE THE CURRENT COST OF SOLAR ENERGY IS ONLY RS 2.50 PER UNIT

(The author is Professor, PGDAV College, University of Delhi)



like Nainital and Mussoorie are also standing on the verge of sinking.

Some people believe that a situation like Joshi Math may be repeated in Nainital as well. Indiscriminate and mindless construction is seen significantly in Uttarakhand. The work of widening of roads, construction of tunnels, railway lines, construction of dams, etc., and in addition large-scale building construction, which mostly includes hotel construction, has increased rapidly in the last two decades.

It is a scientific fact that the Himalayas are comparatively new mountains and hence they are very fragile. Big tampering in the Himalayas, more than its holding capacity, causes landslides and land sinking there. Due to such a situation, new constructions in this area cannot sustain and in the present situation it is seen that disastrous accidents are taking place during the construction itself, due to which the construction works are forcedly stopped midway.

NTPC's 520 MW hydro power project, which was started in the year 2006, and was initially estimated to cost nearly Rs 3000 crores, has seen its construction work repeatedly stopped due to landslides and other natural hindrances and this is the fifth time that its work has to be stopped. It is believed that its cost has reached around Rs 12,000 crore, and there is no sign of its completion. The same thing applies to the expansion works of the roads. The cost of electricity generated from this hydro project is estimated to be around Rs 25 per unit, while the

current cost of solar energy is only Rs 2 and 50 paise per unit. Therefore, building of hydro power project is actually senseless.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

Unbridled construction in the name of development without assessing the expected impact is becoming the cause of today's and later tragedies. This crisis can be avoided only by curbing this indiscriminate construction. But the construction works at different places cannot be stopped without making a law. Legislation is a long process and it is a difficult task to create a consensus of opinion among various stakeholders. The state government can make efforts for this by showing sensitivity that due to the current crisis, the district administration has stopped all the construction activities, but if long-term measures are not thought of, then these construction works will restart again sooner or later.

Therefore, it is necessary that long-term measures are taken to deal with this problem. We know that most of the rivers in the country originate from the Himalayan Mountains. Whereas glaciers are located on the top of the Himalayas, due to global warming in the world, they are melting and because of this not only are the sources of drinking water depleting due to excess flow of water, but the water level of the sea is also increasing.

ECO-SENSITIVE ZONES

Various rivers originate under the glaciers. In the past there had been

opposition to the obstruction of continuous flow of the Ganga by tampering with nature in the name of building dams on the river Ganga. After protests and agitations and fast unto death by many people, including Prof. GD Agrawal, in the year 2010, the central government declared the area of Bhagirathi as eco-sensitive zone. The experience after that is that natural calamities have remained almost non-existent in that area. Similarly, parallel to Bhagirathi area, if Yamunotri, Alaknanda, Mandakini and Kali River and Dhauli Ganga areas are also declared eco-sensitive zones, then only it will be possible to prevent future disasters.

Since the Bhagirathi region had already been declared an eco-sensitive region in the past, similar treatment should be given to the rest of the sensitive regions on similar lines, so that the Himalayas, or in other words, the country's lifeline for thousands of years, can be saved.

This is needed, not only to save the Himalayan region, but also to save about 60 crore people dependent on water flowing from rivers originating in Himalayan. It has to be understood that the present generation and the government have the responsibility of not only protection of the Himalayan region, but also the future of all the people living on this land, who are dependent on the rivers coming out of this region. The present governments, both at centre and the state, will have to demonstrate utmost sensitivity, otherwise the future generations will never forgive us.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI GOVT HAS TAKEN THE HE COUNTRY TO "A POLITICS OF SATURATION AND GOVERNANCE OF SATURATION".
— MAHARASHTRA DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER
DEVENDRA FADNAVIS



THE BJP HAS GIVEN A NEW PHRASE. IT IS ACTUALLY GOVERNANCE OF INDIGESTION BY OVERINDULGENCE OF MEANINGLESS SLOGANS AND ONE LINERS.
— CONGRESS LEADER
JAIRAM RAMESH

Changing times bring changes in international ties

What is required is to develop a fresh perspective for a more mature reliance on international cooperation between nations



SUDHIR HINDWAN

Foreign relations are operated through efficient diplomacy, and diplomacy is all about right gestures and cooperation and coordination in times of crisis. The post-pandemic period has thrown open several new challenges. The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, the spreading tentacles of transnational terrorism, and the over-ambitious mission of Chinese dominance across the globe have created serious problems for international Security.

While China and several other countries are still grappling with the deadly spikes of Covid-19 virus, the issue of environmental protection is taking the forefront of global politics. The concern for climate change policy can very well be visualised by the recent

(The author is an expert on strategic affairs)

decision of the Administrative Court in France to impose a penalty of approximately 19.78 million Euros for failing to control the level of pollution in the country.

On the other hand, the advanced EU nation Germany has taken numerous steps to deal with emerging climate challenges. The UK has recently raised its expenditure on environmental protection from 13 billion British pounds to 13.9 billion British pounds during the last two years. The issue of environmental protection is gradually emerging as the most crucial one as it hurts the health of people and economies throughout the world.

Besides, there are subtle efforts in establishing joint collaborations in Asia, the Pacific,

and the African region. This certainly exhibits a high level of insight and understanding of both sides. The issue that remains vital is to bring so many countries to a negotiating table of working out a strategy of relaxing vaccine related Trade Aspects of Intellectual property Rights to help save maximum lives at the time of global health emergencies.

The increasing support and agreement with regard to limiting climate change issues and opening up gateways for renewable energy and development in technological knowhow along with channelizing the sources of power generation and creating a mechanism to withstand any sudden threat posed by Belt and Road Initiatives augur

well for peace and prosperity of all the member countries. The 2019 Japan-EU deal was an effort in this direction. There has always been a series of extremely good relationships between India and the EU with the trade share having crossed a decent landmark during the last half a decade.

During the last few years or so there has been a closer tie with Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands being the biggest importers from India.

There has been contiguity with regard to nuclear energy and sustainable development concerning environmental issues. Further negotiation may lead to the creation of a strategic mechanism to provide a shield against terrorism, international crime, drug dealing, smuggling, and

cyber threat unleashed by non-state actors. While these are defining moments for entire humanity yet the increasing tendency of actors in international relations to cluster around the powerful one in the system has proved Raymond Aron's observation correct for a long time. Aron once conceded that "the two most typical models are called multipolar and bipolar: either the chief actors, whose forces are not too unequal, are relatively numerous, or, on the contrary, two actors dominate their rivals to such a degree that both become the centre of a coalition and the secondary actors are obliged to situate themselves in relation to the two "blocs," thus joining one or another unless they have the opportunity to abstain.

Intermediary models are possible, depending on the number of chief actors and the degree of equality of forces among the chief actors."

These are changing times and many changes have occurred in international relations recently. Sharing and working on a common strategic vision and a combined approach to ensure mutual economic prosperity and approaching through a multi-layered and multilateral strategy if the situation demands are going to dominate the world order in the coming days.

What is required is to develop a fresh perspective for a more mature reliance on international cooperation between nations to enunciate a new strategy of retaliation,

threatening a severe response to any attempt to destabilising the order. There is a strong need to generate development funds related to integrated education, medicines, science, and technology and huge aggrandizement concerning research in the field of biotechnology among various nations across the globe.

Now even smaller countries are getting exposed to the nuances of domestic socio-economic, political, and international issues. Therefore, during the last few years or so there have been constant attempts by nations to upgrade, innovate and evolve new methods to have economic, strategic, and cultural integration and a common shield to encounter overambitious plans of any actor in IR.

Final toll in Russian strike: 44 dead, including 5 children

AP ■ KYIV

The final death toll from a weekend Russian missile strike on an apartment building in southeastern Ukraine reached 44, officials said on Tuesday, as the body of another child was pulled from the wreckage.

The strike in the city of Dnipro was the war's deadliest attack since the spring on civilians at one location.

Those killed in the Saturday afternoon strike included five children, and 79 people were injured, according to Kyrylo Tymoshenko, deputy head of the Ukrainian president's office. The final toll included two dozen people initially listed as missing at the multistory building, which housed about 1,700, he said.

Emergency crews cleared some 9 metric tons (9.9 tons) of rubble during a non-stop search and rescue operation, the Dnipro City Council said.

Some 400 people lost their homes, with 72 apartments completely ruined and another 236 damaged beyond repair, it added.

The latest deadly Russian strike on a civilian target in the almost 11-month war triggered outrage. It also prompted the surprise resignation on Tuesday of a Ukrainian presidential adviser who said the Russian missile exploded and fell after

the Ukrainian air defence system shot it down, a version that would take some of the blame off the Kremlin's forces.

Oleksii Arestovich's comments in a Saturday night interview caused an outcry. He said as he quit that his remarks were "a fundamental mistake".

Ukraine's air force had stressed that the country's military did not possess a system capable of downing Russia's Kh-22 missiles, which it said was the type that hit the apartment building.

"Since the beginning of Russia's military aggression, more than 210 missiles of this type have been launched on the territory of Ukraine. Not one was shot down by means of anti-aircraft defense," the air force said on Saturday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy vowed to bring those responsible for the strike to justice, saying it's "a fundamental task" for Ukraine and its Western allies.

"This strike at Dnipro, as well as other similar strikes, falls, in particular, under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court," he said in a video address late on Monday.

"And we will use all available opportunities — both national and international — to ensure that all Russian murderers, everyone who gives and executes orders on missile terror against our people, face legal sentences.



And to ensure that they serve their punishment," he said.

The UK Defence Ministry said on Tuesday that the week-end barrage of long-range missiles, the first of its kind in two weeks, targeted Ukraine's power grid.

The ministry noted that the Kh-22 "is notoriously inaccurate when used against ground targets as its radar guidance system is poor at differentiating targets in urban areas", suggesting that might have been a factor in the deaths in the

Dnipro.

Similar missiles were used in other incidents that caused high civilian casualties, it said, including a strike on a shopping mall in Ukraine's central city of Kremenchuk in June. That officials said killed more than 20

people.

The deadliest attack involving civilians before Saturday was an April 9 strike on a train station in the eastern city of Kramatorsk that left at least 52 people dead, according to The Associated Press-Frontline War

Crimes Watch project.

Such incidents have helped stiffen international support for Ukraine as it battles to fend off the Kremlin's invasion. The winter has brought a slowdown in fighting, but military analysts say a new push by both sides is likely once the weather improves.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said on Tuesday that the country's military would increase its readiness from the current 1.15 million to 1.5 million in coming years.

As part of the buildup, the military will form an army corps in the northwestern region of Karelia, near Finland, as well as three new motorised infantry and two airborne divisions. The military will also beef up seven existing motorised infantry brigades into divisions.

That announcement came a day after US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and other US officials met in Kyiv with Zelenskyy.

They reiterated Washington's "strong and steadfast commitment to Ukraine", US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said.

US Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on Monday visited Ukraine troops who are training at a military base in Germany under US commanders.

More than 600 Ukrainian troops began the expanded

training programme at the camp the previous day.

"This is not a run of the mill rotation," Milley told commanders. "This is one of those moments in time where if you want to make a difference, this is it."

Ukraine's first lady was also helping to cement Western support and acquire more foreign weapons, as she was scheduled to give a rare international address at the World Economic Forum's annual gathering in the Swiss town of Davos.

Meanwhile, the head of the UN nuclear agency visited the South Ukraine Nuclear Power Plant on Monday and announced the organisation's permanent presence there to oversee operations and ensure safety.

Rafael Grossi, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, tweeted late Monday that the agency's flag was flying over the power plant.

"We are here to stay to help ensure nuclear safety (and) security during ongoing conflict," Grossi said, adding that "soon, IAEA will be permanently present" at all of Ukraine's nuclear power plants.

Ukraine has a total of four nuclear power plants with 16 reactors. One of them, the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, is Europe's largest and was taken over by Russian forces in the first months of the war and remains under their control.

Biden to host Netherlands PM for talks on tech, Ukraine

AP ■ WASHINGTON

President Joe Biden is set to host Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte for talks as the US administration looks to persuade the Netherlands to further limit China's access to advanced semiconductors with export restrictions.

Tuesday's wide-ranging talks are also expected to cover the countries' efforts to thwart Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine and an upcoming democracy summit, according to the White House.

The Biden administration has been trying to get the Netherlands on the same page since the U.S. Commerce Department announced in October new export controls aimed at China. The restrictions are intended to limit China's ability to access advanced computing chips, develop and maintain supercomputers, and make advanced semiconductors.

Administration officials have reasoned that the export restrictions are necessary because China can use semiconductors to create advanced military systems including weapons of mass destruction; commit human rights abuses; and improve the speed and accuracy of its military decision making, planning and logistics.

Slowing Beijing's access, however, will take plenty of help from allies for the U.S. Export controls to have maximum impact. The Netherlands-based tech giant ASML is a major manufacturer of lithog-



raphy machines that design and produce semiconductors. China is one of ASML's biggest clients.

CEO Peter Wennink in October played down the impact of the U.S. Export control regulations.

"Based on our initial assessment, the new restrictions do not amend the rules governing lithography equipment shipped by ASML out of the Netherlands and we expect the direct impact on ASML's overall 2023 shipment plan to be limited," he said.

ASML said last year that it expected company-wide 2022

sales to be around 21 billion euros. The U.S. Has also been in talks with Japan on tougher export restrictions to limit the sale of semiconductor manufacturing technology to China.

Rutte's visit comes after Biden hosted Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida last week for talks.

The U.S. And Japan, in a joint statement following the Oval Office meeting, said the two sides agreed to "sharpen our shared edge on economic security, including protection and promotion of critical and emerg-

ing technologies."

China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin last week called on Japan and the Netherlands to resist U.S. Pressure.

"We hope the relevant countries will do the right thing and work together to uphold the multilateral trade regime and safeguard the stability of the global industrial and supply chains," he said. "This will also serve to protect their own long-term interests."

Rutte said in a Twitter posting on Monday that he had spo-

ken by phone with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy about Saturday's Russian missile strike on an apartment building in Dnipro — one of the deadliest attacks on civilians in the nearly 11-month-old war. Authorities said the death toll from the strike rose to 40 and that 30 people remained missing Monday.

"The horrific attack on an apartment block in Dnipro underscores just why Russia cannot be allowed to win this war," Rutte said in the posting. "The coordination of international military support remains essential in the months ahead."

Ahead of Tuesday's meeting, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby praised the Netherlands as a "key supporter of security assistance in Ukraine." The Netherlands has committed about \$2.7 billion (2.5 billion euros) in support for Ukraine this year. The money will be spent on military equipment, humanitarian and diplomatic efforts.

Kirby said the two leaders also plan to discuss the Summit for Democracy, which they are co-hosting with Costa Rica, South Korea and Zambia in late March.

Biden hosted the inaugural democracy summit in December 2021, which the administration billed as the start of a global conversation about how best to halt the backsliding of democracy.

Biden is the third U.S. President visited by Rutte, the Netherlands' longest-serving prime minister.

At Davos, Ukraine 1st lady urges leaders to 'use influence'

AP ■ DAVOS, SWITZERLAND

Ukraine's first lady scolded world leaders and corporate executives at the World Economic Forum's annual gathering in the snowy Swiss town of Davos for not all using their influence at a time when Russia's invasion leaves children dying and a world struggling with food insecurity.

As the anniversary of the war nears, Olena Zelenska said Tuesday that parents are in tears watching doctors trying to save their children, farmers are afraid to go back to their fields filled with explosive mines and "we cannot allow a new Chernobyl to happen," referring to the 1986 nuclear disaster as Russian missiles have pounded Ukrainian energy infrastructure for months.

"What you all have in common is that you are genuinely influential," Zelenska told attendees. "But there is something that separates you, namely that not all of you use this influence, or sometimes use it in a way that separates you even more."

She spoke as hundreds of government officials, corporate titans, academics and activists from around the world who descended on the town billed as Europe's highest. The weeklong talkfest of big ideas and backroom deal-making prioritizes global problems such as hunger, climate change and the slowing



economy, but it's never clear how much concrete action emerges to help reach the forum's stated ambition of "improving the state of the world."

"We are all internally convinced that there is no such global problem that humanity cannot solve," Zelenska said. "This is more important now when Russia's aggression in Europe poses various challenges." The war in Ukraine, which has killed thousands of civilians, displaced millions and jolted food and fuel markets worldwide. With the war raising inflation and expanding food insecurity in developing nations, Zelenska called it "an insult to mankind and human nature to have mass starvation."

Ukraine and Russia had been key suppliers of wheat, barley and other food supplies to Africa, the Middle East and Asia where many were already going hungry.

About 345 million people in 82 countries are facing acute food insecurity, according to the U.N. World Food Program, up from 135 million in 53 countries before the pandemic and war in Ukraine.

Zelenska warned that the war could expand beyond Ukraine's borders and worsen the crises but "unity is what brings peace back."

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen urged the assembled executives and global leaders at Davos to keep aiding Ukraine.

"Ukraine wants to become a member of the European Union, and it is a perfect opportunity to take investment and reform to pave this way for Ukraine towards the European Union," she said after Zelenska's address. "And my call on you is: We need every helping hand on board. Ukraine deserves to have as much support as possible.

Ukrainian civilians vanish and languish in Russian-run jails

AP ■ KYIV

Aлина Kapatsyna often dreams about getting a phone call from her mother. In those visions, her mother tells her that she's coming home.

Men in military uniforms took 45-year-old Vita Hannych away from her house in eastern Ukraine in April. She never returned.

Her family later learned that Hannych, who has long suffered from seizures because of a brain cyst, is in custody in the Russian-occupied part of the Donetsk region.

Kapatsyna told The Associated Press that it remains unclear why her mother — "a peaceful, civilian and sick person" who has never held a weapon — was detained.

Hannych is one of many Ukrainian noncombatants being held by Russian forces for months following their invasion.

Some are deemed to be prisoners of war, even though they never took part in the fighting. Others are in a sort of legal limbo — not facing any criminal charges or considered to be POWs. Ukrainian estimates of how many there are range from hundreds to many thousands.



Hannych was wearing only a sweatshirt and slippers when she was seized by Russian forces occupying her village of Volodymyrivka several weeks into the February 24 invasion. It is still under Moscow's control.

Her family initially thought she would come home shortly. Russian forces were known to detain people for two or three days for "filtration" and then release them, Kapatsyna said, and Hannych had no military or law enforcement connections.

When she wasn't released, Kapatsyna and her 64-year-old grandmother started a search. At first, letters and visits to various Russian-installed officials and

government bodies in the Donetsk region yielded no results.

"The answers from everywhere were the same: We did not take her away. Who took her then, if no one took her?" said Kapatsyna, who left the village in March for the Ukrainian-controlled city of Dnipro.

Then, they finally got some clarity: Hannych was jailed in Olenivka, another Russian-controlled city, according to a letter from the Moscow-installed prosecutor's office in the Donetsk region.

The jail staff told Kapatsyna's grandmother that Hannych was a sniper, allegations her family deems absurd,

given her condition. Medical records seen by the AP confirmed that she had a brain cyst, as well as "residual encephalopathy" and "general convulsive attacks".

Anna Vorosheva, who spent 100 days in the same facility as Hannych, recounted squalid, inhumane conditions: putrid drinking water, no heat or showers, having to sleep in shifts and hearing new prisoners screaming from being beaten.

Vorosheva, 46, said she wasn't told why she was detained, aside from "smirks and jokes about Nazis" — a reference to Russia's false claims that what it calls its "special military operation" was a campaign to "denazify" Ukraine. She also said the staff told her: "Be happy we're not beating you."

Donetsk authorities labelled Hannych a POW and recently told the family she is imprisoned in the occupied city of Mariupol. It remains unclear when, if at all, she could be released.

Ukraine's top human rights organisation, Centre for Civil Liberties, has requests concerning around 900 civilians captured by Russia since the war began, with more than half still in custody.

Turkey's top diplomat travels to US amid troubled ties

AP ■ ANKARA

Turkey and the United States will aim to smooth out a series of disagreements between the NATO allies when the Turkish foreign minister visits Washington this week. But expectations that outstanding issues can be resolved are low.

Mevlut Cavusoglu departs on Tuesday for a meeting with US counterpart Antony Blinken on a rare visit by a top Turkish official. US President Joe Biden's administration has kept its distance from Turkey because of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's increasingly authoritarian direction and policies curbing rights and freedoms.

Positioned at the crossroads between East and West, Turkey remains strategically important for Washington. Last year, the Turkish government helped broker a crucial agreement between Russia and Ukraine that allowed millions of tons of Ukrainian grain to be transported to world markets, averting a food crisis amid the war.

NATO allies, however, frequently find themselves at odds over a number of issues, with the biggest disputes centering on Turkey's purchase of Russian-made missiles and American support for Kurdish militants in Syria.

The acquisition of the S-400 air defense system in 2017 led to sanctions and Turkey being removed from the development program for the next-generation F-35 fighter plane. After losing out on the F-35, Ankara



is currently trying to restock its F-16 fleet. But the deal faces opposition in Congress.

Cavusoglu sounded confident this week that the deal for the purchase of 40 F-16 jets as well as technology for the update of its existing fleet would overcome congressional hurdles.

"We have reached an agreement with the (Biden) administration, and it is important that the administration has emphasized that the agreement is not only important for Turkey but for NATO as well," Cavusoglu told reporters. "If the administration stands firm ... Then there will be no problem."

US State Department deputy spokesman Vedant Patel responded Friday to media reports that the Biden administration is also seeking congressional approval for shipping F-35s to Greece, another NATO member and neighbor that is growing increasingly irritated by Ankara's threats.

"Turkiye and Greece both are vital, vital NATO allies and we have a history of, of

course, supporting their security apparatuses. But I'm just not going to get ahead of the process here," Patel said using the name for Turkey preferred by Erdogan's government.

In Syria, U.S. Support for the Kurdish militant group YPG since 2014 has angered Ankara because of links between the YPG and the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has waged a 39-year insurgency against Turkey and is listed as a terrorist organization by the U.S. And European Union.

Backing for the YPG has led senior Turkish officials to accuse Washington of ties to terror attacks such as November's Istanbul bombing that killed six people.

U.S. Concern over Ankara's cozy relationship with the Kremlin has been reinvigorated by the war in Ukraine. Despite Turkey's ties with Moscow producing breakthroughs such as the grain deal and prisoner swaps, Washington is worried about sanctions-busting as Turkish-Russian trade levels have risen over the last year.

Ankara's feet-dragging over ratifying bids by Sweden and Finland to join NATO has added to friction between the allies.

Turkey's recent attempts at rapprochement with Syria after a decade of bitter enmity has opened another break with the U.S. Following a meeting of Syrian and Turkish defense ministers in Moscow last month, the U.S. State Department reiterated its opposition to countries normalizing relations with Damascus.

8 shot at Florida Martin Luther King Jr Day event, say police

AP ■ FORT PIERCE (US)

Police in Florida said eight people were shot during an Martin Luther King Jr. Day event, with one of the victims listed in critical condition.

The St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office confirmed all the victims in the Monday shooting in Fort Pierce were adults, WPBF-TV reported.

The shooting occurred at Ilous Ellis Park at 5:20 p.M. During an MLK Car Show and Family Fun Day, which the sheriff's office said was attended by more than 1,000 people, the TV station reported.

"Multiple people were shot, it sounds like from our initial investigation here on scene there was a disagreement of some sort between two parties, and unfortunately, they chose to resolve that with guns," St. Lucie County Chief Deputy Brian Hester said.

Police said four people including a child sustained non-life-threatening injuries during the ensuing confusion, the station reported.

"It was mass chaos, as you



can imagine, when shots rang out," Hester said. "There were a thousand plus people here at the event, and as the shots rang out, people were just running in all directions."

The sheriff's office said two deputies at the event responded immediately and aided victims,

WPBF-TV reported.

Video obtained by the station showed people ducking, running and hiding behind cars, including a woman running to safety while holding a baby.

"It's really sad in a celebration of someone who represented peace and equality that a

disagreement results in a use of guns and violence to solve that disagreement, and that's what's really sad to me about what happened here," Hester said. "And then so many innocent people who were injured or hurt and were not part of the disagreement as well.

Baby, teen mom among 6 killed in shooting at California home



AP ■ VISALIA (CA)

Six people — including a 17-year-old mother and her 6-month-old baby — were killed in a shooting early Monday at a home in central California, and authorities are searching for at least two suspects, sheriff's officials said.

Deputies responded around 3.30 am to reports of multiple shots fired at the residence in unincorporated Goshen, just east of Visalia, the Tulare County Sheriff's Office said.

"Actually the report was

that an active shooter was in the area because of the number of shots that were being fired," Sheriff Mike Boudreaux told reporters. Deputies found two victims dead in the street and a third person fatally shot in the doorway of the residence, Boudreaux said.

Three more victims were found inside the home, including a man who was still alive but later died at a hospital, he said.

The sheriff said investigators are searching for at least two suspects. They believe there is a gang connection to the killings.

The sheriff's office conducted a narcotics-related search warrant at the residence last week, Boudreaux said.

"We also believe this was not a random act of violence. We believe this was a targeted family," he said.

Two of the victims, the teen mother and her young child, were shot in the head, the sheriff said.

Goshen is a semi-rural community of about 3,000 residents 35 miles (56 kilometers) south-east of Fresno in the agricultural San Joaquin Valley.



Vietnamese president resigns, criticised for major scandals

AP ■ BANGKOK

Vietnamese President Nguyen Xuan Phuc resigned on Tuesday, becoming the most senior member of the government to step down after a series of high-profile corruption scandals for which he was held responsible.

The state Vietnam News Agency reported that he had resigned at a session of the ruling Communist Party's Central Committee that was held "to consider and give opinions on Comrade Nguyen Xuan Phuc's wish to stop holding positions, quit work and retire".

The language of the announcement strongly suggested that he was forced to step down. Phuc, 68, began serving in government at the provincial level in 1979 and took his first position in national government in 2006. He joined the Politburo, the highest-ranking party body, in 2011, and was prime minister from 2016 to 2021, when he was elected president by the National Assembly.

The post of president in Vietnam is largely ceremonial. The most powerful position, Communist Party general secretary, is currently held by Nguyen Phu Trong, who in 2021 won a rare third five-year term in office.

His hallmark has been a long-running anti-corruption campaign, which in his second

term targeted two former Cabinet ministers and Hanoi's former mayor.

An official statement published in state media praised Phuc for his efforts as prime minister in battling the COVID-19 pandemic.It added, however, that he bore political responsibility as the country's top executive for serious scandals involving his subordinates, including two deputy prime ministers and three other ministers.

The statement noted that the two deputy prime ministers had resigned from their positions and criminal proceedings had been launched against two other ministers and many other officials. Several of the scandals involved corruption related to pandemic control measures.

The positions from which Phuc resigned also included Politburo membership, the executive committee of the Central Committee and chairman of the National Defence and Security Council.

As prime minister, Phuc led Vietnam as it became further integrated in the global economy and sustained 7 per cent economic growth until COVID-19 hit the world.

With strict measures including a nationwide lockdown, Vietnam managed to contain the spread of the virus in the first year of the pandemic and quickly resumed business and manufacturing.

Nepal plane crash: Death toll rises to 70; authorities begin to handover bodies

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepalese authorities on Tuesday started handing over to family members the bodies of those killed after Yeti Airlines' aircraft with 72 people, including five Indians, crashed in a river gorge in the resort city of Pokhara, as the death toll rose to 70.

Two more persons are still missing and the search operation is continuing, according to the Nepal Army sources. As one more body was recovered from the accident site at Seti River gorge in Pokhara valley, on Monday night, the total number of confirmed dead has climbed to 70, the sources said.

The Yeti Airlines aircraft took off from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport at 10:33 am on Sunday and crashed on the bank of the Seti River between the old airport and the new airport in Pokhara, minutes before landing.

Fifty-three Nepalese passengers and 15 foreign nationals, including 5 Indians, and four crew members were on board the Yeti Airlines aircraft when it crashed.

The five Indians, all report-



edly from Uttar Pradesh, have been identified as Abhisekh Kushwaha, 25, Bishal Sharma, 22, Anil Kumar Rajbhar, 27, Sonu Jaiswal, 35, and Sanjaya Jaiswal.

Out of 70 dead bodies, 22 are being handed over to the family members after conducting post mortem on them, according to Yeti Airlines spokesperson Sudarshan Bartaula.

Out of 48 remaining dead bodies, including those belonging to crew members and foreign nationals, 25 have already been brought to Kathmandu on a Nepal Army helicopter and sent to the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, according

to the Nepal Army sources.

And another 23 will be Airlifted soon.

They will be handed over to either family members or the concerned diplomatic missions in case of foreign nationals.

The family members of four men from Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh who were killed in a plane crash in Nepal have reached Kathmandu to receive the bodies.

Both the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder have been recovered as search and rescue teams rappelled down a 300-metre gorge to continue their efforts.

The Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) records radio transmis-

sions and other sounds in the cockpit, such as conversations between the pilots, and engine noises. The flight data recorder (FDR) records more than 80 different types of information such as speed, altitude and direction, as well as pilot actions and performance of important systems.

The boxes were handed over to the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN). The boxes could offer vital clues about Sunday's crash.

Experts from France's accident investigation agency are due to arrive in Nepal on Tuesday to help authorities to probe the accident, Radio France Internationale reported.

The crashed twin-propeller plane was made by France-based aircraft manufacturer ATR.

Sunday's accident was the third-deadliest crash in the Himalayan nation's history, according to data from the Aviation Safety Network. The only incidents in which more people were killed took place in July and September 1992. Those crashes involved aircraft of Thai Airways and Pakistan International Airlines and left 113 and 167 people dead, respectively.

Yemen rebels, Saudis in backchannel talks to maintain truce



AP ■ CAIRO

Amid Yemen's longest-ever truce in fighting — more than nine months — Saudi Arabia and its rival, the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, have revived back-channel talks, hoping to strengthen the informal cease-fire and lay out a path for a negotiated end to the long civil war, according to Yemeni, Saudi and UN officials.

The quiet is fragile, with no formal cease-fire in place since a UN-brokered truce ended in October. It has been shaken by Houthi attacks on oil facilities and fiery rhetoric from Yemen's internationally recognised government, allied with Saudi

Nepal PM expands Cabinet; inducts 12 Ministers, 3 junior Ministers

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" on Tuesday expanded his Cabinet for the first time by inducting 12 ministers and three junior ministers and finalised a power-sharing deal, more than three weeks after assuming charge. Prachanda, the 68-year-old CPN-Maoist Centre leader was sworn in as the Nepal PM on December 25 last year, for the third time after he dramatically walked out of the pre-poll alliance led by the Nepali Congress and joined hands with K P Sharma Oli.

Top leaders from the ruling coalition, including the CPN (Maoist Centre), the CPN-UML, the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and the Janata Samajbadi Party (JSB) met Prime Minister Prachanda at his residence here on Monday to finalise the power-sharing deal.

Bimala Rai Paudel from the CPM (UML) was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs, while Hari Upreti was elevated as the country's Defence Min.

Arabia, which complains it has so far been left out of the talks. Lack of progress could lead to a breakdown and a renewal of all-out fighting.

But all sides appear to be looking for a solution after eight years of a war that has killed more than 150,000 people, fragmented Yemen and driven the Arab world's poorest country into collapse and near starvation in one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

Saudi Arabia restarted indirect exchanges with the Houthis in September, when it became clear the UN-brokered truce wouldn't be renewed. Oman has been acting as intermediary.

"It's an opportunity to end the war," a UN official said, "if they negotiate in good faith and the talks include other Yemeni actors." Like other officials, the UN official spoke on condition of anonymity because of the fragility of the talks.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform public in general that Kotak Mahindra bank Ltd has organized an auction in below mention respect of Vehicles.

VEHICLES FOR SALE
1) TATAMOTORS T1518FBGD
REG. NO.HR38Z2646-YOM-2018
MINIMUM RESERVE PRICES 46,201.50

UNDER HYPOTHECATION WITH M/S KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK IS UNDER SALE IN ITS "AS IS WHERE IS CONDITION" INTERESTED PARTIES CAN GIVE THEIR QUOTATIONS (ONLINE/OFFLINE) WITHIN 15 DAYS FROM THIS PAPER PUBLICATION I.E. ON OR BEFORE 01.02.2023 (PLEASE NOTE THAT CLOSING AUCTION DATE WOULD NOT BE A WEEKLY OFF / HOLIDAY).

BRANCH ADDRESS:
KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK LTD., PLOT NO-7 INSTITUTIONAL AREA, SECTOR-125 NOIDA NEAR DELL CAMPUS NOIDA (U.P.) UP-201313 OR CONTACT :JAGDISH SINGH KOTAK MAHINDRA BANK LTD. CONTACT : 919582795967 EMAIL:jagdish.singh@kotak.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
Plot # 286 Sector-7, Phase-II, IMT Manesar
Plot # 286 Sector-7 Phase-II, IMT Manesar 122051, Distt.Gurugram (Haryana) measuring 1,012.5 sq. mtrs.was allotted by the Corporation vide its Allotment Letter dated 9.4.2004 in favour of M/s. Rajesh Printing Press, a partnership firm of Mr. Rakesh Madhok and Mr. Rajesh Madhok with profit sharing ratio of 50 : 50 respectively as per Partnership Deed dated 7.11.2006 and having its office at Plot # 449 Paoa City-II, Sector-37, Gurugram-122004, Haryana. The Corporation has been informed by the firm that one of its partner namely Mr. Rakesh Madhok S/o Late Shri Indar Sain Madhok R/o H. # 2/46 East Punjabi Bagh, New Delhi-110026 has expired on 16.12.2019. Subsequently after his death, the firm has reconstituted the Partnership Deed and the legal heirs of the deceased partner, Mrs. Renu Madhok, Ms. Madhuk Chugh and Mr. Vishal Madhok has approached the Corporation to transfer his 50% shares in M/s. Rajesh Printing Press in favour of M/s. Renu Madhok as per Re-Constituted Partnership Deed dated 29.1.2019 to becomes the legal heir of his 50% shares in M/s. Rajesh Printing Press in the records of the Corporation.

The Corporation is in process of considering firm's request and transferring the said 50% shares in M/s. Rajesh Printing Press to in favour of M/s. Renu Madhok on the basis of Re-constituted Partnership firm namely M/s. Rajesh Printing Press and NOC from other legal heirs. Through this public notice, it is hereby informed that in case, any of the legal heirs of late Mr. Rakesh Madhok or any other person having reservation / objection to the said transfer may file his / her / its objection in writing before the undersigned or Addl. General Manager (Estate), M/s. HSHDC Ltd., Sector-6, Panchsheel Park, Haryana along with an affidavit within a period of 30 days from the date of publication of this notice. In case, no response is received within the aforesaid period, it will be presumed that no one has any objection to Amended Deed of Partnership dated 29.1.2019 and the Corporation shall go ahead with amendment in shares of M/s. Rajesh Printing Press in the records of the Corporation.

The Estate Manager, M/s. HSHDC Ltd., IMT Manesar-122050, Distt. Gurugram

Indian-American attorney becomes first LGBTQ woman of colour to take oath as US City Council member



PTI ■ HOUSTON

Janani Ramachandran, a 30-year-old Indian-American attorney, has emerged as the youngest and the first queer woman of colour to take oath as the Oakland City Council member in the US state of California.

Ramachandran took the ceremonial oath wearing a saree as the Oakland City Council member for District 4 in an inauguration ceremony held on January 10.

"WE WON! Honored to be the next City Councilmember for Oakland District 4!! I will officially be the youngest Council member in Oakland's history; the 1st LGBTQ woman of color & 1st South Asian to serve on Oakland City Council,"

the public interest attorney tweeted. She took to Twitter to express her gratitude and said, "Immensely grateful for all those who believed in me and helped build our movement. Honored to have my loved ones by my side as I took the ceremonial oath!"

Ramachandran describes herself as "a daughter of immigrants from a small village in South India.

Ramachandran currently serves on the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs and has previously served as a Commissioner at the City of Oakland Public Ethics Commission, according to her website.

The Stanford University and University of California, Berkeley pass-out has worked in several legal non-profits.

As a first-time candidate in her 2021 run for State Assembly, she shocked political experts by advancing to the special election runoff, coming out on top amongst a field of previously elected officials, her website said.

Israel kills Palestinian militant after West Bank shooting

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli forces shot and killed a Palestinian militant in the occupied West Bank on Tuesday, the latest in a bout of surging violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said the 40-year-old man, identified as Hamdi Shaker Abdullah Abu Dayyah, was shot and killed by Israeli forces in Halhul, north of the West Bank city of Hebron.

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade — an armed militia affiliated with Fatah, the secular political party that controls the Palestinian Authority — claimed the man as a fighter and said he had also been a police officer.

The Israeli military said in a statement that troops in the area were fired upon and returned fire. It added that Israeli forces were investigating reports that the killed Palestinian was connected to an earlier shooting attack on an Israeli bus.

Tensions have soared in the West Bank, where the Israeli military has been conducting near-nightly arrest raids since last spring, after a wave of Palestinian attacks against Israelis that killed 19 people.

Another 10 Israelis were killed in a second string of attacks later last year.

Israel says the raids are meant to dismantle militant networks and thwart future attacks. The Palestinians see them as further entrenchment of Israel's open-ended, 55-year occupation of lands they seek for their future state.

On Monday, Israeli security forces shot and killed a 14-year-old Palestinian during an early morning raid in the West Bank, Palestinian health officials said.

The Israeli army said forces entered the Dheisha camp and were bombed by Molotov cocktails and rocks. It said soldiers responded with live fire.

Violence and unrest have raged for months in the West Bank, which Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war, along with east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip — territories the Palestinians want for their hoped-for state.

Some half-million Israelis now live in about 130 settlements across the West Bank. The Palestinians and much of the international community view the settlements as an obstacle to peace.

China opposes Dalai Lama's planned visit to Sri Lanka

PTI ■ COLOMBO

China on Tuesday opposed a suggested visit by Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama to Sri Lanka, saying the bankrupt island nation must safeguard the bilateral relationship.A top Chinese embassy official here met the powerful Buddhist prelates in the central town of Kandy to express opposition to the visit for which no dates have been fixed yet, a statement from the embassy

said.

"Charged d'affaires Hu Wei stated that the government and people of China, including in the Tibet autonomous region, strongly oppose any foreign country receiving the Dalai Lama in any name because the 14th Dalai Lama is absolutely not a simple monk as he self-claimed, but the head of the feudal serfdom," the statement said.The embassy slammed the 87-year-old as a "political exile disguised as a religious figure.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Name of work and its location	30-Elect-50-T-R1-22-23-E3 Electrical work regarding provision of air conditioners with other allied works in traffic account office building New Delhi.
Approx cost of the works in	Rs. 56.38 lacs
Address of the office	Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.
Bid Security	Rs. 112800.00
Date & time of submission of tender	13.02.2023, 12.00 Hrs.
Opening of tender	13.02.2023, 12.00 Hrs.
Website & notice board	www.ireps.gov.in & Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.

18/01/2023

INDIAN RAILWAYS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

(BHARAT SARKAR)
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (RAIL MANTRALAYA)
(RAILWAY BOARD)

No. 2022/RS(WTA)-149/TENDER/529 **New Delhi, dated 17/01/2023**
CORRIGENDUM NO.4 to the Tender No. WTA-529

Sub :- E-Tender No. WTA-529 due on 30.01.2023 for Manufacturing cum Maintenance of New Generation Energy Efficient Vande Bharat Trainsets with Distributed Power System Including upgradation of the Government Manufacturing Units & Trainsset Depots.

The due date of opening of subject tender has been postponed from 30.01.2023 to 15.02.2023 (Wednesday).

Some other terms and conditions of the tender have also been modified. The prospective Bidders are requested to visit website- <https://ireps.gov.in> for more details.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RAILWAY STORES (RS)
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS
(RAILWAY BOARD)
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191/2023

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

INDIAN RAILWAYS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

न्यायालय अपर जिला जज चतुर्थ, देहरादून।
आज्ञा रे- श्री आशुतोष कुमार मिश्र, अपर जिला जज चतुर्थ, देहरादून।
विविध वाद सं. 159 वर्ष 2021
(एम.ए.सी.टी. वाद सं. 554 वर्ष 2010)
(इन्जु देवी आदि बनाम प्रेम सिंह आदि)

नैशनल इश्योरस कमिटी प्रेस, 2 ई/9 सेंडेलवा फ्लैटनैम, दिल्ली-110055 द्वारा शाखा कार्यालय प्रत्येक नैशनल इश्योरस कमिटी लि. रामपुर रोड, देहरादून।

...प्राथी

बनाम
(1) श्री प्रेम सिंह पुत्र श्री गोपाल सिंह निवासी मकान नं.- 66 रामपुर रोड, देहरादून-248001. (2) श्री कृष्ण कुमार पुत्र श्री स्याम राम निवासी को-1466 शाखी नगर, दिल्ली-110052 व वर्तमान पता ए-607/2, शाखी नगर दिल्ली-110052.

नोटिस, बनाम विपक्षी सं. 1 से 2
(1) श्री प्रेम सिंह पुत्र श्री गोपाल सिंह निवासी मकान नं.- 66 रामपुर रोड, देहरादून-248001. (2) श्री कृष्ण कुमार पुत्र श्री स्याम राम निवासी को-1466 शाखी नगर, दिल्ली-110052 व वर्तमान पता ए-607/2, शाखी नगर दिल्ली-110052.

...प्रक्षीण

विदित हो कि नैशनल इश्योरस कमिटी लि. (प्राथी) /इंडियन रे अपर विपक्षीण के विरुद्ध उपरोक्त न्यायालय में एक वसुली (Recovery) हेतु वाद योजना किया है, जिसमें दिनांक 21 जनवरी 2023 को त्रिषु सुनवाई हेतु निवात है, पद्व द्वारा अपर विपक्षीण को सुचित किया जाता है कि उक्त त्रिषु को इस न्यायालय के समक्ष प्राप्त- 10 बजे स्वयं वा द्वारा अतिवक्ता को सम्यक् रूपेण अवगत हो, उपस्थित होकर अपनी आपत्ति/ सुनवाई प्रस्तुत करें। उक्त त्रिषु को आपत्ति उपसंबन्धि व चूक सेने पर उक्त अपील एकप्रक्षीण पुत्री जाणी व निमित्त को जाणी।

आप विपक्षीण को सुचित किया जाता है कि यदि आप दिनांक 21 जनवरी 2023 को इस न्यायालय में उपस्थित नहीं होंगे तो उक्त विविध वाद को सुनवाई एवं निवारण के लिये आपके विरुद्ध एकप्रक्षीय आदेश पारित कर दिये जायेंगे।

आज दिनांक 9.12.2022 को मेरे हस्ताक्षर व न्यायालय को मुद्रा सहित जारी किया गया।

प्रबन्धक
अपर जिला जज चतुर्थ, देहरादून

RBI cautions States against restoring old pension scheme

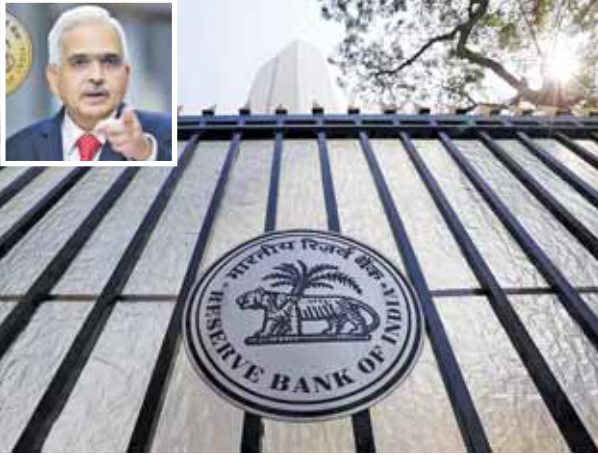
PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank has sounded a note of caution on reversion to the old pension scheme by some states, saying it poses a major risk on the 'subnational fiscal horizon' and would result in accumulation of unfunded liabilities in the coming years for them.

The observations in the RBI's Report titled 'State Finances: A Study of Budgets of 2022-23' comes in the backdrop of Congress-ruled Himachal Pradesh becoming the latest state announcing reverting to the Dearness Allowance (DA) linked Old Pension Scheme (OPS).

Earlier, governments of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand informed the central government and the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) about their decision to restart the OPS for their employees.

The government of Punjab on November 18, 2022 too had issued a notification regarding



implementation of the OPS for the state government employees who are presently being covered under the NPS.

In 2004, the Union government came out with the National Pension System (NPS), a defined contribution pension scheme replacing the old pension scheme.

"A major risk looming large on the subnational fiscal horizon is the likely reversion to the old pension scheme by some states.

The annual saving in fiscal resources that this move entails is short-lived," the RBI report said.

By postponing the current expenses to the future, the report said states risk the accumulation of unfunded pension liabilities in the coming years.

Under the old pension scheme, employees get a defined pension. Under this, an employee is entitled for a 50 per cent amount of the last drawn salary

as pension. However, the pension amount is contributory under the National Pension System, which is in effect from 2004.

Several economists too have expressed concern over reverting to the OPS saying it would put stress on states' finances.

Former Deputy Chairman of the erstwhile Planning Commission Montek Singh Ahluwalia recently spoke against bringing back the OPS, saying it is one of the biggest 'revadis'.

For 2022-23, the RBI report said states have budgeted an increase in revenue spending, mainly led by non-developmental expenditure such as pension and administrative services.

Budget allocations towards medical and public health and natural calamities have been lowered, while housing outlay has been increased.

Committed expenditure, comprising interest payments, administrative services and pension, is expected to increase marginally from 2021-22 (RE), the report said.

Analysts expect FM to trim fiscal deficit to 6% or lower

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will keep on the path of fiscal consolidation and opt for narrowing the FY24 fiscal deficit to as low as 5.8 per cent in the upcoming Budget, analysts said on Tuesday.

The government may go for a fiscal deficit number which will be far lower than the 6.4 per cent of GDP budgeted for FY23, they said, pegging the Budget figure for the next fiscal in the range of 5.8 - 6 per cent.

Given the fact that this will be the last full Budget of the present government, there may be a temptation to make it into an expansionist one. In the two years following the pandemic, the fiscal deficit -- one of the key parameters while assessing macroeconomic stability which also influences inflation -- went up till 9.3 per cent.

India will have to continue on this journey of fiscal consolidation and it does not have the luxury of pausing for the next few years, the analysts made it clear.

"The government's promised fiscal consolidation path will require a herculean effort



over the next few years. Think of it like a long-distance cyclist that needs to keep pedalling hard to reach the finish line; if it were to suddenly stop, it risks falling over," HSBC India's chief economist Pranjal Bhandari said in a note.

"... A lower fiscal deficit is key for India's macro stability, especially in an uncertain global environment," she added.

Economists at SBI expect the Budget, which is slated to be announced on February 1, to peg the fiscal deficit close to 6 per cent.

"The budget FY24 presents a challenge before the Government to stick to the road map for fiscal consolidation, amidst a global environment of

declining inflation," the SBI economists said.

They added that India will have to grow at a faster clip for making this possible, given its estimates on expenditure and revenue mobilisation.

The SBI economists expect 8.2 per cent growth in expenditure but the subsidy bill to come down, and revenues to grow 12.1 per cent.

On the borrowing front, all the analysts expect the market borrowings of the government to be pegged higher in FY24.

Japanese brokerage Nomura, which pegged the fiscal deficit at 5.9 per cent, said the gross borrowing will rise to Rs 15.5 lakh crore from Rs 14.2 lakh crore in FY23, while SBI estimated it at Rs 16.1 lakh crore.

The note by HSBC said the year before elections are typically associated with low privatisation receipts and expenditure pressures, and included it among the challenges the government will have to grapple with.

The markets will be looking for transparent and credible fiscal math, direct tax reforms, lower tariffs on imports, and a thrust on capital expenditure in the Budget, it added.



Industry bodies can't be self regulator for online gaming: Minister

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Industry bodies cannot become self-regulatory organisations to regulate online gaming and the watchdog has to be away from the dominance of industry players, Minister of State for Electronics and IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Tuesday.

While speaking with reporters after an open house consultation with online gaming companies on the proposed rules, the minister said that he expects new rules to be notified by January 31.

The government has proposed a self-regulatory mechanism to regulate online gaming companies under the draft rules for online gaming.

"It is wrong to assume that an industry body will automatically become an SRO (self-regulatory organisation). Any industry body will not be SRO. It will be a body representing all the stakeholders," Chandrasekhar said.

The minister said that SRO will comprise representatives of children, parents, players, government, and gaming intermediaries. All gaming companies that can be allowed under the new rules will need to register with SRO.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT has extended the last date for public comments on the proposed rules to January 25th from January 17th fixed earlier. Chandrasekhar said that both games of skills and games of chance can be permitted online but betting which is based on the outcome of real-life games will not be allowed.

The government has proposed a self-regulatory mechanism, mandatory verification of players and physical Indian addresses for online gaming companies, according to the draft online gaming rules.

Online gaming companies will be covered under the new IT rules that were issued in 2021 for social media platforms.

Chandrasekhar has already held extensive consultation on draft rules for online gaming with parents, students and educationists -- over concerns, expectations, and suggestions on fine-tuning, quite literally, the 'rules of the game'.

Govt cuts windfall tax on crude oil, diesel-ATF export



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has reduced the windfall profit tax levied on domestically-produced crude oil as well as on the export of diesel and ATF, in line with softening international oil prices, according to an official order.

The levy on crude oil produced by companies such as Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has been cut to Rs 1,900 per tonne from Rs 2,100 per tonne, the order dated January 16, said.

Crude oil pumped out of the ground and from below the seabed is refined and converted into fuel like petrol, diesel and aviation turbine fuel (ATF).

The government has also reduced the tax on export of diesel to Rs 5 per litre, from Rs 6.5 and the same on overseas shipments of ATF to Rs 3.5 a litre, from Rs 4.5 a litre.

The new tax rates are effective from January 17.

Windfall profit tax on domestically-produced crude oil is the second lowest since the new levy was introduced in July 2022. The tax had fallen to Rs 1,700 per tonne in the second fortnight of December 2022.

The levy on the export of diesel now equals the lowest hit in the first half of August and October 2022 and the second half of December 2022.

Tax rates were increased at the last fortnightly review on January 3, following a firming up of global oil prices. International oil prices have since then dropped, necessitating the reduction of a windfall tax.

India first imposed windfall profit taxes on July 1, joining a growing number of nations that tax super normal profits of energy companies. At that time, export duties of Rs 6 per litre (USD 12 per barrel) each were levied on petrol and ATF and Rs 13 a litre (USD 26 a barrel) on diesel.

A Rs 23,250 per tonne (USD 40 per barrel) windfall profit tax on domestic crude production was also levied.

The export tax on petrol was scrapped in the very first review. The tax rates are reviewed every fortnight based on average oil prices in the previous two weeks.

Reliance Industries Ltd, which operates the world's largest single-location oil refinery complex at Jamnagar in Gujarat, and Rosneft-backed Nayara Energy are primary exporters of fuel in the country.

The government levies tax on windfall profits made by oil producers on any price they get above a threshold of USD 75 per barrel.

The levy on fuel exports is based on cracks or margins that refiners earn on overseas shipments. These margins are primarily a difference between the international oil price realised and the cost.

Sensex surges 563 pts as RIL, HDFC twins shine

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks shrugged off lacklustre global cues to clock smart gains on Tuesday, buoyed by strong buying interest in index heavyweights Reliance Industries and HDFC twins.

However, a depreciating rupee and unabated foreign fund outflows capped the gains, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rallied 562.75 points or 0.94 per cent to settle at 60,655.72. The broader NSE Nifty climbed 158.45 points or 0.89 per cent to 18,053.30.

Larsen & Toubro topped the Sensex gainers chart with a jump of 3.51 per cent, followed by Hindustan Unilever, HDFC, HCL Technologies, HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries.

In contrast, SBI, Bajaj Finserv, IndusInd Bank, Wipro, Tata Steel and Bajaj Finance were among the laggards, shedding up to 1.67 per cent.

The market breadth was in favour of the bulls, with 22 advances and 8 declines.



"The domestic market is attempting to gain, in comparison to its weak YTD performance, which was caused in anticipation of soft Q3 results and Union Budget. We started the third quarter results on a shaky note, but the latest set of financial announcements from IT and banking blue chips are encouraging.

"Heavyweights are also pushing the counter... (following) fall in windfall tax. Given the positive undercurrents, the trend should continue in the short term. However, a lot will depend on the second line of Q3 results, the Budget outcome, and the Fed policy statement," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial

Services. The government has reduced the windfall profit tax levied on domestically-produced crude oil as well as on the export of diesel and ATF, in line with softening international oil prices, according to an official order.

"Markets reversed Monday's fall and gained nearly a percent amid volatility... The bulls are trying hard to cap the damage amid the prevailing consolidation phase and awaiting some trigger for further recovery.

"We feel buying in select index majors may result in some respite ahead but not enough to trigger the next directional move. We thus reiterate our view to focus on stock selection and risk management until we see some decisive signal," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

The broader market fell marginally in Tuesday's trade, with the BSE smallcap gauge declining 0.13 per cent and midcap index falling by 0.06 per cent.

Among sectoral indices,

utilities jumped 1.48 per cent, power climbed 1.42 per cent, FMCG (1.15 per cent), realty (1.10 per cent), energy (0.97 per cent), tech (0.87 per cent), oil & gas (0.85 per cent), IT (0.79 per cent) and financial services (0.27 per cent).

World markets retreated after China reported a GDP growth of just 3 per cent for 2022 -- the lowest in over four decades, triggering fresh fears of a global recession.

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

Equity exchanges in Europe were trading in the negative territory in mid-session deals. Markets in the US were shut on Monday on account of Martin Luther King Jr Day.

International oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.67 per cent to USD 85.03 per barrel.

The rupee tumbled 19 paise to close at 81.77 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, tracking a rebound in the green-back overseas and firm crude oil prices.

Indians willing to pay premium for vehicle despite inflation: Deloitte

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian consumers are willing to pay a premium for purchasing their next vehicle despite fears of inflation, with a large portion of them looking at automobiles in the Rs 10-25 lakh price bracket, according to a study by Deloitte. They are now prioritising experience over cost, indicating a clear shift in buying pattern and a majority of them are even willing to accept a longer delivery time up to 4-12 weeks for a better experience and preferred choice of vehicle, said Deloitte's 2023 Global



Automotive Consumer Study (GACS).

The study conducted from September 21-29, 2022, with a sample of 1,003 consumers in India found that "vehicle intenders in the price bracket Rs 10-25 lakh were around 47 per

cent".

"For Rs 10 lakh and below these were 28 per cent. About 57 per cent intenders were willing to purchase Electric Vehicles (EVs) from Rs 10-25 lakh and 20 per cent in the range of Rs 10 lakh and below," it said.

There is a clear shift in an Indian consumer's buying pattern, where an average consumer is prioritising experience over cost, the report said, adding, "Traditionally, the Indian consumer has been cost conscious and cost versus mileage was the most important parameter for vehicle purchase."

Sebi proposes blocking of funds facility for trading in secondary market



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday proposed to introduce a blocking of funds facility for trading in secondary markets, a move aimed at safeguarding investors' money from misuse and default by stock brokers.

This is similar to Application Supported by Blocked Amount (ASBA)-like facility already available for the primary market which ensures that money from an investor gets moved only when an allotment happens.

In its consultation paper, Sebi said the proposed introduction of a blocking of funds facility for trading in secondary markets would allow investors to trade in secondary markets based on blocked funds in one's bank account, thereby eliminating the need to transfer funds to stock broker.

Also, the facility would provide client level settlement visibility (both pay-in and pay-out) to clearing corporations (CC) by direct settlement of funds and securities between client or

investor and CC.

The process safeguards clients' assets from misuse, brokers' default and consequent risk to their capital.

Under the existing framework, clients' assets pass through stock broker and clearing member before reaching CC. Similarly, the pay-out released by CC follows a similar cycle of passing through clearing members and stock brokers before reaching the client.

While CCs provide final settlement instructions to their members each day, it is the stock broker who settles obligations with clients.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has sought comments from the public till February 16 on the proposal.

The markets regulator has suggested that Unified Payments Interface (UPI) Mandate service of single block and multiple debits can be integrated with the secondary markets to provide a block mechanism (similar to pledge-like mechanism in securities) whereby the clients will be able to block funds in their bank account for trading in secondary market, instead of transferring them upfront to the trading member, thereby providing enhanced protection of cash collateral.

Under the proposed model, funds would remain in the account of client but will be blocked in favour of CC till the expiry date of the block mandate or till the block is released by the CC, whichever is earlier. CC can debit funds from client account, limited to the amount specified in the block.

India to promote self as viable investment destination at WEF meet at Davos

IANS ■ NEW DELHI

India is ready to promote itself as a viable investment destination during the annual World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting, which began in Switzerland's Davos on January 16, and will continue till January 20.

Apart from its economic parameters, the government has decided to project its ambitious roadmap for the next 25 years, till 2047, when India would be observing 100 years of its Independence. As some of its key achievements till 75 years of Independence, the government has highlighted the rise in GDP, exports, and per capita income.

In a presentation which has been prepared for the WEF, Davos, the government has said that there has been a 100 times rise in GDP, which is currently at \$3.5 trillion.

It has also claimed that there has been a 500 times rise in per capita income, which stands at \$2,300. Similarly there has been a 500 times rise in total exports, the highest-ever exports of \$660 billion in 2021-22.

India's growth rate was 8.7 per cent in 2021-22 and is now the fifth largest economy in the world.

The country has the second largest working population of 522 million with median age of 29 years.

The government has also promoted the country as a destination to go for as far as foreign direct investment (FDI) is concerned.

According to the presentation, the annual FDI doubled in the last eight years from \$35 billion to \$84 billion.

India aims to become the second largest economy worth



\$32 trillion by 2047 and expects the per capita income to grow 10 times.

Its manufacturing GDP is expected to grow 15 times to \$6.2 trillion and the services GDP is likely to grow 13 times to \$20 trillion.

FDI is also expected to grow 12 times to \$1 trillion, while exports are likely to grow 12 times to \$ 8 trillion.

India has also reduced corporate tax and it is among the lowest globally, as part of its business reforms, the presentation

DOMINANT DOWN UNDER

21-time Grand Slam champion Djoker wins his 35th straight match in Australian Open

AP ■ MELBOURNE

The supportive signs and dozens of Serbian flags and loud chants of Novak Djokovic's nickname filled Rod Laver Arena, providing a warm welcome marking his return to the Australian Open — a tournament he has dominated in the past but one he could not enter a year ago.

Djokovic acknowledged the greeting with a quick wave of his left hand when he stepped out onto the court at 10:30 pm on Tuesday, then got down to business by playing quite well and only briefly showing a hint of trouble from the balky left hamstring that was heavily taped.

With his parents and brother in the stands at Melbourne Park for the first time since he won his first Grand Slam title there 15 years ago, Djokovic began the first-round match with an ace at 125 mph (201 kph). He held at love there, took control of that set with a 12-point run and was on his way to a 6-3, 6-4, 6-0 victory over 75th-ranked Roberto Carballes Baena that finished after midnight.

"Unbelievable atmosphere. Thank you so much for staying this late, everybody. Also, thank you for giving me such a welcoming and a reception I can only dream of," Djokovic told the crowd in an on-court interview. "I really feel very happy that I'm back in Australia and I'm back here on the court where I had the biggest success in my career."

RUUD THROUGH

Norwegian second seed Casper Ruud battled through to the Australian Open second round as he kicked off a campaign that could see him become world number one.

The 24-year-old ground down Tomas Machac of the Czech Republic 6-3, 7-6 (8/6), 6-7 (5/7), 6-3 on Margaret Court Arena in a match that finished after 1:00am. He will next play American Jenson Brooksby who



topped Australian Christopher O'Connell.

"It's been a long day," said the world number three Ruud, whose build-up suffered an unexpected blow when he lost

his first match at the Auckland Classic warm-up tournament. "I'm very eager to hopefully have a good tournament and this was a good start, a tough one.

"Tomas played well, very aggressive, but I was able to come back and stay strong towards the end, so very happy," he added.

Ruud missed last year's

event with an ankle injury, but recovered to enjoy a breakthrough 2022, reaching the final of both the French and US Opens.

He had a chance to top the rankings when he took on Carlos Alcaraz in the Flushing Meadows final, but the Spanish teenager won in four sets to take the title and with it the number one spot.

Alcaraz is not in Melbourne as he nurses an injury and three players could take the top ranking from him by lifting the trophy. They include Serbian superstar Novak Djokovic, Greek third seed Stefanos Tsitsipas and Ruud.

According to the governing body ATP, Ruud can also become world number one by simply reaching the final, as long as neither Djokovic nor Tsitsipas win the title.

If none of those scenarios play out, the reign of Alcaraz will continue.

JABEUR SURVIVES

Second seed Ons Jabeur's quest for a maiden Grand Slam title at the Australian Open

began with a shaky 7-6 (10/8), 4-6, 6-1 victory over Tamara Zidansek littered with unforced errors.

The Tunisian was runner-up at both Wimbledon and the US Open last year but had to grind past the Slovenian world number 98 under the roof on Rod Laver Arena in a 2hr 17min battle.

Jabeur has set herself the twin targets in 2023 of becoming the first Arab and African woman to win one of the four tennis majors and toppling Iga Swiatek from the number one ranking.

"I just tried to follow what my coach told me to do," she said of her turnaround in the third set.

"I wasn't really doing that and he's going to kill me after the match," she joked.

Jabeur committed 49 unforced errors during her stuttering opening match, but only six came in her much-improved third set.

"I just tried to be more patient. It's a tough sport and you definitely don't want to play three sets here."

Rublev ends Thiem's Australian Open

AP ■ MELBOURNE

The 2020 finalist Dominic Thiem's Australian Open ended in the first round on Tuesday, with the former world number three crashing out to fifth seed Andrey Rublev in a setback on his return from injury.

While Russia's Rublev held a clear advantage in terms of current ranking, Thiem had a far greater Grand Slam pedigree as the US Open champion in 2020. He is also a two-time finalist at Roland Garros.

But the Austrian, ranked 98, was outplayed in 36 Celsius (96.8 Fahrenheit) heat as he continued his return from a wrist injury which kept him off court for nine months during the 2021 and 2022 seasons.

Rublev banked a 6-3, 6-4, 6-2 win on John Cain Arena - his first of the year after two defeats in warm-up events, with either Australia's Max Purcell or Finland's Emil Ruusuvuori his next opponent.

"First of all I'm happy that I was able to get through in straight sets. It was super hot



today so happy I can save some energy for future matches," said Rublev, who reached the quarter-finals at Melbourne in 2021 and won four titles last year.

"When you play against Dominic, it's never easy.

"We are really good friends and I know he is going through not easy times, so I just want to wish him all the best to come back at the same level that he belongs as fast as possible."

It was a seventh meeting between the pair but their first at a Grand Slam, with Rublev now leading 5-2.

Murray stuns Berrettini over five sets

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Andy Murray stunned Italian 13th seed Matteo Berrettini on Tuesday, saving a match point to prevail over five grueling sets and book a spot in the Australian Open second round.

The three-time Grand Slam champion has battled major hip and abdominal injuries for half a decade but declared himself free of pain and fired up before the tournament. His renowned grit was on full display in toppling the Italian 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 6-7 (7/9), 7-6 (10/6) in 4hrs 49mins under a closed roof on Rod Laver Arena due to extreme heat.

It was a huge win for the



35-year-old Briton, now ranked 66, to knock out last year's semifinalist for a landmark 50th match-win at the season-opening Grand Slam.

"I'll be feeling this this evening and tomorrow, but right now I'm unbelievably

happy and proud of myself," said Murray, a five-time runner-up at Melbourne Park.

"I've put a lot of work into the last few months with my team to give me this opportunity to perform on stadiums like this, in matches like this and

against players like Matteo and it paid off tonight."

It was Murray's first victory over a top 20 player at a Grand Slam since defeating ninth-ranked Kei Nishikori in the quarter-finals of the 2017 French Open.

Victory also brought up his 50th Australian Open match-win, becoming only the fifth man in the Open Era to achieve the feat alongside Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Stefan Edberg.

"I think some of the tennis at the end was really good, it felt like that playing," he said.

"He's a brilliant competitor, one of the best on tour, he always fights to the end and I did well to get through."

Russian flags banned at AO

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Tennis Australia on Tuesday banned Russian and Belarusian flags at the Australian Open after Ukraine's ambassador demanded action when they were seen among the crowd.

Moscow called the ban an "unacceptable politicisation of sports".

The red, white and blue stripes of Russia were held up by fans during Monday's first-round clash between Ukraine's Kateryna Baindl and Russia's Kamilla Rakhimova on day one.

Ukrainian fans reportedly called security and police to the stands.



A Russian flag was also unfurled on Rod Laver Arena during Daniil Medvedev's clash with American Marcos Giron. "Flags from Russia and

Belarus are banned onsite at the Australian Open," Tennis Australia said in a statement.

"Our initial policy was that fans could bring them in but could not use them to cause disruption. Yesterday, we had an incident where a flag was placed outside.

"The ban is effective immediately. We will continue to work with the players and our fans to ensure the best possible environment to enjoy the tennis."

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Russian and Belarusian players have normally competed under a neutral white flag as independents, as is the case at the Australian Open.

We will try to execute penalty corners against Wales: Manpreet

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

India were found wanting in penalty corner conversions in their first two matches in the FIH Men's World Cup, but midfielder Manpreet Singh is hoping that the home side will hit the target against Wales here on Thursday.

India have got nine penalty corners so far but have not scored once from them directly though Amit Rohidas found the target against Spain in the opening match in Rourkela after captain Harmanpreet Singh's drag-flick was rebounded from an opponent's stick.

Against England, with whom they played out a goalless draw, India got four penalty corners.

"There were few misses but if you see, England also defended well and their goalkeeper did well. We cannot say that it was not our mistake, but somewhere, England also defended well. We will analyse where we went wrong," Manpreet said after team training on Tuesday.

"The playing structure of England and Wales are almost the same and we will try to execute the penalty corners we get against Wales," said the 30-year-old Punjab player.



He said the match against Wales will be important as a big win will put India on top of Pool D.

"We will try to play our best and play our normal game and execute our plans," said Manpreet who had led India to a historic bronze at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

The toppers in each of the four pools directly qualify for the quarterfinals. The second and third place finishers of each pool will feature in cross over matches.

Asked about his role in the

team as he is no longer the captain, he said, "To be honest, earlier also (when I was captain) when I set foot on the ground, I gave my 100 per cent, and it is the same now also.

"In our team, it is not like that Harmanpreet is the captain (and he does everything) because hockey is a team game and what is more important is to have the contribution of all the team members.

"So, the mindset is the same that I would give 100 per cent whenever I play and take the youngsters along."

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Double Olympic medallist P V Sindhu was knocked out but defending champion Lakshya Sen looked in fine fettle on way to a straight-game win over compatriot HS Prannoy in the India Open here on Tuesday.

World No. 7 Sindhu, a former champion, went down 12-21, 20-22 to Thailand's world No. 30 Supanida Katethong. The Indian had lost to the same player in the semifinals of the last edition.

World No. 12 Sen, seeded seventh, settled the score against world No. 9 Prannoy after his opening round reversal at the Malaysia Open, with a 21-14, 21-15 win at the KD Jadhav Indoor hall in IG stadium.

Reigning champions Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty also produced a clinical display to storm into the second round after beating Scotland's Christopher Grimley and Matthew Grimley 21-13, 21-15 in their men's doubles opener.

Commonwealth Games champion Sen will next take on Denmark's Rasmus Gemke, who knocked out two-time world champion Kento Momota 21-15, 21-11 earlier in the day.

"I could settle from the beginning, get my length and defence properly. In the Malaysia



Open, I wasn't able to control the shuttle. Today my smashes and half smashes were working," Sen said after the match.

Anup Sridhar, who has been roped in to train Sen in the Pre-Olympic year, said it is important for his ward to stick to his natural game and make a good start.

"He was a lot more confident today. We had some good

sessions last week. That's helped him. He was aggressive, attacking and taking his chances, that made the difference," Lakshya's new coach Anup Sridhar said.

"He has corrected the mistakes that he did last week and Lakshya is an attacking player, that's his natural style. If he starts defensive then that is not something that works. He needs an attacking start.

"This year the focus will be to stay physically fit more than anything else."

Satwik and Chirag, who had claimed a semifinal finish last week in Kuala Lumpur, will be up against either China's Liu Yu Chen and Ou Xuan Yi or England's Ben Lane and Sean Vandy.

"We would want to win 3-4 more events and reach world

No. 3 this year. We want to win a major event like the All England Championships and better the medal at World Championships," Chirag said.

Commonwealth Games bronze medallist Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand also notched up a 22-20 17-21, 21-18 win over France's world No. 29 Margot Lambert and Anne Tran in their opener. It was their first win against their opponent in last three meetings. Among other Indians, N Sikki Reddy and her new women's doubles partner Shruti Mishra went down fighting 17-21, 19-21 to Germany's Linda Efler and Isabel Lohau.

Earlier, former top 10 player Shi Yuqi of China staved off a challenge from Indonesia's Chico Aura Dwi Wardoyo 20-22, 21-16, 21-15 and Chinese Taipei's Wang Tzu Wei beat Ireland's Nhat Nguyen 21-18, 21-17.

Fifth seed Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei prevailed 22-20, 14-21, 21-11 over Lee Cheuk Yu while Zhao Jun Peng beat Weng Hong Yang 21-19, 21-12 in another match.

In women's singles, three-time former winner Ratchanok Intanahon recovered from a back injury to get the better of Malaysia's Goh Jin Wei 21-13, 21-11, and Rio Olympic champion Carolina Marin beat 2017 world champion Nozomi Okuhara 21-13, 21-18.

'Krishan Pathak ready to replace Sreejesh when time comes'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian hockey team's goalkeeping coach Dennis van de Pol strongly feels that young custodian Krishan Pathak has matured enough and is ready to replace the peerless PR Sreejesh as and when the veteran decides to call time on his glorious career. Pathak, 25, was standby to Sreejesh in the Tokyo Olympics, where India won a historic bronze medal.

But after the Tokyo Games, Pathak has been a regular for India with both goalies — other being Sreejesh — taking turns to guard the goal in the four quarters.

At 34, Sreejesh is at the twilight of his career, having been India's go-to-man in front of the goal for over 16 years.

"I have worked a couple of times in camps with the Indian team. Back in December in Bengaluru, I worked with nine



goalies out of which three are from the first team — Sreejesh, Krishan Pathak and Suraj Karkera," Van de Pol said.

"The goalies from the 2019 batch of India juniors are now in senior group. So there is definitely good plans for the future.

"The other good part is that both the two

goalies of senior team -- Krishan and Sreejesh play in quarters. Krishan is much junior to Sree, so he is exposed quite a lot in big matches. So he is the guy for the future. By the time Sreejesh stops, Krishan will still be a young guy with a lot of experience," he added.

He feels India have a strong all-round team to make it to the podium in the World Cup, currently underway in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela. "We have a good, strong team. We have a strong defence. Against England the attack was not that great but the defence was pretty solid, strong even when we were a man down.

"In defending penalty corners, we are really strong. Against England, we conceded 7 PCs, but the goalie didn't have to make a single save as the defence did its job," said Van de Pol, who was formerly associated with the Canadian women's team.

Klopp has no plans to quit

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Jurgen Klopp says he will not leave Liverpool unless he is told to go, hinting at a major overhaul of his ageing squad at the end of the season.

A sixth Premier League defeat of the campaign at the weekend means the 2020 champions are 10 points outside the top four with just over half the season remaining.

Klopp last year signed a contract extension until 2026 and the 55-year-old stressed only the sack would prevent him seeing that through.

"Either the manager's position changes or a lot of other things change," he said. "So as far as I am concerned unless someone tells me I will not go.

"So that means maybe there is a point where we have to change other stuff. We will see that, but that is something for the future. Like summer or whatever. Not now.

"I have space and time to think about it — we have to play better football now."

Captain Jordan Henderson (32), Fabinho (29) and 31-year-old Thiago Alcantara remain first-choice picks in a midfield that is showing its age



but Klopp denied he was being too loyal to the old guard.

"The problem is too complex. You have a good player who did a lot of good things in the past and then in your mind (you think) maybe that's it for him," said the Liverpool boss, speaking of the need for rejuvenation.

"If you can then go out and bring in another player to replace (him) that makes sense. If you cannot bring anybody in you cannot bring anybody out. That is the situation."

RANI SCORES ON COMEBACK

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

Rani Rampal made an impressive comeback to the national side with a goal to her name as Indian women crushed South Africa 5-1 in the first hockey Test of the four-match series here. Returning to the side for the first time since playing against Belgium in the FIH Women's Hockey Pro League 2021-22 last June, former captain Rani opened India's scoring in the 12th minute on Monday night before Monika (20th), Navneet Kaur (24th), Gurjit Kaur (25th) and Sangita Kumari (30th) found the back of the net four times in the second quarter to hand India a commanding 5-0 lead at half-time.

South Africa's lone goal was scored by captain Quanita Bobbs in the 44th minute.

INDIA EYE REVENGE ON KIWIS

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Having stirred a debate after being left out of the squad despite a world record double hundred, Ishan Kishan is expected to be in the playing eleven in the upcoming ODI series against a tough New Zealand.

KL Rahul's unavailability due to personal reasons opens up a slot for Kishan, but he may not be asked to open during the three-match series starting here on Wednesday.

Kishan had to sit out of the Sri Lanka series despite scoring the fastest double hundred in the history of ODIs, against Bangladesh in the preceding series.

Shubman Gill, who was rewarded for his consistency and picked ahead of Kishan to open alongside skipper Rohit Sharma, made the most of the opportunities with scores of 70, 21 and 116 in the Sri Lanka series.

No changes are expected to the opening combination against the Black Caps but Rahul's unavailability means Kishan is expected to keep wickets.

Kishan has batted in the middle-order thrice in the 10 ODIs he had played, therefore adjustment should not be an issue.

KS Bharat, who is the second wicketkeeper in the squad, is likely to warm the bench as he is more of a cover in Rahul's absence.

In a World Cup year, every game is significant and India would aim to build on the gains from the Sri Lanka series even though the performance of their opponents was underwhelming to say the least.

The big takeaways for India from the Sri Lanka series was the performance of the top three and Mohammed Siraj's ability to pick up wickets with the new ball.

Like Gill and Virat Kohli, Rohit also looked in sublime touch

with scores of 83 and 42 but would like to get a big hundred which has also eluded him for some time now.

Kohli though is back to scoring hundreds at will and looks hungrier for runs more than ever, which should set alarm bells ringing in the New Zealand camp.

While he was one of India's steady batters in ODIs in 2022, Shreyas Iyer failed to convert his starts in three games as scores of 28, 28 and 38 would suggest and to make matters worse, the middle-order batter now has been ruled out of the three-match series against New Zealand owing to a back injury.

In Iyer's absence, the indomitable Suryakumar Yadav will get at least three chances to cement his place in the side. Surya and Hardik Pandya in the middle-order will surely add firepower at the back-end.

Rajat Patidar, who plays for Madhya Pradesh in the domestic circuit and Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Indian Premier League, has been named as Iyer's replacement for the rubber against the visiting Kiwis. Patidar has earlier been part of ODI team for past few series.

Besides Rahul, Axar Patel has also been given a break for the series and his like-for-like replacement in the eleven could be Shahbaz Ahmed.

It remains to be seen if the team management gives Shahbaz a go or bring in Washington Sundar, who could be handy against the left-handers in the New Zealand camp.

India have so far preferred to play a finger and a wrist spinner each in the playing eleven, leaving them to choose between Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav, who provided the much needed wickets in the middle overs in the two games against Sri Lanka.



ROHIT WON'T MIND EARLY START IN WORLD CUP MATCHES

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Rohit Sharma on Tuesday backed Ravichandran Ashwin's idea of an early start in the ODI World Cup to negate the dew factor as the Indian captain does not want any team to gain undue advantage in a major event.

It becomes difficult for the bowlers to grip the ball when dew covers the

field in the evening, making batting easier for the chasing team.

Ashwin had proposed an 11.30 am start for the World Cup games to be played in India in October-November. Usually in India, the game starts at 1:30pm.

However, the broadcasters who pay big money to get the media rights are expected to have the final say on the subject.

"It is a good idea. It is a World Cup right. You don't want to compromise too much on the toss factor. You want to completely take that away. I like the idea of an early start but don't know if it is possible. The broadcasters will decide (laughs)," said Rohit. "Ideally you don't want to see teams getting advantage of dew. You want to see cricket being played without one having an advantage of batting under

lights with dew around."

The captain also confirmed that Ishan Kishan, who sat out of the series against Bangladesh despite scoring a double ton in his last ODI innings, will be accommodated in the middle-order.

"Kishan will be batting in the middle order and I am glad he could get a run here after that fine knock in Bangladesh," he said.

Whether Kuldeep and Chahal could be played together like it used to happen five years back or the team management decides otherwise is there to be seen.

Chahal did not play after the first ODI due to a sore shoulder but he should be available for selection for the series-opener.

Siraj, Mohammad Shami and Umran Malik will be the likely specialist pacers in the team with Hardik Pandya being the all-rounder.

NZ STRONG ENOUGH

Though New Zealand don't have the services of star players Kane Williamson and Tim Southee for the series, the hosts will have to be at their best to better the visitors. Stand-in-captain Tom Latham played a blinder the last time the two teams met in an ODI.

The team is coming from a high of a series against Pakistan in Karachi. Opener Finn Allen, who was not at his destructive best in Karachi, would be looking to take the attack to the India bowlers.

The hosts need to find a way to stop the belligerent Glenn Phillips who single-handedly won New Zealand the decider against Pakistan despite being half-fit.

SQUADS

India: Rohit Sharma (Captain), Shubman Gill, Ishan Kishan (wk), Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, KS Bharat (wk), Hardik Pandya (vice-captain), Washington Sundar, Shahbaz Ahmed, Shardul Thakur, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohd. Shami, Mohd. Siraj, Umran Malik. **New Zealand:** Tom Latham (captain), Finn Allen, Doug Bracewell, Michael Bracewell, Mark Chapman, Devon Conway, Jacob Duffy, Lockie Ferguson, Daryl Mitchell, Henry Nicholls, Glenn Phillips, Mitchell Santner, Henry Shipley, Ish Sodhi, Blair Tickner.

Boult, Southee's absence leaves massive hole; Sodhi too out of first ODI: Latham

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Experienced pacers Tim Southee and Trent Boult's absence leaves a "massive hole" in the New Zealand squad but it also provides a chance to fringe players to step up during the India tour, stand-in-captain Tom Latham said on Tuesday.

While Southee has gone back home after a successful tour of Pakistan, Boult is playing the ILT20 in the UAE, having opted out of a New Zealand central contract. In the batting department, the Kiwis will miss the services of regular skipper Kane Williamson.

"They (Boult, Southee, Williamson) are not in the side and that leaves a massive hole for us. On the other hand, it presents an opportunity for other guys who have been around the squad. Everyone has played international cricket in the squad which is a bonus," Latham during the pre-match press conference.

"It is their turn to step up. Lucky we have Lockie Ferguson who has played a lot of cricket in India," said

Ferguson will lead the pace attack in the company of Blair Tickner, Doug Bracewell and Henry Shipley.

The southpaw also informed that senior spinner Ish Sodhi has been ruled out of the first ODI due to a niggle. Sodhi did turn up in the nets on Tuesday but did not bowl with the usual intensity. A fine player of spin, Latham led from the front by spending maximum



time in the nets.

"Unfortunately a niggle for Ish. He won't be available tomorrow but fingers crossed he will be available for the next couple of games," said Latham.

New Zealand go into the India ODIs after a memorable 2-1 series win in Pakistan.

With the ODI World Cup scheduled in India in October-November, Latham said the series gains a lot of significance.

"The cricket that we played in Pakistan was really good. Some of them had not toured Pakistan ever and to come up with a series win was really nice.

Over here, we will try and adapt to the conditions as much as we can.

"Surfaces in India will potentially be a bit better than what we had in Pakistan. Every time we play India it is a competitive series," he said.

In the context of the World Cup, Latham added: "This is our last opportunity to play in these conditions before the World Cup which is not too far away. We will just try to take as many learnings as we can from these conditions. Luckily enough most of the guys have played in Indian conditions."

Overlooked for Aus Tests, Sarfaraz smashes another hundred

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sitting atop a pile of runs, Sarfaraz Khan was a shattered man after failing to break into the Indian team for the upcoming Test series against Australia.

Not one to give up, the Mumbai run-machine sent the national selectors yet another reminder on Tuesday, notching up his third century in the ongoing edition of Ranji Trophy to extend his astonishing run in the Indian domestic circuit.

That Mumbai could make 293 before being bowled out on the first day of their Group B match against traditional rivals Delhi, was largely due to the 25-year-old's 125 off 155 balls at the Feroz Shah Kotla.

The innings was a timely one, coming barely days after his snub for the high-profile four-match series against a formidable Australian team. The prolific batter not being picked for the Indian team has been a subject of an intense debate for the past two days.

When his team needed him the most, he responded to the call and reached one of his most significant tons with a nudge for a single. Sarfaraz then took off his helmet, did the signature thigh-five celebration, and gestured towards his teammates on the boundary line.

In return, his teammates rose to pay a standing ovation, while chief coach Amol Muzumdar doffed his hat at the batter. It was no surprise that his younger brother Musheer Khan was the most ecstatic in the Mumbai camp.

It was not an easy outing as Sarfaraz came in to bat with his team in a spot of bother at 62 for three, replacing his 17-year-old brother Musheer. He then saw skipper Ajinkya Rahane making his way back to the dressing room after being dismissed by medium pacer Pranshu Vijayran to leave Mumbai at 66 for four.

Wicketkeeper Prasad Pawar (25) got out after getting a start, paving the way for a sixth-wicket stand of 144 runs between Sarfaraz and Shams Mulani (39).

In-form opener Prithvi Shaw was the second highest scorer for Mumbai, with a characteristic 35-ball 40.

Vijayran (4/66) was the most successful bowler on the day for Delhi, while there were two wickets apiece for Harshit Rana and Yogesh Sharma.

Left-arm spinner Yogesh was unfortunate not to have got the key wicket of Sarfaraz as keeper Anuj Rawat missed a stumping off his bowling much before the batter had reached his hundred.

In the last two Ranji Trophy seasons, Sarfaraz has amassed 1,910 runs in just 12 games, averaging 136.42. He scored seven centuries in 18 innings, and also made 11 fifties.

Since 2019, the Mumbai batter has scored 2,289 runs in 22 innings at an average of 134.64 with nine hundreds, five fifties, two double hundreds and a triple ton.

BABY SCORES TON

Thiruvananthapuram: Skipper Sachin Baby led from the front



with a superb 116-run knock as Kerala recovered from 6 for 3 to end day one of their Group C match against Karnataka at 224 for 6.

Opting to bat after winning the toss, Kerala found themselves in trouble after losing opening batter Rahul P for a duck.

Rohan Prem (0) and opener Rohan S Kunnummal (5) were dismissed by V Vyshak and Koushik respectively as the home side slipped to 6 for 3.

Baby fought back for Kerala in the company of Vathsals Govind (46, 116 balls, 6 fours) as the duo added 120 runs in a little over 40 overs.

The left-handed Baby, however, did not miss out on scoring opportunities that came his way. He hit 12 fours as he kept Kerala in the hunt with a splendid ton, his third of the current Ranji season.

Once the Baby-Vathsals partnership was ended by medium-pacer Koushik (4/36), Karnataka removed Salman Nizar (0) for the addition of two more runs. Akshay Chandran (17) batted in a sedate manner to help the captain add 46 runs for the sixth wicket before he fell to leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal (1/25).

All-rounder Jalaj Saxena, a hugely experienced campaigner, walked in at the fall of Chandran's wicket and made sure that the team did not suffer any further setbacks. He was 31 not out at stumps as Kerala moved to 224 for 6 in 90 overs at close of play after adding 50 runs with Baby.

Oz can recreate magic of 2004 Test series win in India: Gilchrist

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australia skipper Adam Gilchrist is confident the Pat Cummins-led side will be able to win the Border-Gavaskar series in India after 19 years if they go in with three seamers to partner spinner Nathan Lyon. The former wicketkeeper-batter, who was Australia's stand-in skipper during the 2004 series win — the only one they pocketed since 1969 — added that experimenting with a new spinner in sub-continental conditions has never worked, and Cummins should refrain from doing that.

"I think they'll do it (win the series). I really do. I think they've got a squad and final XI that will have a lot of similarities to the



team we rolled with in 2004," Gilchrist was quoted as saying by Fox Sports on Tuesday.

"So often teams go to India hoping to unveil some new spinner that's going to come in and adapt and bedazzle in India — it doesn't really happen," added Gilchrist.

He felt Australia should just

have faith in their best four bowlers to do the job, adding that the highly-experienced seamers should have no trouble reverse swinging the ball.

"Pick your best four bowlers, run with them — and if that is three seamers who can all get really nice reverse swing and Nathan Lyon, who's outstanding

and clearly the best off-spinner we've ever had, can play his role — that's my gut feeling. You do that, you go with it."

Australia currently find themselves in a tricky situation with their most experienced seamer, 32-year-old Mitchell Starc, nursing a finger injury to his bowling arm and likely to miss the first Test at Nagpur.

Tall all-rounder Cameron Green too suffered a fracture on his finger and has undergone surgery, though he is expected to be fit before the first Test, beginning on February 9. The former cricketer said the return of Green, a fast-bowling all-rounder, could give Cricket Australia the luxury to pick an extra spinner, and added the need to be patient in trying conditions.

PTI ■ BENONI

With 74 senior international appearances under her belt, Shafali Verma is finding the pace of U-19 bowlers in the ongoing Junior Women's World Cup, slightly easier to face.

Shafali, who has already played 51 WT20Is and 21 WODIs besides two Tests for India senior team, is currently leading the U-19 national side in the Women's U-19 T20 World Cup.

She has already stamped her class with 16-ball-45 against South Africa and 34-ball-78 against UAE in consecutive win for the Indian girls.

"There is lot of difference because the ball is coming in little slow in the U-19 and the wicket is also in the slower side and we are trying to get used to that. And of course, a little bit of difference, seamers have good pace, a good mind-set here also but they are



all learning and I really enjoying playing with them," Shafali was quoted as saying by 'Star Sports'.

"I think it's (U-19 T20 World Cup) very important for women's cricket as the way Mithali (Raj) said that for growing up and developing talented players, for them it's very good," she added.

The 19-year-old Shafali, who is playing in her first and last U-19 T20 World Cup, led India to back-to-back comprehensive wins in the tournament.

"Of course it's very good feeling. It is my first and last because it's my last year of U-19.

"We have a good team, we are really enjoying with the girls and I hope we will play good cricket and of course we will be here for the world cup and we will try to achieve that," Shafali said.

"I would say we are doing well in batting, bowling and fielding and as captain, I hope we win the World Cup."