

OPINION 6

STOP MEDDLING
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WORLD 9

MARCOS: SEA FEUD INVOLVING
CHINA KEEPS ME UP AT NIGHT

MONEY 10

SENSEX SNAPS 2-DAY RALLY
AMID GLOBAL WEAKNESS

NEW DELHI, FRIDAY JANUARY 20, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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MACKENZIE,
BEATS NADAL,
EYES MORE IN
OZ 11 SPORTSC asserts supremacy
over Govt in judges' pickCollegium rejects
intelligence inputs,
backs its proposal to
elevate five judges,
slams Centre for
sending back namesPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium on Thursday asserted its supremacy in appointment of judges and backed its earlier proposal to elevate five judges. The Collegium summarily rejected the inputs provided against them by intelligence agencies to the Centre.

The development came days after Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar launched a scathing attack on the judiciary on the issue of appointment of judges and Law Minister Kiren Rijiju sent a letter to the Chief Justice of India seeking Government representation in the Collegium.

Under the rules, the Government has to accept a name that is sent by the Supreme Court Collegium for a second time.

The names of five advo-

cates sent back to the Centre by the Collegium on Thursday for appointment as judges are: Saurabh Kirpal for the Delhi High Court, R John Sathyan for the Madras High Court, Somasekhar Sundaresan for the Bombay High Court, Amitesh Banerjee and Sakya Sen for the Calcutta High Court.

Interestingly, this is the second time the Collegium reiterated the names of two advocates — Amitesh Banerjee and Sakya Sen — for appointment as judges of the Calcutta High Court "expeditiously", saying it was not open for the Government to repeatedly send back the same proposal.

Advocate Banerjee is the son of former apex court judge Justice UC Banerjee, who headed a commission which in 2006 ruled out conspiracy angle in the 2002 Sabaramati Express train inferno at Godhra that killed 58 "kar sevaks". The Godhra incident had triggered widespread communal riots in Gujarat.

Advocate Sen is the son of Justice Shyamal Sen, who was elevated as a permanent judge of the Calcutta High Court in February 1986 and later became the chief justice of the Allahabad High Court. Justice Sen also served as the Governor of West Bengal from



May 1999 to December 1999.

Justice (retd) Sen had headed an inquiry commission which probed the multi-crore Saradha Group ponzi scam.

The Collegium comprising Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and Justices SK Kaul and KM Joseph rejected RAW's inputs against Saurabh Kirpal citing his gay sex orientation, and Intelligence Bureau inputs against John Sathyan and Somasekhar Sundaresan for critical posts in social media against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Collegium asked the Centre to expedite the five advocates' appointments to High Courts as judges.

In separate letters for the reiteration of the five persons appointment as judges, uploaded in the Supreme Court's website, the Collegium that rejected Kirpal's elevation based on the RAW report on his sexual preferences is against constitutional principles on equality.

"The recommendation

unanimously made by the Collegium of the Delhi High Court on October 13, 2017, and approved by the Supreme Court Collegium on November 11, 2021, has been referred back to us on November 25, 2022 for reconsideration in light of the observations made in the file," said the Collegium statement.

"From the letters of the Research & Analysis Wing (R&AW) dated April 11, 2019 and March 18, 2021, it appears that there are two objections to the recommendation which was made by the Collegium of this court on November 11, 2021 approving the name of Shri Saurabh Kirpal namely: (i) the partner of Shri Saurabh Kirpal is a Swiss national, and (ii) he is in an intimate relationship and is open about his sexual orientation," the statement said, went on lauding Kirpal for being open about his sexual orientation, saying it "goes to his credit" that he has not been surreptitious about it.

The Collegium said in this backdrop, it resolved to reiterate its recommendation of November, 11, 2021 for appointment of Saurabh Kirpal as a judge of the Delhi High Court and said the Government should process it expeditiously."

Continued on Page 2

Reply within 72 hrs on MeToo
charges: Ministry to WFI chief

Wrestler Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Malik, Bajrang Punia and Deepak Punia during a press conference regarding their protest against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), in New Delhi on Thursday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur on Thursday evening met the wrestlers, including Olympic medallists, who are demonstrating at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi against Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, and assured them action.

The Sports Ministry has sought a response from the WFI "within the next 72 hours" on the sexual-exploitation allegations levelled against Singh by the protesting wrestlers.

Earlier, India's top wrestlers, including Olympians, who are demonstrating at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, seeking action against the WFI and its chief on Thursday said

the Government had not given them "satisfactory response" and they will lodge multiple FIRs against the WFI president if the WFI is not disbanded immediately.

Addressing a Press conference on the second day of their protest, ace wrestler Vinesh Phogat said they haven't gotten any satisfactory response from the Government.

"Today is the 2nd day of protest and we haven't got any satisfactory response from the Government. We will make sure Brij Bhushan resigns and is jailed. We will also file a case," she said. She stated, "We had gone to talk..We do not want to tell now which representative of the Government said what. Our fight is not with the Government or the people of

the Government...Our fight is only with one person."

Some of the top wrestlers who sat on the protest are: Three-time CWG champion Vinesh Phogat and the Olympic bronze medallist duo of Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik, Tokyo Olympics silver winner Ravi Dahiya and world championship silver medallist Deepak Punia and several others. Babita Phogat, a 2014 CWG gold medalist and BJP leader, arrived at the protest and heard the demands of the grapplers.

"I will try to get the solution. I am a wrestler first and then a political person. I know their pain and I will try to get the solution that the wrestlers want," Babita said.

Continued on Page 2

32 flyers left on
Amritsar airport

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the second such incident in a month, a flight took off leaving a section of its passengers stranded at the airport on Wednesday. The incident took place at Amritsar airport when the Amritsar-Singapore flight operated by Scoot left behind 32 passengers following a change in schedule.

A miscommunication between the travel agent and the passengers is said to be the reason behind the confusion.

Taking note of the incident, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has ordered a probe in the matter. The Scoot Airlines issued an apology on Thursday.

The Scoot incident comes just 10 days after a Go First flight departed from Bengaluru for Delhi leaving behind 55 of its passengers onboard the airline's bus on the tarmac.

Continued on Page 2

4-month flying
ban on Mishra
over urination

New Delhi: Air India on Thursday extended the ban for four months on Shankar Mishra, who is accused of urinating on a woman co-passenger onboard a flight in November last year.

According to sources, other airlines are also expected to ban him from flying once the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) comes out with a ruling on the matter.

DCW chief dragged by
car, drunk driver held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) Chairperson Swati Maliwal was harassed and dragged by a drunk car driver for some distance on Thursday morning when she was out to inspect the state of women's security in Delhi along with her team. The police have arrested the car driver, Harish Chandra, 47, a resident of Sangam Vihar, on charges of molestation and voluntarily causing hurt.

"Last night, I was inspecting the situation of women's safety in Delhi. A car driver, in an inebriated condition, harassed me and when I caught hold of him, he rolled up the window pane on my hand and dragged me along. God saved my life. If the chairperson of the women's commission is not safe in Delhi, one can then imagine the situation," she tweeted about the incident in Hindi.

The DCW chief said she was inspecting the state of women's security in Delhi in



the wake of the Kanjhawla hit-and-drag incident in which a 20-year-old woman was dragged to death while trapped under a car in the national Capital. Maliwal's team was with her during the inspection, although it was stationed at some distance.

Later, the DCW issued a statement saying Maliwal was standing at a bus stop on Ring Road opposite AIIMS when the car approached her.

"The driver rolled down the window and asked her to sit in the car but she refused. The man stared at her for some time and left the spot but again approached her after a while. He again asked her to sit in his car but she again refused. He started making lewd gestures towards her," it said.

Continued on Page 2

India raps BBC
for 'propaganda'
docu on ModiPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India on Thursday termed a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) documentary on Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a "propaganda piece" and "lacking objectivity." It also said the documentary has not been screened in India.

Putting forth New Delhi's position on the documentary 'India: The Modi Question', Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said here, "If anything, this film or documentary is a reflection on the agency and individuals that are peddling this narrative again. It makes us wonder about the purpose of this exercise and the agenda behind it. Frankly, we don't wish to dignify such efforts."

He also said, "Do note that this has not been screened in

India...We think that this is a propaganda piece, designed to push a particular discredited narrative. The bias, lack of objectivity and continuing colonial mindset is blatantly visible."

Incidentally, the two-part series or documentary was removed from YouTube on Wednesday. The documentary, which was released on Tuesday, takes a close look at the story of the Prime Minister and tracks his journey to power.

It makes an in-depth study of his political career, including his tenure as Gujarat Chief Minister, which was marred by the riots in 2002.

Continued on Page 2

GrNo student
gangraped for 5
months, filmed,
blackmailed

PTI ■ NOIDA

A Class 12 student in Greater Noida was allegedly raped by three people who also filmed her objectionable videos and blackmailed her over a period of five months after she was lured into a relationship by one of the accused, police officials said Thursday.

An FIR has been lodged in this connection at the Beta 2 police station but no arrests have been made yet. Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Greater Noida) Dinesh Kumar Singh said. The FIR was lodged after the mother of the girl approached the police, he said. "The woman alleged that her daughter was lured into a physical relationship by an accused on the pretext of being in love with her."

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Double-engine Govt will realise
Mumbaikars' dreams, says Modi

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday sought to reach out various sections of Mumbaikars ahead of the crucial Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) polls, by launching a host of the metropolis-specific projects and stressing on the need for "perfect co-ordination" among the Centre, the Maharashtra Government and the BMC for the development of the country's commercial Capital.

Virtually launching the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena-BJP combine's campaign for the forthcoming crucial BMC polls at the Bandra-Kurla Complex (BKC) ground, Modi said the BJP's "double-engine" Government — at the Centre and the State — had hugely benefitted the metropolis and said the "development cannot be realised in a city like



Prime Minister Narendra Modi talks to passengers while taking a metro ride in Mumbai on Thursday

PTI

Mumbai till the time urban local body also has the same priority for rapid development".

Stressing on how the BJP-led Governments at the Centre and State had contributed to the rapid development in Mumbai, Modi said, "In 2014

Mumbai had 10-11 km long Metro route, with double engine Government Metro got a new speed and scale as Mumbai is rapidly moving towards a 300 km metro network."

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Have accepted Akhilesh as my leader, says Shivpal

RS PATHAK ■ BALLIA

After reconciliation with nephew Akhilesh Yadav, the tone of senior Samajwadi Party leader Shivpal Singh Yadav has now changed as he said in Ballia that he had accepted his nephew Akhilesh Yadav as his leader and SP as his party.

Talking to journalists, Shivpal Yadav said: "Akhilesh Yadav is my nephew but he is also SP president. I have accepted him as my leader. I have not asked for any post as I am not hankering for a party post."

Expressing his resolve to overthrow the Bharatiya Janata Party government, Shivpal Yadav said that the people would come out on the streets against the policies of the government, which were anti-poor and anti-people.

On the question of forming

an opposition front, Shivpal Yadav said that the SP alone was capable of removing the BJP.

"Our aim is to defeat BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections and 2027 assembly polls. We are true followers of Lord Ram and Lord Krishna and will win this dharma yuddha," he said.

When asked about Varun Gandhi joining the SP, he said whoever wanted to remove the corrupt BJP government was welcome in the party.

Shivpal Yadav said that SP had formed government four times in Uttar Pradesh and they knew how to respect opposition parties. "But the present BJP government is busy in eliminating the opposition. Campaign is being run across the state against the opposition," he said.

"In fact, this BJP govern-



ment is the most corrupt government the state has ever had. Today the entire bureaucracy is mired in corruption. No development work is being done anywhere in the state. The chief minister and his ministers are only doing lip service," Shivpal Yadav said.

Talking about his party's strategy, he said that SP would concentrate on strengthening

the organisation. "We will hold meetings and organise protests against the government," he added. Dozens of SP leaders, including former ministers Ambika Chaudhary, Narad Rai, Sanatan Pandey, district panchayat chairperson Anand Chaudhary, former chairperson Sanjay Upadhyay were present during the press conference.

4 dead as car falls into roadside pond in Hapur

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Four died in a watery grave after the car they were in veered off into a roadside pond near Karimuddin Nagar village in Hapur district on Wednesday night.

The incident came to light on Thursday morning after the locals alerted the police.

Kapoorpur police identified the deceased as Rahul, Haroon and Shokeen of Kapoorpur and Arun from Dhaulana.

All of them were working at Vedanta farm in Ghaziabad district. The mishap occurred when they were returning home from the farm.

The locals staged a protest condemning the district administration for its failure to install railings at the pond. After talks, the locals allowed the bodies to be shifted for autopsy.

District Magistrate Medha Rupam visited the spot to take



stock of the situation. Police said the locals were the first to spot the white Honda City submerged in the pond. Police rushed to the spot to launch rescue efforts. The ill-fated car was fished out of the pond and the lifeless bodies were recovered. A local resident said, "The deceased belonged to Karimuddin Nagar village. They were working at Vedanta farm in Ghaziabad. They were return-

ing home. The car driver seems to have lost control over the wheel leading to the accident." According to him, the accident happened because of the poor infrastructure.

"The pond does not have a rail guard or a raised concrete wall to help the driver differentiate while driving. We want Rs 10 lakh compensation for the kin of the deceased," he said.

Two-day meet by ICSSR inaugurated in Delhi University

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

As part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, Aditi Mahavidyalaya, Delhi University on Thursday inaugurated a two-day national conference on "Reconnaissance of resilience, re-emergence, strengthening, re-building of the nation".

The two-day conference has been sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR).

"India has forever been a resilient country since ages and it was reiterated during the Covid pandemic and this conference was to celebrate and enhance this spirit of our country," the college said in a statement. The conference was inaugurated by Pro Vice Chancellor, IGNOU, Prof Satyakam as chief guest and Pro VC, DSEU, Prof Rihan Khan Suri and Proctor, Delhi University, Prof Rajni Abbi.

Reply within 72 hrs on MeToo charges: Ministry to WFI chief

From Page 1

Bajrang, Anshu Malik, Sakshi and Vinesh have demanded that the WFI be disbanded and a new federation be formed. Wrestlers including Bajrang, his wife Sangeeta, Vinesh, Sarita Mor, Anshu Malik, Antim Pangal were called for a meeting with Sports Secretary Sujata Chaturvedi, a few minutes after Babita left the protest site.

Apart from Chaturvedi, DG SAI Sandeep Pradhan and Joint Secretary (Sports) Kunal were also a part of the meeting with the wrestlers. However, the wrestlers wanted a concrete and immediate

action and decided to continue their protest unless WFI president, a BJP MP, is removed and the national federation is disbanded along with all the State Wrestling Associations in the country.

"Yesterday, we had 1-2 victims amongst us but now we have 5-6 wrestlers, who were harassed (sexually). We can't name them now, after all they are daughters and sisters of somebody. But if we are forced to disclose their identity, it will be a black day," said Vinesh, the two-time World Championship medalist.

"It's not just about his (Brij Bhushan) resignation. We will

send him to jail.

We did not want to take the legal route, because we had hoped for resolution but if a proper solution is not provided, we will lodge FIRs against him.

"We are world champions and Olympic medalists, don't suspect us, we are telling the truth, believe us." The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) has called for an Emergency General Council in Ayodhya on Sunday to discuss the issue. "Yes, a meeting has been called and future course of action will be discussed. I can't say if WFI president will resign or not. It needs to be dis-

cussed," said a WFI official.

"If it happens in a country like India where 'Durga' and 'Lakshmi' are worshipped. Then I would say that no woman is safe in this country and no daughter should be born to anyone."

Asked to give details of the meeting they had with the Government representative, Vinesh said, "They did not give any time-frame, just gave assurances."

"Everything is at stake now. We have not even taken police protection and (are) sitting here. But where is the WFI president; his office (is) locked. Where are those eyes that used

to scare us."

When reminded that London Olympics medallist Yogeshwar Dutt has backed WFI president, along with Asian Championship medallist Divya Karan, Vinesh said, "Yogeshwar is definitely sitting in the lap of the WFI and that Kakran herself spoke against the president in the past. We have proof."

"All the videos (in support of WFI president) are being made where he has that 'aatank ka adda' (hub of terror), people should come and make videos here at Jantar Mantar while sitting in front of the public.

32 flyers left on Amritsar...

From Page 1

According to Scoot, bad weather affected departure time, and the flight was rescheduled to leave Amritsar at 3:45 pm instead of the original departure time of 7:55 pm. The airline's statement also said passengers were informed about the change in departure time in advance via email and/or SMS.

"Due to inclement weather conditions affecting departures, the flight was retimed to depart Amritsar at 3:45 pm instead of the original departure timing of 7:55 pm. Affected passengers were noti-

fied in advance of the departure time change, through email and/or SMS, where possible, based on the contact details provided. Scoot sincerely apologises for the inconvenience caused. We are currently working to provide affected customers with the necessary assistance," the statement from Scoot read.

After Airport authorities contacted the airline officials they were informed that all the passengers were communicated about the change departure time well in advance through email by their booking agents. Many passengers not aware of

the schedule change were left behind, leading to chaos at Amritsar airport. "All booking agents were informed well in time and they relayed the information to their clients. But only one agent could not inform his clients for reasons best known to him," airport director of Sri Guru Ramdas Ji International Airport, Amritsar, V K Seth said. "If we talk about the change of timing of the flight, a proper procedure was followed as it was with the prior clearance from the Airport Authority of India, besides all authorities concerned," Seth said.

Double-engine Govt will realise Mumbai's...

From Page 1

Modi — who either inaugurated or laid the foundation stone of projects worth around Rs 38,800 crore in Mumbai — said, "The role of cities in the creation of Viksit Bharat. He said during the Amrit Kaal, many cities of Maharashtra will drive India's growth. That is why preparing Mumbai for the future is one of the key priorities of the double-engine Government".

The Prime Minister went onto give the example of the Metro in Mumbai. "In 2014 Mumbai had 10-11 Km long Metro route, with double engine government Metro got

a new speed and scale as Mumbai is rapidly moving towards a 300 km Metro network," he said.

Indirectly underscoring the need for Mumbai's electing the BJP-led ruling alliance at the BMC in the forthcoming polls, Modi said, "There is no dearth of capacity and political will for the development of cities. Still, development cannot be realised in a city like Mumbai, till the time urban local body (BMC) also has the same priority for rapid development. That is why the role of the local urban body is critical in the development of Mumbai."

Modi called for "perfect coordination and a system that works in sync from Centre to Maharashtra to Mumbai".

In this context, the Prime Minister alluded to the concretisation work being taken up by the Eknath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis dispensation for the improvement of roads in Mumbai and said: "The project showcases the commitment made by the double-engine Government".

Modi was addressing after dedicating Rs 12,600 crore worth Mumbai - 2A and 7 -Metro Line projects which will connect the western sub-

urbs between Andheri and Dahisar and a host of other Mumbai-specific projects. The Prime Minister had laid the foundation stone of these metro lines in 2015.

While he kick-started the Rs 6,100 crore road concretisation project involving 400 kilometres of roads in Mumbai, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of seven sewage treatment plants worth Rs 17,200 crore being set up across Mumbai. The sewerage plants, when completed, will have a combined capacity of around 2,460 Million Litres a Day (MLD) of sewerage.

DCW chief dragged by car, drunk...

From Page 1

"When she approached him to reprimand him, he made a vulgar gesture towards her. When she tried to catch hold of him, he rolled up the window due to which Maliwal's hand got stuck in it. He then pressed the accelerator to drag her for several metres with the car. She somehow managed to escape," the statement added.

Taking a dig, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has asked LG Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena to leave politics aside and focus on the law and order situation in the capital. "What happened to the law and order situation in Delhi? The

morale of the goons has increased so much that even the women's commission chairperson is not safe." Only this work has been given to LG Sahib by the Constitution. LG Sahib is requested to leave politics for a few days and focus on law and order. We will fully cooperate with him," Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi.

According to police, "a special patrolling vehicle had made the PCR call after the personnel spotted a lady outside the hospital. She was identified as Swati Maliwal. She mentioned that a person driving a Baleno (who was drunk) stopped near her and asked her

to sit inside...with a bad intention. When she refused, he left but came back again and once again asked her to sit in the car. She again refused and went near his side to reprimand him. The car driver quickly rolled up the window and her hand got stuck... She was dragged for 10-15 metres". The police said they took immediate action on Maliwal's statement.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Chandan Chowdhary said a case was registered under IPC sections 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 341 (wrongful restraint), 354 (assault or criminal force to

woman with intent to outrage her modesty) and 509 (word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman) and section 185 of the Motor Vehicles Act at Kotla Mubarak Pur based on a complaint from the DCW chief.

The accused was produced before Link Metropolitan Magistrate Akansha Garg earlier today, and has been sent in judicial custody till February 2.

In the statement, the Delhi women's panel said Maliwal visited several places near Kanjhawala, Munirka, Mundka and Hauz Khas following the Kanjhawla case. She also stopped at several bus stops at night and observed the safety situation, it added.

कार्यालय, नगर पालिक निगम, मिलाई

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1.	121181	जोन 01 अंतर्गत सभी बाड़ों में बैस्मिंट शारुड निर्माण कार्य (बार्ड 01.02.03.04.05, 06.07.08.09.10.11.12.13.17 एवं 18)	150.00	113000.00	120 Day	17-01-2023	08-02-2023
2.	121190	जोन 02 अंतर्गत सभी बाड़ों में बैस्मिंट शारुड निर्माण कार्य (बार्ड 14.15.16.19.20, 21.22.23.24.25.26.27.28 एवं 29)	140.00	105000.00	120 Day	17-01-2023	08-02-2023
3.	121227	जोन 01 अंतर्गत सुपेला वीक से राखेड प्रसाद चौक तक डामरीकरण मार्ग का नवीनीकरण कार्य।	188.83	142000.00	180 Day	17-01-2023	08-02-2023

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2.	Mohan Sukhija/ Geeta Sukhija/ QZGUR00005003351	Prop No. RZ- B-39, 2nd Floor Without Roof, Kh No.189, Village- Bindapur Indra Park, East Uttam Nagar, New Delhi/ January 17, 2023	August 31, 2022 Rs. 10,23,922/-	Delhi
3.	Mahesh Kumar/ Anita Kumari/ QZJNK0004998737	E-12/1 & E-12/2, First Floor Back Side (R.H.S), Without Roof Rights, Khasra No.561, Vill. Nawada Majra Hastasi Block-E, Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar, Delhi, New Delhi 110059/ January 17, 2023	April 01, 2022 Rs. 21,47,785/-	Delhi

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Date : January 20, 2023

Place : Delhi/ NCR

Authorized Officer
ICICI Bank Limited

India raps BBC for 'propaganda' documentary on Modi

From Page 1

Lord Rami Ranger, a member of House of Lords of UK Parliament on Wednesday slammed BBC over

new series attacking Modi.

Condemning the biased reporting of BBC, he tweeted, "@BBCNews You have caused a great deal of hurt to over a billion Indians. It insults a democratically elected@PMOIndia Indian Police & the Indian judiciary. We condemn the riots and loss of life & also condemn your biased reporting."

The BBC released the docu-series, the first episode of which was aired on Tuesday and was removed from YouTube on Wednesday.

According to the BBC, the documentary will examine how "Narendra Modi's premiership has been dogged by persistent allegations about the attitude of his government towards India's Muslim population".

SC asserts supremacy over Govt in...

From Page 1

Saurabh Kirpal is the son of former Chief Justice of India BN Kirpal.

The court, however, said Kirpal could have avoided speaking to the media on this issue.

In an interview to NDTV in November last year, Kirpal had said that he believed his elevation was viewed with disfavour because of his sexual orientation. "I don't think the government necessarily wants to appoint an openly gay person to the bench," Kirpal, 50, had said.

The Collegium brushed aside the IB report which cited social media posts of John Sathyan, critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and said that the rejection is against the freedom of speech and expressions.

The statement of the Collegium reproduced the IB report against Sathyan. "As per open sources, two posts made by him, i.e. sharing of an article published in 'The Quint', which was critical of the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi; and another post regarding committing of suicide by medical aspirant Anitha, who ended her life in 2017 since she was unable to clear NEET, portraying it as a

killing by 'political betrayal' and a tag stating 'shame of you India' came to notice," said the IB note reproduced in the Collegium statement.

"The Intelligence Bureau has reported that he enjoys a good personal and professional image and that nothing adverse has come to notice against his integrity. Shri Sathyan belongs to the Christian community; The IB report notes that he does not have any overt political leanings. In this backdrop, the adverse comments of the IB extracted above in respect of posts made by him i.e. sharing an article published in 'The Quint' and another post regarding committing of suicide by a medical aspirant candidate in 2017 will not impinge on the suitability, character or integrity of Shri Sathyan," said Collegium reiterating its recommendation.

On the IB inputs against Somasekar Sundaresan, citing his social media posts and terming him as biased person, the Collegiums said it considered the objection to the candidature of Somasekar Sundaresan but was of the view that the posts on social media attributed to the candidate, do not furnish any foundation to infer that he

is biased.

"The issues on which opinions have been attributed to the candidate are in the public domain and have been extensively deliberated upon in the print and electronic media. All citizens have the right to free speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. Expression of views by a candidate does not disentitle him to hold a constitutional office so long as the person proposed for judgeship is a person of competence, merit and integrity," said the Collegium, adding, "Somasekar Sundaresan being a specialized in commercial law would be an asset to Bombay High Court."

Sundaresan was recommended for elevation by the Bombay High Court Collegium in October 2021. Subsequently, in February 2022, the Supreme Court Collegium also recommended his name. However, on November 25, 2022, the Central Government opposed his elevation. The apparent reason given by the government was that Sundaresan "aired his views in the social media on several matters which are the subject matter of consideration before the courts."

On the IB reports against

Amitesh Banerjee and Sakya Sen, the collegium said the inputs furnished by the Department of Justice in the file on November 25, 2022 do not contain any fresh material or ground.

Moreover, after the Supreme Court Collegium reiterated the proposal on September 1, 2021, it was not open to the Department to repeatedly send back the same proposal which has been reiterated by the Supreme Court Collegium after duly considering the objections of the Government," said the Collegium reiterating its resolve for the appointment of Amitesh Banerjee and Sakya Sen as the Calcutta High Court Judges.

The names of advocates Banerjee and Sen were initially recommended by the Collegium of the Calcutta High Court on December 17, 2018 and the Supreme Court Collegium had approved the proposal on July 24, 2019.

Apart from reiteration of names of advocates to be elevated as judges of high courts, the Collegium in its meeting held on January 17 recommended the elevation of 17 advocates and three judicial officers as judges of the high courts of Karnataka,

Allahabad and Madras. For the Madras High Court, the three-member collegium has recommended the names of advocates Venkatachari Lakshminarayana, Lekshmana Chandra Victoria Gowri, Pillaipakkam Bahukutumbi Balaji, Ramaswamy Neelakandan and Kandhasami Kulandaivelu Ramakrishnan.

It has also recommended the names of three judicial officers — Periyasamy Vadimalai, Ramachandran Kalaimathi and K Govindarajan Thilakavadi — for judgeship at the Madras High Court.

For the Allahabad High Court, the collegium has approved the proposal for elevation of the nine advocates - Prashant Kumar, Syed Qamar Hasan Rizvi, Manish Kumar Nigam, Manjive Shukla, Anish Kumar Gupta, Nand Prabha Shukla, Arun Kumar Singh Deshwal, Kshitij Shailendra and Vinod Diwaker.

The Collegium has recommended the names of advocates Vijaykumar Adagouda Patil, Rajesh Rai Kallangala and Tajali Moulasab Nadaf for elevation as judges of the Karnataka High Court.

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Protests mar fourth day of Assembly session

While AAP MLAs protested against L-G, CS for stalling works of Delhi Govt, BJP MLAs sat on dharna against anti-farmer policies of Kejriwal Govt

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The first half of the fourth day of the Delhi Assembly session saw multiple adjournments — first till 12.15 PM, the second till 12.30 PM and the third till 12.45 PM as BJP and AAP MLAs protested against the rival party.

While the BJP MLAs protested against the alleged “anti-farmer” policies of the AAP Government, the ruling party MLAs protested against Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena and top Delhi Government officers, including the Chief Secretary, for allegedly causing hindrance in the works of the Kejriwal Government.

The House proceedings could commence only at 11.30 AM in view of the protest by the AAP. In the House, the AAP MLAs protested against the L-G over interference in the Government’s work and trooped into the Well of the House, prompting the Speaker to adjourn the Assembly till 12.15 PM.

After the House reconvened, BJP MLAs entered the Well, carrying posters and raising slogans against Kejriwal over his alleged anti-farmer policies. As they did not heed the Speaker’s request to take their seats, he adjourned the house till 12.30 PM and again till 12.45 PM. Later the BJP MLAs were marshalled out of the Delhi Assembly as they continued to protest.

While the Opposition MLAs carried miniature ploughs as a mark of protest on the Assembly premises, AAP MLAs, including Atishi and Saurabh Bhardwaj, staged a protest in front of Mahatma Gandhi’s statue.

The AAP MLAs were out-



AAP MLAs stage a protest against Delhi Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena during a session of Delhi Legislative Assembly, in New Delhi on Thursday; (R) BJP MLAs stage a protest against AAP Govt’s anti-farmer policies, at Delhi Legislative Assembly in New Delhi on Thursday



Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

raged by the findings of the Delhi Legislative Assembly’s Committee on Petition’s report which said the L-G was involved in sabotaging Mohalla Clinics, stopping old-age pensions. The committee has now requested the President of India and Union Home Ministry to take cognisance and take appropriate action against the L-G and Chief Secretary. The role of the Chief Secretary in derailing projects is under the scanner, he has been directed to submit an action taken report on the Committee’s Recommendations in 30 days.

On his part, Leader of Opposition in the Delhi Assembly Ramvir Singh Bidhuri said, “There is less compensation on land acquisition and no subsidy is given on agricultural appliances. No hospital, colleges or sewer lines have been laid in villages of Delhi during eight years of the AAP Government.” He said if the Government will run away from a discussion on farmers’ issue in the House, BJP MLAs will stage a dharna outside the Chief Minister’s chamber in the Assembly.

He said that the Kejriwal Government is acquiring the agricultural land of farmers in Delhi at throwaway prices. On

26 December 2022, the land of the farmers of Nangli Razapur village was acquired at a price of only Rs 22 lakh per acre. This is open loot with the farmers.

The AAP MLAs were demanding suspension of the Chief Secretary and the secretaries of the health and finance departments for allegedly sabotaging the works of Delhi Government at the behest of L-G. The MLAs raised slogans against Saxena, accusing him of undermining the elected Government and causing harm to the public.

Senior AAP leader and MLA Atishi said, “Today we have gathered to protest outside the Vidhan Sabha as through IAS officers in Delhi, the L-G is obstructing all the developmental works of the State Government.

“He is doing this through the medium of the Principal Secretary (Finance), Principal Secretary (Health) and the Chief Secretary of Delhi.”

She claimed that the salaries of doctors and medical staff of Mohalla Clinics have not been dispensed and even the drivers and marshals of the Delhi Transport Corporation have not been given their salaries.

₹1,028 cr more for Yamuna cleaning gets Assembly nod

L-G tried to stop river work but Delhi Govt will never let it happen, says Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Assembly on Thursday approved an additional outlay of ₹1,028 crore for the cleaning of the Yamuna River.

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia placed the Supplementary Demand for Grants before the Assembly; saying, “We will not let road-blocks hamper Delhi’s development.”

To ensure a clean Yamuna, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is taking the progress report of each and every drainage and sewage treatment plant (STP) regularly and assessing it, Sisodia said.

Sisodia said Delhi Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) made every possible effort to stop the work of cleaning of the Yamuna by putting pressure on the officers and despite the approval of the budget from the House the funds to the Delhi Jal Board were stopped.

The Delhi Assembly also approved an additional grant of ₹100 crore for road works under the Mukhyamantri Sadak Yojana.

In addition, the PWD got an additional grant of ₹800 crore for road maintenance,



construction of additional classrooms and re-modeling of hospitals besides ₹50 crore for the Mukhyamantri Teerth Yatra Yojana and ₹75 crore for SC-ST Welfare.

While presenting the proposal in the House, Sisodia said, “The L-G made every possible effort to stop the work of cleaning the Yamuna by putting pressure on the officers. Despite

the budget being approved by the House, the works of the Delhi Jal Board were stopped. They tried to stop the projects earlier. When the projects did not stop, they stopped the funds, but the work of cleaning Yamuna is still on. The Delhi Government will never let the work of cleaning the Yamuna stop.”

The Government has not only got money released to the Delhi Jal Board but has also released an additional budget of ₹1,028 crore for cleaning the Yamuna. So that the work of cleaning the Yamuna can be expedited, he said.

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has said that Yamuna will be cleaned before the next elections at any cost.

Cite cases of L-G stopping work: Saxena office to Govt

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Refuting Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia’s statements on the Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) VK Saxena stopping Yamuna cleaning work, the L-G’s office said in a statement released on Thursday, “The current L-G took over seven months ago and has since then taken concrete steps that have visibly started showing results in

Najafgarh Drain and Yamuna River.”

The statement further said that the Deputy Chief Minister should have cited specific instances of L-G Saxena stopping works of cleaning the Yamuna River.

“But, he did not, because nothing of this sort happened. He is lying blatantly to cover his failure, which is their characteristic style. The DCM should do better,” the statement said.

First list of students for 1,800 pvt schools admissions today

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The first list of shortlisted students for admission to entry-level classes in more than 1,800 private schools of Delhi will be published on Friday, Delhi government’s Directorate of Education (DoE) said.

The names along with a waiting list will be issued on the notice board, as well as the official website of the schools, the DoE said on Thursday.

The second list of shortlisted students will be out on February 6. A child needs to be at least four years old to fill the form for nursery admission. The age limit is five years for admission in kindergarten and at least six years for Class 1 as on March 31, 2023.

The registration process for admission to entry-level classes in more than 1,800 private schools in Delhi for the



2023-24 academic session had begun on December 1 and ended on December 23.

“No deviation from the above schedule shall be permitted. Each school shall display the aforesaid admission schedule on its notice board and website. Further, each school shall ensure that application forms for admission are made available to all applicants till the last date of submission,” the DoE circular had said.

It had said a non-refundable amount of only Rs 25 can be charged as the admission registration fee. The purchase of the prospectus of a school by the parents will be optional, it said.

According to the circular, all private schools will reserve 25 per cent seats for economically weaker sections (EWS) and disadvantaged group (DG) students as well as for differently-abled children.

144 unsafe properties demolished: Govt to HC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Arvind Kejriwal Government Thursday told the Delhi High Court, which is hearing a plea related to earthquake preparedness, that out of over 10,000 buildings identified for assessing structural safety, more than 6,000 have been asked to show structural safety certificates and 144 unsafe buildings demolished in the national Capital.

The Delhi government said structural audit of 4,655 buildings has been done, while retrofitting is in progress in respect of 89.

The State Government filed a status report before a bench of Chief Justice Satish Chandra Sharma and Justice Subramonium Prasad which listed the matter for further hearing on February 16.

Pro-Khalistani graffitis removed from walls in parts of Capital

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Police on Thursday got removed multiple graffiti-raising objectionable slogans (“anti-national” and “Khalistan-related graffiti”) painted on a wall in the Paschim Vihar, Janak Puri, Vikas Puri, Peeragarhi areas of the city, officials said. Based on the information, a case u/s 153-B & 120-B IPC is being registered by Special Cell, police said.

The walls were painted with slogans like “Khalistan Zindabad” and “Referendum 2020”, they said.

When asked, Delhi Police PRO Suman Nalwa said, “Some people had painted anti-national, Khalistan-related graffiti at some locations in Delhi. This is not a security-related issue. Legal action will be taken in this matter.”

Delhi Police is ensuring that no wrong activities take

place ahead of Republic Day, she said.

Since SFJ (Sikhs for Justice) is a banned organisation, it is trying to make itself known and wants to be in the news,” she added.

Fringe organisation Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), run by a few radical Sikhs of foreign nationality in the US, Canada, the UK, etc, was declared unlawful by the Union Government under the provisions of Section 3(1) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.

The Centre, by its July 10, 2019 notification, had declared the SFJ an unlawful association and had banned it for five years, saying the group’s primary objective was to establish an “independent and sovereign country” in Punjab and it openly espouses the cause of Khalistan and in that process, challenges the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India.

Traders protest against Sadar shop sealing

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Traders of Sadar Bazar on Thursday staged a protest outside the Lieutenant Governor House here against the sealing of 25 shops in the market.

The Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI), the traders’ organisation of the Aam Aadmi Party, has also written a letter to Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena on the issue.

Earlier this month, 25 shops were sealed in Sadar Bazar in Old Delhi while five others received a notice to vacate their premises.

CTI chairman Brijesh Goyal and president Subhash Khandelwal said due to the sealing action in Sadar Bazar, shopkeepers of other markets have also become panic-stricken.

“Traders are getting sealing threats. At present, there is no government in the MCD in

Delhi and the control of the MCD is with the LG, all officers are reporting to the LG only,” Goyal said.

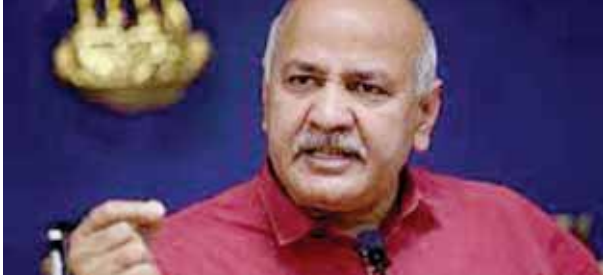
In the letter to the LG, Goyal has said till the new government is formed in the MCD, no sealing action should be taken.

We want the issue of sealing should be discussed in the MCD House, he added.

“Anyway, Delhi’s master plan 2041 is about to come and it is written that the market which has more than 70 per cent commercial activity comes under the category of the commercial market,” the letter read.

“The order for sealing action was issued on 11 April 2022. But action has been taken place after 10 months. What were the officers doing till now? Why were the shops suddenly sealed after 10 months? The role of officers is doubtful, it should be investigated,” it added.

Future of edu system lies in assessment, reforms, says Sisodia



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Thursday said that the true potential of the education system can be realised only through assessment and reform.

“Assessment and reform is the pillar on which the future of quality education stands; extremely proud to see Delhi leading such discussions,” Sisodia said while addressing a conference titled “Let’s Re-Learn to Assess”.

The conference was organized by the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and Delhi Teachers University.

Together with the support of Cambridge University Press and Assessments, DBSE, which is working on new assessment reforms in Delhi schools, will set new milestones, he said.

“When we are trying to make changes in the conven-

tional assessment system, then we must ensure that we work on assessment models which are manageable and do not pressurise the system, Group Director, Assessment, Research and Development, Cambridge University Press and Assessment, Tim Oates” said at the conference.

“In a country like India, we should aim for both achievements and equity in the assessment system rather than just focusing on one,” Oates said.

Oates also shared his insights on global best practices in assessment at the conference.

The session with Oates attempted to gain an in-depth understanding of the evolution of assessment strategies closely linked with successful assessment models worldwide. The assessment trends traversing around central and state boards in India in relation to policy design and strategic implementation were also discussed during the session.

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has asked the Centre-run Coal India Limited (CIL) to stop the supply and sale of coal to industrial units and other commercial organisations, except thermal power plants, in the National Capital Region.

The direction comes in view of the ban on the use of coal and other unapproved fuels in Delhi-NCR which came into effect on January 1. However, the use of low-

sulphur coal in thermal power plants is allowed. Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have been asked to ensure that companies of CIL do not supply or allot coal to the suppliers, stockists and agents of the Centre-owned coal producer, the CAQM said in a statement.

The commission has also asked industries and entities, including stockists, traders and dealers, to discontinue coal supply, except for thermal power plants, in Delhi-NCR.

It said that 84 industrial units not operating on approved fuels in the NCR

Amanatullah’s plea against ‘BC’ tag by police rejected

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday dismissed a plea by Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) MLA Amanatullah Khan challenging the Delhi Police’s decision to list him as a “bad character” after opening the “history sheet” against him. However, Justice Sudhir Kumar Jain gave Khan the liberty to approach the Delhi Police with a representation. The judge, while pronouncing the verdict, said the DCP concerned has given reasons in support of the action against the Delhi lawmaker as per law.

Khan’s lawyer had contended the authorities “acted in a malafide manner” and claimed the replica of the history sheet, which is a confidential document, was shared on social media by a spokesperson for a rival political party to malign his image.

The Delhi Police, on the other hand, had argued that due procedure was followed by the competent authorities to arrive at the decision. They contended “sufficient material” was not placed before the court



to prove malafide on their part.

Police said applicable rules were duly followed by the authorities and the decision was arrived at given the material on record and after application of mind.

The proposal for declaring Khan a bad character was sent on March 28 by the Jamia Nagar police station in the Southeast district and approved on March 30.

A total of 18 FIRs have been registered against Khan, the document stated.

According to police, a person who is involved in multiple criminal cases, including murder and attempt to murder, and can disturb peace in an area, can be designated a bad character.

HC gives guidelines to shield victims in POCSO cases

Survivor need not appear in court as minor’s physical presence in bail hearings impacts their psyche, says court

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A child survivor in the case of sexual assault has the option of not appearing physically in court when the latter is hearing a bail application filed by the accused facing charges under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the Delhi High Court said. The High Court has come out with guidelines for court proceedings in POCSO Act cases.

The High Court said the psychological impact on a POCSO case victim being present in court during the arguments is grave as there are allegations and accusations doubting the integrity and character of the survivor and family.

“The presence of the prosecutrix victim in court at the time of arguments, according to me, has an adverse impact on the psyche of the prosecutrix. The prosecutrix is forced to be present in court with the accused, who is the same person who has allegedly violated her.

“It was felt that it would be in the interest of the victim that she is not traumatised again and again by reliving the said incident by being present in court proceedings,” Justice Jasmeet Singh said in an order on January 11.

According to the guidelines, the victim can be produced virtually before the court, either by the investigating officer (IO) or support person, or by taking assistance of the District Legal Services Authority. Hybrid form of hearing of bail applications would suitably address the

concerns of the victim while safeguarding the rights of the accused, and they shall not come face to face. This can prevent the re-traumatisation of the victim, the guidelines said.

As per the guidelines, if an alleged victim gives in writing that her counsel or parent or guardian or support person shall appear on her behalf and make submissions on the bail application, insistence on her physical or virtual presence should not be made.

They said while recording the submissions or objections of the alleged victim on the bail application, appropriate questions may be put to her to elicit her response instead of bluntly asking her “Do you want bail to be given to the accused or not?”

Instead, “questions can be put to her to ascertain what her apprehensions and fears are in case the accused is granted bail in the matter, for bail is to be granted by the court concerned on the basis of overall appreciation of facts and circumstances of the case and in the light of well settled principles governing the grant of bail,” the guidelines said.

During the hearing of an appeal by an accused in a case of sexual assault on a minor girl, the counsel for the man and a representative of the legal services authority pointed out that many victims in POCSO cases were being asked to appear physically or virtually in court at the time of hearing bail applications. This led to a situation where the victims were forced to potentially interact with the accused, the counsel said.

“...I am in agreement that the said directions, if implemented in true letter, spirit and intent, may help in reducing the trauma of POCSO victims. In this view of the matter and in addition to the practice directions issued earlier, it is further directed that during bail hearings of a POCSO case, the following guidelines shall also be adhered to...,” the judge said.



areas of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan closed down their operations temporarily or permanently on their own.

Since October 1, only 21 industrial units have been found using highly-polluting unapproved fuels like coal and furnace oil and have subsequently been shut down.

Only two units have been found using such highly polluting fuels since January 1, indicating satisfactory compliance of the commission’s directions.

According to the CAQM, firewood and biomass briquettes can be used for religious purposes and cremation, wood or bamboo charcoal can be used for tandoors and grills of hotels, restaurants, banquet halls (with emission control system) and open eateries or dhabas. The use of wood charcoal for cloth ironing is also allowed.

Indian Army to have women Colonels soon

244 women being considered for post as against 108 vacancies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In an effort to bring women officers on a par with their male counterparts, the Army is now carrying out a selection of suitable women candidates for promotion from Lt Colonel to Colonel. Once selected, they will command their respective units.

Giving details here on Thursday, Army sources said here women officers Special No 3 Selection Board is being conducted for promotion from the rank of Lt Col to Colonel from January 9-22.

A total of 244 women officers are being considered for promotion against 108 vacancies, from 1992 batch to 2006 batch in various Arms and Services (Engineers, Signals,



Army Air Defence, Intelligence Corps, Army Service Corps, Army Ordnance Corps and Electrical and Mechanical Engineers).

The vacancies for this Special No 3 Selection Board have been released by the government to promote the affected women officers, to ensure gender parity in Indian Army, they said.

A total of 60 affected women officers have been called as observers for the

Selection Board, to ensure fair conduct and clarify their apprehensions, if any. On the culmination of the selection board, the 108 women officers who are declared fit, are under consideration to be posted on various command assignments. The first set of such postings will be issued by end of January 2023, sources said.

Women Officers are serving proudly and confidently in various operational theatres of the Indian Army. With an aim

to provide equal opportunities to women, the Indian Army has granted Permanent Commission (PC) to women officers on a par with their male counterparts. With the grant of PC, women officers can aspire to achieve greater glory and shoulder higher ranks and responsibility.

All women officers granted PC are undergoing special training courses and challenging military assignments for higher leadership roles in the Indian Army. Permanent Commission to Women Officers in junior batches has also commenced, in which they are considered for PC in their 10th year of service.

Moreover, for the first time, five Women Officers (WOs) have cleared the prestigious Defence Services Staff Course (DSSC) and Defence Services Technical Staff Course (DSTSC) Exam, which is held annually in the month of September. The five WOs will undergo a one year course and give them adequate weightage while being considered for command appointments.

NDRF to initiate training prog to combat forest fires

Move comes after Parl panel expresses concern over non-inclusion of forest fires in national disaster list

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) is all set to introduce a comprehensive forest fires control and combat training programme for its personnel to mitigate the losses due to such disasters.

The Force will play an active role in this disaster combat discipline and three of its teams will begin their training from February 6, NDRF Director General (DG) Atul Karwal said at the 18th Raising Day event here.

The move comes months after a Parliamentary panel flagged concern in 2022 over non-inclusion of forest fires as part of disasters tackled by the federal contingency force.

The panel had said, “Forest



Union MoS for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai being presented a memento by National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) DG Atul Karwal during the 18th Raising Day of NDRF, in New Delhi on Thursday

PTI

fires are a growing threat globally now. The incidents of forest fires not only damage the forest resources but also damage biodiversity, cause climate change, adversely impact tribal livelihood and lead to severe distress among flora and fauna of forests.”

In view of the increase of these incidents in the country, forest fires should be “expedientiously” added to the list of disasters tackled by the NDRF, the panel had advised.

“Due to the limited capacity of the forest department to fight huge forest fires, it is high

time that the same is tackled by a highly trained force on disasters,” it had noted.

The NDRF was in touch with the Ministry of Environment and Forests in connection with the training on tackling fires in the jungles.Eight more regional response centres (RRCs) for the NDRF will also be established across the country in the future, the DG said.

The RRCs are units that have small but self-contained teams of NDRF at designated physical locations in various States that are vulnerable to dis-

asters. The NDRF was raised January 19, 2006 and has a total of 16 battalions (16,000 personnel), manning 28 RRCs, located at various places across the country.

“We have got a new land, about 60-65 acres, to base a battalion near Haldwani in Uttarakhand while land for a RRC in Chennai has also been sanctioned,” the DG said.

The Assam government has also decided to sanction land for housing the 1st battalion of the Force that is present in that State for about 16 years now, the DG said.

While officiating as the chief guest of the raising day event, Junior Home Minister Nityanand Rai praised the role of NDRF in quickly responding to all types of catastrophes, even in the face of challenges.

You have shown courage and worked without caring for facilities and without “caring for your respect” and you have gone beyond your call of duty...We saw especially during cyclone Amphan (2020)...The NDRF did everything to save Bengal, the Minister added.

IN SHORT

INDIA ASKS PAK TO PROBE HARRYING AT HIGH COMMISSION

New Delhi: India has asked Pakistan to investigate alleged sexual harassment of an Indian woman inside the Pakistan High Commission premises here, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Thursday. The woman academician from Punjab last week accused some officials at the visa section of the Pakistan High Commission of making lewd remarks and resorting to sexual harassment. MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the MEA has taken serious note of this complaint.

SC QUASHES GOOGLE'S PLEA AGAINST NCLAT ORDER

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Thursday refused to entertain the plea of US tech giant Google against an order of the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) refusing an interim stay on the Competition Commission of India imposing a Rs 1,337 crore penalty on it. A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices PS Narasimha and J B Pardiwala granted the US firm seven days to deposit 10 per cent of the penalty and directed the NCLAT to decide Google's appeal against the competition regulator's order by March 31 this year.

CRPF ISSUES SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES TO STAFFERS

New Delhi: The CRPF has issued a 2-page fresh set of social media guidelines for its personnel, asking them not to comment on controversial or political matters that may come back to “haunt” them later. Among others, the guidelines suggested some “don'ts” including not revealing the exact posting and nature of work if working in a sensitive ministry or organisation.

SC UPHOLDS DISMISSAL OF CRPF CONSTABLE

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Thursday upheld the dismissal of a CRPF constable who misbehaved with his senior under intoxication, saying misconduct and insubordination cannot be tolerated in a disciplined force. A bench of Justices M R Shah and C T Ravikumar quashed an order of the Rajasthan HC which had set aside the penalty imposed by the disciplinary authority and directed reinstatement of the constable in service with notional benefits without any back wages.

DELHI HC GRANTS INTERIM BAIL TO KULDEEP SENGAR

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court on Thursday granted interim bail to expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar, serving 10 years' imprisonment for the death of the Unnao rape victim's father in custody, to attend his daughter's wedding. Justice Dinesh Kumar Sharma suspended the sentence from January 27 to February 10 and said a division bench of the high court has already granted interim relief to Sengar, and sufficient conditions have been imposed on him.

UDFA SEEKS NEET PG-2023 EXAMS' POSTPONEMENT

New Delhi: The United Doctors Front Association has written to Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya seeking postponement of the NEET PG-2023 examination, scheduled on March 5, by two-three months. The doctors' body has also sought to revise the new internship cut-off date, stating that many interns still remain ineligible.

INDIA GETS ACCESS TO NAVY STAFF DETAINED IN QATAR

New Delhi: India has got its third consular access to the eight former Navy personnel detained in Qatar during which their well-being was ascertained. MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi on Thursday reiterated that the government continues to attach high priority to this matter. The Indian nationals have been in detention in Qatar for four months now.

‘SG OPINION TO GOVT NOT EXEMPTED UNDER RTI’

New Delhi: An opinion tendered by the Solicitor General to the Government cannot be exempt from disclosure under the Right to Information (RTI) Act and the law officer cannot be treated as a private lawyer rendering service to a client,” the Delhi High Court was told on Thursday. The submissions were made before Justice Prathiba M Singh by the counsel appearing for an RTI applicant in the Centre's challenge to a December 2011 order of the CIC directing disclosure of certain advice given by the Solicitor General of India to the telecom department.

India recorded 50% more domestic flyers in 2022, says DGCA

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 50 percent more passengers flew domestically in India in 2022, compared to 2021.

“Passengers carried by domestic airlines between January 2022 and December 2022 were 1232.45 lakhs as against 838.14 lakhs during the corresponding period of the previous year thereby registering an annual growth of 47.05 per cent and monthly growth of 13.69 per cent,” the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said on Thursday.

The passenger load factors of all major airlines – Air India, SpiceJet, GoFirst, IndiGo, Akasa Air, AirAsia India and Vistara witnessed an upward trend in December 2022 compared to November 2022, as per the DGCA data.

The passenger load factor



measures the seat capacity utilisation of the airline.

IndiGo recorded a market share of 56.1 per cent followed by Vistara with a 9.2 per cent share. SpiceJet and Air India had an 8.7 per cent market share, shows the official data.

During December 2022, a total of 408 passenger-related

complaints were received by the scheduled domestic airlines. The major reasons for complaints are flight problems and refunds.

Airlines have received a total of 408 complaints, out of which 401 (approx. 98 per cent) have been addressed, the DGCA data shows.

Centre: Mulling Ram Setu as National heritage monument

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre told the Supreme Court on Thursday that it was looking into the issue related to declaring Ram Sethu as a national heritage monument.

A Bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice J B Pardiwala, hearing a PIL filed by former Rajya Sabha lawmaker Subramanian Swamy on the issue, asked the BJP leader to make a representation to the government if he wished so.

“Learned Solicitor General (Tushar Mehta) states that a process is currently underway in the Ministry of Culture. He states that the petitioner (Swamy) may submit additional communication if he may so wish,” the bench said.

The court asked the Centre to take a decision on the issue and granted Swamy the liberty to move before it again if he is dissatisfied and disposed of his interim application on the issue.

“I do not want to meet anybody... We are in the same party. It was there in our manifesto. Let them decide in six weeks or whatever,” Swamy said.

“I will come again,” the BJP leader said. Swamy said that in 2019, the then Culture Minister Prahlad Patel had called a meeting on the issue and had made a recommendation for declaring the Ram Sethu as a national heritage monument.

“The issue is that they have to say-- ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ he said.

The law officer said that the Union Government was looking into it.

Normal ties only after Pak stops cross-border terrorism, says MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Days after Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's flip-flop on holding talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on all issues, India on Thursday said it always wanted normal neighbourly ties but Islamabad should stop cross-border terrorism.

Making India's stand clear here, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said, “We have said that we have always wanted normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan. But there should be a conducive atmosphere which does not have terror, hostility or violence. That remains our position.”

His reaction came two days



after Sharif 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 on Kashmir.

During an interview to the Dubai-based Al Arabiya news channel on Monday, he also said Pakistan wants to live in peace with India. 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.”

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.

SC to hear plea on Lalit Modi's ‘scurrilous’ remark against ex-AG Rohatgi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to hear a plea that alleged ex-IPL Commissioner Lalit Modi made “scurrilous” remarks in his social media post against former Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi.

As senior advocate Kapil Sibal informed the court that Modi has made “scurrilous allegations” against Rohatgi without any basis, the bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala said: “Give us the paper book. We will keep the IA (interim application) on board before an



appropriate bench next Friday,” The ex-IPL commissioner, in his Instagram post, had made some comments about Rohatgi. Later, through another post, he reportedly apologised to the advocate.

The top court had, last year, appointed former apex court judge Justice R V Raveendran as a mediator to settle the family property dispute involving the former IPL head and his mother Bina Modi.

UP Govt opposes Mishra's bail, says Kheri violence heinous

New Delhi: The Uttar Pradesh Government on Thursday termed the Lakhimpur Kheri violence as “grave and heinous” and opposed the bail plea of Union Minister Ajay Kumar Mishra's son Ashish Mishra, who is one of the accused.

A Bench of Justice Surya Kant and Justice J K Maheshwari reserved its order after it heard submissions from Additional Advocate General for Uttar Pradesh Garima Prashad, and senior advocates Mukul Rohatgi and Dushyant Dave.

Opposing the bail plea, Prashad told the top court that the crime was grave. “It is a grave and heinous crime and (granting bail) will send a wrong signal to society,” she said.

Senior advocate Dushyant Dave, appearing for those opposing the bail plea, said grant of bail will send a terrible message to society.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Mishra, strongly opposed Dave's submission and submitted that his client has been in custody for more than a year and the way the trial is going, it will take seven to eight years to complete it.

On October 3, 2021, eight people were killed in Lakhimpur Kheri district's Tikunia in a violence that erupted when farmers were protesting then Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya's visit to the area.

PNS

Vande Bharat to get sleeper coaches from March 2025

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Buoyed by the success of the ‘Made in India’ state-of-the-art Vande Bharat Express trains with Chair Cars, the Indian Railways has decided to roll out its ‘Sleeper’ version by March 2025.

The Vande Bharat ‘Sleeper’ train set is likely to have 16 coaches — 11 AC III tier, four AC II tier and one AC I class coaches — that can accommodate 887 passengers as per the initial design prepared by the Chennai-based Integral Coach Factory (ICF), which has been making trains for Indian Railways.

The national transporter is now focusing on introducing a large number of these set of trains in its network.

The newly-launched Vande Bharat trains have recently also come in for special praise from London-based Financial Times. The daily in its article recalled Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Independence Day speech in 2021 when he promised to “connect every corner of the

country” with 75 Vande Bharat trains.

“Designed, engineered, and built locally, the train is a showcase project for the “Make in India” industrial policy of Narendra Modi's nationalist government, which aims to build indigenous capacity in everything from microchips to combat helicopters, using local knowhow and talent while leveraging strategic partnerships with foreign companies.

The train is an exemplar of India's industrial model, in which it is following a much lower-cost, but arguably more pragmatic version of China's economic take-off in recent decades, in which building railways played a role,” read the FT article early this month.

To introduce more of the existing version, the Ministry of Railways has floated tenders for 200 trains, to be manufactured at its various units including the ICF that has so far manufactured all the eight Vande Bharat trains in operation including the latest one between Secunderabad and Visakhapatnam, flagged off by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

One face takes credit for good, but no flak for bad, Didi slams PM

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

For the first time in many months Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi for extracting credit for every project launched but taking no liability for failures.

Stopping short of mentioning Modi's name the Bengal Chief Minister said, "wherever you go you will find only one face ... he will take credit for every project ... (they will claim) he is giving ration, he is giving houses, he is giving food, he is giving stipends ... then why doesn't he take liability for the disabilities ... then if there is death we will say that he has given death, he has given covid, he has given notebandi (demonetization) he has given inflation, he has hiked the price of gas, he has taken away the rights of the people."

The Chief Minister who was addressing an audience at Alipurduar in North Bengal said not everyone's picture deserved to be displayed for public viewing. "Pictures do not say everything ... for that to happen you should be in public mind ... you should be loved and respected by them ... you should understand their woes," Banerjee said alleging the how the Centre had withheld all the funds due to the State.

"The State does not collect taxes. It is the Centre that does so ... The State gets 60 percent of the tax collected by the Centre ... but they have withheld the funds ... which is required for a number of schemes ... you (Centre) are not giving the funds for 100-days' work scheme you are not giving funds for anything so that the State's projects are getting hampered," Banerjee said, adding she would not beg

before the Centre for her State's dues. "I will not beg before you. I want to see how far you can go with this," she said.

Banerjee's attack comes in an apparent view of the approaching panchayat elections; experts felt as she had curiously been silent on the Prime Minister and targeted Home Minister Amit Shah during the past so many months for the heightened activities of the central investigating agencies post unearthing of the recruitment scam, cattle smuggling and other cases. She said "I do not believe that the Prime Minister is behind these vindictive raids."

Apparently attacking Modi for sending central teams to inspect the alleged corruption in distributing houses under the Prime Minister Awaas Yojna scheme Banerjee said "they are sending fact finding teams for Awaas Yojna ... Bar



Council of India is sending team to the High Court for a problem which should ideally be handled by the State Bar Council ... but they will not

Only BJP can stop TMC's goonda raj: Nadda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Modi sarkar imandaron ki sarkar, Didi apki sarkar baimano ki sarkar (Modi's government is an honest government while the state government is a corrupt one).

That is how BJP national president JP Nadda on Thursday started his second inning as the saffron party chief by attacking Mamata Banerjee.

Launching a scathing attack on Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee holding her responsible for all the anomalies in the State and promising jobs and everything that came with 'good days' Nadda said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi sends money from Delhi and here those who are in power misappropriate them



... this will not allowed to continue ... you (TMC government) have to account for every penny you are granted because the money belongs to the people you rule."

Speaking at a rally in Nadia district Nadda who was reappointed to his office on Wednesday said, only the BJP could stop the corruption and goonda raj perpetrated by the TMC. "Only BJP can stop

Rejection for PM's critique is against freedom of speech: SC Collegium

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



Collegium reproduced the IB report against Sathyan. "As per open sources, two posts made by him, i.e. sharing of an article published in 'The Quint', which was critical of the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi; and another post regarding committing of suicide by medical aspirant Anitha, who ended her life in 2017 since she was unable to clear NEET, portraying it as a killing by 'political betrayal' and a tag stating 'shame of you India' came to notice," said the IB note reproduced in the Collegium statement.

"The Intelligence Bureau has reported that he enjoys a good personal and profes-



sional image and that nothing adverse has come to notice against his integrity. Shri Sathyan belongs to the Christian community. The IB report notes that he does not have any overt political leanings.

In this backdrop, the adverse comments of the IB extracted above in respect of posts made by him i.e. sharing an article published in 'The Quint' and another post regarding committing of suicide by a medical aspirant candidate in 2017 will not impinge on the suitability, character or integrity of Shri Sathyan," said Collegium reiterating its recommendation.

'Nixing advocate's elevation as HC judge due to orientation is against equality'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Days after Law Minister Kiren Rijiju's letter seeking government representation in Collegium, the Supreme Court Collegium reiterated its recommendation for appointing senior advocate Saurabh Kirpal, a gay person as a Judge of Delhi High Court, rejecting the Centre's contention that though homosexuality stands in India, same-sex marriage is still bereft of recognition. Three page letter of Supreme Court Collegium comprising Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and Justices SK Kaul and KM Joseph dated November 18, published on the apex court's website on Thursday reminded the Centre that rejecting

Kirpal on sexual preferences, citing RAW reports is against constitutional principles on equality.

"The recommendation unanimously made by the Collegium of the Delhi High Court on October 13, 2017 and approved by the Supreme Court Collegium on November 11, 2021 has been referred back to us on November 25, 2022 for reconsideration in light of the observations made in the file," said the Collegium statement.

"From the letters of the Research & Analysis Wing (R&AW) dated April 11, 2019 and March 18, 2021, it appears that there are two objections to the recommendation which was made by the Collegium of this court on November 11, 2021 approving the name of

Shri Saurabh Kirpal namely: (i) the partner of Shri Saurabh Kirpal is a Swiss national, and (ii) he is in an intimate relationship and is open about his sexual orientation," the statement said, went on lauding Kirpal for being open about his sexual orientation, saying it "goes to his credit" that he has not been surreptitious about it.

"In this backdrop, the Collegium resolves to reiterate its recommendation dated 11 November, 2021 for appointment of Shri Saurabh Kirpal as a Judge of the Delhi High Court which needs to be processed expeditiously," said the last paragraph of the statement of Collegium. Saurabh Kirpal is the son of former Chief Justice of India BN Kirpal.

Nadda begins campaign on PM's mandated 'border village connect'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Making a beginning on the campaign for the 'border village connect' mandated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP president JP Nadda on Thursday inaugurated the 'Border Village Sampark Abhiyaan' at Kankamura in West Tripura district.



The campaign led by the Youth Morcha of the BJP will connect with over 200 border villages across 8 states and 50 districts across the country.

Talking about the programme, the Bhartiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) President and BJP MP from Karnataka Tejasvi Surya said "under it BJYM karyakarta will go to border villages and stay there for 3 days to have direct interaction with the locals and

understand their aspirations, apprehensions, life and culture."

The BJP youth workers will also disseminate information about the Union Government's "vibrant villages program to the residents and take their feedback about the changes brought about in their day to day life with this development policy of the Modi government," he said.

The BJYM leader said the border regions of the nation are "finally getting the attention and infrastructural development that had eluded them for decades."

Coming back to my roots with bowed head: Rahul

MOHIT KANDHARI/PNS ■ JAMMU/ NEW DELHI

The much awaited last leg of the Rahul Gandhi led Bharat Jodo Yatra which kick started at Kanniyakumari in September last year, entered Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday. The 3500-km-long foot march traversing several States and vivid seasons and weather conditions will do its march in a hybrid mode like padyatra, vehicle convoys etc given the security reason.

Some Congress leaders are making efforts to cover even the Valley on foot march but some others are citing security concerns in such a scenario.

Rahul and his contingent entered Lakhanpur which is 90 km from Jammu to finally hoist the flag in Srinagar on January 30 on the occasion of Mahatma Gandhi's martyr-

dom. Hundreds of people walked alongside the former Congress president. In a customary handover function, Punjab's Congress unit gave the party flag to a leader from the Jammu and Kashmir unit.

Addressing his first public meeting at Lakhanpur, Rahul said the government is indulging in mass pickpocketing by diverting the attention of people and then looting them. He listed hatred, violence, unemployment and price rise as the main issues confronting the country and blamed the media for not highlighting them.

Criticising the media for not focusing on the right issues, he said it uses topics such as Bollywood stars Aishwarya Rai and Akshay Kumar to divert the attention of people. Injecting a personal note, Rahul said his ancestors belonged to this land and

he felt he was returning home.

"I am going back to my roots, I know the suffering of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and come to you with a bowed head," he said adding he has been walking about seven hours a day, covering 25 km each day, but nobody was tired as some people had predicted. "I later felt we are not feeling tired because people are pushing us forward. If someone falls, he is supported within seconds... Nobody is asking anyone what is your religion," he said.

Welcoming him into the union territory, National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah drew a parallel between the Shankaracharya and Rahul. "Many years ago, Shankaracharya had undertaken a yatra from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. And today you are doing it," Abdullah said.



The yatra is scheduled to pass J&K from January 19-30. "Rahul would undertake padyatra in Jammu and Kashmir but there would be no compromise with security. We are having a consultation with the state authorities regarding the security and maybe the distance on foot could be curtailed," said Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh.

According to reports from Jammu, J&K DGP Dilbag Singh said adequate security will be provided to the march when it reaches the Union territory. The police said it will be regulated in such a manner that people do not face any inconvenience. He also asserted that the Yatra will be 'guided from the security point of view as well wherever it is needed'.

Sabari railway line will help drug traffickers, says former DRI boss

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

With the much publicized Kasaragod-Thiruvananthapuram Silver Line Rail getting shelved due to massive opposition from environmentalists and people of the State, some vested interests have come together pitching for the revival of the 111-km-long Angamali-Sabari Rail Line ostensibly for the benefit of Lord Ayyappa devotees from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh who undertake the annual pilgrimage to Sabarimala, the holy shrine atop Western Ghats.

Four Lok Sabha members Anto Antony, Haiby Eden, Dean Kuriakose (all Congress) and Thomas Chazhikkadan (Kerala Congress Mani) and four MLAs, Roji John, Sebastian Kulathunkal



Mathew Kuzhalsadan and Eldhose Kunnappilli have issued statements demanding the immediate implementation of the Sabari Rail Line which they claim would make pilgrimage to Sabarimala easy. However, BV Kumar, IRS officer who led the country's Revenue Intelligence for years, and who is familiar with the operation of narcotics traders in India, sounded caution while speaking about the proposed Sabari Rail. "The Western Ghats close to Sabarimala are places 'well known' as the ganja/marijuana cultivation

centres in India. Narcotics traders have commissioned tribal communities in the region to cultivate ganja in reserve forests along Tamil Nadu, Kerala border," said Kumar. He said marijuana was being transported to Kochi via road. "The narcotics lobby has been understood that it is no more safe. So they need an alternate mechanism to ferry the commodity. Train is an ideal mode of transport for this mafia," he said.

E Sreedharan, former chief of Metro Rail has warned the Centre and State Governments. "Sabarimala pilgrimage is just for four months. Is there any need to cater exclusively to the pilgrims for this period. Where will the travellers come from once the main doors of the Lord Ayyappa temples are shut," Sreedharan told Prime Minister Modi in a letter.

India identifies 3 priorities to create better global healthcare system

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Under the health vertical of the G-20, India has identified three priorities in order to create a more resilient, responsive and inclusive approach to building a better global healthcare system with special emphasis on "digital health."

The three priorities are Health Emergencies Prevention, Preparedness, and Response, Strengthening Cooperation in Pharmaceutical Sector with a focus on Access and Availability to safe, effective, quality, and Affordable Medical Countermeasures (vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics) and Digital Health Innovations and Solutions to Aid Universal Health Coverage and Improve Healthcare Service Delivery, officials said.

The G20 India's Presidency Health Track will comprise four Health Working Group (HWG) meetings and one Health Ministerial Meeting (HMM).

India plans to host four side events on various topics along with HWG meetings to enrich, supplement and sup-

port G20 discussions. These include side events on Medical Value Travel and Digital Health. The meetings will be held in different locations across the country and this will help to highlight India's rich and diverse cultures.

The first Health Working Group meeting is underway at Thiruvananthapuram and the three-day meet will conclude on Friday.

In 2018, the =World Health Organisation (WHO) adopted the Digital Health Resolution tabled by India. India has asserted that digital service delivery is the need of the hour in healthcare. 'Digital Health' can help to ensure accessibility,

affordability, quality, and timely services supporting Universal Health Coverage (UHC). New digital discoveries have helped to accelerate progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), aiming for priorities, the officials said.

However, the challenge is to ensure global coordination, bringing together expertise, adopting a trusted framework, and promoting the culture of Global Public Digital Goods, along with allowing neutral data sharing across borders and G-20 is an ideal platform for galvanizing attention from all countries and stakeholders, they added.

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 **RAJESH SHARMA / RAKHI SHARMA** (borrower/s) has availed Home loan facility vide facility agreement number **LBGUR0002388147** located at **FLAT NO. D-104, CAPITAL GATEWAY, SECTOR 111, 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 17, 2023** informing that **KNS INFRACON PRIVATE LIMITED** has cancelled the allotment of the above mentioned property. You are therefore requested to resolve this matter with the builder within 7 days from the date of this publication.

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

Dated: January 20 2023 **For ICICI Bank Limited**
Place: Delhi/ NCR **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 **Mr. BONTHA SURESH BABU/ THOGATI DAHAYANTHI** (borrower/s) has availed Home loan facility vide facility agreement number **LBDEL00002374553** located at **T-1/A-114 "NCR, MONARCH", PLOT- GH- 02C, SECTOR 01, GREATER NOIDA**. The borrower/s has failed to pay the contractual amount to the builder as per the terms and conditions of the agreement.

The Bank had informed the same to the borrower through letter dated **January 17, 2023** informing that **JSS 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 bound and/or responsible for any other allotment done by the builder.

Dated: January 20, 2023 **For ICICI Bank Limited**
Place: Delhi/ NCR **Sd-**

noida **New Okhla Industrial Development Authority**

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

E-TENDER NOTICE

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

A) Fresh-Tender Work :-

S. No.	Jobs No.	Name of the Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
1	70/DGM/SM(WC-5)/2022-2023	M/o Building (C/o Community Toilet 2 nos. near Play Ground & Tikona Park in sector-71), Noida.	42.42

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 02.02.2023 up to 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 03.02.2023 at 11.00 AM.

B) Re-Tender Work :-

S. No.	Jobs No.	Name of the Work	Tender Amount (Rs. Lacs)
2	33/DGM/SM(WC-2)/2022-2023	M/o Drain (C/o Water Harvesting Pit sector-18, 16A, 16B & near Botanical Garden Bus Stand), Noida.	47.11
3	35/DGM/SM(WC-2)/2022-23	D/o Village (Laying of C.C. Pavement on Masjid road near Hydrant in Village Nithari sector-31), Noida.	35.13
4	38/DGM/SM(WC-2)/2022-23	D/o Village & M/o Village (P/L Retro Reflective sign Board in Village Morna and repair of C.C. road in front of Primary School Raghunathpur road to Haldhar Medicos Morna), Noida.	44.47
5	17/DGM/SM(WC-7)/ET/2022-23	C/o Footover Bridge (Repair of Footover Bridge on DSC Road in front of Police Chowki NSEZ) Noida	59.11
6	27/DGM/SM(WC-4)/ET/2022-23	M/o Road (Repair of footpath at road No.-6 near S.P.S. Compound sector-66), Noida.	40.81

The above tenders can be uploaded by dated 27.01.2023 up to 5.00 PM. Pre-qualification shall be opened/downloaded on dated 30.01.2023 at 11.00 AM.

Dy. General Manager (Civil)
NOIDA

CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA

FIRST COLUMN

WILL FM REJIG INCOME TAX RATES

This is the last full budget of the Government



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Earlier this week, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman expressed solidarity with the huge middle-class population in India, as she gears up to present her fifth consecutive Budget. She was trying to address a large slice of the political economy, which is growing exponentially, making India one of the largest consumer markets in the world.

India with its 800 million internet users is one of the largest digitally connected democracies in the world, which can put many richer nations into a moment of self-doubt. A majority of this digitally connected population is what is loosely defined as the middle class in India, i.e., who have disposable income to spare, after taking care of their monthly expenses and, therefore, the money can be spent on various specs of the economy such as travel and leisure, hospitality, entertainment, etc.

Sitharaman knows quite well that a huge chunk of this middle class is also a voter base, for her government for the year 2024. Therefore, the expectations of a prudent Budget, without big ticket reforms, with an eye on rural as well middle class, seems reasonable.

The government in the upcoming Budget is most likely to introduce more capex primarily in social, education and healthcare sectors. This proposed capital expenditure is being planned to keep the economy growing, in a year, crucial before general elections.

Yet the capital needed for the expenditure is limited, as except for tax collections, which have shown a month on month jump for nearly a year now, the government has little else money. The external world, primarily the prosperous nations (which are major drivers of world economy), are reporting high inflation due to the rise in fuel costs as a fall out of the war in Ukraine.

The high inflation has forced central banks of all these nations to increase the bank rates. This means after having near zero interest rates for many decades the numbers now are looking tempting for many fund managers to invest in their local markets.

The second way of generating money for the capital expenditure could be through asset monetisation or disinvestment. Now, the government's window for quick asset monetisation is limited, in the upcoming fiscal year, as it will clash with the political economy. The government has in the past two budgets spelt out the intention of divesting two large public sector banks. But this seems unachievable in the upcoming fiscal, given the stiff resistance it may face from the bank unions.


A few of the states have restored the Old Pension Scheme, thereby putting many decades of financial burden on their future generations. The only option left for the government in bank privatisation could be IDBI, which can bring in some money, provided the market conditions are right and the global economy, including China don't slide further. The other proposed disinvestment of Shipping Corporation of India, Concor, etc., have been in the pipeline for some years.

This means the government may have to look at the third option of raising revenues through direct and indirect taxes for meeting the capital expenditure in an election year, i.e., assembly elections in major states slated for 2023, followed by general elections in 2024.

This brings us back as to why Sitharaman chose to highlight and empathise with the middle class earlier this week. She knows that she can't increase any taxes for the middle class, including the salaried, during this crucial year. She has to put some money into the hands of the electorate. This means effective handling and possible recalibration of personal income tax rates. She can't increase taxes for corporations, as it can further dry up private sector investment. Her challenge will be to maintain a healthy balance between individual expectations and a sound budget in an electorally crucial budget.

(The author is a foreign affairs commentator)

Fertiliser subsidy: Shortcuts won't work



UTTAM GUPTA

The initiatives taken by the Government are unlikely to bring down the quantum of fertiliser subsidy

Propelled by the need to return to fiscal consolidation path and targeting fiscal deficit as a proportion of GDP at 5.9 per cent for financial year (FY) 2023-24 (against 6.4 per cent for FY 2022-23), the Union government is keen to rein in major subsidies. It wants to slash fertilizer subsidies from the likely actual of around Rs 250,000 crore during the current FY to Rs 140,000-150,000 crore during 2023-24.

Does it have measures to deliver? Is it merely banking on a drop in international fertiliser prices?

Fertilizer subsidy is payments made to manufacturers or importers to cover the excess of the cost of production/import and distribution (or cost of supply) over a low maximum retail price (MRP) they are directed by the Union Government to charge from the farmers. The subsidy on each ton of fertilizer produced (or imported) and sold is nothing but the difference between the cost of supply and MRP.

When multiplied by the total quantity of fertilizer sold in a year, it gives aggregate subsidy payments, as reflected in the budget.

Even as fertiliser sales are primarily demand driven (this in turn, depends on the weather, area sown under different crops, fertilizer use per hectare and so on), the other two crucial factors are MRP and the cost of supply. As for MRP, given the massive political ramifications of any hike and a spate of assembly elections during 2023 followed by general elections in 2024, the government won't dare to bring about even a small hike, forget a steep jump needed for slashing the subsidy by over Rs 100,000 crore.

As for the cost of supply, India is overwhelmingly dependent on imports. Nearly 50 per cent of India's requirement of diammonium phosphate (DAP) is imported, whereas in case of muriate of potash (MOP), our import dependence is 100 per cent. Similarly, all phosphoric acid and the bulk of ammonia (raw materials or RMs used in making of DAP and other non-urea fertilisers) are imported. About one-third of the urea demand is imported. Even for the balance of two-thirds supplied domestically, India depends on the import of natural gas (NG) for at least 1/3rd of its requirement.

Of the total potash imports, India draws close to 50 per cent from Russia and Belarus. Russia, Belarus and Ukraine together account for 20 per cent of our phosphoric acid import. Additionally, India gets around 15 per cent of its ammonia imports from Russia who also supplies 10 per cent of our NG imports. Nearly 60 per cent of Indian DAP imports come from China and Saudi Arabia.

In the case of urea, over one-third of Indian imports come from China. The war following military action by Russia and sanctions imposed on it by European countries and the USA has resulted in dis-

ruption in supplies from the region and steep increase in price of both fertilisers as well as RMs used in their production. All of these cost escalations were absorbed by the Centre by increasing subsidies during 2022-23 even as MRPs of all fertilisers were kept unchanged.

Given the unfolding geo-political and military situation with NATO countries getting increasingly entangled in the conflict and Russia and Ukraine showing no sign of scaling down hostilities (forget ending), there seems to be no end to the war at least till the end of 2023.

Therefore, any relief from the current tight global supply and elevated fertiliser prices is highly unlikely. The government has been trying to diversify sources of supply, for instance, buying more of MOP from Canada, Israel, Jordan, etc., or more of DAP from Saudi Arabia and Morocco. But, these efforts have only helped in ensuring adequate supplies but not much relief in securing lower prices.

Meanwhile, Chemicals and Fertiliser Minister Mansukh Mandaviya has led delegations to major supplier countries seeking long-term agreements. These are welcome moves but the timing isn't apt. When the global supply-demand scenario is tight, India is unlikely to secure good price deals, notwithstanding some concession over the prevailing high price in lieu of our committing to buy long-term.

In regard to NG, the government is working on a couple of initiatives such as "incentivizing companies that contract fuel at better prices", idea of an aggregator for

procuring the fuel on behalf of fertilizer producers and buying NG from gas exchanges.

Since 2015, the Centre has been running a system of pooling NG to supply all urea plants connected to a national grid at a uniform delivered price (UDP).

Even as individual units pay as per their respective weighted average delivered cost, the pool operator, viz. GAIL India Limited, notifies the UDP at the beginning of every month. A unit that pays less than UDP has to deposit the differential amount with the pool, whereas another unit that pays more gets the difference from the pool.

Under the scheme, the ability of a urea manufacturer to purchase gas at a lower price is not rewarded, just as there is no disincentive for others who buy at a higher price. Hence, any talk of "incentivising companies that contract fuel at better prices" is laughable.

The idea of an aggregator procuring fuel on behalf of Indian fertiliser producers is appealing as consolidation of demand enhances the negotiating power with global suppliers. But then, GAIL India Limited, in coordination with the Department of Fertilisers (DoF), is already doing this by assessing the deficit in supply from existing sources vis-à-vis the projected demand and importing LNG to plug it.

Buying NG from gas exchanges won't help either. This is because the quantity traded at the exchange is miniscule. The government is also pinning hopes on Nano liquid urea or urea in the form of nanoparticles. It provides nitrogen to plants in liquid form as an alternative to conventional urea. A 500ml bottle of nano urea is equivalent to a 45kg bag of conventional urea. While, selling the latter for Rs 242 requires subsidy support of Rs 2,758, the former is available to farmers at the same price sans subsidy.

A 45kg bag of conventional urea contains 46 percent 'N' or 20 kg (45x0.46), whereas a 500ml bottle of nano urea has 4 percent 'N' or 20 grams (500x.04). Yet, the two are treated as equal. Can a mere 20 grams in nano urea deliver what 20 kg in conventional urea does? Nano urea could solve India's fertiliser subsidy conundrum if only miracles happen!

To conclude, the initiatives taken by the Government are unlikely to make a dent on subsidy on the desired scale. An outgo of Rs 140,000 crore-150,000 crore during 2023-24 seems to be beyond reach. During 2020-21, the budget estimate (BE) for fertilizer subsidy was Rs 70,000 crore but actual was Rs 138,000 crore. During 2021-22, BE was Rs 80,000 crore but the actual was Rs 162,000 crore. For 2022-23, BE was Rs 105,000 crore but the actual is likely to be Rs 250,000 crore. If, for 2023-24, the finance minister keeps BE at Rs 140,000-150,000 crore, we will only see a repeat of the past.

India can break away from this trend only if the Government pursues major reforms such as urea decontrol and direct benefit transfer (DBT) of subsidy, which can force suppliers to cut costs, stop leakages, and farmers to improve fertilizer efficiency.

ALAS! None of these is on the radar.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

OUR FIGHT IS NOT AGAINST THE GOVT OR SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA (SAI). THIS IS AGAINST WFI. 'YEH AB AAR PAAR KI LADAI HAI'. — WRESTLER BAJRANG PUNIA



THERE HAS BEEN NO INCIDENT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT. IF SUCH A THING HAS HAPPENED, THEN I WILL HANG MYSELF. — WFI PRESIDENT BRIJ BHUSHAN SHARAN SINGH

Demonetisation hit the mark; economy now healthy

The country has also moved towards digital payments and a lot of progress has been made in this regard

The Supreme Court has upheld the Narendra Modi government's November 2016 decision to demonetise Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 currency notes. It is believed that this will end demonetisation controversy going on for years.

Significantly, the opposition parties and many economists had been opposing the demonetisation. Their argument was that due to this decision of the government, the general public had been put to troubles; and at the same time small businesses suffered huge losses and this also affected their employment and livelihood.

But on the other hand, a large section in the country was welcoming and supporting this decision of demoneti-

sation. One of the arguments of the government was that this decision of demonetisation would attack black money. Although after demonetisation, most of the cash in the country was converted into new currency notes, it is also true that after demonetisation, the cash which was lying unused somewhere in the form of black money, got included in the banking system and it had contributed to the development of the country.

It may be noted that the demand for banning of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 notes was being made by many important people, to curb black money, including Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev and Subramaniam Swamy for a long time. Although, in order to bring

black money into the mainstream, in the past, several voluntary disclosure schemes had been announced by the previous governments. But in spite of many such schemes, black money worth Rs 1,25,000 crore could only be brought out.

It can be said that this was the first major effort of any government to bring out the black money lying in the form of cash. The Prime Minister named it as 'Swachhta Parv', 'Honesty Parv', 'Fight Against Corruption', etc. It is also true that in spite of all the opposition from the opposition parties, the common man, despite facing various difficulties, strongly supported demonetisation and the common man was considering himself a partner in

this fight against black money.

If we consider the difficulties of the common man, we have to understand that according to the Social, Economic and Caste Census 2011, in 92 per cent of the households, the maximum income of any member was less than Rs.10,000 per month.

That's why the common man was not expected to be harmed by this decision. Withdrawal of old currency notes of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 by the government, also helped the country getting rid of the havoc of fake currency on a large scale. Large scale circulation of fake currency notes by Pakistan and other enemy countries was increasing through their local contacts. Due to this many anti-

national activities, including terrorism, Naxalism, stone pelting, were rising. It was seen that after demonetization, all these anti-national activities were curbed.

Significantly, the case of leakage of secret features of currency printing also came to the fore about 10 years ago and it was feared that the fake currency printed according to these features couldn't be identified also.

Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, the chairman of the Constitution Draft Committee of independent India, also expressed his views in favour of demonetisation. About 99 years ago, Dr Ambedkar had written in his thesis at London School of Economics, that the currency should be replaced after every

ten years. He opined that by doing this inflation and corruption can be reduced.

One of the important advantages of the decision of demonetization, is curbing inflation. Obviously, black money in the form of currency in large quantities increases the purchasing power of the rich, which fuels inflation.

A reduction in inflation was also observed after demonetisation. Between December 2016 and November 2022, Consumer Price Index (Consumer Inflation) increased by only 32.5 per cent, whereas in the previous six years, this increase was 54.1 per cent. With the successful implementation of demonetisation by the Narendra Modi government and ultimately,

approval of this decision by the Supreme Court, the demonetisation debate has not only come to an end. Along with demonetisation, the country has also moved towards digital payments and a lot of progress has been made in this regard. Today 40 per cent of the world's digital payments happen in India. The special thing is that most of the digital payments, UPI, etc., are free.

Due to this, there has been a huge reduction in the cost of transactions in the country and due to this there has been a lot of progress in the ease of doing business. Many countries of the world are eager to adopt India's UPI platform. This is the biggest contribution of demonetization to India.



ASHWINI MAHAJAN

(The author is a professor in Delhi University)

Zelenskyy urges West to speed up flow of weapons to Ukraine

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has bared his frustration about not obtaining enough tanks from some Western countries to help Ukraine's defend against Russian forces. The Ukrainian leader, at a break-fast Thursday on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum's annual gathering in Davos, Switzerland, offered a veiled critique of countries like Germany, Poland and the US — crucial supporters of Ukraine — that have nonetheless hesitated about sending tanks.

Speaking by video link, Zelenskyy bemoaned a "lack of specific weaponry" and said that to win the war, "we cannot



just do it with motivation and morale". Through an interpreter, he told the Victor Pinchuk Foundation breakfast that "I would like to thank again for the assistance from our partners. But at the same time, there are times where we shouldn't hesitate or we shouldn't compare when someone says, I will give tanks if someone else will also share his tanks."

Zelenskyy also said air defence was "our weakness" in light of targeted Russian strikes, including use of Iranian-made drones, and reiterated his call for supplies of long-range artillery to fire at Russian forces in Ukrainian territory — not fire into Russia itself.

Ukraine has for months sought to be supplied with heavier tanks, including the

US Abrams and the German-made Leopard 2 tanks, but Western leaders have been treading carefully.

The UK announced last week that it will send Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine, and France has said it would send AMX-10 RC armoured combat vehicles to Ukraine, designated "light tanks" in French. Poland and the Czech Republic have provided Soviet-era T-72 tanks to Ukraine. Poland has expressed readiness to provide a company of Leopard tanks but has said it would only do so as part of a larger international coalition of tank aid to Kyiv. Former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who attended the breakfast, said, "Get them the tanks, get Volodymyr Zelenskyy whatever he needs.

Ukrainians learn mine clearing skills from Cambodian experts

AP ■ PREYTOTORUNG (CAMBODIA)

Cambodian experts, whose Country has the dubious distinction of being one of the world's most contaminated by landmines, walked a group of Ukrainian soldiers through a minefield being actively cleared on Thursday, hoping their decades of experience would help the Europeans in their own efforts to remove Russian mines at home.

Wearing protective body armour, helmets and visors, the group of 15 Ukrainians were guided along cleared routes through the former battlefield in northwestern Battambang



province by trainers with the Cambodian Mine Action Centre, a government agency that oversees the clearing of land mines and unexploded ordnance in the country.

Capt. Arsenii Diadchenko, who led the Ukrainian team, said the training so far has been

"quick and fast" but that they were learning good lessons.

"It will be very helpful in clearing our area of Russian mines," he told reporters on the sidelines of the exercise.

Cambodia is still littered with mines after three decades of war and internal conflicts that ended in 1998, with an estimated 4 to 6 million unexploded devices still uncleared.

The NGO Landmine Monitor in its 2022 report listed both Cambodia and Ukraine among the nine countries with "massive" mine contamination, meaning they had more than 100 square kilometres (38.6 square miles) of uncleared fields.

TEMPORARY CANCELLATION / PARTIAL CANCELLATION / DIVERSION / RE-SCHEDULING & REGULATION OF TRAINS

In order to upgrade the infrastructure, Railways will undertake the Non-interlocking work on Chhintanwala - Nabha Stations on Rajpura - Bhatinda section. To execute this work Railways will take suitable traffic blocks from 23.01.2023 to 28.01.2023. During this period following trains will be cancelled/partially cancelled/diverted/re-scheduled & regulated on the dates shown against each:-

CANCELLATION OF TRAINS		
Train No.	Train Name	Date of Cancellation (from originating station)
04548/14510	Bhatinda - Ambala Cantt. Express Special Train	from 25.01.2023 to 28.01.2023
04531	Ambala Cantt. - Dhuri Express Special Train	from 25.01.2023 to 28.01.2023
04547	Ambala Cantt. - Bhatinda Express Special Train	from 25.01.2023 to 28.01.2023
14525/14526	Ambala Cantt. - Sri Ganganagar - Ambala Cantt. Exp.	from 25.01.2023 to 28.01.2023

PARTIAL CANCELLATION OF TRAINS			
Train No. & Name	Short Terminate at/ Short Originate from	Partially Cancelled between Station	Date of partial cancellation (from the Originating Station)
14735 Sri Ganganagar - Ambala Cantt. Express	at Bhatinda	Bhatinda - Ambala Cantt.	from 25.01.2023 to 28.01.2023
14736 Ambala Cantt. - Sri Ganganagar Express	from Bhatinda	Ambala Cantt. - Bhatinda	from 26.01.2023 to 29.01.2023

DIVERSION OF TRAINS			
Train No. & Train Name	Diversion Route	Date of passing	
11057 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus - Amritsar Dadar Express	Diverted via Ambala Cantt. - Rajpura - Ludhiana Stations	from 23.01.2023 to 26.01.2023	
11058 Amritsar - Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus Dadar Express	Diverted via Ludhiana - Rajpura - Ambala Cantt. Stations	from 25.01.2023 to 28.01.2023	
12751 Hazur Sahib Nanded - Amritsar Express	Diverted via Panipat - Jakhai - Dhuri - Ludhiana Stations	on 27.01.2023	

RESCHEDULING OF TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	Rescheduled of Trains
11058 Amritsar - Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus Dadar Express	Train will be Rescheduled to depart from Amritsar at 11:10 hrs. instead of 08:50 hrs. (140 minutes late) from 25.01.2023 to 28.01.2023

REGULATION OF TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	Regulation of Trains at Station
14507 Delhi - Bathinda Express	Train will be Regulated for 30 minutes on 20.01.2023 at on route

SKIPPING STOPPAGES DURING BLOCK		
Train No. & Name	Skip Stoppages	Date
14888/14887 Barmer - Rishikesh - Barmer Express	Nabha Railway Station	from 24.01.2023 to 27.01.2023
14508/14507 Fazilka - Delhi - Bhatinda Express	Nabha Railway Station	from 25.01.2023 to 28.01.2023
14711/14712 Haridwar - Shri Ganganagar - Haridwar	Nabha Railway Station	from 25.01.2023 to 28.01.2023

For any other information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App. Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in Download RailMadad App.



NORTHERN RAILWAY
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SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE Please join us on 

NORTHERN RAILWAY NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION
Senior Divisional Commercial Manager/Freight, Delhi Division, Northern Railway, in terms of Railway Board letter no. 2022/TC(FM)/10/04 dated 13.06.2022, invites bids through e-Auction (www.ireps.gov.in) for leasing of parcel space of SLR compartments/Parcel Vans for a period of two years as per detail and schedule given below:-

S. No.	Date & time of e-Auction	Assets to be auctioned
1	23.01.2023 at 11:30 am	01 LVPH (24 tonnes) in each train - 12226/12225, 12284/12283, 12425/12426, 12432/12431, 12438/12437, 12442/12441, 12445/12446, 12454/12453, 12488/12487, 14033/14034, & 20408/20407, 22412/22411, 22414/22413, 22420/22419, 22428/22427 & 22434/22433 01 VP (23 tonnes) - 22418/22417
2	24.01.2023 at 11:30 am	14303 (F1 & R1), 14305 (F1 & R1), 14331 (F1, F2 & R1), 14545 (F1, F2 & R1), 20409 (F1, F2 & R1), 20488 (F1, F2 & R1), 20658 (F1)
3	25.01.2023 at 11:30 am	12011 (F1), 12017 (F1), 12148 (F1 & F2), 12432 (F1), 12582 (F1), 12644 (F1, F2 & R1), 22418 (F2 & R1)
4	27.01.2023 at 11:30 am	12029 (F1), 12040 (F1), 12455 (F1), 14041 (F1), 14521 (F1, F2 & R1), 22454 (F1, F2 & R1)
5	30.01.2023 at 11:30 am	12013 (F1), 12015 (F1), 12031 (F1), 12448 (F1), 12459 (F1), 12463 (F1), 12986 (F1), 15280 (F1), 15484 (F1), 22210 (F1), 22414 (F1), 22429 (F1), 22472 (F1, F2 & R1)
6	31.01.2023 at 11:30 am	12045 (F1), 12963 (F1), 14152 (F1), 14164 (F1, F2 & R1), 14681 (F1), 20938 (F1 & R1), 22401 (F1)
7	01.02.2023 at 11:30 am	12265 (F1, F2 & R1), 12428 (F1), 12444 (F1), 12584 (F1), 14014 (F1), 14035 (F1, F2 & R1), 14212 (F1), 14553 (R1)
8	02.02.2023 at 11:30 am	12191 (F1), 12918 (F1), 14316 (F1), 15035 (F1, F2 & R1), 20840 (F1), 22463 (F1), 22485 (F1)
9	03.02.2023 at 11:30 am	01 LVPH (24 tonnes) in each train - 12236/12235, 12264/12263, 22429/22430, 22460/22459
10	06.02.2023 at 11:30 am	12457 (F1, F2 & R1), 14507 (F1, F2 & R1), 19338 (F1), 20914 (F1, F2 & R1), 20946 (F1), 22479 (F1), 22654 (F1)
11	07.02.2023 at 11:30 am	12036 (F1), 12066 (F1), 14011 (F1 & R1), 14731 (F1 & R1), 15060 (F1 & R1), 20473 (F1 & R1), 22168 (F1, F2 & R1), 22950 (F1), 22986 (F1)

Important notes:
1. For more information, requirement and various aspects regarding these e-Auctions, interested bidders are advised to visit https://www.ireps.gov.in/html/helpdesk/learning_centre.html. (e-Auction leasing section).
2. **Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) : 5%** of the total contractual bid value to be deposited online during the auction. EMD of the successful bidder will be retained as Security Deposit.
3. Railway Administration reserves the full and absolute rights to short terminate these contracts at any point of time and/or for taking any decision regarding the discontinuation/continuation of these contracts with modified/additional terms and conditions depending upon the continuation/discontinuation of these trains or commencement of new train services. **216/2023**

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

UNESCO seeks to prevent trafficking of looted Ukrainian art

AP ■ WARSAW

The United Nations cultural organisation is training law enforcement and judiciary officials from countries on Ukraine's western borders, seeking to prevent the trafficking of looted cultural objects from Ukraine amid Russia's war against its neighbour.

UNESCO partnered with Poland's Culture Ministry to hold three days of workshops in Warsaw this week for the officials from Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Moldova.

Representatives from Ukraine also attended the training that began on Wednesday.

The aim is for the officials to be able to identify and prevent any artistic treasures looted in Ukraine from crossing their borders.

Krista Pikkat, UNESCO's director of culture and emergencies, said that more than 230 cultural sites have been damaged or destroyed in Ukraine since Russia invaded the country.

She said that UNESCO is working to document lost cultural objects, among them treasures



from museums and archaeological sites. Another priority for the agency is making sure that the wider public is aware that looted Ukrainian treasures could end up on art markets in Europe, so that buyers are more careful about what they buy. Pikkat described Poland as a strong partner for

UNESCO in the protection of cultural heritage in situations of conflict because it has learned many lessons from its own experiences.

Poland suffered mass looting of its cultural heritage during World War II, when it was invaded and occupied by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. It is still working to recover looted paintings, books and other cultural artifacts. These objects still come up for sale at auctions and on the internet eight decades after they were stolen.

"Poland is really a country at the forefront of this work," Pikkat said.

Katarzyna Zalasinska, the director of the Polish National Institute for Cultural Heritage, noted that Poland lost at least 500,000 works of art during World War II.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is informed that the cars with the following car numbers which have completed their life Petrol Cars 15 Years Diesel Cars 10 Years. The MCD drive was confiscated by Pine View Technology Pvt Ltd and has not been claimed by anyone till now. All these vehicle owners are informed to come to the company's office and claim the scrap value of the vehicle. Otherwise, all these vehicles will be scrapped in the next three days.

CG10F3825,	DL9CS0635,	DL4SAV3326,
DL1CW6125,	HR03R0006,	DL6S90963,
DL9CB3572,	HR26AN2998,	DL4SL7655
DL9CL1004,	DL1CAD8629,	DL1LA2401,
HR55F3878,	DL2CAG0856,	DL1LF1542,
DL8CG6470,	DL3CAG0858,	DL8SA4649,
DL9CQS1930,	DL4CAV0920,	DL1S6600,
DL2GR3613,	DL9CDB874,	DL8SW1746,
DL3CAL5045,	DL3CN7136,	DL8SH9178,
DL4CN4675,	DL9CF0786,	DL8SAF6766,
MA3EED61-	DL3CY8361,	DL4SAM8243,
S00383856,	DL6CD7388,	DLN8543,
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DL4CAA9439,	HR26BT9276,	DL5SN6574,
HR2J03533,	DL2CM3412,	DL4SAU3140,
DL3CAJ7371,	DL4CAE1801,	DL3SAK8060,
DL8CE5083,	UK03C2056,	DL8SM8224,
DL3CA03859,	DL3CA03803,	UP7BE8244,
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DL6CH7418,	DL2CZ2728,	DL6SA80233,
DL1CAE8108,	DL4CAE4975,	DL1SG7936,
DL3CM2829,	DL2CH6340,	HR24B1223,
DL6SM0055,	HR26Y7801,	DLP6589,
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DL2CAL9027,	DL4SAR7990,	DL4SNA1312,
MP09NR0009,	DL1LC2307,	DL4SAP2766,
C-003Y5005,	DL1LD1261,	DL7SAE8418,
DL2CQ0166,	DL4SAW5853,	DL8SK7530,
DL8CN4031,	DL4219,	DL4SAU3902,
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S0073545,	DL2SK6717,	DL4SAG5096,
HR26AC3491,	DL4SAM2761,	UMI8192,
DL4CNA3971,	DL4SAS7508,	DL8S9806,
DL8CQ3671,	DL6SF6873,	DAD9578,
DL6CF2792,	DL7SAA6774,	DL8SNA5492,
DL6CL3680,	DL6SBR8128,	DL8SAJ6818,
DL3CAV2656,	UP15A0138,	DL8SAK3829,
DL2CW5842,	DL6SV4168,	DL8SAJ5476,
DINJ3282,	DL6S81084,	DL8SA5064,
DL3CBA0198,	DL1LF8626,	RJ23SB7282,
DL11C80700,	DL4SM0455,	DL5SM7753,
DL2FHS0013,	DL6SS2481,	DL4SBD0846,
DL3CAP5158,	DL8CQ2207,	DL6SS2942,
DL9CG9875,	DL6SW1771,	DL8SW5443,
DL2FFW0038,	DL7SK4305,	DL8SAJ7481,
DL2CD7115,	DL4SAW5853,	DL8SK7530,
DL9CN2096,	DL4SAG9575,	DL8SAE9275,
DL4CAA1779,	DL4SAE4547,	DL8SAL0230,
DL3CBQ0793,	DL4SAH7518,	DL7SBB0739,
DL3CH6565,	DL4SAM0674,	DL8SAJ4650,
DL8CQ0774,	RU14J7M3484,	KAO1U9006,
DL8CW6801,	DL4SAU5019,	HR2QJ7570,
PB10AF0030,	DL4SAB1075,	DL4CR3336,
HR26AF8611,	DL4SBA6794,	DL5CWS535,
DL9CJ2751,	DL6SE2547,	DL9CQS8074

EU assembly wants special court for Russia's war in Ukraine

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union's assembly called on the member states on Thursday to back the creation of a special court to judge any war crime of aggression by Russia in Ukraine.

The nonbinding resolution was approved by a 472-19 vote with 33 abstentions in the European Parliament, and underscored the EU's willingness to make sure Moscow should be brought to justice for Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The legislature called on the EU "to work in close cooperation with Ukraine to seek and build political support in the U.N. General Assembly and other international forums ... For creating the special tribunal for the crime of aggression against



Ukraine." The call came despite the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court saying his court was capable of effectively dealing with war crimes committed in Ukraine.

Karim Khan at the time pushed back against the plan by European Commission Presi-

dent Ursula von der Leyen to establish such a special court.

The European Parliament said, however, that it "considers that the establishment of the special tribunal would complement the investigative efforts of the ICC and its Prosecutor, as it would focus on alleged geno-

cide, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ukraine."

The Hague-based ICC has launched an investigation into war crimes in Ukraine but can't prosecute the crime of aggression — the act of invading another country — because the Russian Federation is not a signatory to the Rome Statute, the treaty that created the court.

Since Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, his military forces have been accused of abuses ranging from killings in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha to deadly attacks on civilian facilities, including the March 16 bombing of a theatre in Mariupol that an Associated Press investigation established likely killed close to 600 people.

Russia, China to hold naval drills off South Africa

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG

Russia and China will conduct naval drills in the Indian Ocean off the coast of South Africa next month in another indication of their strengthening relationships with Africa's most developed country amid the war in Ukraine and global financial uncertainty.

The South African armed forces said Thursday that they and the Russian and Chinese navies will engage in "a multinational maritime exercise" from February 17-27 off South Africa's east coast near the cities of Durban and Richards Bay.

The drills will happen around the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24 and will bring more focus on the refusal of South Africa — a leading voice on its continent — to side with the West and condemn Russia's actions.

The announcement also comes days before Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is due to visit South Africa and hold talks with South African counterpart Naledi Pandor.

The South African government said last year that it had adopted a neutral stance over Ukraine and called for dialogue and diplomacy, but the upcoming naval drills have led the country's main opposition party to accuse the government of effectively siding with Russia.

The South African government denies it has taken sides



and has called for the end of the war in Ukraine.

But the South African National Defence Force, which incorporates all of its armed forces, said next month's naval exercise would "strengthen the already flourishing relations between South Africa, Russia and China." The aim of the drills was "sharing operational skills and knowledge," the SANDF said.

The three countries also conducted a similar naval exercise in 2019 in Cape Town, while Russia and China held joint naval drills in the East China Sea last month.

South Africa, a key Western partner, was one of several African countries that abstained in a United Nations vote last year condemning Russia's invasion. The United States and the European Union had hoped that South Africa would support the international condemnation of Russia and act as a leader for other nations in Africa.



Germany pressed on tanks for Ukraine; Kyiv airs frustration

AP ■ BERLIN

Germany faced mounting pressure to supply battle tanks to Kyiv and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy aired frustration about not obtaining enough weaponry as Western allies conferred on Thursday on how best to support Ukraine nearly 11 months into Russia's invasion.

Just hours into his tenure, Germany's new defence minister Boris Pistorius welcomed US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin to Berlin.

He declared that German weapons systems delivered so far have proven their worth and that "we will continue in the future, together with our partners, to support Ukraine in its fight for freedom, territorial independence and sovereignty."

He didn't, however, immediately mention the Leopard 2 tanks that Ukraine has long sought. Since the United

Kingdom announced last week that it will send Challenger 2 tanks, Berlin has faced increasing pressure to supply battle tanks or at least clear the way for others — such as Poland — to deliver German-made Leopards from their own stock.

Marcos: Sea feud involving China keeps me up at night

AP ■ MANILA

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. Said the long-raging disputes in the South China Sea that involve China, the Philippines and other coastal states have kept him "up at night" and warned that any major confrontation in Asia, similar to the war in Ukraine, would be disastrous to the world.

Marcos spoke Wednesday at a World Economic Forum dialogue in the Swiss Alpine town of Davos, where he was asked about his seven-month-old presidency, his economic strategy and key security worries, including the increasingly tense South China Sea territorial conflicts.

The dispute "keeps you up at night, keeps you up most of the time ... It's very dynamic, it's constantly in flux so you have to pay attention to it," Marcos said in response to a question from forum President Borge Brende.

Marcos said there have been calls for the Philippine government to do more to defend its territorial waters



but added that a military solution to the conflicts was not an option.

"We have no conflicting claims with China. What we have is China making claims on our territory," he said.

"Nobody wants to go to war. We don't. China doesn't. The United States doesn't," Marcos said, adding that "just having the tensions increase in the region already has an effect on trade, on all of the exchanges that we have."

Asked if he raised the territorial conflicts with his Chinese counterpart, Xi

Jinping, in a visit to Beijing earlier this month, Marcos said discussions on the touchy issue were inevitable but acknowledged he did not expect any major resolution.

"When I spoke to President Xi, I prefaced our discussion by saying we are not going to decide here today the issues that are between the Philippines and China in terms of territoriality," Marcos said.

The Philippine leader added without elaborating that he discussed recent incidents between coast guard and fishing vessels of China and the

Philippines in the contested waterway.

The Philippines has filed hundreds of diplomatic protests over China's increasingly assertive actions in the disputed waters, which Beijing claims virtually in its entirety. Last year alone, Manila sent nearly 200 protest notes to Beijing, including 65 since Marcos Jr. Took office in June, according to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila.

Aside from China and the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei have been locked in the disputes in the busy waterway. Tensions intensified after Beijing turned seven disputed reefs into what are now missile-protected island bases to reinforce its claims, alarming the United States and its Asian and Western allies.

"It has become terribly complex and very, very dynamic and requires a good deal of attention," Marcos said of the long-seething disputes.

The heightened tensions between China and Taiwan, which lie across a sea border from the northern Philippines, have also been a key concern, he said.

UML's party's Ghimire elected Nepal's House Speaker

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's CPN-UML party leader Dev Raj Ghimire was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives on Thursday, after a decisive vote in parliament, in which he received the backing of 167 lawmakers.

Ghimire was pitted against Nepali Congress lawmaker Ishwori Neupane. In the House of Representatives (HoR) meeting, 167 votes were cast in favour of Ghimire, 100 votes were cast against while a solitary lawmaker abstained from the vote to elect Ghimire as the Speaker.

Only 138 votes are required for a win in the 275-member lower house. "I declare the proposal to elect Ghimire as Speaker has been endorsed through a majority," said the oldest parliamentarian Pashupati Shumsher Rana, who chaired the meeting as a Speaker.

CPN-UML, CPN (Maoist Centre), Rastriya Prajatantra Party, Rastriya Swatantra Party, Janata Samajwadi Party, Janmat Party, Nagarik Unmukti Party and independent MPs Amresh Kumar Singh, Prabhu Shah and Yogendra Mandal voted in favour of Ghimire.

Nepal PM meets families of those killed in plane crash

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Thursday met with the grieving families of the people who were killed in the Yeti Airlines plane crash in the resort city of Pokhara.

Prachanda reached the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital to meet the families. Expressing his condolences to the families, the prime minister directed the hospital authorities to speed up the identification of the bodies, make the process scientific and hand over the bodies to the relatives soon, his office said.

According to the prime minister's secretariat, Prime Minister Prachanda requested the hospital's officials to ask for necessary assistance from the government to establish the deceased's identity at the earliest. The prime minister also inspected the bodies kept for identification.

In one of Nepal's worst domestic crashes, the Yeti Airlines aircraft after taking off from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport on November 15 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 five Indians, and four crew members were on board the Yeti Airlines aircraft when it crashed.

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

So far, only 71 dead bodies have been recovered and the search is on for the remaining one person. On Thursday, the Nepal Army extended search area to rivers in the adjoining districts Nawalparasi and Chitawan districts too, said Nepal Army spokesperson

Narayan Silwal.

Meanwhile, the bodies of 12 people, including an Indian national, were handed over to the family members on Thursday after conducting their postmortem, according to hospital sources.

The body Sanjaya Jaishwal was handed over to his relatives who returned to India, they said.

The relatives of four other Indian nationals, who were killed in the crash, have also reached Kathmandu to receive the bodies. According to Nepal's civil aviation body, 914 people have died in air crashes in the country since the first disaster was recorded in August 1955.

EU border chief pledges transparency, no illegal pushbacks

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The new executive director of European Union border agency Frontex pledged on Thursday to ensure that illegal pushbacks of migrants trying to reach Europe wouldn't take place under his watch.

Hans Leijten was appointed as a replacement for Fabrice Leggeri, who resigned last year following media allegations that the agency was involved in that practice.

A report by EU anti-fraud watchdog OLAF into Frontex later concluded that employees from the agency were involved in covering up pushbacks of migrants from Greece to Turkey.

Pushbacks — forcing would-be refugees away from a border before they can reach

a country and claim asylum — are considered violations of international refugee protection agreements, which say people shouldn't be expelled or returned to a country where their life and safety might be in danger because of their race, religion, nationality or being members of a social or political group.

"Pushbacks by Frontex officers are not legal. They are forbidden," Leijten said during a news conference with Ylva Johansson, the EU commissioner for home affairs. "I'm responsible for the fact that my people don't participate in ... Pushbacks."

Leijten will start his new job on March 1.

According to the OLAF report made public in October, top managers at Frontex com-



mitted "serious misconduct and other irregularities" in covering up pushback incidents, not investigating them or not handling them correctly.

Leijten said "there is nothing secret about Frontex" and that he would promote a nothing-to-hide attitude while improving transparency and putting an end to "defensive attitudes."

"We can't do our work when we are not trusted," he said.

Leijten's nomination comes as the EU's 27 member countries struggle to make progress in discussions over a long-delayed overhaul of the bloc's asylum system proposed by the EU's executive arm more than two years ago.

The number of attempts by

migrants to enter the EU without authorisation reached around 330,000 last year, the highest number since 2016, the EU's border and coast guard agency said last week.

Johansson said the increase is mainly due to the arrivals of citizens likely not in need of international protection, who need to be returned to their country of origin.

"Frontex is well equipped to actually support the member states," she said, adding that the agency last year carried out the return of 25,000 people.

Johansson added that she will next week present a new strategy on returns next week before a summit of EU leaders in February. She also exhorted EU countries to step up their cooperation with Frontex for a better management of returns.

Johansson cited a rise in arrivals to the EU by Bangladeshis, with most of them not in need of international protection. She said that after Bangladesh was put on a list of visas sanctions, local authorities improved their cooperation and are now open to taking back their citizens.

"But we are also in a situation where member states only do readmission requests for approximately 10 per cent to 20 per cent of the return decisions" she said. "And when Frontex are flying the planes to Bangladesh (...), they are not full. When we have a political momentum with a third country, it's important that we work together: (the European) Commission, Frontex, all member states, to really make these returns happen."

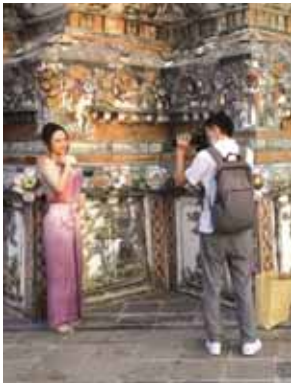
AP ■ BANGKOK

Ahoped-for boom in Chinese tourism in Asia over next week's Lunar New Year holidays looks set to be more of a blip as most travelers opt to stay inside China if they go anywhere.

From the beaches of Bali to Hokkaido's powdery ski slopes, the hordes of Chinese often seen in pre-COVID days will still be missing, tour operators say.

It's a bitter disappointment for many businesses that had been hoping lean pandemic times were over after Beijing relaxed restrictions on travel and stopped requiring weeks-long quarantines. Still, bookings for overseas travel have skyrocketed, suggesting it's only a matter of time until the industry recovers.

"I think the tourists will return around the end of February or early March at the earliest," said Sisdivachr Chewerattaporn, president of the Thai Travel Agents Association, noting that many



Chinese lack passports, flights are limited and tour operators are still gearing up to handle group travel.

COVID-19 risks are another big factor as outbreaks persist following the policy about-

face in China, he said in an interview. "People are possibly not ready, or just getting ready."

For now, the Chinese territories of Macao and Hong Kong appear to be the most favored destinations.

Just days before Sunday's start of the Lunar New Year, iconic tourist spots in the former Portuguese colony, like historic Senado Square and the Ruins of St. Paul's, were packed. Gambling floors at two major casinos were largely full, with groups of Chinese visitors sitting around the craps tables.

"I'm so busy every day and don't have time to rest," said souvenir shop owner Lee Hong-soi. He said sales had recovered to about 70%-80% of the pre-pandemic days from

nearly nothing just weeks ago. Kathy Lin was visiting from Shanghai, partly because it was easy to get a visa but also because she was concerned about risks of catching

COVID-19. "I don't dare to travel overseas yet," she said as she and a friend took photos near the ruins, originally the 17th century Church of Mater Dei.

		NORTHERN RAILWAY			
TENDER NOTICE					
Invitation of tender through E-tendering (E-Procurement Systems)					
NIT No.		37/22-23/WVE			
Name of Work with its Location		(A) Provision of computer lab and upgradation of RPF office at RPF line Dayabasti in the S/o SSE/W/PB under ADENE-II			
Approx. Cost of Work		(A) 5476820.11			
EMD amount		(A) 109500.00			
Completion Period of Work (A)		05 Months			
Date and Time for submission of tender and opening of tender		Closing date of tender on 14.02.2023 at 15:00 hrs.			
Website particular notice board location complete details of tender can be seen and address of the office from where the tender form can be purchased etc.				Above tender available on website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in	
128-W/269/OET/22-23/WVE/NIT/37 Dated: 19.01.2023					
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Letter No. : 249/ 41M-2/2022-23 Dated : 17/01/2023						
NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING (E-Tendering)						
Superintending Engineer, 2nd Circle, Public Works Department Nainital on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand invites e-tender (two bid system). For further details please log on to https://www.uktenders.gov.in from 21-01-2023.						
Sl. No.	Name of Work	Earnest Money (in Lakh Rs.)	Cost of Tender	Validity of Tender	Time of Completion	Contractor's Category of Registration
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Construction work of 60 meter span steel girder bridge on Sukhi river to connect village Laxhampur (Nakel) and approach road on both side in Vidhansabha Lalkuwan Constituency and Distt Nainital under Hon'ble Chief Minister Announcement No. 319/2013.	13.40	5000+ 18% GST	120	15	Registered in Class 'A' and above in any State Govt./ Central Govt. or any Govt. undertaking in Brridle work

Biden adviser meets Netanyahu amid unease over his govt

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met Thursday with U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, the allies' highest level in-person talks since Israel's most right-wing government ever took power last month.

Sullivan's visit comes amid unease in Washington over Netanyahu's policies and over several members of his ultranationalist and ultra-Orthodox governing coalition, which is already taking a hard line against the Palestinians and is expected to ramp up construction in the occupied West Bank.

N Korea sustains high defence spending with new budget

AP ■ SEOUL (SOUTH KOREA)

North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament has passed a budget that sustains a high level of defence spending despite the country's economic troubles as leader Kim Jong Un pushes for an aggressive expansion of his nuclear arsenal.

State media reports indicated Kim didn't attend the Supreme People's Assembly's two-day session that ended on Wednesday. Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency didn't mention any comments by assembly members toward the United States or South Korea in Thursday's report on the meetings.

The assembly convened weeks after Kim called for an

"exponential increase" of nuclear warheads, mass production of battlefield tactical nuclear weapons targeting "enemy" South Korea and the development of more advanced intercontinental ballistic missiles designed to reach the US mainland.

His statements during a major political conference in December underscored an intensifying nuclear standoff with the United States and its allies in Asia after he pushed North Korea's weapons tests to a record pace in 2022.

The North fired more than 70 missiles last year, including multiple ICBM launches, and conducted a series of tests it described as simulated nuclear attacks on South Korean and US targets.

EU assembly wants Iran's Revolutionary Guard on terror list

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Parliament on Thursday called for Iran's Revolutionary Guard to be put on the European Union's terrorist list and insisted that sanctions targeting Tehran had to be expanded after the violent suppression of protests.

In a nonbinding resolution, the legislature mustered a large majority to call on the EU's 27 member states for such punitive action to counter what it sees as a swift backsliding of human rights in Iran. Beyond the call to put the organisation on its terrorist blacklist, the European Parliament also wants the EU to ban any economic or financial activity that can be linked to the Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The United States has



already designated the corps as a "foreign terrorist organisation", and subjected it to unprecedented sanctions.

The European Parliament action came before Monday's meeting of EU foreign ministers where more sanctions against Tehran are expected to be approved.

Thursday's resolution came after four months of anti-government protests in Iran sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who was being held by the morality police for allegedly violating the country's strict Islamic dress code.

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RD No 62

e-Tender First Time Extension Notice

Due to unavoidable reasons the dates of e-Tender NIT No.36/EE(Patnri) /2022-23 invited by this office is hereby extended as given below:-
Date of availability of bid document on website : 19-01-2023
Last date for submission of bids on website: 25.01.2023 up to 16:00 Hrs.
For fuller & further details kindly log on to <https://uktenders.gov.in>.
All other terms and conditions of tender shall remain unchanged

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER (M&G)



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प्रोजे. 4726 /ई-निविदा सूचना/ 2022-23 ई-निविदा सूचना

मुख्य महानियन्त्रक, उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान, देहरादून की ओर से जल जीवन मिशन कार्यक्रम के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित पेयजल योजनाओं के कार्यों हेतु ई-निविदा, टू-बिड सिस्टम (तकनीकी बिड एवं कॉमर्शियल बिड) के आधार पर निम्नानुसार आमंत्रित की जाती हैं :-

दिनांक: 19.01.2023

निविदा क्र.सं.	विकास खण्ड	कार्य विवरण	धनराशि (रु.में)	निविदा का मूल्य (रु.में)	कार्य पूर्ण करने की अवधि
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	डोईवाला	हरिपुरकाला पेयजल योजना के सुदृढीकरण कार्य के अन्तर्गत नलकूप अधिष्ठापन, उर्वर् जलाशय निर्माण, राईसिंग मेन एवं वितरण प्रणाली में पाइप लाइन बिछाने, पम्पिंग प्लांट सामग्री की आपूर्ति अधिष्ठापन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	671300.00	₹4000 +GST	12 माह
2	डोईवाला	प्रतीनगार पेयजल योजना के सुदृढीकरण कार्य के अन्तर्गत नलकूप अधिष्ठापन, उर्वर् जलाशय निर्माण, राईसिंग मेन एवं वितरण प्रणाली में पाइप लाइन बिछाने, पम्पिंग प्लांट सामग्री की आपूर्ति अधिष्ठापन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	343400.00	₹4000 +GST	12 माह
3	साहसपुर	अब्दुल्लापुर पेयजल योजना में उर्वर् जलाशय मरम्मत, नलकूप विकास, पाइप लाइन बिछाने एवं पम्पिंग प्लांट सामग्री की आपूर्ति अधिष्ठापन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	217800.00	₹4000 +GST	10 माह
4	विकलनगर	बालुवाला पेयजल योजना में नलकूप अधिष्ठापन, उर्वर् जलाशय निर्माण, राईसिंग मेन, वितरण पाइप लाइन बिछाने, विद्युत संयंत्र सामग्री की आपूर्ति अधिष्ठापन एवं तत्सम्बन्धी कार्य।	306000.00	₹4000 +GST	10 माह

निविदा समय सागणी (मुख्य तिथियाँ) निम्नवत् हैं:-		
क्र.सं.	विवरण	अनुसूची
1	ऑनलाइन प्रकाशन की तिथि	21.01.2023 at 11:00 Hrs
2	निविदा प्रश्न डाउनलोड करने की तिथि	21.01.2023 at 11:00 Hrs
3	प्री-बिड मीटिंग की तिथि	24.01.2023 at 11:00 Hrs
4	बिड ऑनलाइन जमा करने की प्रारम्भ तिथि	28.01.2023 at 11:00 Hrs
5	बिड ऑनलाइन जमा करने की अन्तिम तिथि	03.02.2023 up to 17:00 Hrs
6	ऑफ लाईन रूप से जमा किये जाने वाले प्रश्न (निविदा प्रश्न हेतु निर्धारित शुल्क, बिड सिन्धोरिटी, स्टॉम्प पेपर एवं अन्य सम्बन्धित दस्तावेज)	03.02.2023 up to 17:00 Hrs
7	तकनीकी बिड खोलने की तिथि	04.02.2023 at 11:00 Hrs
8	वित्तीय निविदा खोलने की तिथि	सूचना पृथक से दी जायेगी

ई-निविदा से सम्बन्धित समस्त जानकारीयां व शर्तें उत्तराखण्ड राज्य की वेबसाइट www.uktenders.gov.in पर ऑन लाइन देखी/प्राप्त की जा सकती हैं।

“जल संयंत्र-जीवन संयंत्र”

राजेन्द्र पाल
अधिसूची अभियन्ता

Sensex snaps two-day rally amid global weakness

Asian Paints drops post Q3 show

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmarks retreated on Thursday after a two-day rally, mirroring a weak trend overseas after lacklustre US consumer data fanned fresh concerns over global growth.

A weak rupee and foreign fund outflows further weighed on sentiment, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 187.31 points or 0.31 per cent to settle at 60,858.43. During the day, it tumbled 329.19 points or 0.53 per cent to 60,716.55.

The broader NSE Nifty dipped 57.50 points or 0.32 per cent to end at 18,107.85.

Asian Paints was the top loser in the Sensex pack, slipping 2.64 per cent after the company reported a 6.4 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 1,097.06 crore for the December quarter.

IndusInd Bank, Tata Motors, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Titan, Hindustan Unilever,

UltraTech Cement, and Nestle India were among the other major laggards, shedding as much as 1.89 per cent.

The gainers included Tata Steel, Power Grid, Tech Mahindra, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank and Larsen & Toubro, which climbed up to 0.73 per cent.

"Domestic indices snapped their previous gains amid negative sentiments from their global counterparts. Weak US consumer data and hawkish comments from the Fed's policymakers on Wednesday hammered investor risk appetite.

"Lingering fears of recession dragged global bourses down, leaving the market volatile," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.24 per cent while the midcap index dipped 0.06 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, utilities declined 1.23 per cent,



power went lower by 1.02 per cent, FMCG (0.83 per cent), consumer durables (0.80 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.69 per cent) and telecommunication (0.64 per cent).

Energy, industrials, capital goods, metal, oil & gas and realty were the gainers.

"Domestic equities reacted to weak US economic data and hawkish commentary from US Fed. After two days of positive momentum, Nifty opened lower and consolidated throughout the session...

"We expect market to consolidate in a range on back of

global volatility. However, inline Q3 FY23 earnings so far has capped the downside," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd.

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

European benchmarks were trading in the red during mid-session deals. Markets in the US had ended lower on Wednesday after data showed US manufacturing output and retail sales slumped last month.

Indian startups hail SC ruling on Google-CCI case

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Home-grown startup founders on Thursday hailed the Supreme Court's order where it refused to interfere with the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) decision, declining to stay operation of the Competition Commission of India (CCI) order imposing Rs 1,337.76 crore fine on Google.

Google had moved the apex court after the setback at the NCLAT, which did not stay the CCI order on abuse of dominant position in multiple markets in the Android mobile device ecosystem case.

Rohan Verma, CEO and ED at homegrown MapmyIndia said that they are extremely grateful to the Supreme Court for their order against Google's appeal.

"MapmyIndia was mentioned and spoken of multiple times in the Supreme court today by multiple parties, who said that MapmyIndia pioneered digital mapping in India since 1995, far before the birth of Google, and offer an alter-



native in terms of MapmyIndia's Mappils app versus the force pre-installed Google Maps," Verma added.

It was discussed in the court how Google foreclosed rivals such as MapmyIndia due to their anti-competitive practices, harming Indian consumers ability to choose, and harming the Indian economy and rivals such as MapmyIndia.

The Supreme Court in the end declined Google's arguments.

Google was yet to react to the apex court ruling.

On January 11, the Supreme Court had agreed to examine an appeal by Google against a decision by the NCLAT.

Verma hoped that after the SC ruling, consumers and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) will now use 'Mappils' app, which "offers far better maps, navigation and safety features than Google Maps".

Rakesh Deshmukh, Co-founder, CEO, Indus OS, had said that in its ruling, the CCI categorically demonstrated multiple anti-competitive actions carried out by Google in the last decade.

"In fact, it scuttled Indian entrepreneurs in the Android ecosystem with unfair and restrictive Google policies. The CCI ruling against Google is a step towards ushering in the next phase of digital revolution in the country," he said.

Musk to lay off more Twitter employees



IANs ■ SAN FRANCISCO

Twitter Boss Elon Musk is reportedly planning to lay off more employees from the microblogging platform again after six weeks.

About 50 employees in the company's product organisation are set to be let go in the coming weeks, reports Business Insider, citing sources.

Hundreds of workers in Twitter's advertising, trust and safety, and monetisation departments were laid off two weeks ago, and layoffs in Singapore and Australia occurred just last week.

Employees believe that plans to close many international offices as well as several smaller offices in the US will result in even more layoffs, which could lead Twitter's headcount soon to be under 2,000 people, said the report.

Requested Centre, State Govt for ₹3,500 cr each for debt repayment: DMRC tells HC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has informed the Delhi High Court that it has requested the Centre and the city government for over Rs 3,500 crore each as interest free subordinate debt for repayment of the unpaid arbitral award passed in favour of Reliance Infrastructure-owned Delhi Metro Express Private Limited (DAMEPL).

The DMRC said though this step of interest free subordinate debt lay more financial burden on the Delhi Metro, the less bothersome option of issue of equity shares which was explored earlier failed to materialise.

"The DMRC, following the decision of its Board of Directors, have approached its

shareholders, that is, Government of India and Delhi government and had written letters dated January 18, 2023 to Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and Delhi government that a sum of Rs 3565.64 crore may please be provided as interest free subordinate debt at an early date so that the Supreme Court directions may be complied with," the DMRC said in an affidavit in the high court.

The matter came up for hearing on Thursday before Justice Yashwant Varma who listed it for hearing on January 31 as Attorney General R Venkataramani, representing the DMRC and Centre, was unavailable.

The DMRC said in order to expedite and bring to a conclusion the process of exe-

cution of the arbitration award, the corporation had proposed offering of 7,13,12,800 equity shares of Rs 1,000 each to both the shareholders--the Government of India and Government of Delhi-- on right basis in equal proportion to raise Rs 7,131.28 crore to make the payment to satisfy the arbitration award. However, the Delhi government was disinclined.

It said the matter was discussed in the 148th Board meeting of the DMRC on January 16 and, in view of the Delhi government's disinclination and also the inability of the DMRC to raise money from open market because of its adverse financial position, it was decided to approach both the shareholders--the two governments.

The DMRC had informed the high court that the state government was not willing to provide it over Rs 3,500 crore towards equity for payment of the arbitral award.

It had submitted the Delhi government has stated that shareholders cannot be held liable for payments arising out of disputes or contractual defaults and that the DMRC may raise money from open market or externally aided funds, or loan from the central government to meet this liability.

The submissions were made by the DMRC in a pending application of the DAMEPL which said the DMRC had paid it only Rs 166.44 crore on March 14, 2022 and sought a direction for payment of another Rs 4427.41 crore.

Earlier, the DMRC had informed the court that meetings were held with the Centre, Delhi government and other stakeholders to discuss the modalities of payment of the balance arbitral award to DAMEPL.

The metro rail had said if any adverse orders were passed against it at this point of time, millions of commuters will be simply told they cannot use the Delhi Metro.

On March 10 last year, the high court had directed the DMRC to pay the over Rs 4,600 crore arbitral award along with interest to DAMEPL in two equal installments within two months.

The first and second installments were to be paid on or before April 30, 2022 and May 31, 2022, respectively.



The direction had come on DAMEPL's execution petition filed against the DMRC over the arbitration award passed in its favour on May 11, 2017.

An arbitral tribunal had ruled in favour of DAMEPL, which had pulled out of running the Airport Express metro line over safety issues, and

accepted its claim that running the operations on the line was not viable due to structural defects in the viaduct through which the train would pass.

Swiggy likely to lay off up to 10% of employees after performance review

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Online food delivery platform Swiggy is likely to lay off up to 10 per cent of its employees, or about 600 workers, after an extensive performance review that was concluded late last year, amid global uncertainties and recession fears.

Sources told IANS that the upcoming layoffs at Swiggy are likely to impact verticals like product, engineering and operation at the company.

The upcoming layoffs are also expected to impact Swiggy's quick commerce delivery service Instamart to reduce cash burn.

The company did not immediately respond to an IANS query on upcoming layoffs.

Earlier reports that surfaced in December, have said that Swiggy may lay off more than 250 employees or up to 5 per cent of its workforce, starting January.



However, the number of layoff employees is set to go further up, according to sources, after the completion of the performance cycle in October. The company employs close to 6,000 workers.

In an earlier statement, Swiggy had said there were no layoffs and with every performance cycle, "we expect exits based on performance".

The online food delivery platform's losses doubled to Rs 3,629 crore in FY22 compared to Rs 1,617 crore in the last fiscal year.

Total expenses went up

131 per cent to Rs 9,574.5 crore in FY22, according to its annual financial statement with the Registrar of Companies (RoC).

Swiggy's revenue grew 2.2 times to Rs 5,705 crore during FY22 as opposed to Rs 2,547 crore in FY21. In November last year, global brokerage firm Jefferies said that Swiggy was fast losing market share to its rival Zomato despite offering heavy discounts.

Earlier in 2022, the food delivery platform raised \$700 million led by Invesco at a \$10.7 billion valuation.

Domestic passenger traffic grows 13.69% to 127.35 lakh in Dec: DGCA

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's domestic passenger traffic grew 13.69 per cent year-on-year to 127.35 lakh in December, according to DGCA monthly traffic data released on Thursday.

The number of passengers flown by the Indian airlines in December 2021 was recorded at 112.02 lakh, as per data.

IndiGo, which carried 69.97 lakh passengers during the month, lost the market share further at 55.7 per cent, while Air India and Vistara carried 11.71 lakh and 11.70 lakh passengers, with a market share of 9.1 per cent and 9.2 per cent, respectively.

AirAsia flew 9.71 lakh passengers with a market share of 7.6 per cent during the month, the DGCA data show.

The two other budget carriers - SpiceJet and Go First - carried 9.64 lakh and 9.51 lakh



passengers in December 2022.

Also, SpiceJet saw the highest load factor on its flights among all domestic airlines, with 92.7 per cent of the seats on its aircraft filled during the month under review.

New entrant Akasa Air also carried 2.92 lakh passengers with a 2.3 per cent market share.

IndiGo retained its top ranking in the on-time performance at four key metro airports in the country, as 88.6 per cent of its flights were seen arriving or departing at their scheduled time at these airports, as per DGCA data.

Road safety body IRF urges FM to waive GST on helmets

IANs ■ NEW DELHI

Road safety body International Road Federation (IRF) wrote a letter to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, demanding removal of GST on life saving device helmets for safety of the two-wheeler riders in the forthcoming Union Budget 2023-24.

"India accounts for about 11 per cent of road accident deaths worldwide and the economic loss is about \$15.71-38.81 billion to the Indian Economy as per the latest Bosch Report. The two-wheeler riders, being most vulnerable, constitute almost 31.4 per cent of road accidental deaths primarily due to head injuries. One of the most effective measures to reduce the two-wheeler accident injuries and fatalities is the use of standard helmets," said K.K. Kapila, President Emeritus, International Road Federation (IRF) said in his letter.



"The helmet usage in our country has been found to be low. It has been noticed that most of the two-wheeler riders fall in economically weaker and lower income group and prefer to purchase helmets which are cheaper and inferior in quality. Many of these helmets are not capable to save a rider's life, in case of an accident," Kapila stated.

He said that currently, the applicable rate of GST on helmet, which is a life saving device, is 18 per cent. "I, as a proponent of Road Safety, strongly recommend that there

should be no GST on helmets. This will help in making the standard helmets more affordable for the masses and will discourage them from buying helmets of substandard quality. This in turn will assist, not only in reducing road accident fatalities of two-wheeler riders, but will also help in reducing the whopping GDP loss due to road accidents to our economy," Kapila added.

As per the Section 129 of the Central Motor Vehicle Act, 1988 wearing of helmets is mandatory for two-wheeler riders.

India Post to use RoPax for postal services between Saurashtra-South Gujarat

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India Post will use RoPax (roll-on/off-passenger) ferry services on Gogha-Hazira route for speedy postal services between Saurashtra and South Gujarat and Mumbai, according to an official release.

Minister of State for Communications Devusinh Chauhan on Friday will flag off the daily mail and parcel delivery transportation services of India Post on 'M.V. Voyage Express'-RoPax Ferry.

The service will not only bring down the delivery transportation time of about 10-12 hours to 3-4 hours but will also enable swift movements of industrial packages between Saurashtra and South Gujarat and Mumbai regions, the



release said.

The statement said the service is estimated to carry daily postal cargo of about 3 to 4 tonnes during upcoming months.

The RoPax service between Hazira and Gogha was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2020 and has transported more than 3.7 lakh passengers and 1.1 lakh vehicles (car, bus, truck) till December 2022 since inauguration.

Samsung eyes 75% smartphone biz from 5G phones; advances Galaxy A series launch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Smartphone maker Samsung has advanced the launch of its Galaxy A series smartphones with an aim to capture a larger market share as it looks to garner 75 per cent of its mobile phone business from the sale of 5G handsets this year, a senior company official said on Thursday.

Samsung India Senior Vice President for Mobile Business Raju Pullan told PTI that the company's mobile business grew over 22 per cent in value terms between January-November 2022 and is expected to grow faster than the industry this year, in strong double digits.

"Last year, industry contribution for 5G was 56 per cent as per industry analysts. 5G

contributed 61 per cent to Samsung India's mobile phone business in 2022. With the early launch of Galaxy A14 5G and A23 5G, we expect the contribution to go up to 75 per cent," he said.

Samsung will start selling Galaxy A14 5G for a net effective price of Rs 14,999 apiece and Galaxy A 23 5G for a net effective price of Rs 20,990 from January 19.

Both smartphones will come with a 6.6-inch full high-definition display and a 50-megapixel camera.

Galaxy A23 5G will have a quad camera and come with an in-built image stabilisation sensor.

"In 2023, our strategy is going to be the first 5G strategy. While we are leaders in the 5G segment in the last four



consecutive years. We will expand our 5G portfolio by 1.6 times. We had the Galaxy A series, which we launched in the month of March. This year, we have A series launching right in the month of January. This means that an early launch will give a very strong start to Samsung," Pullan said.

PhonePe raises USD 350 mn at USD 12 bn valuation

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Walmart-owned digital payments app PhonePe on Thursday said it has raised USD 350 million at a valuation of USD 12 billion in a funding round led by private equity firm General Atlantic.

With this round, the valuation of the company has more than doubled in about a two-year period.

"PhonePe has raised USD 350 million in funding from General Atlantic, a leading global growth equity firm, at a pre-money valuation of USD 12 billion."

"Marquee Global and Indian investors are also participating in the round. The investment marks the first tranche of an up to USD 1 billion total fundraising that commenced in January 2023," the statement said.



PhonePe had raised USD 700 million at a post-money valuation of USD 5.5 billion in December 2020.

The fresh fundraising follows PhonePe's recently announced change of domicile to India and full separation from Flipkart.

PhonePe, in which the US retailer Walmart Inc took ownership in 2018, plans to deploy the new funds to "make significant investments in infrastructure, including the development of data centers and help build financial services offerings at scale in the country."

EVEN WHEN WICKETS WERE FALLING, MY INTENT WAS TO PUNISH BAD BALLS: GILL

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Shubman Gill feels his intent to look for boundaries despite wickets falling at the other end contributed immensely to his sensational double hundred in the first ODI against New Zealand. While the wickets were falling regularly at the other end, opener Gill batted till the 50th over to script a knock for the ages. Thanks to Michael Bracewell's breathtaking 140 off 78 balls, New Zealand came dangerously close to chasing down 350 but the barrage of sixes that Gill hit in the death overs made the difference.

The gifted Gill was not getting support from the other end but he kept looking for the odd boundary in the middle overs before going ballistic in the death overs. He hammered six sixes in the last 10 balls he faced.

"This knock means a lot to me. I could not convert in the first ODI and third game (against Sri Lanka), I was looking to get a big score but it did-

n't happen. Once I was set, the focus was to score as may runs as possible.

"With the extra fielder inside the circle (in overs 11-40), we see the other teams pushing in the middle overs. Even when wickets were falling, I wanted to show intent to the bowlers because it's very easy to bowl dot balls if the batter is not showing intent.

"So, that was my intent when the wickets were falling that 'I will hit you if you are going to bowl bad balls'," the 23-year-old spoke about his mindset during his sensational innings. What stood out was his ability hit straight sixes. He ended up tonking nine of them on Wednesday. With the batters getting dismissed at the other end, the message from the dressing room kept changing but it was the 47th over when Gill decided to go after every ball.

"I think once in England I had hit six sixes in seven balls. I was itching to unleash myself but with wickets falling at regular intervals and the message



from the dressing room was that I have to bat till the end.

"So, that is why I had to play in a safe manner so that a set batter doesn't get out. If I had got out, it would have been difficult for the lower order batters to hit boundaries. "First I decided to go hard in the last five overs but with Washy (Washington Sundar) getting out in the 45th over, the message was to go hard in the last three overs. When I hit a couple of sixes (off Tickner in the 47th over), I decided to go big." Gill is starting to show the consistency that is expected from a rare talent like him and he is glad about that.

"Consistency is very important for me, it's the key to everything. As a batter that is what I strive for in any format. It feels good when things you are doing repeatedly are paying off," said Gill, whose father has been his primary coach since he took up the game.

After a memorable double ton, he spoke about his father and mentor Yuvraj Singh.

"Yuvi paaji has been a mentor to me, like a big brother. I keep discussing about my batting with him and my dad has been my primary coach since the beginning. I am glad I could make them proud." "I didn't think ball hit the stumps"

India all-rounder Hardik Pandya was adjudged bowled but replays suggested the ball did not hit the stumps. It could have been wicketkeeper Tom Latham's gloves that knocked the balls off but the third umpire ruled it in favour of the away team. However, Gill had his doubts on the dismissal.

"As a non striker batter I did not think the ball hit the stumps when I was watching the replay. Sometimes there is a blind spot you can't really tell what happened. "With the bail falling towards the crease, it is a bit weird (and not falling towards the wicketkeeper). But these bails are different they are heavy bails and in the end you have to go with the third umpire decision," added Gill.



Not having practice and tour games could hurt Australia in India: Healy

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australia wicket-keeper Ian Healy doesn't agree with prolific run-getter Usman Khawaja's opinion that practice matches are not required ahead of the four-Test Border-Gavaskar series in India beginning February 9.

Australia will not be playing a single practice game in India before the opening Test in Nagpur, and Khawaja, a member of the touring side, recently said it won't harm the team's chances on spinning sub-continent wickets.

"Have you ever been pre-tour with us? They can be spinning wickets when we play but we go to the practice matches and they are green Gabba-like wickets out there so what's the point," Khawaja was quoted as saying recently by the Australian media.

"I think we have finally learned. When I heard we weren't going to have a practice game I went up to (head coach) Andrew McDonald and said, 'good idea'."

Healy, 58, on Thursday begs to differ and said that while someone like Khawaja, who is in peak form, might not require fine-tuning on Indian pitches, there would be many in the side who need to get used to sub-continent wickets.

"That's an in-form natural batsman (Khawaja) talking,"

Healy told SEN Radio on Thursday.

"I think the spinners would like a 'bowl-off' into it and so the non-natural players who need some repetition and to grind before getting back into it. It's not for everyone practice matches, but it is for some," added Healy.

The touring side under Pat Cummins is not scheduled to play any tour games in between Tests, and Healy thinks that could hurt Australia's chances in the crucial series.

"How do we get players back into form? There'll be no games in between the four Tests either. Someone who is going to be sitting on the bench for three matches might get dragged in, we've got to be careful."

The veteran of 119 Tests and 168 ODIs added that he was concerned for someone like pacer Lance Morris, who could make his debut for Australia on the tour.

"I am a little bit worried, not so much for an Usman (Khawaja) and that sort of personality that he's got with great natural flair. But a Lance Morris, I want to keep him revving, I would be looking to find games for a few of those (players)."

"We want them to play games, see if there's a club game if there is such a thing in India. I don't need him (Morris) getting stale or bored without form behind him," opined Healy.

Amla retires from all forms of cricket

PTI ■ SURREY

Legendary South African batter Hashim Amla has announced his retirement from all forms of cricket, bringing curtains down on an illustrious career spanning two decades.

The 39-year-old, who retired from international cricket in 2019, confirmed the development to his English county side Surrey.

"Hashim Amla announces retirement from all forms of cricket. The legendary South African batter has declared his playing career over. From everyone at Surrey, thank you for everything Hash. @amlahash," Surrey wrote on Twitter.

One of the most prolific batters in South African cricket history, Amla amassed 18,672 runs for the Proteas in 124 Tests, 181 ODIs, and 44 T20Is from 2004-2019. He has also created several records for his country. Amla became the first and only Proteas' batter to score a triple century in Tests.

His 311 not out against England at The Oval in July 2012 still remains the highest Test score by a South African player. "I have great memories of the Oval ground and to finally leave it as a player fills me with immense gratitude for what has been," Amla was quoted as saying by the Surrey website.

Having represented Surrey



sional and a great of the game".

"Hashim is a fantastic cricketer and a wonderful person. He has been an incredible resource for the team to learn from on and off the field. As well as posting big scores at vital moments, he has also shown his willingness to dig in and do what is needed to get his team a result in tough games.

"I can't thank him enough for what he has done for Surrey and hold him up as an example to all young players of what a true professional looks like," Stewart said.

Amla's next assignment is a coaching stint MI Cape Town in the ongoing SA20 where he will serve as the batting coach.

Smith to prepare for Ashes with stint at English county

AP ■ HOVE

Australia batter Steve Smith will prepare for this year's Ashes series in England by playing three matches for English team Sussex in the four-day County Championship.

Smith's short-term deal will see him play three matches in May ahead of the Ashes, which starts with the first test at Edgbaston on June 16. Australia could also feature in the World Test Championship final at the start of June at the Oval in London.

In the last Ashes series in



England — in 2019 — Smith scored 774 runs and averaged 110.57.

"To have arguably the world's best batter play for Sussex just before an eagerly awaited Ashes Test series is great for us and the County Championship," Sussex CEO Rob Andrew said Thursday.

Smith, test cricket's No. 2-ranked batter, said he was "particularly looking forward to working with the younger players in the squad and hoping I can provide some guidance to them."

Zampa's Test aspirations have probably passed him by after India snub: Hussey



PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australian cricketer David Hussey believes Adam Zampa's omission from the Border-Gavaskar series in India could have dealt a body blow to the off-spinner's Test aspirations.

Hussey, 45, a white-ball specialist, felt strongly about Zampa's exclusion after being assured of a Test berth in the India tour.

"He (Zampa) played a red-ball Shield game for New South Wales against Victoria at the Junction Oval just prior to the Big Bash starting and he bowled particularly well," Hussey told SEN Radio on Thursday.

"I think all reports from (head coach Andrew) McDonald and (chairman of selectors) George Bailey (was that) he (Zampa) was going to be going to India."

The former Australia cricketer added that had Zampa been selected, he would have been successful in India.

"Unfortunately for Adam (Zampa) he didn't get the nod, but personally I think he would do an excellent job. Not too dissimilar to Anil Kumble, who was a fine bowler for India for many a year.

"Purely a sub-continent selection, I think he would have done a great job. But it would seem with his snub that his Test

aspirations have probably passed him by," opined Hussey.

Zampa had recently hinted he had got indication that he could be on the Test tour of India.

"I thought with the way that I've been going in international cricket in particular that this was going to be my opportunity (to play Test cricket)," Zampa had told cricket.Com.Au.

"And that was the message I got six weeks ago as well that this was going to be a very good chance I could potentially be on it but now that I'm not, I'm very flat about it and it's time to just move on from it."

The selectors have opted for Nathan Lyon, Ashton Agar, Todd Murphy and Mitch Swepson in the spin department in the 18-member squad.

"I'm a little bit biased... But the skill-set there, he (Zampa) bowls fast, he bowls with good overspin, he can turn it both ways and he really attacks the stumps, every time he bowls a ball the batsman is playing and bring the close fielders into play," Hussey said.

"LBW, caught behind, caught bat-pad, bowled so many different dismissals are in hand. I thought if he had got the nod and got the opportunity to play Test cricket in India, I don't think he would have shamed himself at all, I think he would have done exce

Bengal in sight of innings win over Haryana

PTI ■ ROHTAK

Pacer Akash Deep continued to shine with the ball, picking up three scalps in the second innings to add to his five-wicket haul in the first essay as Bengal eye an innings victory over Haryana in a Ranji Trophy Group A match here on Thursday.

At stumps on the third day, Haryana were struggling at 177 for 7, requiring 79 more runs to make Bengal bat again.

Akash Deep (3/37) removed Himanshu Rana (16), RP Sharma (1) and skipper Harshal Patel (1) to compound Haryana's misery after fellow pacers Mukesh Kumar (2/53) and Ishan Porel (2/36) had done the early

damage with the scalps of C K Bishnoi (55) and Yuvraj Singh (78 off 187 balls, 7x4s, 1x6).

Asked to follow-on after conceding a 256-run lead, Haryana began the second innings well with openers Bishnoi and Yuvraj adding 129 runs for the first wicket. The duo looked in control and appeared to be taking the home team to safety before Porel struck the first blow, dismissing Bishnoi.

Three balls later, Porel had Ankit Kumar trapped LBW for a duck. Yuvraj and Himanshu Rana (16) added 27 runs for the third wicket before Akash Deep got into the act by sending back the latter. Haryana subsequently lost four wickets for 15 runs



after Yuvraj was scalped by Mukesh Kumar to find themselves in trouble.

BRIEF SCORES:

At Rohtak: Bengal 419 all out in 113.4 overs (Anustup Majumdar 145, Abhimanyu

Easwaran 57; Harshal Patel 4/80) vs Haryana 163 all out in 52 overs (Sumit Kumar 70 not out; Akash Deep 5/61, Ishan Porel 2/29) and 177 for 7 in 69 overs (Yuvraj Singh 78, C K Bishnoi 55; Akash Deep 3/37). Haryana trails by 79 runs.

At Meerut: Odisha 226 all out in 87 overs (Shantanu Mishra 109, Rajesh Dhuper 62; Kunal Yadav 5/47) and 152 for 1 in 41 overs (Subhansu Senapati 91 batting, Anurag Sarangi 52 batting) vs Uttar Pradesh 362 all out in 100.3 overs (Priyam Garg 122, Rinku Singh 108, Dhruv Jurel 44; Suryakant Pradhan 4/76). Odisha lead by 16 runs.

At Dehradun: Baroda 86 all

out and 336 for 7 in 102 overs (Shashank Rawat 89, Vishnu Solanki 79, Priyanshu Moliya 36, N A Rathva 35 batting; Swapnil K Singh 3/80) vs Uttarakhand 199 all out in 77.4 overs (Swapnil Singh 63, Akhil Rawat 45; Ninad Rathva 4/19, Babashafi Pathan 2/44). Baroda leads by 223 runs.

At Nadaun: Himachal Pradesh 346 all out in 104.5 overs (Ankit Kalsi 160, Mayank Dagar 58; Imliwati Lemtur 5/74) and 263 for 3 declared in 46 overs (Prashant Chopra 115, Raghav Dhawan 46) vs Nagaland 233 all out in 79.5 overs (Rongsen Jonathan 96, Hokaito Zhimomi 41; Vinay Galetiya 6/62) and 31 for 4 in 17 overs. Nagaland needs 346 runs to win.

Mayank slams double ton, helps K'taka grab lead vs Kerala

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

India Test discard Mayank Agarwal's unbeaten double century helped Karnataka secure the all-important first innings lead against Kerala on the third day of the Ranji Trophy Group C match here on Thursday.

Resuming at the overnight score of 137 for 2, Karnataka captain Agarwal (208 off 360 balls, 17x4s, 5x6s) moved to his ton from 87 in quick time and took control of the proceedings, scoring the bulk of the runs.

In the company of S J Nikin Jose (54), the stylish Agarwal

kept the scoreboard ticking. The two put on 151 runs to keep the team in the hunt.

Jose fell to left-arm spinner Akshay Chandran (1/32) and Manish Pandey (0), one of the team's star batters, was dismissed for a first ball duck to off-spinner Lalaj Saxena (2/124) as Karnataka appeared to stutter.

Agarwal, however, found an able partner in Shreyas Gopal (48 off 125 balls, 4x4s), and their fifth-wicket stand of 93 from 165 balls, put Karnataka back in the hunt. Gopal fell at 336 with the visiting team six runs short of Kerala's score.



Wicket-keeper-batter B R Sharath (47 batting), who joined Agarwal in the middle, put on 42 runs for the sixth wicket to make sure Karnataka got past their opponent's score.

Off-spinner Vaishakh Chandran (2/87) struck a big blow for Kerala by removing Agarwal, who was looking in

ominous form and appeared set for a mammoth score. Sharath and Shubhang Hegde (8 batting) ensured that there was no further damage as Karnataka ended the day at 410 for 6, a lead of 68 runs.

BRIEF SCORES:

At Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala 342 all out in 130.1 overs (Sachin Baby 141, Lalaj Saxena 57, Vathsai Govind 46; V Koushik 6/54) vs Karnataka 410 for 6 in 137 overs (Mayank Agarwal 208, S J Nikin Jose 54, Shreyas Gopal 48, B R Sharath 47 batting).

At Puducherry: Pondi-

cherry 231 all out in 91.4 overs (K B Arun Karthick 68, Paras K Dogra 68, Aravind K 31; Ashish Kumar 3/34, Anukul Roy 3/78) and 89 for 5 in 38 overs (Anukul Roy 3/39) vs Jharkhand 412 all out in 133.2 overs (Virat Singh 124, Saurabh Tiwary 116, Kumar Suraj 45; Sagar P Udeshi 8/118).

At New Delhi: Services 175 all out in 59.2 overs (Pulkit Nagar 52, L S Kumar 32; Vijesh Prabhudesai 3/39) and 139 for 2 in 40 overs (Ravi Chauhan 68 batting, S G Rohila 52) vs Goa 483 for 9 declared in 155.2 overs.

Nagpur Blues: Vidarbha defends lowest score in first-class cricket in India, shoot out Gujarat for 54

PTI ■ NAGPUR

Left-arm spinner Aditya Sarwate grabbed a match haul of 11 wickets as Vidarbha pipped Gujarat by 18 runs, defending 73 on the third day morning in a Ranji Trophy Group D match at Jamtha here on Thursday.

With this Vidarbha defended the lowest score — 73 — successfully in first-class cricket in India, bettering Bihar's 78 against Delhi in Jamshedpur way back in the 1948-49 season.

At a venue where India's opening Test against Australia is slated to be played in less than a month's time, the match witnessed 15 wickets tumbling on day one, followed by 16 on the next day.

The Ranji Trophy game was played on a side pitch, while the Test would be played on one of the centre strips.

Chasing a paltry 73, Gujarat resumed their second innings on six for one but were shot out for 54 runs inside 31 overs on the third day morning with Sarwate once again running through their line-up with stunning figures of 15.3-6-17-6 to complement his first innings' 5/64. Sarwate, who returned with a career-best match haul of 11/81, was complemented well by another left-arm spinner in Harsh Dubey (9-1-11-3).

Siddharth Desai, who batted on No. 3, was the only Gujarat batter to reach a double-digit score (18) and was dismissed by a run-out.

Electing to bat, Vidarbha's first innings folded for 74 in 30.3 overs at the stroke of lunch on day one, with the Gujarat pace duo of Chintan Gaja and Tejas Patel grabbing five wickets each.

Gujarat scored 256 in their first innings, taking a lead of 182 runs.

Vidarbha put up a strong fight in their second essay with Jitesh Sharma leading the show with a 53-ball 69, while no. 9 batter Nachiket Bhute also contributed a significant 42 off 66 balls.

Gujarat's Siddharth Desai, left-arm orthodox spinner, was their wrecker-in-chief as he returned with 6/74 to bundle out Vidarbha for 254 and a win seemed formality for the visitors with a small target of 73.



But Sarwate had other ideas as Gujarat batters fell like nine pins on an eventful third day morning as Vidarbha bagged six points from the match to move to joint-second place with Punjab.

BRIEF SCORES

At Nagpur: Vidarbha 74 and 254. Gujarat 256 and 54; 33.3 overs (Siddharth Desai 18; Aditya Sarwate 6/17, Harsh Dubey 3/11). Vidarbha won by 18 runs. Points: Vidarbha 6, Gujarat 0.

At Mohali: Punjab 443. Madhya Pradesh 244; 78.4 overs (Yash Dubey 50, Shubham Sharma 50, Harsh Gawli 53; Siddarth Kaul 4/55) and following on 77; 27.5 overs (Kumar Kartikeya 21 not out; Arshdeep

Singh 4/30, Mayank Markande 3/19, Kaul 2/11). Punjab won by an innings and 122 runs. Points: Punjab 7, MP 0.

At Chandigarh: Railways 386. Chandigarh 485/8; 149 overs (Manan Vohra 126, Gaurav Puri 102 batting, Kunal Mahajan 83, Gurinder Singh 42; Himanshu Sangwan 3/64, Sagar Jadhav 2/71). Chandigarh lead by 99 runs.

At Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir 446/6 declared; 156 overs (Abhinav Puri 121, Shubham Khajuria 53, Vivrant Sharma 55, Ian Chauhan 61, Abdul Samad 58, Musaf Ajaz 43 not out; S S Ghosh 3/106). Tripura 76/4; 37 overs (Bikram Das 39 batting, Subham Ghosh 23 batting; Abid Mushtaq 3/13). Tripura trail by 370 runs.

Novak bothered by leg, heckler during Australian Open victory

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Novak Djokovic propped up his left shoe on a court-side sign so he could stretch out his bothersome hamstring. He grimaced while flexing the muscle after one point, hopped on his right leg to keep weight off the left. He took a medical timeout while a trainer re-taped him during the second set -- which Djokovic would go on to drop.

As if he needed another distraction, Djokovic was flustered enough by a heckler that he asked chair umpire Fergus Murphy to have the spectator removed from Rod Laver Arena, saying: "The guy's drunk out of his mind. ... He's been provoking. He just wants to get in my head."

As Djokovic summed up:



"It was a lot happening tonight."

Here's what did not happen Thursday evening at the Australian Open: Djokovic did not lose his way entirely and, most importantly, he did not lose in the second round, which is what happened to both No. 1 seed Rafael Nadal and No. 2 seed Casper Ruud.

Seeking a 10th trophy at Melbourne Park, to add to his own record, and a 22nd Grand Slam title overall, to equal Nadal's, Djokovic put everything aside and beat 191st-ranked French qualifier Enzo Couacaud 6-1, 6-7 (5), 6-2, 6-0.

It was Djokovic's 23rd consecutive win at the Australian Open, a streak that paused a year ago when he couldn't play in the tournament because he was not vaccinated against COVID-19.

This did not shape up as a contest of much intrigue, given that the fourth-seeded Djokovic has done all that he has done, while Couacaud entered with a career mark of 2-5. And whatever Couacaud's chances were beforehand seemed to dim just four games in, when he turned his right ankle and required a visit from a trainer. But Couacaud overcame that and played freely, conjuring some terrific shot-making and even having some fun, celebrating his claim of the second set by pointing to the court as if to indicate, "This is my house!"

Which, of course, it is not. The place belongs to Djokovic, who will play Grigor Dimitrov next, knowing that two highly-ranked contenders are no longer possible obstacles.



Australian Open: American Jenson beats No 2 Ruud

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Jenson Brooksby eliminated No. 2 seed Casper Ruud 6-3, 7-5, 6-7 (4), 6-2 in the second round of the Australian Open on Thursday in Rod Laver Arena, meaning a pair of 20-something Californians have knocked out the top two players in the men's bracket.

The 22-year-old Brooksby's surprise came in the same round and on the same court that 27-year-old Mackenzie McDonald defeated No. 1 seed and defending champion Rafael Nadal on Wednesday at the year's first Grand Slam tournament.

Brooksby is ranked 39th and making his Australian Open debut. He was supposed to enter a year ago but came down with COVID-19 the day before he was supposed to fly to Australia.

"Hopefully this is the first of many many good years here to come," Brooksby said.

Ruud was the runner-up at the French Open to Nadal last June and at the U.S. Open to Carlos Alcaraz last September.

Brooksby's unusual playing style, including his two-handed backhand volleys, and ability to track down opponent's shots, were trouble for Ruud, who took a medical timeout after the second set.

The biggest problem for

Brooksby was closing this one out. He held a trio of match points while trying to serve for the victory at 5-3 in the third set but could not cash any of them in.

After he got broken there by missing a backhand, Brooksby sat down in his changeover seat and yelled at himself: "How?! How?! God!"

Ruud, a 24-year-old Norwegian, raced through the end of that set, but Brooksby righted himself in the fourth, jumping out to a 3-0 lead. Brooksby finished the set off 1 hour, 15 minutes after his first chance.

His performance continued the run of strong play by men from the United States during Week 1, a significant development given that none has won a Grand Slam title since Andy Roddick at the 2003 U.S. Open.

By reaching the third round, Brooksby joins countrymen Ben Shelton, Tommy Paul and J.J. Wolf, who also won Thursday, along with McDonald, No. 16 Frances Tiafoe and No. 29 Sebastian Korda, who all won Wednesday.

Shelton beat qualifier Nicolas Jarry of Chile 7-6 (3), 7-6 (3), 7-5; Paul came back to edge No. 30 Alejandro Davidovich Fokina of Spain 6-2, 2-6, 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-4; and Wolf breezed past No. 23 Diego Schwartzman of Argentina 6-1, 6-4, 6-4.

Mackenzie, who beat Nadal, eyes more in Australia

AP ■ MELBOURNE

It was a long road back to elite-level tennis for Mackenzie McDonald, and his victory over defending champion Rafael Nadal at the Australian Open showed just how much things have changed for the 27-year-old Californian who was a college star at UCLA.

To understand McDonald's journey, go back to the 2019 French Open, where he tore a hamstring tendon three games into a first-round doubles match. Surgery for that made him unable to walk for several weeks and left McDonald with what he describes as "a massive scar." The whole episode also served as "a big wakeup," he says.

Returning to Roland Garros in 2020, his ranking down to 236th, McDonald got



his first opportunity to face Nadal. McDonald spoke ahead of that one about having fun -- then went out and lost 6-1, 6-0, 6-3.

Fast-forward to this week at Melbourne Park, where McDonald viewed his rematch against 22-time Grand Slam champion Nadal on

Wednesday in a far different light than that initial meeting less than 2 1/2 years ago in Paris.

"Before, I wasn't really up to beating a guy like that -- or even believing I could," McDonald said in an interview with The Associated Press after completing the 6-4, 6-4, 7-5

win in the second round against Nadal, who already was way behind on the scoreboard by the time he sought medical treatment late in the second set for what turned out to be an injured left hip flexor.

"I believed it more -- and showed that," said McDonald, who won NCAA titles in singles and doubles in 2016. "I was on a mission more than on a vacation."

He twice has been to the fourth round at major tournaments, at Wimbledon in 2018 and the Australian Open in 2021.

Now ranked 65th, McDonald will try to make it at least that far yet again when he takes on No. 31 seed Yoshihito Nishioka of Japan in the third round on Court 3 in the afternoon Friday in Melbourne (sometime after 10:30 p.m. EST on Thursday).

Sania-Danilina sail into Australian Open second round

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Competing in her last Grand Slam, India tennis star Sania Mirza cruised into the second round of the Australian Open here on Thursday.

Sania and her Kazakh partner Anna Danilina prevailed over Hungary's Dalma Galfi and American Bernarda Pera 6-2 7-5 in one hour and 15 minutes in the women's doubles.

Wrapping up the first set in less than 25 minutes, the pair led 4-1 in the second when they were made to work a bit as Galfi and Pera won four games on the trot to make it five-all.

However, the Indo-Kazakh duo managed to break Pera's serve and then Danilina held on to hers to seal the issue and set up a second round clash against Alison Van Uytvanck and Anhelina Kalinina.

A six-time Major champion (three in doubles and three



in mixed doubles), the 36-year-old Indian has announced that the Australian Open is her last and she would be retiring after WTA 1000 Dubai Tennis Championships slated from February 19.

In men's doubles, Ramkumar Ramanathan and the duo of Yuki Bhambri and Saketh Myneni made first round exits after losing their respective matches.



Hockey WC: Netherlands register record win over Chile to seal berth in quarters; Malaysia stun NZ

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Three-time champions Netherlands registered a record-breaking 14-0 win over debutants Chile to secure a direct qualification into the quarter-finals, while Malaysia stunned New Zealand 3-2 to finish second in Pool C at the FIH Men's Hockey World Cup here on Thursday.

With three wins from as many games, Netherlands finished at the top of Pool C with maximum nine points, while Malaysia were second with six points from two victories.

In the second match of the day, world No.3 Netherlands toyed with Chile, ranked 23rd, and scored goals at will to register the biggest margin of victory in a World Cup match.

The record for the biggest margin of win in a hockey World Cup match was earlier held by world No.1 Australia, who thrashed South Africa 12-0 in New Delhi.

Jip Janssen (6th, 29th, 34th, 44th minutes) and skipper Thierry Brinkman (25th, 33rd, 58th) scored a hat-trick each, while Koen Bijen (40th, 45th) struck a brace.

Derck de Vilder (22nd), Thijs van Dam (23rd), Terrance Pieters (37th), Justen Blok (42nd) and Teun Beins (48th) were the other goal-getters for the Dutch. Janssen's all four goals came from penalty corners.



India beat Wales 3-2 but fail to book direct berth in quarters

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

A below-par India beat tournament debutants Wales 4-2 in their final pool match but failed to qualify directly for the quarterfinals of the FIH Men's World Cup here on Thursday.

India can still qualify for the quarterfinals if they beat New Zealand in their crossover match here on Sunday.

Akashdeep Singh (32nd and 45th minutes) struck twice, while Shamsher Singh (21st) and Harmanpreet Singh (59th) got the other goals for India. Gareth Furlong (42nd) and Jacob Draper (44th) were the goal-getters for Wales.

Needing to win by a margin of eight goals to directly qualify for the quarterfinals,

India failed to live up to the expectations as they finished second in Pool D behind England.

Both India and England ended their pool engagements on seven points each after winning two matches and drawing one but the European side topped Pool D on the basis of superior goal difference.

England, who had outclassed Spain 4-0 in the earlier Pool D match here, have a better goal difference of plus nine as against four of India.

When two teams are on same points and won equal number of matches, the ranking is decided by goal difference. India will play New Zealand -- the third-placed team in Pool C -- on Sunday in their crossover match here.

WTT Contender: Manika, Sathiyam storm into semis

PTI ■ DOHA

Indian mixed doubles duo of I.G Sathiyam and Manika Batra stormed into the WTT Contender semifinals with a 3-0 win over World No. 9 Spanish pair of Maria Xiao and Alvaro Robles here on Thursday.

Continuing their splendid run, the Indian duo took less than 24 minutes to wrap the proceedings 11-9 11-9 11-5 and set up a last-four clash against Lim Jonghoon and Shin Yubin, the world No. 20 duo from Korea. The other half of the semifinal will take place between the Chinese pair of Kuai Man-Lin Shidong and Wong Chun Ting-Doo Hoi Kem of Hong Kong. Both the semis are slated later in the day.

Fresh from their tough 3-2 win over Tin-Tin Ho and Samuel Walker of England, the Indian pair got off to a slow start and trailed 2-5 and 3-6.

They gradually upped the ante and won six points in a row to take the lead with a 11-9 win in the first game. It was a little close affair in the second game where the Indians took a 4-1 lead before winning by an identical 11-9 margin.

Man United halted by Palace ahead of Arsenal showdown

AP ■ ANCHESTER

Manchester United's title momentum was dramatically halted ahead of its visit to Premier League leader Arsenal at the weekend.

Leading Crystal Palace 1-0 after 90 minutes at Selhurst Park, United looked set to rack up a 10th straight win in all competitions and move up to second in the table, just six points off the top.

Michael Olise, however, completely changed the mood of the night by scoring a free kick in the first minute of stoppage time to earn Palace a 1-1 draw.

"We were 1-0 up. In the second half we had a lot of space to kill them and go for the second. I never saw we really went for the second goal," United manager Erik ten Hag said. "It's difficult to say (why). I have to criticize my team. Go for the second."

Ten Hag's frustration was evident after a result that changes the narrative going into the game against Arsenal.

Now, instead of being able to cut the Londoners' lead to



three points, defeat would leave United 11 points adrift having played a game more.

Ten Hag has so far talked down United's unlikely title challenge, but the improvement in his team has been evident on the back of nine straight wins before Palace, including a 2-1 victory against second-place Manchester City last weekend.

United remains the only team to have beaten Arsenal in the league this season and a repeat performance at the Emirates Stadium would have been a major statement of intent.

It still could be, but the draw with Palace will feel like a missed opportunity after Bruno Fernandes had opened the scoring in the 43rd.

United moved up from fourth to third in the league -- level on points with Manchester City.

While Ten Hag and his United players were left frustrated, Leeds can look forward to an FA Cup fourth round match with Boreham Wood or Accrington Stanley after a 5-2 rout of Cardiff in their third round replay.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Defending champion Lakshya Sen suffered a heartbreak, going down narrowly to world number 20 Rasmus Gemke of Denmark in the second round as the Indian ended at the Yonex-Sunrise India Open here on Thursday.

World no. 12 Sen reduced an 8-14 deficit in the decider to 13-14 after losing the second game but couldn't go the distance, losing 21-16 15-21 18-21 to Gemke in a match that lasted an hour and 21 minutes at the IG stadium.

Reigning champions in men's doubles, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, who had come into the tournament after a semifinal finish at Malaysia Super 1000 last week, withdrew from the tournament after the former suffered a hip injury ahead of their second-round clash.

London Games bronze medalist Saina Nehwal also found the

Sen, Saina lose; Satwik-Chirag pull out as home challenge ends at India Open

going tough against Olympic champion Chen Yufei, surrendering weekly 9-21 12-21 in just 32 minutes to draw curtains on India's campaign at the Super 750 tournament.

Earlier, Commonwealth Games bronze medallists Gayatri Gopichand and Treasa Jolly lost 9-21 16-21 to sixth-seeded Chinese Zhang Shu Xian and Zheng Yu in women's doubles pre-quarterfinals.

The rising men's doubles pair of Krishna Prasad Garaga and Vishnuvardhan Goud Panjala also was no match for China's Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang, going down



14-21 10-21 in 33 minutes.

Sen was favourite to win the match, having won the last two encounters against Gemke but the Indian couldn't find his 'A' game when it mattered as the Dane showed better alertness and control to come up trumps.

The match started on an even knell with the two engaging in long rallies. Both played high tosses and clears, and waited to put away weak returns.

Sen produced some sensational smashes and soft taps at the net to zoom ahead at 17-12 after the two were locked 9-9 at one stage.

A cross-court smash and a drop gave Sen six game points. He converted on the third opportunity to earn the bragging rights.

However, Sen was a touch off in his precision after the change of sides, allowing his opponent to open up a slender 7-5 lead. Gemke slowed down the game and soon the Indian was left to do the catch-up job.

Gemke maintained his two-point advantage at the break before moving to 14-10 after winning a controversial point. Sen's shot missed the backline but the Indian protested as he felt it had touched

his opponent's hand while landing outside.

Soon it turned 16-10 as Sen looked a bit dazed.

Thereafter, Sen sprayed the net twice before producing two precise cross-court returns. But he missed the line again as Gemke held six-game point and converted when the Indian went wide again.

Sen had a poor start in the decider as his unforced errors allowed Gemke to open up an 8-1 lead.

The Indian then sent one looping over his rival's head and another one away at the forehand corner, much to the cheers of the crowd to recover to 6-8.

His backhand blocks and forehand low returns reaped dividends but an alert Gemke managed to grab a four-point cushion at the interval.

On resumption, Sen again committed two silly errors as Gemke led 14-8 after unleashing a precise smash.