

OPINION 6
TROUBLED TIMES FOR
NEIGHBOURS**WORLD 9**
GUNMAN IN LUNAR NEW YEAR
MASSACRE FOUND DEAD**MONEY 10**
TATA STEEL 'STUDYING' UK
GOVT SUPPORT PACKAGE

NEW DELHI, TUESDAY JANUARY 24, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3

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'Judges not elected but people do watch them'

Nothing is hidden in era of social media and people are watching and making assessments about judiciary on basis of verdicts, says Law Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing tussle between the Government and the Judiciary, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday once again took on the judges. The Law Minister said since the judges are not elected, they do not face public scrutiny, but in the age of social media people watch them all the time and make assessments about them from the way they deliver justice.

He also said that his latest letter to the Chief Justice of India (CJI) on representation of the Government in the Collegium was misreported by the media.

"...As people don't elect you, they cannot replace you. But people are watching you — your judgments, the way you deliver a verdict — people are watching and make assessments and form opinions," he said, adding that nothing is hidden in the era of social media.

Speaking at a Delhi Bar Association function at the Tis Hazari Court complex, Rijiju said CJI Chandrachud once requested for initiating mea-



asures to control the attacks on the judiciary in social media and he (Rijiju) replied that it was not possible when people comment on a mass scale.

Talking about his letter to the CJI seeking Government representation in the Collegium, Rijiju said, "I wrote a letter to the CJI on January 6. It is my duty. There was no need to tell anyone, it is work. For two-three days, nobody knew. Out of nowhere someone learnt about it and it became a headline that the Government wants a representative in Collegiums."

Pointing out that Collegium has five Judges

including the CJI, Rijiju said how could he bring someone from somewhere and put them there. "There has to be a way? On this lie, former judges and seniors gave a statement. I think people get pleasure by making others fight. We don't want to fight ... what answer do I give on something which has no basis?" said Rijiju.

The Law Minister also said that he and CJI regularly meet and discuss everything, but nothing happens and difference of opinion arises. "We meet regularly. There is a live contact between CJI Chandrachud and me. We discuss everything and there are differences. Hum log

milte hai lekin opinion alag ho sakte hai kabhi kabhi," said Rijiju. Rijiju said that the CJI had requested him to do something about the attacks on judges on the social media. He wanted to know how to control the insulting language against judges. The CJI said the judges cannot argue on a public forum as there are limitations, said the Law Minister.

"I have thought about what should be done. There is a provision of contempt. But when people comment on a mass scale, then what can be done. While we are facing public scrutiny and criticism on a daily basis, judges too are facing the same now," he said.

Rijiju went on to say that judges, too, these days are careful, because if they deliver a verdict which will result in a "massive reaction" in society, then they, too, would be affected as they are also humans.

"If people elect us again, we will return to power. If they don't, we'll sit in Opposition and question the Government," he said, adding that, on the other hand, if a person becomes a judge, he does not have to face elections.

Continued on Page 2

21 Andaman islands named after soldiers

PM unveils model of memorial dedicated to Bose in isles

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday virtually unveiled the model of a proposed memorial dedicated to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, to be set up in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and also named 21 largest unnamed islands after Param Vir Chakra awardees in a ceremony on the occasion of Parakram Diwas.

"Today Ross Island has become Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Island, Havelock



and Neil Islands have become Swaraj and Shaheed Islands", said the Prime Minister.

Modi noted that the names, 'Swaraj' and 'Shaheed' were given by Netaji himself

but no importance was given to them even after Independence. "When the Azad Hind Fauj Government completed 75 years, our Government reinstated these names," he said.

Modi lamented the efforts of the previous Government in recognising the country's potential due to decades of 'inferiority complex.'

Continued on Page 2



Maha Guv seeks to step down

Facing onslaught over Shivaji quips, Koshiyari tells PM he wants to quit

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Facing onslaught from the Opposition over his remarks on Chhatrapati Shivaji and his bitter run-ins with Shiv Sena-led alliance partners on a host of administrative issues, Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshiyari wants to say goodbye to Raj Bhavan. Koshiyari, 81, took charge as the



Maharashtra Governor in September 2019.

"During the recent visit of the Hon'ble Prime Minister to Mumbai, I have conveyed to him my desire to be discharged of all political responsibilities and to spend the remainder of my life in reading, writing and

other activities.

"I have always received the love and affection from the Hon'ble Prime Minister and I hope to receive the same in this regard," a statement from the Raj Bhavan said.

Hoshiyari met PM Modi when he visited Mumbai on January 19 to inaugurate and lay the foundation stone for several infrastructure projects.

"It was an absolute honour and privilege for me to serve as the Rajya Sevak or Rajyapal of a great State like Maharashtra, the land of saints, social reformers and valiant fighters," Koshiyari added.

Continued on Page 2

Uddhav's Sena ties up with Ambedkar's VBA

Mumbai: Ahead of the elections to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and various civic bodies in cities across Maharashtra, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena forged an alliance with the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) headed by former MP and late BR Ambedkar's grandson Prakash Ambedkar. The development seeks to change the caste equations in the metropolis and elsewhere in the State. Uddhav also made it clear that the VBA will be part of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA). **Detailed report on P5**

CAPSULE

KL RAHUL WEDS ATHIYA SHETTY IN KHANDALA

Mumbai: Ace cricketer KL Rahul and Bollywood starlet Athiya Shetty are now official man and wife! The couple tied the knot at Athiya's father B'town star Suniel Shetty's swanky bungalow Jahan in Khandala.

SUBMARINE INS VAGIR COMMISSIONED

Mumbai: INS Vagir, the fifth submarine of the Kalvari Class submarines, was commissioned into the Indian Navy on Monday, giving a boost to the force's prowess. INS Vagir is among the six Scorpene Class submarines being built in India by the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited Mumbai.

HIT & DRAG: CUSTODY OF 5 MEN EXTENDED

New Delhi: A Delhi court on Monday extended by two weeks the judicial custody of five people accused in the Sultanpuri hit-and-drag case in which Anjali Singh was dragged to death while trapped under a car. The court extended the judicial custody of Deepak Khanna, Amit Khanna, Krishan, Mithun and Manoj Mittal till February 6. Two accused — Ankush and Ashutosh — were recently granted bail in the case.

AI crew seeks repeal of action against staff

AI has derostered Captain, 4 crew members for peegate shocker

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The All India Cabin Crew Association (AICCA) on Monday demanded that the airline should roll back derostering of the crew that operated the New York-Delhi flight where a male passenger allegedly urinated on a female co-passenger last November.

Air India issued show cause notices to the Pilot-in-Command and four crew members of the flight and derostered them pending investigation. For various violations related to the urination incident onboard the flight on November 26, 2022, aviation regulator DGCA has imposed a financial penalty of ₹30 lakh



on Air India, a ₹3 lakh fine on the airline's Director of Inflight Services and also suspended the Pilot-in-Command's licence for three months.

Against this backdrop, the AICCA has demanded that the crew concerned should be rostered for duty again. "The AICCA has perused the DGCA press note on the AI-102 (26/11/22) and noted with deep regret the unusually harsh punishment on the Pilot-in-Command. "The AICCA places on record that all the crew and pilots acted judiciously, within the law and in the best interests of the safety, security and well-being of all the passengers and crew on the flight," it said in a statement.

Continued on Page 2

Mary to head panel probing charges against WFI chief Singh



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Boxing legend MC Mary Kom will lead a five-member oversight committee to probe the sexual harassment allegations against Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh that have been levelled by senior wrestlers and Olympians.

Olympic medallist Yogeshwar Dutt, Dhyanchand awardee Trupti Murgunde, SAI member Radhica Sreeman and ex-CEO TOPS Cdr Rajesh Rajagopalan (Retd) are also part of the committee.

The committee was appointed by an order passed by the Department of Sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports. **Detailed report on P11**

Huge find of dino hatchery in MP

Palaeontologists have found 92 nests, 256 eggs of Titanosaurs in Dhar district

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a rare discovery, palaeontologists have found a massive hatching site of Titanosaurs in the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh, containing 92 nests and 256 eggs. Titanosaurs were among the largest known dinosaurs to have lived. They could measure up to 100 feet in length. The finding, published in the journal *PLOS ONE*, reveals details about the lives of Titanosaurs and their parenting nature.

"These fossil nests also provide a wealth of data about



some of the largest dinosaurs in history, and they come from a time shortly before the age of dinosaurs came to an end," the researchers said in the study

'New Late Cretaceous Titanosaur sauropod dinosaur egg clutches from lower Narmada valley, India: Palaeobiology and taphono-

my.'

The Lameta Formation of the Bagh District of lower Narmada Valley is already known for fossils of dinosaur skeletons and eggs of the Late Cretaceous Period that lasted from about 145 to 66 million years ago, the researchers said.

They identified six different egg-species suggest a higher diversity of Titanosaurs than is represented by skeletal remains from this region. Based on the layout of the nests, the team inferred that these dinosaurs buried their eggs in shallow pits like modern-day crocodiles.

"Our research has revealed the presence of an extensive hatchery of Titanosaur sauropod dinosaurs in the study area," said the study's lead author Harsha Dhimman from Department of Geology, Center for Advanced Studies, University of Delhi.

Continued on Page 2

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Har Pal Aapke Saath

SpiceJet offloads passenger from flight for unruly behaviour

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

SpiceJet on Monday offloaded a passenger from a Hyderabad-bound aircraft for unruly behaviour at the Delhi airport, after he allegedly inappropriately touched a foreign female cabin crew member and handed over to security agencies. This most recent case of unruly behaviour happened onboard a SpiceJet wet-leased Corendon aircraft that was scheduled to operate SG-8133 flight from Delhi to Hyderabad.

In a statement, SpiceJet said that the passenger was offloaded and handed over to the security team. Following a written complaint from the crew member, the passenger concerned was offloaded and handed over to the IGIA (Indira Gandhi International Airport) police station for further course of action.

"On January 23, 2023, SpiceJet wet-leased Corendon aircraft was scheduled to operate SG-8133 (Delhi - Hyderabad). During boarding at Delhi, one passenger behaved in an unruly and inappropriate manner, harassing and causing disturbance to the cabin crew. The crew informed the PIC and security staff of the same. The said passenger and a co-passenger, who were travelling together, were offloaded and handed over to the security team," the airline released a statement. The sources said that during the boarding, the male passenger behaved in an unruly manner and touched the female cabin crew member inappropriately. The video of the incident shows an elderly man in a verbal fight with the airline crew.

After the debarking, the passenger gave an apology in written. A senior official at the DGCA has said that it was



looking into the matter.

In recent times, there have been various incidents of unruly behaviour by passengers onboard flights. Under DGCA norms, unruly behaviour can even attract life time ban on flying.

On January 7, two foreign nationals were offloaded from a Mumbai-bound Go First flight from Goa after they allegedly misbehaved with a woman cabin crew member.

At least three incidents of unruly passenger behaviour

onboard two Air India international flights last year came to light in recent weeks. Among others, there was also an incident onboard a Thai Smile Airways plane from Bangkok to Kolkata last month.

Under DGCA rules, the airline concerned is responsible for informing the regulator within 12 hours of landing of the aircraft in case of any incident of unruly passengers/ passenger rage/passenger misconduct reported in their flight, the statement said.

AAP opposes ‘One Nation, One Election’ as anti-democracy

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

AAP has opposed One Nation One Election as anti-democratic and dangerous seating. The Law Commission had expressed opinion on the One Nation One Election proposal from the political parties. According to the proposal of One Nation One Election, the elections of the Center and the States should be held simultaneously. This proposal was placed before the Law Commission and in 2018 the Law Commission supported the proposal.

AAP leader Atishi said, "The Law Commission took opinion from all political parties and you have also given your opinion. It seems what is the harm every year. If all the elections are held together, but this deeply separates . . then many classical issues come to the fore. If One Nation One Election happens then India's democracy will take a big blow.



That's why you have opposed One Nation One Election."

AAP leader Atishi said, "In central and state elections, people vote on different issues. Those who have more resources will suppress the issues of the states.

Once elections are held, money power will influence the elections." If a government falls in two years or a coalition government, elections cannot be held for the next 3 years. We saw this in Delhi. In 2013, the public gave a big victory after seeing the 49-day government.

If One Nation One elections are held, the right to vote is taken away from the

public." At the same time, Jasmin Shah said, "This proposal was analyzed with a more open mind. For 75 years we are seeing that democracy is being thrust upon our constitution. You cannot abolish the AMRUT framework. Deterministic system Bringing Presidency form of government by abolishing it. Babasaheb Ambedkar had said one thing.

He had said with claims that he wants to bring the tenure system, he will be accountable to the public every 5 years. It is necessary to make the government accountable, not to be steady"

GMDA installs 300 more cameras to keep eye on traffic



PARVESH SHARMA ■ GURUGRAM

To keep an eye on traffic violators and the traffic management system in Gurugram, the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) along with Vehant Technologies, a sub-contractor for the Integrated Traffic Management System (ITMS) has installed around 300 more cameras at 20 key locations across the city under in the second phase.

In the first phase, the authority along with the company installed 750 cameras at 25 key junctions of the city.

The company will soon install such high-technology cameras across 102 locations in Gurugram.

21 Andaman islands named after...

From Page 1 He said there was "lack of self-confidence", especially due to "distorted ideological politics." "Whether it is our Himalayan States, especially the Northeast, or the oceanic island regions like Andaman and Nicobar, the development in such areas was neglected for decades as these were deemed remote, inaccessible and irrelevant areas", Modi remarked.

On the occasion of Netaji's 126th birth anniversary, the Prime Minister also paid floral tributes to him in the Central Hall of the Parliament. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla was also present on the occasion.

While unveiling the model to be dedicated to the 'Azad Hind Fauj' leader and addressing the gathering digitally, Modi informed the gathering that the naming ceremony of 21 islands from the Andaman and Nicobar

Islands is also taking place today and they will now be recognised as the names of 21 'Param Vir Chakra awardees'. He noted that the islands will be a source of inspiration for generations to come and said it will infuse feelings of patriotism among people.

The Prime Minister Said "today is a historical day for Andaman and Nicobar Islands".

"When history is being made, the future generations not just remember, assess and evaluate it, but also find constant inspiration from it."

He said the foundation stone of a new memorial in honouring the life of Bose is being laid at the island where he stayed, and remarked that this day will be remembered by future generations as a significant chapter in the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Kaal'.

Throwing light on the history of Andaman and Nicobar islands, the Prime

Minister informed that the Tricolour was hoisted for the first time here and the first independent government of India was formed.

He further added that Veer Savarkar and many other heroes like him had touched the pinnacle of penance and sacrifice for the country on this very land.

He said, "The voices of that unprecedented passion along with immense pain are still heard from the cells of the Cellular Jail today."

The Prime Minister lamented that the identity of Andaman was associated with the symbols of slavery instead of the memories of the freedom struggle and said, "Even the names of our islands had the imprint of slavery."

The Prime Minister also said that attempts were made to downplay Netaji's contribution to the freedom movement, but the entire country, right from Delhi and Bengal to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, is paying tribute to the great hero today, preserving history and heritage associated with him.

He also pointed out that demands to make Netaji's files public were made by many for long, and his government has done that.

Netaji will be remembered for his fierce resistance

to colonial rule, he said "Today, it is a proud moment for me as I address the people of Andamans because this is the land where Subhas Chandra Bose unfurled the national flag for the first time in 1943," he said.

The Prime Minister affirmed that the countries which connected their imminent personalities and freedom fighters with the public in due time and, created and shared capable ideals, were the ones that went far ahead in the race of development and nation-building and added that India was taking similar steps in the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Kaal'.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah also paid tributes to Bose on his birth anniversary and saluted his courage in fighting the British.

The Modi government is observing January 23 as 'Parakram Diwas' to commemorate Bose.

"With his unique leadership ability, Netaji organised the people and launched an armed movement for freedom by forming 'Azad Hind Fauj'. The whole country salutes his courage and struggle.

Shah is in favour of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to take part in programmes on the occasion of 'Parakram Diwas.'

‘Judges not elected but people do watch...

From Page 1 "There is no public scrutiny of judges," said the Law Minister. "Judges are appointed once and they don't have to face elections. Judges can't even be scrutinised by the public. Public can't change judges but it is looking at them, their judgements, their way of functioning and dispensing justice. Public is watching all and making assessments. Nothing is hidden in the age of social media," Rijiju said.

AI crew seeks repeal of action against...

From Page 1 According to the association, the facts of the case are still being looked into by the Delhi Police, court and DGCA and "we would not like to pre-judge them". "The association will be guided by its legal advisors in the matter. We demand that our derostered crew are now rostered back on flights," it said.

Last week, reports said Air India's top management was informed about the incident hours after the New York-Delhi flight landed in the national Capital.

"Our attention is also drawn to the press reports and extracts of the Internal Complaints Committee which are incredulous and are flawed. There is no seat 9B on the Air India 777-300 ER and our (15) crew and (4) pilots did not personally appear before the ICC committee to depose before them either," the association claimed.

"That report, which has been submitted to DGCA, also respectfully, seems based on wrong facts and incorrect assumptions and hence a nullity," it alleged.

Maha Guv seeks to...

From Page 1 When the Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi was in power, Koshiyari and Thackeray did not see eye to eye. They fell on a range of issues including the appointment of 12 members to the state legislative council from the gubernatorial quota, which he never approved. The MVA had accused him of acting in a partisan manner.

The latest controversy surrounding Koshiyari was about his remarks on Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj whom he described as the 'icon of olden times'. The remarks triggered protests from the Opposition parties demanding that he be sacked.

Following the row, Koshiyari wrote to Union Home Minister Amit Shah stating he would never imagine even in his dream insulting icons like Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Not new to controversy, Governor Koshiyari had said Mumbai would not remain the financial capital of the country if people belonging to the Rajasthani and Gujarati communities decided to leave. His remark drew criticism

from several opposition party leaders with former CM Uddhav Thackeray saying it is time to show him the famous Kolhapuri chappal and Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut asking CM Eknath Shinde to condemn the Governor.

Amid the political impasse created after the 2019 Assembly elections when Shiv Sena severed ties with BJP, Koshiyari administered the oath to Devendra Fadnavis as the chief minister for the second time and NCP leader Ajit Pawar as Deputy CM.

However, the Fadnavis-Pawar government lasted for only 80 hours, paving the way for the Maha Vikas Aghadi experiment wherein Shiv Sena, NCP, and Congress joined hands to form a coalition government.

Koshiyari's remark that Samarth Ramdas was the guru of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj had also caused a furore.

Amid a political crisis triggered by Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde's rebellion last June, Koshiyari ordered a floor test of then Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray-led MVA government.

Huge find of dino...

From Page 1 "The study offers new insights into the conditions of nest preservation and reproductive strategies of titanosaurs

sauropod dinosaurs just before they went extinct," he said in a statement.

Other authors of the study included Vishal Verma, from Higher Secondary School, Bakaner, Dhar District, Madhya Pradesh, Lourembam R Singh from Department of Geology, Panjab University, Chandigarh, Deepak Kumar Jha, Sampat K Tandon and Prasanta Sanyal, all from Department of Earth Sciences, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Kolkata, and Guntupalli VR Prasad from Department of Geology, Center for Advanced Studies, University of Delhi..

Certain pathologies found in the eggs, such as a rare case of "egg-in-egg," indicate that titanosaurs had a reproductive physiology that parallels that of birds and possibly laid their eggs in a sequential manner as seen in modern birds.

The presence of many nests in the same area suggests these dinosaurs exhibited colonial nesting behaviour like many modern birds. However, the close spacing of the nests left little room for adult titanosaurs, supporting the idea that adults left the hatchlings (newborns) to fend for themselves.

"Parental care must have been absent as the size difference between juvenile and parent dinosaur is enormous and clutches are closely spaced. This also supports precocial behaviour of juveniles which must have left clutches soon after hatching. On the basis of abundant clutches, closely spaced clutches, similar eggs, and different oospecies, it is concluded that the titanosaurs of the study areas adopted for colonial nesting behavior," said the researchers.

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It is to inform to the public at large Mr. Rukmesh who is purchasing the Residential Flat No. E-124-C on Ground Floor without roof rights area measuring 37.16 Sq. Mtrs. built on Plot No. K-124 Situated at sector-12, Pratap Vihar, Ghaziabad, Tehsil & Distt. Ghaziabad, U.P. from Mrs. Savita Goyal who had owner through sale deed dated through 22.03.2021, from Mrs. Annu Sharma and same to be financed & mortgaged by Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Ltd. However, Original Sale Deed Dated 28.05.2008 & Sale Deed Dated 11.09.2003 and others pertain Original documents has been lost and not available and an e-FIR has lodged on dated 21.01.2023 with LAR No. 2023000042591 for loss of document. If any Person having any type of claim/right/title/interest over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien, disputes etc.

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As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Bank Limited.

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1.	Nikhil/ Nimisha Ahuja/ LBNOD00002958474	Apartment No.1501, 14th Floor Tower-K, Godrej Summit, Sector-104, Gurgaon- 122101/ January 18, 2023	August 16, 2021 Rs. 1,60,93,683/-	Gurgaon

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.

Date : January 24, 2023
Place : Gurgaon

Authorized Officer
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Office of The Executive Engineer, M.P.P.W.D (B&R) Division Narsinghpur (M.P.)

Tender Notice

NIT No-26/2022-23/E.E. Narsinghpur Date 16/01/2023

Online Tender for mentioned below are being invited. The Tender have been uploaded on the e-Procurement system of Public Works Department on the Portal www.mptenders.gov.in Tender details are as below:-

S. No.	Tender ID.	District	Nature of work	Name of Works	Cost of Project (PAC) (Rs. In lack)	EMD Amount	Cost of Form	Call No.	Work Time	Physical submission (Original EMD & Other Document) at the office of as mentioned
1	2023_PWDRB_244377_1	Narsinghpur	Strengthening	Strengthening of Sualata Paloha Katangi Road Length 1.70 Km. Under Sub Division Narsinghpur.	131.20	1,31500	12,500	First Call	03 Month (Including Rainy Season)	All Document Submission Online Only.
2	2023_PWDRB_244378_1	Narsinghpur	Strengthening	Strengthening of Dhamna Sagouni Approach Road Length 2.40 Km. Under Sub Division Narsinghpur.	182.76	1,83,000	12,500	First Call	03 Month (Including Rainy Season)	All Document Submission Online Only.
3	2023_PWDRB_244379_1	Narsinghpur	Strengthening	Strengthening of Paloha Amoda Ulthan Road Length 6.60 Km. Under Sub Division Gadwana.	428.66	4,29,000	15,000	First Call	03 Month (Including Rainy Season)	All Document Submission Online Only.
4	2023_PWDRB_244380_1	Narsinghpur	Strengthening	Strengthening of Dahalwada Approach Road Length 2.35 Km. Under Sub Division Gadwana.	166.11	1,66,500	12,500	First Call	03 Month (Including Rainy Season)	All Document Submission Online Only.
5	2023_PWDRB_244381_1	Narsinghpur	Strengthening	Strengthening of Reechha Approach Road Length 1.00 Km. Under Sub Division Narsinghpur.	76.74	77,000	10,000	First Call	03 Month (Including Rainy Season)	All Document Submission Online Only.
Total					985.4					

The document can only be purchased online from the above website after making online payment. The last date & time for purchase of Document Online is **Dated 28.01.2023 up to (17:00)**. Detailed NIT and other details can be viewed on the above mentioned portal. Amendments to NIT, if any, would be published on website www.mptenders.gov.in only, and not in newspaper.

Submission Original EMD & Other All Documents Submission Online Only will be received on **Dated 28.01.2023 up to (17:00)**, in the PORTAL mentioned.

Executive Engineer
PWD (B/R)
Division Narsinghpur

G-22004/22 अफवाहों पर न दें ध्यान, टीका लगाकर बचायें जान।

General Manager (Technical) State Agriculture Marketing Board

Mand Bhawan, Rudrapur (U.S. Nagar) Ph: 9594-25056 fax: 9594-25059 Email : gmcrcud@gmail.com

Letter no. UKAPMB/2022-23/13 Date: 23/01/23

E-Tender Notice

Uttarakhand Agriculture Produce And Marketing Board (UKAPMB) invites interested Bidders to supply and Installation of Fully Automatic PLC base Bacteriological treatment plant enabled with Programmable logic controller & online comprehensive water Analyzer Water Purifier at Dairy Director Building Haldwani (Nainital), ULDB Shyampr Rishikesh (Dehradun), And I.T.I Hostels Building Haridwar, Saldmahadev (Pauri Garhwal), Pokhra (Pauri Garhwal)

The Terms and Conditions are as follows:-

- The Bid will be opened on 13 February, 2023 at 12:30 PM.
- The Bid can be seen on uktenders.gov.in site.
- Rs. 1,77,000.00 Security money plugged in favour of GM(T) UKAPMB, Rudrapur. The security money can be in FDR, Bank Guarantee. Security money (FDR&BG) & Bank draft to tender cost (in favour of GM(T) UKAPMB, Rudrapur) should be submitted before 05:00 PM on 10 February, 2023 in original at GM(T) office UKAPMB, Rudrapur. Failing which the tenders will not be open and treated as rejected.
- The cost of tender is Rs. 4720.00 including GST.
- Fully Automatic PLC base Bacteriological treatment, Number of plants can be Increased or Decreased.

General Manager (Tech.)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client i.e. (IC) Bank Limited that Mr. Harcharan Gandhi, Mr. Rajat Gandhi and Mr. Rohit Gandhi are owner of Flat No. 74 Single Storey addressing 80 Sq. Yds., Block C-6-B, Pankha Road, Janakpuri, New Delhi and have inherited the property after the death of Mrs. Usha Gandhi. All persons are hereby informed that above mentioned owner wants to sell the said floor to a person who intends to obtain loan from our client against the said floor, if anybody has any objection/s its sale/mortgage/litigation, and any other objections, kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present.

Kumar & Associates (Advocates & Consultants)
200, 1st Floor, 23, Shivaji Marg, Moti Nagar, N. Delhi-15
Ph: 011-4115227-28 kumar.associates.advocates@gmail.com

G20 **NORTHERN RAILWAY** **75**
भारत 75th Anniversary
Tender Notice
Invitation of tender through E-tendering (e-Procurement Systems)

NIT No.	38-22-23/WE
GEM Bid No.	
GEM/2023/B/3024144	Custom Bid for Services - House Keeping of Subordinate Rest house at Shivaji Bridge for a period of 34 months in the So SSE/WM/MTB under ADENE-II Out come basis.
Approx. cost of work	5851561.65
EMD amount	117040.00
Completion period of work	2 Years 10 Months
Date and Time for submission of tender and opening of tender	Closing date of tender on 17-02-2023 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.gem.gov.in
128-W/269/OET/22-23/WE/NIT/738 Dated: 23.01.2023	242/2023

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

MCD House to meet today to elect new Mayor, deputy

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The second MCD House meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday to elect Mayor, Deputy Mayor and six standing committee members. The meeting is expected to be stormy as all the issues that led to the chaos in the first meeting on January 4.

As per the agenda of the meeting, elected members will take oath first. After that, nominated members will take oath followed by Mayor, deputy mayor and six standing committee member's elections. Earlier, the AAP which has 134 councillors in the 250-member House, had objected to the appointment of a BJP councillor as the presiding officer.

The mayor and deputy mayor are supposed to be elected in the very first House that convenes after a municipal poll, which could not happen on January 6 as the House was adjourned following a ruckus between the AAP and BJP members over who would take oath first. Meanwhile, AAP leader Durgesh Pathak on



Monday requested the BJP to cooperate with councillors once the MCD house convenes on January 24 for Mayoral election. The House is scheduled to begin from 11am at the Civic Centre, the headquarters of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD).

The aldermen and the newly elected councillors will be administered oath in the House after which the mayoral election will begin, MCD officials aware of the development said. The MCD has been without a mayor for the last 8 months. The nominees for the post of mayor are -- Shelly Oberoi and Ashu Thakur (AAP), and Rekha Gupta (BJP). "As per the agenda, nom-

inated members and alderman will take oath first. Then other members will take the oath. I don't think the AAP will create such an issue because it is their loss. I am hopeful we will be able to elect the Mayor on Tuesday," Presiding Officer and BJP councillor Satya Sharma said.

Sharma said all preparations for the second house have been done. "We are ready for Tuesday. I have informed the LG and his MCD secretary about the ruckus of the last time," Sharma said, adding that the councillors who were involved in the January 6 tussle should bear the expense of the damage.

Meanwhile, AAP leader Durgesh Pathak on Monday requested the BJP to cooperate with councillors once the MCD house convenes on January 24 for Mayoral election. Urging the BJP to let the house function "peacefully", Pathak said that the AAP councillors want the Mayoral election to be held as soon as possible. "All our councillors will visit MCD house on time and participate

in the voting. And together we will work towards fulfilling the dreams of the citizens. "I want to request the BJP to follow the constitution and let the house function peacefully tomorrow.

We would request them (BJP) to cooperate with our councillors," he said. "According to the agenda list, first the councillors will be sworn in, then the aldermen, after that the mayor, the deputy mayor and finally the 6 members of the standing committee will be elected. We have been saying from day one that we have no objection if elections are held on the basis of Constitution and DMC Act," Pathak said.

Besides 134 councillors, the AAP has three Rajya Sabha MPs, 13 MLAs in the electoral college (150 votes), where as the BJP has 105 councillors, seven Lok Sabha MPs and one MLA (113 votes).

While the 10 persons nominated by the LG (administrator), called alderman, are also part of the House of councillors, they do not have voting rights in the House.

In first, liquor won't be served in bars on R-Day



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The sale of liquor in bars and restaurants in Delhi will be banned on January 26 from now on. This is the first time that liquor will not be served in bars and restaurants on January 26 in the national Capital.

The Delhi Government has decided to observe six dry days in the period from January 26 and March 31, following its decision to revert to the previous Excise Policy that provides for dry days on gazetted holidays.

The dry days include Republic Day (Jan 26), Guru Ravidas Birthday (Feb 5), Swami Dayananda Saraswati Jayanti (Feb 15), Maha Shivaratri (Feb 18), Holi (March 8), Ram Navami (March 30). Officials said that that Delhi Government has

made a significant decision regarding the sale of liquor. On January 26, which is a dry day, there will be a ban on the sale of liquor in liquor shops, bars and restaurants. Previously, only liquor vends were closed on dry days, but bars and restaurants were still allowed to serve liquor. This is the first time that liquor will not be served in bars and restaurants on January 26 in Delhi.

"Additionally, there will be a ban on the sale of liquor at shops on Mahashivratri, Ram Navami and Holi. The government has also declared dry days on Swami Dayanand Jayanti and Guru Ravidas Jayanti, and liquor shops will remain closed on these days as well," officials added. The Delhi Government issues a list of dry days every 3 months. At present there are about 21 dry days in a year.

Faridabad man orders home delivery of illicit liquor from Noida; held

New Delhi: Home delivery of illicit liquor in Noida has landed a Faridabad resident in jail, police and excise officials said on Monday. Accused Anurag Bhati, who lives in Faridabad, had stored liquor meant for sale in Haryana only in a car parked in the basement of a group housing society in Sector 137 here.

He used a scooter to deliver liquor at people's homes, according to the officials. He was arrested by Sector 142 police station officials following a raid by the Excise Department in a residential society here on Sunday night, they said.

"The raid was conducted following a tip-off by a joint team of excise inspectors Chandra Shekhar Singh and Rahul Singh along with the

local police station and illicit liquor in large quantity recovered from the Fiat Avventura car parked in the basement of Paras Tierra society," District Excise Officer Rakesh Bahadur Singh said.

"Among the liquor seized were bottles of different brands and sizes of whiskey, wine, rum and vodka — all meant for sale in Haryana only," Singh said. Sector 142 police station in-charge Uttam Kumar said Bhati lived in Faridabad and came to Noida to store liquor which was kept in the car in the society's basement.

The car would remain covered most of the time, he added. The accused's partner, who lives here, is at large but he has been identified and searches are underway to nab him, police said. SR

Cop tries to end fight, stabbed, lands in ICU; accused caught after gunfight

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A Delhi Police head constable was stabbed twice by an accused while he was responding to a PCR call regarding a quarrel between an auto-rickshaw driver and some men in southwest Delhi's Chhawla area.

The incident took place on Sunday evening when Assistant Sub-Inspector Sunil and head constable Rinku were on patrolling duty in the Qutub Vihar area, and got a call at 8.35 pm about a fight in the area.

He was rushed to a hospital where his condition is said to be stable. Three people were nabbed in connection with the incident soon after.

According to the police, Assistant Sub-Inspector Sunil and Head Constable Rinku were on beat patrol duty in Qutub Vihar area on Sunday evening when they got a police control room (PCR) call regarding a quarrel and assault in the vicinity.

They rushed to the spot and found a few people quarrelling with an autorickshaw

driver. Intervening in the scuffle, Rinku caught one of the accused, Sunny, but the latter stabbed him and fled the spot. The officer was shifted to a hospital.

"His condition is stable and he is undergoing treatment for a deep stab injury," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Harsha Vardhan.

He is currently in the ICU, police said, adding that senior officers have visited him and are ensuring the best possible medical care.

A case under sections 186 (obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 353 (assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty), 307 (attempt to murder) and 34 (common intention) of the Indian Penal Code has been registered at the Chhawla police station, they said.

After the incident, the police launched a manhunt for Sunny and his accomplices and got a tip off that he was at a house on Bhai-Bhai Road in Qutub Vihar. When police

raided the house around 2.30 am, they were fired at by Sunny. Police also fired three rounds, hitting him in his legs. Sunny was arrested and taken to a hospital where he is under treatment, Vardhan said.

In all, police nabbed three people from the house and seized a country-made pistol, three live cartridges, and a knife from them. A hunt is on to nab other people involved in the incident, police said.

Earlier on January 8, Delhi Police's assistant sub-inspector Shambhu Dayal (57), a native of Sikar district in Rajasthan, died days after being stabbed multiple times by a man he nabbed for allegedly snatching a mobile phone. Dayal is survived by his wife, a son and two daughters.

Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora paid homage to Dayal in the office complex of DCP west in Janakpuri and consoled the bereaved family. Special Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Sagar Preet Hooda and other senior officials also paid homage to Dayal.

Worried over job cuts by MNCs, CM urges Centre to take steps

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday voiced his worries about the numerous job cuts at various tech firms and called on the Centre to evaluate the situation in the country and take appropriate steps. In recent times, several multinational firms have undergone layoffs, resulting in job losses in the United States and other countries.

"Many young people are losing their jobs in the IT Industry due to large-scale layoffs. The Central government must review the situation in the country and take appropriate measures," the Delhi chief minister said in a Hindi tweet.

Earlier this month, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said that the company will lay off 10,000 workers, about five per cent of its total workforce, terming it a hard choice the tech giant had to make to remain a "consequential company" amid global economic uncertainties. Microsoft is the latest firm after Facebook and Amazon to cut jobs as the



bloodbath in the technology sector continues in 2023.

As companies look to rein in costs amid an economic downturn, tech giants such as Alphabet Inc, Amazon.com Inc and Microsoft Corp have all cut thousands of jobs.

In a letter to employees, Google CEO Sundar Pichai said that the company took a "rigorous review across product areas" to ensure that current roles are aligned with the company's highest priorities. It

remains unclear which department is most affected by the latest round of mass layoffs. In the first three weeks of January alone, Google parent Alphabet said it would eliminate 12,000 jobs, while Microsoft said it would eliminate 10,000. Amazon's layoff round will impact more than 18,000 roles. Prior to this, other tech companies such as Facebook-parent Meta and Elon Musk's Twitter had laid off thousands late last year.

Capital sees massive traffic jams due to R-Day Parade rehearsal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The national Capital saw massive traffic jams and a slowing down of vehicular movement in many areas on Monday owing to restrictions for the Republic Day Parade rehearsal, with commuters stuck for hours on roads.

Major roads in and around Delhi, including on the DND flyover and Ghazipur border, were affected from the morning rush hours till around 2 pm. Busy stretches including ITO, Sardar Patel Marg, Kashmeri Gate and Chankyapuri were also choked.

The Delhi Traffic Police had issued an advisory on the arrangements and restrictions for the smooth conduct of Monday's full dress rehearsal for the Republic Day parade. Many office goers had come prepared for traffic diversions, but alternative routes also wit-



Vehicles stuck in a traffic jam at Vikas Marg due to rehearsal of the Republic Day Parade 2023 in New Delhi on Monday

nessed slow traffic. "Sri Aurbindo Marg was completely blocked due to traffic. Even as I took the other route via Malviya Nagar, there was traffic from Hauz Khas onwards. The road leading towards

Parliament Street from Chankyapuri was completely blocked due to heavy traffic and caused a delay of at least an hour," said Ananya Basu (35). Even those who left early for their destination failed to beat

the traffic woes. "Today I had to leave for work 30 minutes early as there were some traffic restrictions issued by the Delhi traffic police.

Although there was enough deployment of police personnel, traffic near Ram Manohar Lohia hospital, which is usually smooth, was moving slowly," Silpi, who was heading to Parliament Street, said.

Several people also opted for Delhi metro due to the traffic jams. "I usually commute by car but today I knew that roads will be chock-a-block, so I took the metro," said Krishan Pal. Police said they received several calls from commuters reporting traffic woes. Vikas Marg (from Laxmi Nagar to ITO), Pragat Maidan, and Akshardham were three of several such stretches which witnessed intractable snarls. Ankita Singh, a commuter, said, "Traffic from Noida till

Akshardham was heavy. The route leading towards ITO also had traffic jams and the GPS showed 40 minutes to cover a distance of around 6 kilometres." Several commuters took to Twitter to inform others about the traffic situation in the city, with one of them reporting heavy jams on ITO, Pragati Maidan, and Geeta Colony flyover.

While one said that traffic did not move at ITO for over an hour, another commuter, who said he was stuck for two hours, advised people against venturing out on roads.

Perna Singh, who works in central Delhi, said, "I live in the southern part of the city and reach my office within an hour and a half." However, there were several roads that were closed on Monday due to rehearsal of Republic Day and my cab took an extra 30 minutes to drop me at my place."

Traffic advisory issued ahead of 'Bharat Parva' at Red Fort from Jan 26 to 31

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police on Monday issued traffic advisory for the 'Bharat Parva' scheduled to be held at Red Fort from January 26 to 31. Food courts and handicraft stalls will be set up at 15 August Park and Madhav Das Park during the 'Bharat Parva' being organised by the Ministry of Tourism, it said.

Tableaux will also be placed at 15 August Park, Red Fort, for general public and VIPs are also scheduled to visit the

place, it said. "In view of 'Bharat Parva' to be organised by @tourismgoi at Red Fort from Jan 26-31, 2023, traffic diversions, regulations & restrictions will be imposed. Commuters are requested to plan their journey accordingly to avoid any inconvenience," the Delhi Traffic Police tweeted.

Traffic will be diverted from the Delhi Gate, Hanuman Mandir (Yamuna Bazaar), Chhatta Rail Chowk, Shanti Van, T-Point Subhash Marg and the GPO (Kashmere Gate), the advisory said.

Arms syndicate busted, 2 held, 34 pistols recovered

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of Republic Day, the Delhi Police has busted an arms syndicate by arresting two men and recovering 34 pistols from their possession, officials said on Monday.

The accused have been identified as Naved Rana (21) and Saleem (39), both residents of Shamli district in Uttar Pradesh, they said. The consignment of firearms was supposed to be delivered to a member of Gogi gang, police

said. The police got a tip-off on January 13 and conducted a raid at a place on the Delhi-Jammu Road in Narela and nabbed Rana who had 10 pistols in his possession.

The police then identified Rana's source — Saleem — who was arrested on Friday, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Ingit Pratap Singh said. Based on the inputs given by Saleem, an illegal arms manufacturing unit was busted and huge cache of firearms and tools were recovered

on Saturday from a sugarcane field at Kandhla village in Shamli district, the DCP said. A total of 24 finished single shot country-made pistols, six semi-finished automatic pistols, 10 body screws of country-made pistols, 20 freshly-cut barrels, one old barrel etc were recovered, Singh said.

Rana told the police that his brother Asif is presently lodged in Muzaffarnagar Jail of Uttar Pradesh in connection with various criminal cases, officials said.

13 anti-fog sprinklers launched to keep city clean

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lt Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Monday inaugurated 13 multipurpose vehicles equipped with anti-fog sprinklers and anti-clogging facilities to clean the city's streets.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi has procured 28 such vehicles from the Ministry of Environment, officials said, adding that 13 were flagged off and the rest will come by February 15. The cost of each vehicle is Rs 35.95 lakh, they said. An official



said the vehicles have a 5,000-litre water tanker each fitted with a sprinkler system, jetting arrangements, and an anti-

smog gun. The vehicle is capable of spraying atomized water droplets for suppressing suspended dust particles. The

vehicle has an arrangement of a jetting nozzle for various purposes -- washing trees, watering and removing blockages in small covered drains or culverts and pipe drains etc, they said. Speaking at the flagging-off ceremony, Saxena said the capital will be able to fight the pollution war more effectively.

"The best part of this vehicle is that it has jets for water sprinklers. It also has an anti-clogging facility and it can also clean spits of paan on footpath. I am very hopeful that this will be a milestone in our war towards pollution," he added.

2 arrested for duping senior citizen of ₹2.67 cr

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

The Noida Police has arrested two people, allegedly involved in duping a senior citizen of Rs 2.67 crore on the pretext of renewing his life insurance policy, almost two-and-a-half-year after the case was lodged.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Noida) Ashutosh Dwivedi said the complainant worked in an eminent private company and had retired in 2005. He currently lives in Vasant Kunj in Delhi.

"In 2020, the complainant got a phone call from an unknown person who informed him that his insurance policy has lapsed and he would have to pay some money if he wanted the policy renewed.

"Eventually, the complainant ended up paying Rs 2.67 crore in multiple accounts in lieu of policy renewal assurance," Dwivedi said.

The complainant's daughter had lodged a complaint on behalf of the senior citizen after which an FIR was lodged at the Sector 20 police station here under Indian Penal Code sections 420 (fraud), 406 (criminal breach of trust) and 34 (act done by several persons) as well as the IT Act and investigation launched.

"During the probe, it was found that multiple SIM cards were used in the crime and most of them were procured using forged identity cards.

Army chief visits forward posts at LAC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

After Indian and Chinese troops clashed at Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh on December 9 last year, Army Chief General Manoj Pande for the first time visited the state on Sunday to review the operational readiness of the armed forces to meet any challenge.

Giving details of Pande's visit to the sensitive region, officials said on Monday he carried out a comprehensive review of India's military preparedness along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh.

The Army chief visited various forward posts along the de-facto border with China in the Rest of Arunachal Pradesh (RALP) as well as some other strategically key posts during his visit. Senior commanders there briefed the army chief about the overall security scenario in the border areas. "Gen Manoj Pande #COAS visited



units and formations along LAC in Eastern #ArunachalPradesh and was briefed on operational preparedness and security situation. #COAS complimented troops for maintaining sharp vigil & exhorted all to continue working with same zeal & devotion," the Army tweeted.

On Saturday, Pande reviewed the Army's military preparedness along the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim during his visit to the headquarters of the eastern Army command in Kolkata. Pande's tour to the crucial command

came six weeks after the clash between Indian and Chinese troops in an area along the LAC in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh. The Eastern Command takes care of the LAC in the Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim sectors.

There has been a fresh spike in tensions between India and China after troops from the two sides were engaged in the clash along the LAC at Yangtse in the Tawang sector on December 9.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said in Parliament on December 13 the Chinese troops tried to "unilaterally" change the status quo in the Yangtse area but the Indian Army compelled them to retreat by its firm and resolute response.

On January 12, Pande said the situation along the frontier with China is 'stable' but 'unpredictable' and Indian troops are adequately deployed to deal with any contingencies. He also said there was a slight

increase in the number of Chinese troops in their areas across the eastern sector. "But we are keeping a close watch on the movements and activities there," he said.

Besides eastern Ladakh, the Indian Army has been also focusing on enhancing infrastructure along the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. Following the eastern Ladakh standoff, the Indian Army significantly strengthened its operational capabilities along the LAC in the eastern theatre as well.

The Army put into place an effective surveillance apparatus and there has been a substantial improvement in overall monitoring of the areas in the last two years, military officials said. From the construction of roads, bridges and ammunition depots to bolstering its surveillance apparatus, the Army is ramping up military infrastructure at a rapid pace for quicker mobilisation of troops in the region. The Indian and

Chinese troops are locked in an over 32-month standoff in several areas along the LAC in eastern Ladakh. India has all along maintained ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

The eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong lake area. The relations between the two countries nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.

As a result of a series of military and diplomatic talks, the two sides completed the disengagement process on the north and south banks of the Pangong lake and in the Gogra area. In September last, the Indian and Chinese militaries carried out disengagement from the Patrolling Point 15 in the Gogra-Hotsprings area.

Motorcyclists enthrall spectators during R-Day parade dress drill

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

A thrilling flypast by fighter jets including Rafale and Su-30s, trick motorcycle riding led by a woman, and marching contingents enthralled the spectators during the Republic Day parade here at the Kartavya Path this year.

For the first time, women will also form part of the Border Security (BSF) camel contingent at the parade. Workers of Central Vista and Kartavya Path are among special invitees on Republic Day celebrations

President Droupadi Murmu will take the salute at the 74th Republic Day while Egypt President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi is the chief guest for this year's parade. A contingent of the Egyptian army will also form part of the parade.

In all there will be 16 marching contingents from the Armed Forces, Central Para Military Forces, Delhi Police, National Cadet Corps, National Social Service (NSS) along with 19 military, Pipes and Drums Bands. Also, 27 tableaux of various States, Departments and Armed Forces will be participating.

The Indian Army will be represented by Mounted Columns of 61 Cavalry, nine mechanized columns, six marching contingents and a fly past by helicopters of Army Aviation. Three Param Vir Chakra and three Ashok Chakra awardees will participate in this year's Parade.

Before commencement of the Parade, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the nation in paying homage to the fallen bravehearts by laying a wreath at the National War Memorial.

The Parade will start at 1030 hours with the National Salute. Duration of the parade will be 90 minutes from Vijay Chowk to Red Fort. All Indian Army equipment on display is



Air Force. Indigenously produced Prachand, a multi-role, light attack helicopter will also be part of the Indian Air Force fly past.

Lt General Dhiraj Seth, General Officer Commanding (GOC) Delhi Area will be the Parade Commander while Major General Bhavnish Kumar, Chief of Staff Delhi Area will be the Second - in - Command of the parade.

The mounted columns of 61 Cavalry consist of 51 Horses while the Arjun tanks, Nag Missile System, two BMP vehicles, three Quick Reaction Fighting Vehicles (QRFV), Two K-9 Vajra Self Propelled Howitzer Guns, one Brahmos missile, two 10m Short Span Bridges, a Mobile Microwave Node and Mobile Network Centre each and Two Akash missile systems will showcase India's military prowess.

Khalistanis vandalise Hindu temple in Oz

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/MELBOURNE

In yet another incident of vandalism of Hindu shrines in Australia by alleged Khalistani supporters, a temple was targeted in Victoria state with anti-India graffiti on Monday. It is the third such incident within a fortnight in Australia.

The management of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) temple also known as the Hare Krishna Temple in Melbourne's Albert Park on Monday morning found the walls of the revered temple vandalised with graffiti "Hindustan Murdabad", The Australia Today website reported. "We are shocked and outraged with this blatant disregard for respect for the place of worship," Bhakta Das, Director



of Communication for ISKCON Temple, said. "A complaint has been filed with Victoria Police and CCTV footage is being provided to assist them in their pursuit of culprits." This is the third such incident in the country within a fortnight.

On January 16, the historic Shri Shiva Vishnu Temple in Carrum Downs, Victoria, was vandalised in a similar manner.

On January 12, the Swaminarayan temple in Melbourne was defaced by 'anti-social elements' with anti-India graffiti. Acting Premier of Victoria Jacinta Allan told The Australia Today, "All Victorians deserve to practice their faith free from racism, vilification and hatred." "This behaviour is not reflective of the majority of Victorians. The diversity of Victoria is one of our strongest

assets, and we condemn these attacks," Allan added.

This attack on ISKCON Temple came just two days after Victorian multi-faith leaders had an emergency meeting with the Victorian Multicultural Commission after which a statement of condemnation was issued against the spread of Hindu hate allegedly by Khalistani supporters.

This is disgusting. We must not allow this to happen," Victorian Liberal Party MP Brad Battin has told The Australia Today. Federal Member of Parliament Josh Burns also issued a statement saying, "I was shocked today to learn of the hateful attack on the Hare Krishna temple in Albert Park." This is the third incident of vandalism against Hindu places of worship in Melbourne in recent weeks.

Shivesh Pandey, an IT consultant and devotee of ISKCON temple said: "In the last two weeks, Victoria Police has failed to take any decisive action against the people who are running their hate-filled agenda against the peaceful Hindu community."

India last week condemned the incidents of vandalism in Australia and said the matter has been raised with the Australian government in Canberra and asked for an expeditious investigation against the perpetrators.

Australian High Commissioner to New Delhi Barry O'Farrell issued a statement after Indian intervention. He said, "We have been shocked at the vandalism of two Hindu temples in Melbourne, and Australian authorities are investigating," he tweeted.

US launches special interviews for first-time Indian applicants for visas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

In an effort to cut delays in granting visas to Indians, the US has launched new initiatives that will include scheduling special interviews for first-time applicants and increasing strength of consular staff.

As part of the multi-pronged approach to cut the visa backlog, the US embassy in Delhi and the consulates in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad conducted "special Saturday interview days" on January 21.

"On January 21, the US mission in India launched the first in a series of special Saturday interview days, as part of a larger effort to reduce wait times for first-time visa applicants," the US embassy said on Sunday. "The United States Embassy in New Delhi and Consulates in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Hyderabad all opened consular operations on Saturday to

accommodate applicants who require in-person visa interviews," it said in a statement.

The mission will continue to open "additional slots" for appointments to take place on select Saturdays in the coming months. "These additional interview days are just one component of a multi-pronged initiative to address the backlog in visa processing caused by COVID-19," it said. It said the US State Department has implemented remote processing of interview waiver cases for applicants with previous US visas.

Between January and March 2023, dozens of temporary consular officers from Washington and other embassies will arrive in India to increase visa processing capacity, it said.

The US mission in India released more than 2,50,000 additional B1/B2 appointments. While B1 is a business visa, B-2 is tourism visa. The mission said the Consulate General in Mumbai also

extended its weekday operating hours to make space for additional appointments. "By this summer, the US mission in India will be at full staffing, and we expect to be processing visas at levels from prior to the COVID-19 pandemic," the embassy said.

The statement said as travel restrictions have been lifted, the mission to India has made it a priority to facilitate legitimate travel and adjudicated over 8,00,000 nonimmigrant visas in 2022, including record numbers of both student and employment visas. "In every other visa category, interview

wait times in India are at pre-pandemic levels or lower," it said. Consulate General Mumbai currently adjudicates the most visa applications in India and is one of the largest visa operations in the world, the embassy said.

"Our consular teams across India are putting in the extra hours to meet the needs of international travellers and bring down wait times," said Mumbai Consular Chief John Ballard. "This is part of a Mission wide effort to find innovative solutions to facilitate travel to the United States," the official said.



2-week-long French Film Fest concludes

NEW DELHI: Celebrating the rich contribution of women film directors to the cinematic oeuvre of France, a two-week-long French Film Festival concluded at India Habitat Centre here on Monday.

Organized by the Embassy of France in India and the French Institute in India (IFI), the film festival titled "Women Directors from France" saw screening of five films by women filmmakers.

With an impressive selection of both established and up-and-coming directors, the festival showcased the diverse and talented voices of women in the film industry.

From thought-provoking documentaries to heart-wrenching dramas, the lineup included a wide range of genres and styles. Films like Real Love / C'est ça l'amour by director Claire Burger; Atlantics / Atlantique by Mati Diop; A Radiant Girl / Une Jeune Fille Qui Va Bien by Sandrine Kiberlain; and , animation film The Crossing / La Traversée, were screened at the

festival

Till Sunday. The fifth film Skies of Lebanon / Sous le ciel d'Alice by Chloé Mazlo was the last of the movies screened on Monday.

The movie is set in the 1950s, when a young Alice leaves Switzerland for Lebanon, a sunny and exuberant country, where she falls in love with Joseph, a mischievous astrophysicist who dreams of sending the first Lebanese into space.

The film Skies of Lebanon was selected at Semaine de la Critique at the 2020 Cannes Film Festival. A poetic blending of the personal and the political, "Skies of Lebanon" combines live action with animation to create a vivid picture of Lebanon, inspired by the family history of the director.

Using stories told to her by her grandmother on life during the Lebanese Civil War, Mazlo crafts a touching and heart-breaking story of love during wartime. All movies were screened in French with English subtitles.

Appoint IPS officer Rupin as DGP, SC directs Nagaland

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Nagaland Government to pass orders within one week on the appointment of senior IPS officer Rupin Sharma as the Director General of Police (DGP).

A bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices V Ramasubramanian and JB Pardiwala refused to consider the plea of the Nagaland government that the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) be asked to relax the 30 years service criteria rule to 25 years for IPS officers for being empanelled in the UPSC list of three for appointment as the state police chief.

After the landmark Prakash Singh Judgment on appointment of state police chiefs, the UPSC, in consultation with the State Government and other stakeholders, has to prepare a list of three senior police officers and the State can appoint any one of them as the DGP. The bench said the issue of relaxation of 30 years service criteria into 25 years for IPS officers can be determined by



the UPSC and the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. The State Government argued that it was very difficult to find three senior IPS officers of 30 years of experience in small states like Nagaland who could be considered for empanelment by the UPSC.

"As already noted...Rupin Sharma has already been appointed and this being the position, we are not issuing directions mandating the UPSC to relax the eligibility criteria from 30 years to 25 years," the bench said.

"The court cannot be unmindful of the fact that any mandate for relaxation of eligibility would result in a situation" where an officer, who is junior by five years, can become the DGP, it said. PNS

ED attaches ₹7.90 cr assets under PMLA in 2 cases of NDPS Act

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached assets worth Rs 7.90 crore under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act (PMLA) in two cases of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

These two cases are related to Gurdeep Singh Rano and others, and Rajesh Kumar along with others. "The attached assets include 16 immovable properties consisting of land and building in Punjab pertaining to Gurdeep Singh Rano and his family members.

This besides, 11 immovable properties consisting of land in Punjab pertaining to Rajesh Kumar and his family members were also attached," the ED said in a statement.



The assets attached also included movable properties like balance in bank accounts, cash and gold ornaments seized by law enforcement agencies, it said.

The ED initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of an FIR registered by Special Task force, Punjab Police under various sections of the NDPS Act, Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Arms Act. It was also alleged that Gurdeep Singh Rano had links with other suspected illicit drugs smugglers like Simranjit Singh and Tanvir Bedi, who are resid-

ing abroad. The ED initiated a money laundering investigation against Rajesh Kumar and others on the basis of an FIR registered by Punjab Police at Police Station City Faridkot, under NDPS Act.

As per the FIR against Rajesh Kumar, he was selling intoxicating drugs in the guise of a medical store run by him.

"The ED investigation revealed that in both PMLA cases, most of the immovable properties were bought in cash wherein the accused were not able to produce any documentary evidence in support of source of cash," the agency said. Investigation further revealed that in some cases, cash was deposited in the bank accounts of known persons to layer the 'Proceeds of Crime' for purchasing immovable properties. Further investigation is under progress, it added.

'Antidepressants sans prescription leave you feeling emotionally blunted'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

If you have the habit of gulping down the commonly available antidepressants without proper prescription, chances are that they may leave you feeling emotionally 'blunted' in the long run, as researchers have found in a study published in the journal Neuropsychopharmacology.

The study found that healthy volunteers became less responsive to positive and negative feedback after taking a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) drug for three weeks.

The "blunting" of negative emotions could be part of how the drugs help people recover from depression, but could also explain a common side-effect, said the researchers. The work's senior author, Prof

Barbara Sahakian of the University of Cambridge, said: "In a way, this may be in part how they work. They take away some of the emotional pain that people who experience depression feel, but unfortunately it seems that they also take away some of the enjoyment."

The findings could help patients make better informed choices about their medication, she said, but added "there is no doubt that antidepressants are beneficial" for many patients.

According to the NHS more than 8.3 million patients in England received an antidepressant drug in 2021-22. SSRIs are among the most widely used, and are effective for the majority of, although not all, patients.

Some people on the medication report feeling emotionally dull or no longer find-



ing things as pleasurable, with one study suggesting this applied to 40-60% of people taking the drug. However, it has been unclear whether this symptom is a drug side-effect or a symptom of depression. The latest work suggests that the drug alone can produce emotional blunting. At least 66 volunteers were given either the SSRI drug, escitalopram, or a placebo for at least 21 days before doing a set of cognitive tests.

In nearly all tests, including those assessing attention and memory, the drug made no difference. "The drug isn't doing anything negative to cognition - from that point of view it's very good," said Sahakian.

However, people taking the SSRI were less responsive to reinforcement learning, which requires people to respond to positive or negative feedback. Participants were shown two options on a screen, A and B.

Selecting A would result in a reward four in five times, while B was only rewarded one in five times. After a few turns, people learn to select A.

Every so often, the probabilities were switched and the participant was required to learn the new rule. The SSRI group was, on average, significantly slower to respond to these changes in feedback.

In questionnaires the volunteers taking escitalopram also reported having more trouble reaching orgasm when having sex, which is another side-effect often reported by patients.

Sahakian said the findings could be useful for patients. "At least they can be aware of this. Some people can be offered different forms of treatment, particularly if they've not come into hospital with severe illness."

Rahul bats for restoration of Statehood to J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Intensifying its campaign in support of restoration of the 'statehood' in Jammu & Kashmir, Rahul Gandhi on Monday announced that the Congress party will put all its might and resources to achieve this goal.

Rahul also took Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha head on and asked him to apologise to the members of the Kashmiri pandit community for telling the prime minister's package employees that they should not seek alms.

Addressing a gathering of common people assembled near Satwari to welcome the Bharat Jodo Yatra, Rahul Gandhi said the biggest issue in J&K is the restoration of statehood. They (BJP) have snatched your right from you. Congress party would work for the restoration of statehood and will put all its might behind restoring Jammu and Kashmir's statehood".

Unsparring Rahul Gandhi also maintained, "Injustice is being meted out to Kashmir Pandits by this government.



This morning, a delegation of Kashmiri Pandits met me and briefed me about their issues. I was surprised to know that their delegation was told by the Lieutenant Governor that they should not seek alms".

Gandhi said he wants to tell the lieutenant governor that they are not demanding alms but are seeking their rights. "You (LG) should seek forgiveness from them (Pandits)," he said.

Rahul also claimed that Jammu and Kashmir has the highest level of unemployment in the country. Youngsters aspire to become engineers,

doctors and lawyers but they find they cannot, he said. "There was another way (to get employment) earlier. It was with the Army. It has also been closed now by a new scheme, called Agniveer, introduced by BJP. That path is also now closed," he said."

Gandhi said he spoke to a cross section of people from J&K during his yatra and they raised their issues. He said they told him that their voices are not being heard by the administration. "The entire trade is being run by outsiders and people of J&K watch them sitting haplessly," he said.

Digvijaya: Centre spreads lies, no proof of surgical strikes against Pak

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Congress leader Digvijaya Singh on Monday created a flutter by claiming the BJP Government at the Centre claims to have carried out surgical strikes against Pakistan but there was no proof of the same.

"They (Centre) talk about surgical strikes and that they have killed so many of them but there is no proof," said the Congress leader in his address in Jammu today.

"The Centre is ruling with the help of lies. I want to tell you that this country belongs to all of us," added the Madhya Pradesh former chief minister.

Singh also targeted PM Modi over the Pulwama terror attack in which over 40 CRPF personnel were killed. The former Madhya Pradesh chief minister said that the

2019 terror attack could have been averted had the vehicle, which launched the attack on the CRPF been checked properly.

"Why did they die? The CRPF director had sought airlifting of CRPF personnel from Srinagar to Delhi as the area was a sensitive one but PM Modi declined the request. Why did he decline?," Singh questioned.

As the Congress party faced political heat and BJP too mounted a counter attack to push the congress party on the backfoot, Jairam Ramesh late Monday evening tweeted, "the views expressed by senior leader Digvijaya Singh are his own and do not reflect the position of Congress. Surgical strikes were carried out before 2014 by the UPA government. Congress has supported & will continue to support all military actions that are in the national interest".

Will get married when right girl comes along, says Rahul

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Viewed as India's most eligible bachelor by some, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi says he'll get married when the right girl comes along and part of the problem is that his parents' "really lovely marriage" has set the bar very high.

In a free-wheeling, light-hearted chat on food and travel platform Curly Tales on YouTube, Gandhi switched from the 'only politics' track to discuss a range of personal issues, including his growing up years, his food preferences and his exercise regimen.

The 52-year-old former Congress president said he has nothing against marriage. "Part of the problem is my parents had a really lovely marriage and they were completely in love with each other so my bar is very high," he said, referring to



his parents Rajiv and Sonia Gandhi.

"When the right girl comes along. I will get married. I mean if she comes along, she comes along. It will be good."

Asked if he has a checklist for the kind of person he wants to get married to, Gandhi said, "No, just a loving person who is intelligent."

During the dinner interaction recorded during the Rajasthan leg of his Bharat

Jodo Yatra outside his container, Gandhi said he is not very fussy about food and eats anything that is available but does not like "matar and kathal (peas and jackfruit)".

Gandhi, who has been on the road since September when he started his Bharat Jodo Yatra from Kanyakumari and is now in Jammu and Kashmir, said he's "pretty strict" about his diet when at home.

"But here I don't have much choice," he said in the video of the chat posted by the Congress on its social media handles on Sunday.

Telangana was a "little bit spicy" for his taste. "The chillies were a bit over the top. I don't eat that much chillies."

Asked what food is cooked at home, he said there is "desi khana" for lunch and some sort of continental food for dinner. He follows a controlled diet and avoids too many sweet things.

Kerala Guv blames Centre for woes faced by State

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Budget session of Kerala Legislative Assembly commenced on Monday with Governor Arif Mohammed Khan addressing the law makers and delivering the customary inaugural speech.

The Governor's decision to address the first session of the year brought down the curtain on the debate whether he would break convention and stay away from the legislative Assembly in order to express his anguish and unhappiness over the verbal attacks on him by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, his Cabinet colleagues and leaders of the CPI(M).

The Government's move to appoint party leaders and their relatives as vice-chancellors and faculty members in the universities in the State and the Governor's opposition to it vitiated the ties between the Raj Bhavan and the Chief Minister. The Governor delivered



his speech, according to his close aides, as part of his Constitutional obligation.

"He is the head of the Government and has the responsibility to read out whatever the chief minister hands over to him as policy statement and that was the reason for his decision to deliver the speech full of anti-Centre retort," said a Raj Bhavan official.

Though the CPI(M)-led Government has lambasted the Centre on a daily basis for the latter's move to set up Niti Ayog disbanding the Planning Commission, the Governor's speech began with the encomi-

ums earned by the Kerala Government from the controversial body.

"My Government's relentless endeavour to achieve holistic and sustainable development of the State has been recognised time and again by the reputed Government of India and international entities. Kerala has been ranked at the forefront among the States in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals consistently by the Niti Ayog. My Government undertook a survey to identify extreme poverty in earlu 2022 which identified 64,006 extremely poor

families across Kerala. The findings in the survey are broadly in line with the findings of the Niti Ayog Baseline Report on Multidimensional Poverty Index which indicated that multi dimensional poverty in Kerala is only 0.7 per cent the lowest in the country," said the Governor.

The entire speech was devoted to highlight the achievements made by the State in sustained development and combating the Covid-19 pandemic which were appreciated by global powers, The LIFE Mission, portrayed as the Flagship Project of the CPI(M) Government has built 3,22,922 houses since it was launched by the chief minister in 2016.

"In order to address issue the unemployment, my Government initiated a massive programme, the Kerala Knowledge Economy Mission, with the aim of creating 20 lakh jobs in the economy within the next five years," said the Governor.

Cong attacks UP Govt over investors' summit

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Congress on Monday targeted the state government over the investors' summit, alleging that there was a big scam and several crores of rupees had been spent on false propaganda of inviting investments in Uttar Pradesh.

"Previous governments also used to hold investors' summits, but ever since the Bharatiya Janata Party government came to power, investors' summits have become a medium of scams.

"Almost every year by organising this event, the public's hard earned money is wasted on false publicity," alleged UP Congress president and former MP Brijlal Khabri, adding that investment worth not even a single paisa came through this summit.

Political slugfest on Netaji's birthday

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Political parties continued to indulge in a vicious tug of war over the legacy of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose with Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday slamming the Central Government for renaming the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in quest of political publicity.

While speaking during the celebration of Bose's 126th birth anniversary, Banerjee said, "Today some people are engaged in renaming the islands at Andaman and Nicobar in order to gain publicity," reminding how the great freedom fighter "himself had named the islands when he had gone to inspect the Cellular Jail there."

The islands were named Sahid and Swaraj by Bose in 1943. However in 2018 the Centre renamed the islands as Swaraj Dweep and Shahid



Dweep. Besides, the Ross Island was also named after Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Neil Ilands too was then renamed.

Incidentally Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday announced the renaming of the islands of Andaman and Nicobar after the recipients of military awards who laid down their lives for the country.

Though Banerjee would not name the Prime Minister she went on to accuse his Government for dissolving the Planning Commission envisaged by Netaji and rechristening it as Niti Ayog.

Uddhav-led Sena forges alliance with Ambedkar's VBA

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Ahead of the elections to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and various civic bodies in cities across Maharashtra, the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena forged an alliance with the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) headed by former MP and late B R Ambedkar's grandson Prakash Ambedkar in a development that seeks to change the caste equations in the metropolis and elsewhere in the state.

On a day when the two

facings of the Shiv Sena celebrated the birth anniversary of late Balasaheb Thackeray by organising their programs, the son of late Sena chief, former chief minister and current party president Uddhav Thackeray announced an electoral alliance with the Prakash Ambedkar-led VBA in what looked like a "win-win" prospect for both the parties.

By tying up with the VBA, the Shiv Sena (UBD) -- which is a part of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVS) -- has added one more party to the Opposition front.

Addressing a joint con-



ference with VBJ chief Prakash Ambedkar, Uddhav said: "At this juncture, let's not think about what will be

the political situation tomorrow and how will we tackle issues on hand.

"Let's cross the bridge

when it comes. In view of what is going on in the country currently, we need to reach out to people at the grassroots. We need to stop the efforts by the ruling BJP to befool the people in low strata of the society by creating a rosy picture and holding out false promises. We need to stop this somewhere. That's Shiv Sena (UBD) and VBA have come together."

Alluding to a host of announcements and projects launches made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Mumbai, Uddhav said: "Though newspapers and electronic media,

we learnt who all came and from where all they came from. Come elections, they create a make-believe world, promising moon to the poor and downtrodden.

"Once the elections are over, the people are left fend for themselves and they go back to their old ways. We need to stop all this somewhere."

Promising that the alliance forged by his party and the Shiv Sena (UBD) on the birth anniversary of late Bal Thackwreay would bring about a new change in Maharashtra politics, Prakash Ambedkar said: "I am confi-

dent that our alliance will change political equalitions in the state. There have been precedents in the past where some parties tried to diminish and finish off their allies. But, it is people who will ultimately decide which political party or a formation they will support"

On whether the Sharad Pawar-headed NCP will accept his party as part of the MVA, the senior Dalit leader said: "I have no personal differences with Pawar. But, whatever differences I have are of political nature. I am sure that Pawar will accept my party as part of the MVA".

Hearing on plea demanding survey of 2 basements in Gyanvapi postponed to Mar 21



PTI ■ VARANASI

A court here on Monday fixed March 21 for the next hearing on a petition seeking to open and survey two basements in the Gyanvapi-Shringer Gauri complex, a government lawyer said.

District government counsel Mahendra Pandey said Varanasi District Judge A K Vishvesh posted the matter after almost two months as the Allahabad High Court last week postponed hearing in a related matter by eight weeks.

The High Court case relates to the demand of carbon dating of an object, said to be a 'shivling', found during a court-mandated survey of the

complex.

The plea for carbon dating was earlier filed by the Hindu side in the district court which had rejected the demand. The petitioners then filed a revision plea in the Allahabad High Court.

The High Court on January 19 granted eight more weeks to the Archaeological Survey of India for filing its response to clarify whether the carbon dating of the claimed 'shivling' could damage it or if safe evaluation of its age was possible.

Justice J J Munir fixed March 20 as the next date of hearing after the counsel for ASI sought more time to file its response.

Antilia bomb scare case: HC denies bail to ex-cop Pradeep

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Monday refused to grant bail to former policeman Pradeep Sharma arrested in connection with the Antilia bomb scare case and the killing of businessman Mansukh Hiran, but expressed anguish about the manner in which the National Investigation Agency (NIA) had probed the case.

A division bench of Justices Revati Mohite Dere and R N Laddha noted that the NIA's probe was silent on the co-conspirators involved with dismissed policeman Sachin Waze in planting gelatin sticks in an SUV parked it outside the residence of industrialist Mukesh Ambani.

The agency has not done an "in- depth" investigation, it said.

On February 25, 2021, an explosives-laden SUV was found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's residence 'Antilia' in south Mumbai. Businessman Hiran, who was in possession of the SUV, was



found dead in a creek in neighbouring Thane on March 5 last year.

"We express some anguish in the manner in which the NIA has investigated the charge of conspiracy of parking of the Scorpio vehicle near the residence of a prominent businessman and planting of gelatin sticks in the said vehicle, on February 24 and 25, 2021," the court said.

It further noted that the NIA was silent on persons with whom Waze had conspired to plant the gelatin sticks.

"We, prima facie, find that the NIA has not done investigation with regard to the same i.e. With respect to the co-conspirators involved in planting of gelatin sticks in the Scorpio vehicle," the court said.

Stealth Scorpene class INS Vagir commissioned into Indian Navy

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a development that promises to add strength to the arsenal of the Western Naval Command's Submarine fleet, the fifth stealth Scorpene class Submarine INS Vagir was commissioned into the Indian Navy in the presence of Adm R Hari Kumar, Chief of the Naval Staff, the Chief Guest, here on Monday.

INS Vagir is among he six Scorpene Class submarines being built in India by the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) Mumbai, under collaboration with M/s Naval Group, France. It would form part of the Western Naval Command's Submarine fleet and would be another potent part of the Command's arsenal.

Vagir was launched on November 12, 2020 under Project 75 (P75). INS Vagir was delivered to the Indian Navy on December 20, 2022, after the completion of sea trials. Vagir has the distinction of having the lowest build time among all indigenously manufactured submarines till date.

The Scorpene Submarines



are extremely potent platforms, they have advanced stealth features and are also equipped with both long range guided torpedoes as well as anti-ship missiles. These submarine have a state of the art SONAR suite and sensor suite permitting outstanding operational capabilities.

Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Naval Command Vadm AB Singh, Chairman & Managing Director, MDL Vadm Narayan Prasad (Retd) and other senior civil & military officials of Ministry of Defence were present during the commissioning ceremony.

The crew of the erstwhile 'Vagir', a Russian origin Foxtrot Class Submarine which was decommissioned in 2001 were special invitees for the ceremony and the then commissioning Commanding Officer RAdm K Raja Menon (Retd) was also present.

Speaking on the occasion, Adm R Hari Kumar said that INS Vagir would give a significant fillip to the Indian Navy's operational might and serve as a potent deterrent for any

adversary.

"Vagir is the third submarine inducted into the Navy in a short span of 24 months. This underscores the coming of age of India's shipbuilding industry, and the maturing of our defence ecosystem. It is also a shining testimony to the expertise and experience of our shipyards to construct complex & complicated platforms and serves to reinforce Indian Navy's unequivocal commitment and steadfast resolve to be a fully 'AatmaNirbhar' force by 2047," Adm Hari Kumar said.

Middle ground needed

The Monterey Park massacre in Los Angeles has once again brought focus back on gun control in the US

The 72-year-old man allegedly guilty of the Los Angeles mass shooting has died, but the horrible incident has once again brought the debate over gun control into focus. Huu Can Tran murdered 10 people and wounded at least 10 more. He gunned down people who were celebrating at a Chinese Lunar New Year party at Monterey Park. Police followed him and found him in a van. Surrounded by cops, he apparently shot himself. The Monterey Park shooting is one of the many that have occurred in different parts of the United States. In May last year, a shooter in Texas killed 21 people at an elementary school. The US seems to be the only nation in the world that witnesses such mindless violence on a regular basis. Even the most dangerous places on earth — e.g., Afghanistan and Somalia — don't have incidents where mad persons go out slaughtering people, often children, for no rhyme or reason. Yes, a lot of massacres are carried out by jihadists and other violent groups, but that's done for a purpose. The massacres in the US, however, defy reason; mostly the culprits are psychopaths. But then there are psychopaths in all countries, so why do they end up carrying out mass murders, using guns, only in the US—the most advanced country in the world where law-enforcement agencies are equipped with the best weapons and state-of-the-art devices to fight crime?

This is primarily because the laws controlling guns in the US are quite lax, as compared to the ones in other countries. Importantly, the US Constitution, by way of the Second Amendment (1791) says, "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." For much of its early history, the Second Amendment went largely unscrutinized by the Supreme Court, says the website of the US Congress (the American parliament). The few nineteenth century cases implicating the Second Amendment established for a time that the Amendment was a bar to federal, but not state, government action, and the Court's only significant Second Amendment decision in the twentieth century seemed to suggest that the right protected under the Amendment was tied only to state militia use of certain types of firearms, it added. Effective control over gun ownership is problematic because of the sharp differences between the conservatives and liberals, represented by the Republican and Democratic Parties, respectively. For more conservative of the Republicans, the Second Amendment is sacrosanct, so the party is unwilling to compromise on the subject. The Democrats, on the other hand, are increasingly getting influenced by Leftists whose agenda includes such abominations as defunding the police and critical race theory. The need of the hour is the middle ground where both parties can thrash out a plan to curb, if not eliminate, the dangers posed by the extant gun laws.



A contingent of the Egyptian Military marches past India Gate at the dress rehearsal of the Republic Day Parade PTI

Clean up the mess

The protests by the wrestlers speak volumes about the wrong doing in the sports bodies

Fence eating the crop aptly describe the happenings in the Wrestlers federation of India. The crop happens to be the most valued assets for the country, our sportspersons. That is what has sent shock waves throughout the country. The ill-treatment of sportspersons in the country is not new and many times their plight has been reported but the present woes of wrestlers are extraordinary on two counts. It shows how stubborn the sports authorities are as they are not afraid of consequences, secondly never before such a protest by the sportspersons have been made by several wrestlers including the Olympians who have come out in the open to protest the highhandedness and arbitrariness of the Wrestling Federation of India. The saddest part is that the sexual misconduct of the authorities has been alleged, though it is still to be probed, But one thing is for sure, the smoke tells the story of the fire.

The malice lies in the way the sports are handled by the government in the country. Most of the sports bodies are governed by politicians and their relatives. Their motive is not to promote the sport but to ride on the popularity of the game and enjoy the entitlements that come along with it. It is no secret that most of the money earmarked for the sportsperson is spent on lavish tours of sports authorities and their perks while sportspersons are left high and dry. Since speaking against the authorities is akin to risking their career, they keep mum while the authorities enjoy life piggybacking on the sportspersons.

The recent outburst of the top wrestlers may be just the tip of the iceberg as the faultlines go much deeper. The wrestling federation authorities have been charged by wrestlers with sexual exploitation of athletes. The person in the eye of the storm is none other than Wrestling Federation of India president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, a sitting MP. The protesters are not unknown faces but world-class sportspersons like world championship medallist Vinesh Phogat, Rio Olympic medallist Sakshi Malik, world medallist Anshu Malik, and Olympic medallist Bajrang Punia. Since the charges are against a person from the ruling dispensation it may not be easy for the athletes to get justice. But since they have come in the open, it should inspire others to speak up against the wrongdoings of the authorities. The war to clean up the mess has just begun and the wrestlers who have fighting spirit can and must take this fight forward.



Troubled times for Neighbours

Pakistan and China, the two neighbours India is ill at ease have domestic problems that they must counter before they take on India

Despite the onset of the "campaigning season" in a couple of months, our security establishment must be heaving a much-needed sigh of relief. Clearly, both our primary adversaries, Pakistan and China, are presently facing extremely turbulent weather, much of it of their own creation, that is forcing their respective leaderships to concentrate on domestic matters only. While Pakistan has for much of its existence hurtled from crisis to crisis, never of the scale that it faces today. That is saying a lot for a country that was split in two, just five decades back. The many-headed Hydra of terror groomed and unleashed against India and others, including Afghanistan, has finally turned on its master. Not only does it face an increasingly hostile Taliban unwilling to do its bidding along its western border, but also faces an existential threat from the Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP) that is looking increasingly ominous.

Add to that a host of problems — a deeply divided socio-political milieu, popular separatist movements in the provinces, perceptible unhappiness with the Army Generals and their corrupt ways, and populations displaced by floods. But the straw that has broken the camel's back is its inevitable decline into bankruptcy. Not only is it living on charity, but is clearly incapable of providing its citizens with their basic essentials of "roti, kapda or makaan". It has little time or inclination to worry about India and will do nothing to disturb the existing ceasefire along the LOC. This, in no way, detracts from its efforts to interfere in Jammu and Kashmir, as the Jihadi Groups' very livelihood depends on its continuation, but it will remain at a low key. China, of course, is a very different matter, though facing its own set of fairly serious internal challenges that have forced President Xi on the back foot, though it is only a matter of time before there is a resurgence of economic activity. However, what appears to have



changed, is that the level of control that President Xi and his CCP cohorts could exert has diminished, as their trustworthiness has taken a beating. Robust economic recovery will take time, especially the fixing of the broken housing market and State debt. This will provide only marginal relief to our security establishment because if Xi's hold on power were to diminish, he could do what Mao did in 1962 and engineer a conflict.

While President Xi's primary ambition may be to integrate Taiwan quickly, even he understands that doing so by an amphibious assault is an extremely hazardous venture. The Allied D-Day amphibious assault at Normandy was undertaken with overwhelming superiority, with no air or naval threat to speak of. The landing force consisted of 5000 ships and over 200,000 men and was opposed by just 80,000 men with one Panzer Division located in Normandy. Moreover, the landing sites were four hours distant from the British Ports, and the Allies were assured of active support from the French Resistance. Despite all this General Eisenhower admitted he was unsure of victory. An amphibious



WHILE PRESIDENT XI'S PRIMARY AMBITION MAY BE TO INTEGRATE TAIWAN QUICKLY, EVEN HE UNDERSTANDS THAT DOING SO BY AN AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT IS AN EXTREMELY HAZARDOUS VENTURE

assault on Taiwan would involve a nine-hour crossing, with the PLAN armada facing an extremely hostile opposition, in terms of surface ships, submarines, aircraft, and missiles. Even if it did finally land on Taiwan's shores and consolidate its invasion, it would face a pretty robust insurgency. Surely, the last thing Xi needs is a repetition of Putin's folly in Ukraine.

So, he must seek his low-hanging fruits elsewhere, and where better than along our LAC. Here he is confronted by a leadership that makes a lot of noise but appears keen to maintain the status quo and is terrified of escalation. The threat of India as competition in the future is greatly reduced as it would keep India tied down to its own backyard, forced to invest on strengthening its military. More importantly, it secures his flank, if he were still keen on pursuing the Taiwan venture. But there is this small slip between the cup and the lip he can ignore only at his own cost. As the lessons of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war make clear, his huge administrative bases in Tibet, connected to the mainland by a tenuous 2000 Km Road and train link, are in jeopardy, as

being a high-altitude desert, they are relatively easy to locate and destroy, despite the PLAs best efforts.

However, the biggest chink in its armour is the quality of its soldiers. Organised on the lines of the Soviet(now Russian) forces, they are primarily dependent on poorly trained or motivated conscripts, with zero combat experience. That hasn't gone too well for the Russians and must worry the Chinese leadership as well. Especially since it faces a regular well-trained and motivated military with ample combat experience in high altitudes and mountains. At least, that is till Mr Modi's pet Agnipath project seriously impacts the military, as it is bound to. Clearly, the attack at Yangtse was a fishing expedition to check out our alertness and his own quality of troops. That not having gone well, gives us a brief window to prepare. Let's not waste it and regret it subsequently.

(The writer is a military veteran who is a Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and Senior Visiting Fellow with the Peninsula Foundation, Chennai. The views expressed are personal)



DEEPAK SINHA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE MODI QUESTION

Sir — The BBC's documentary on the 2002 killings in Gujarat has sparked the Strome of controversy, in which the documentary has a series of images of the text of the report, and in one statement the inquiry report says that Narendra Modi the then CM of Gujarat is directly responsible for the massacre carried on Muslims. The documentary "India- The Modi, questions the tensions between Narendra Modi and the minority of Muslims and shows the systematic campaign of violence which has all the hallmarks of ethnic cleansing and it refers to the chain of events as the worst thing that happened in 2002. Ex-foreign minister Jack Straw confirmed the UK report and said that he was the then Foreign minister in India and gave a report that the "extent of the violence was much greater than reported and there was a widespread and systematic rape of Muslim women as the violence was "politically motivated". There were serious claims that CM Modi played a pretty active part in pulling back the police and tacitly encouraging the Hindu extremist. The foreign diplomat has further said in the documentary that the violence was widely reported to have been organized by an extremist Hindu nationalist group the VHP. The Government is blatantly trying to Censure the documentary. Why Government is afraid of the documentary and why ban it on YouTube and Twitter? Let the public see the documentary and decide.

Now the Government is silent on the film "Gandhi- Godse- Ek yudh. The movie is being made about Godse who is the killer of Mahatma Gandhi. The movie talks about why Godse killed Mahatma Gandhi and it said that the movie is being made to tarnish the image of the father of the Nation. There is a problem when BBC made a documentary on Modi but the Government doesn't feel any problem when the image of Mahatma Gandhi is being tarnished. Why these double standards?

Zeeshaan | Kazipet

India beats China in population



India has surpassed China vis-a-vis Population. As the Lunar New Year celebration just ended in China last Sunday, people were praying and discussing raising death numbers.

China had a well-crafted population control regime, a mandatorily two-child policy, which has led to an ageing population. Now it is switching to the three-child policy for damage control. The expanding and squeezing of the population count is not at all an easy task. More deaths were being

reported in China compared to births, and this is a problem. The same kind of demographic trajectory is with Japan too, as both had passed the peak of the dividend population already.

In the context of India, there is no formula in the works that could be employed. The government is relying on education, better healthcare system and awareness. This could yield the desired results but it is a slow process. Extracting demographic dividend potential is possible through a planned approach, and one must not miss this opportunity anyway. The people within the working age bracket among the Indian population in particular are the forerunner of India's success story in economic and social terms. And this driving force of success must be winged properly to be the real dynamo of future India.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

SAMAJWADIS BURY THE HATCHET

Sir — Since burying the hatchet is always suggestive of peace, Pragatishheel Samajwadi Party-Lohia(PSPL) chief Shivalp Singh Yadav, in a show of solidarity with Akhilesh Yadav, has not only merged his party with the Samajwadi Party; he is also a co-founder of, but also accepted his nephew and SP president as his leader in a press conference. Interestingly, the chacha-bhatija duo has seen a long span of estrangement following some political differences between them even as chacha Shivalp floated his outfit leading to a division in the SP votes and consequential defeats the Samajwadi Party has faced since.

SP founder and patriarch Mulayam Now, it is incumbent upon former UP Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav to discharge his familial duties in the best political interest of his Samajwadi Party party to conform to the saying that 'blood is thicker than water.'

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

NEW ZEALAND PM'S RESIGNATION

Sir — New Zealand's PM Jacinda Arden's sudden announcement of her resignation

has come as a shock . Ms Arden was seen as a global liberal icon as she made a name for herself by successfully vanquishing the Coronavirus from her country. She was hailed for her determined leadership through a series of extraordinary events, notably the white supremacist's massacre of worshippers at two mosques in Christchurch and the White Island volcanic eruption that killed a group of 21.

She became a global icon in a rise dubbed "Jacinda-mania" as she campaigned passionately for women's rights and put an end to poverty and economic inequality.

But, Arden also received brickbats as many targeted her for showing incompetence and vulnerability. Nevertheless, it must be noted that she did not step down because the job was hard, but because she believed others could perform even better than her.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

India is being defamed by those who say that there is hatred in the country

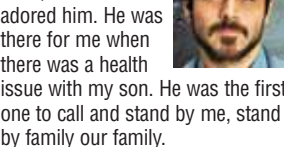


Defence Minister — Rajnath Singh



General Bajwa changed after the extension and compromised with the Sharifs. He decided, at that time, to give them the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO).

Former Pakistan PM — Imran Khan



I've followed him (Akshay Kumar) as a fan, and I've adored him. He was there for me when there was a health issue with my son. He was the first one to call and stand by me, stand by family our family.



Actor — Emraan Hashmi



The protest is over. We did not want to sit on dharna but 'paani sar se ooper chala gaya tha'. The government has assured us of safety and security.

Wrestler — Bajrang Punia



People, who used to toll bells at temples, are now occupying powerful positions. Take Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for instance.

Bihar Revenue Minister — Alok Mehta

FIRST COLUMN

TOP SITES IN INDIA FOR ADVENTURE TOURISM

The country offers a bouquet of such destinations



NIHARIKA NIGAM

As an adventure lover, what are your vacation goals? Are you looking to scuba dive in deep seas or just want to enjoy the scenic view while trekking? Whether you are travelling solo or with your loved group, a good environment can change the way your memories look. And when it is about adventure lovers, their trip is more than just Instagram-friendly locations.

Think adrenaline, facing fears, breakthrough moments, euphoria and an experience that can't exactly be contained in words! Whether you are looking to break free from city life or just want to indulge in fun, if feeling the adrenaline rush with a sense of contentment is what you are looking for, the below-mentioned destinations are just for you.

RISHIKESH: Also known as the "Adventure Capital of India," Rishikesh is popular for its themed cafes, a spiritual feel in the air, the holy Ganges and breathtaking mountains. In fact, the world's first Bungy fiction is woven around the bungy experience in Rishikesh and you can read all about it in 3...2...1...JUMP. While also being a haven for yoga retreats and ashrams, Rishikesh is equally famous for white water rafting, bungy jumping, flying fox and India's most extreme Giant Swing, situated at Mohanchatti village.

It is a complete package for your vacation goals. The place is hands down, the foremost choice for seekers of experiential travel.



GOA: The emerald land of India is another destination for people to explore their inner party lover and now, adventure junkie too. Known for its ravishing beaches and unending night life, Goa has an unexplored side brimming with adventure - scuba diving, snorkelling, parasailing, windsurfing, water scooters, water rafting, kayaking and much more. Bungy jumping over the enchanting Mayem lake is a must-do activity to go for. In association with Goa Tourism Development Corporation, bungy jumping facility is the same one that pioneered the sport in India, in Rishikesh over a decade ago—that's how you know, they're absolutely safe! Such are the gems that can be found in Goa, if only you dare to look!

MANALI: Pine forests, orchards, fascinating trails, and incredible view of the Himalayas makes Manali the perfect place to go for an adventurous vacation. Manali has become the go to place for backpackers, especially the ones who are more interested in exploring extreme sports in snow-capped mountains during the peak winter months. Biking, snowboarding, rappelling, ziplining, zorbing, paragliding and many other activities surround the beauty that the place offers. It is the most preferred choice for people residing in the national capital.

ZANSKAR: Trekking on a frozen river, a blanket of snow the way they show in dreamy Hollywood movies, Zanskar looks like a wish come true in January and February. But do research and take medical precautions before you decide to proceed on this journey. Conditions might not be favourable and extreme snow can be a barrier to your adventure. One can easily reach the destination, however, there is no place to stay so you have to make your own arrangements. Get in touch with a professional who can help you get everything sorted along with the adventurous activities that you are looking for.

AULI: The Himalayan ski resort in Auli is another part of Uttarakhand that is famous for its thrilling activities. Just like Rishikesh is for river rafting and bungy jumping, Auli is for the ski lovers. Surrounded by lush oak forests and panoramic mountains, the destination creates a feel-good state to your body, mind and soul. Skiing in the snow with alpine flora and fauna is perfect to experience on your adventure trip.

(The author is Director, Business Development at Jumpin Heights)

Science literature festivals boost scientific temper



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

If scientists and literary figures come together, we can expedite our mission of developing scientific temper

Scientific temper is a buzzword in the scientific community, and policymakers often use it to highlight one of the specialties of our Constitution and nation. Even before our Constitution came into existence, we had a rich tradition of following scientific principles in our daily life; be it in our architecture, health care, agriculture and music. Of course, this knowledge is kept in the hands of a few elite sections of society.


After independence, our policymakers realised that scientific knowledge and new scientific advances from the western world should be adopted. Accordingly, they "envisioned world-class institutions in the country and the fruits of which we are harvesting today through research and innovation. But even today, science is managed by the scientific and academic community. The science spoken by these elite communities is not digestible to the ordinary person, even though they are reaping the benefits in their daily life.

Myths and superstitions that affect human development are prevalent even in this 'Amrit Kal' when we are marching towards a global leader. Many educated people have an aversion to taking vaccines or believing in evolution. Only when all our citizens are scientifically literate, can our country progress in every aspect of human development. This is a challenging task in a country with diverse cultures and traditions. Many science popularisation programmes have been carried out in the country under the aegis of great institutions like Vigyan Prasar, CSIR-NIScPR (earlier CSIR-NISCAIR) and others. But still, achieving 100 per cent scientific temper seems to be a dream, the problem is that these institutions have their own limitations in reaching every nook and corner of the country.

Moreover, most of the science popularisation programmes are led by scientists who are from a science background. There are hardly any scientific institutions in the public sector where people from literature or fine arts backgrounds are recruited as scientists. This is one of the major drawbacks of our science communication activities. We need more science communication institutions having human resources trained in science, literature and fine arts, in different regions of the country. Based on the local cultural differences, we need to design different science communication strategies to develop scientific temper in the society.


It is here literature comes to the rescue. Every literate person will read story books, novels, fiction and poems at some point in life, even if they don't read scientific books or journals. Literature is one area that we have missed in our science popularisation activities. Even children who are not interested in science in the classroom would like to read sci-fiction books like the Star Trek series and similar.

Many ordinary people without any scientific background, have shown interest in reading biographies of scientists



WE NEED TO DESIGN MATERIALS THAT WOULD DIGEST EVERY CHILD, STORY BOOKS, COMIC BOOKS, NOVELS, FICTION, POEMS, ETC, THAT HAVE SCIENCE COMPONENTS IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES. THIS WILL MAKE EVEN STUDENTS NOT INTERESTED IN SCIENCE LEARN SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTS INDIRECTLY

(The author is a science communicator and academic)



like "Wings of Fire" by our former President Dr APJAbdul Kalam. Similarly, there are many takers for the sci-fiction books written by Fred Hoyle, Gregory Benford, Carl Sagan, Isaac Asimov, Robert A Heinlein, Arthur C Clarke, Michael Crichton and others.

Even in our classroom, instead of textbooks, if science-based popular science books or literary works are included, we can generate interest in students. Studies have shown that creating connections with literary works will help engage students in science classes.

Students reported that they were immediately able to see and emotionally engage with the narrative. They might start to appreciate science for its creative potential. Students' self-assurance in science improves when they see the relevance of scientific concepts to interests they already have. It encourages kids to broaden their horizons and think beyond the box when it comes to their science coursework.

Integrating readings about accountability in science is one way to help students grasp the material. They gain self-assurance as they learn that science encompasses more than one narrow field. Students with a passion for science will find that the sessions push them to develop their critical thinking skills and open their minds to new ideas. They have also inspired many kids to pursue learning on their own time. Innovative ideas and technological advances in science and technology have been reflected by numerous well-known and representative literary works. The important interactions between science and the cultural sphere (with architecture, religion, the philosophy of the Enlightenment, or literature)

throughout history demonstrate that science is a fundamental component of culture.

Jonathan Swift, in his work Gulliver's Travels (1726), depicts an island, Laputa, which is held up magnetically in the air, and inhabited by men who are totally dedicated to mathematics and music. Similarly, Jules Verne, in his novel The Mysterious Island (1874) explains the notion of man's controlling nature thanks to science and technology.

Science also influences the work of Arthur Conan Doyle. The investigation methods used by his literary creation, the detective Sherlock Holmes, are based on the positivist scientific methods taught to the author as a medical student. In recent times books by Prof. Yuval Noah Harari – Sapiens & Homo Deus -- were the best-sellers lucidly, which explain science, even though the author is not a scientist per se. He recently came out with another book Sapiens: A Graphic History, a radical graphical adaptation of his best-selling book Sapiens, targeting children and the layman.

Realising the importance of literature in science communication, the government has included 'Vigyanka' (Science literature festival) as one of the main events at the mega science event, India International Science Festival (IISF), which has been celebrated since 2015. The 'Vigyanka' event will bring scientists, literary and fine arts personnel to a common platform. The event was first conceived by Dr Nakul Parashar, Director, Vigyan Prasar, on the lines of Jaipur Lit Festival for the first time and with the help of his colleagues Kapil Tripathi and Maanbardhan Kanth launched it in IISF 2019 at Kolkata.

This initiated a new becoming in taking science communication and science education to the next level. Our science students should be taught to read novels, poems, biographies, etc., to improve their creative skills. The beauty of storytelling and poems is that even an illiterate person who listens to them will enjoy and understand scientific concepts.

In this world of trans-disciplinary learning, policymakers should open the doors of scientific institutions to people from a literature background. A good literary work, be it a novel or fiction, or poem, is a mirror of society. It can reflect problems the community faces, virtues of good values and teach people to dream higher. It can even help us document certain traditional knowledge that prevailed during the period. These values are essential for effectively bringing science to the masses. Even today, our policymakers give impetus to scientist-centric science communication. This should change to a collective teamwork of scientists, literary and fine arts persons. We must envision a nation where scientific temper is imparted to every citizen. For this, we must train our young minds, our school-going children.

We need to design materials that would digest every child, story books, comic books, novels, fiction, poems, etc, that have science components in different languages. This will make even students not interested in science learn scientific concepts indirectly. If scientists and literary figures come together, we can expedite our mission of developing scientific temper in every part of the country and make India a scientific superpower in the Amrit Kaal.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THE GOVT IS ON WAR FOOTING TO ENSURE NO ONE IN INDIA CAN WATCH A MERE BBC SHOW. SHAME THAT THE EMPEROR AND COURTIER... ARE SO INSECURE. — TMC LEADER MAHUA MOITRA



WE THINK THAT THIS IS A PROPAGANDA PIECE, DESIGNED TO PUSH A PARTICULAR DISCREDITED NARRATIVE. THE BIAS... IS BLATANTLY VISIBLE. — MEA SPOKESPERSON ARINDAM BAGCHI


Popularity of gold is unproductive for economy

The Government and the RBI must initiate necessary steps to discourage people against excessive holding of gold

India is one of the largest markets for gold and growing affluence is driving growth in its demand. As per World Gold Council's estimate in the year 2019, Indian households may have accumulated up to 25,000 tonnes of gold, thereby retaining the tag of the world's largest holders of the metal.

In value terms, it may be worth more than \$1300 billion.

As gold cannot produce anything, it is an unproductive asset. Its growth in terms of value depends on the belief that someone else will pay more for it in future. If any investment is made in shares or debt instruments, it will contribute to the productivity and economic growth of the country.



S KALYANASUNDARAM

(The author is a retired banker)

A pile of gold will stay the same pile of gold no matter how much time passes. The only exception is when it is used in a small way in some industrial production.

Steps to curtail gold holding

At different points of time, the Government of India has initiated steps to reduce the holding of gold by the people. In 1965, a gold bond scheme was launched with tax immunity for unaccounted wealth. In 1968, the Government brought in the Gold (Control) Act to control sale and holding of gold in personal possession.

This Act enabled to recall all gold loans given by banks and to ban forward trading in gold. While launching economic liberalization the Gold

Control Act was abolished on June 6, 1990.

However, the Government was contemplating different schemes to prune the holding of gold by the general public. The government is issuing a Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme and one can invest in gold without actually holding it. The investor can have equivalent value of gold on maturity and the bonds are tradable also. He can earn some interest also. However the government has collected only Rs. 31290 crore since its launch as per the statement of the Finance Minister in August 2021.

Then a new Gold Deposit Scheme was brought in through State Bank of India to enable people to deposit

gold to the government, to earn interest during the scheme period and to get either gold bullion or cash equivalent on maturity. But as the investors have to melt the jewels to deposit gold, the scheme was not attractive to people. It seems that only big temples deposit gold by melting the jewels offered by devotees.

Loan facility against gold

When all these schemes failed to produce the desired result, it is strange that the RBI is allowing an enormous amount of loan facility against gold jewels from banks and NBFCs.

Loans against gold jewellery disbursed by banks rose from ₹46,791 crore at the end of September 2020 to ₹72,111 crore by September 2021 and ₹80,617 crore by September 2022. As per RBI data, the outstanding loans against gold has nearly doubled to Rs. 60,464 crore in FY21 as against Rs. 33,303 crore in FY20. As per RBI Bulletin dated 17 03 2022 outstanding as on 28 01 2022 is Rs. 69521 crores. The Y-o-Y 2022 growth was 32.9 per cent.

The outstanding with NBFCs on Advances to individuals against gold was Rs. 34678 crores in March 2020, Rs. 94840 crores in March 2021 and Rs. 114013 crores in September 2021. The percentage variation in 2020-21 is 173.5 as per RBI publication dated 29 12 2021.

It is strange that there is a tacit approval of the huge

disbursal of jewel loans by NBFCs.

Need to prune lending against gold

No doubt that gold has a central role in the country's culture and it is considered as a store of value, a symbol of wealth and status and a fundamental part of many rituals in our country. Among the country's rural population, a deep affinity for gold goes hand in hand with practical considerations of the portability and security of jewellery as an investment. But all these do not make it a productive asset.

Shutting liberal lending against gold jewels will force people to liquidate their holdings. In fact there should be higher margin and higher

rate of interest for such loans.

Outgo of foreign exchange

Value of gold imported by India during the last three years was Rs. 3440.94 (FY 2022), Rs. 2542.88 (FY 2021) and Rs.1992.50 (FY 2020). We normally import up to 1,000 tonnes of gold every year, and it is estimated another 200 tonnes are added through unofficial channels. There is substantial outgo of foreign exchange for import of gold.

Time to act

The Government and the RBI must initiate necessary steps to discourage people against excessive holding of unproductive assets like gold. Outright ban may not give the right solution as it will be counter-productive.

Lavrov blames West for no Ukraine talks

AP ■ PRETORIA, SOUTH AFRICA

Russia was willing to negotiate with Ukraine in the early months of the war, but the United States and other Western nations advised Kyiv against holding talks, Moscow's top diplomat said Monday.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks on a visit to South Africa were similar to those made last year by President Vladimir Putin. The U.S. and other Western nations have said that Russia isn't serious about hammering out a deal to end the nearly year-long war, which began on Feb. 24.

"It is well known that we supported the proposal of the Ukrainian side to negotiate early in the special military operation and by the end of March, the two delegations

agreed on the principle to settle this conflict," Lavrov said.

"It is well known and was published openly that our American, British, and some European colleagues told Ukraine that it is too early to deal, and the arrangement which was almost agreed was never revisited by the Kyiv regime."

Russia has repeatedly rejected Ukrainian and Western demands that it withdraw completely from Ukraine as a condition for any negotiations. U.S. President Joe Biden has indicated he would be willing to talk with Putin, if the Russian leader demonstrated that he seriously wanted to end the invasion.

Lavrov is in Pretoria for talks with South African counterpart Naledi Pandor as Russia



pushes to strengthen ties with Africa's most developed country and an historical ally amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

South Africa was seen as the most significant of several African nations to take a neutral stance on the war and refuse to condemn Russia's

invasion — to the disappointment of the U.S. and other Western partners who also view South Africa as pivotal to their plans to build relationships in Africa.

Lavrov met with Pandor in the South African capital and is expected to visit other African countries on his trip. It's the Russian minister's second visit to Africa in the space of six months as Moscow seeks to rally support.

Russia's war in Ukraine and its impact on Africa's 1.3 billion people, which includes rising oil and food prices, was expected to take center stage during Lavrov's talks with Pandor.

"We are fully alert that conflict, wherever it exists in the world, impacts negatively on all of us, and as the devel-

oping world it impacts on us particularly as the African continent," Pandor said before the talks. "This is why as South Africa we consistently articulate that we will always stand ready to support the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the continent and throughout the globe."

Lavrov repeated a claim that he's made before that the West was responsible for the surge in global food prices.

South Africa continues to keep strong bonds with Russia following the Soviet Union's support for the country's current ruling party, the African National Congress, when it was a liberation movement fighting to end the apartheid system of repression against South Africa's Black majority.

That relationship is largely what led South Africa to abstain from a U.N. vote last year condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine, although a small group of people protested against Russia and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine outside the building where Lavrov and Pandor held talks.

Despite South Africa's expressed neutrality over Ukraine, Lavrov's visit comes days after the South African armed forces announced they would hold joint drills with the Russian and Chinese navies off South Africa's eastern coast next month, bringing Russian and Chinese warships across the Indian Ocean.

On Monday, Lavrov insisted that the naval exercises would be "transparent" and follow international law.

"Three sovereign countries will hold drills without violating international law, and I don't understand with whom this can cause a mixed reaction," Lavrov was quoted as saying by Russian state news agency Tass.

Lavrov visited Ethiopia, Egypt, Uganda and the Republic of Congo on his African tour last year. That was closely followed by a visit to South Africa by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, a move seen as a bid by Washington to counter expanding Russian influence in a strategically important continent.

This time, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen will start an official visit to South Africa on Wednesday following stops in Senegal and Zambia.

Poland pushes for more tanks for Kyiv, will seek German OK

AP ■ WARSAW, POLAND

Poland said Monday it would ask Berlin for permission to send German-built Leopard tanks to Ukraine as the government in Warsaw pushes its Western allies to move faster on supplying Kyiv with more military hardware to thwart Russia's invasion.

Germany has hesitated over sending tanks to Ukraine. But Polish officials took heart from remarks Sunday by German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock that Berlin wouldn't seek to stop Poland from providing Leopard 2 battle tanks to Ukraine. Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki didn't specify when the request to Germany will be made. He said that Poland is building a coalition of nations ready to send Leopard 2 battle tanks to Ukraine.

Poland needs the consent of Germany, which builds the tanks, to send them to a non-NATO country. But even if there is no permission from Germany,



Warsaw will make its own decisions, Morawiecki said at a news conference. Poland has become a leading advocate in the European Union for giving Ukraine the military aid that could help it prevail over the Kremlin's invading forces 11 months after the war began. Germany's hesitation has drawn criticism, particularly from Poland and the Baltic countries on NATO's eastern flank that feel especially threatened by Russia's renewed aggression.

Although Berlin has provided substantial aid, it has been criticized for dragging its feet on

providing military hardware.

German government spokesman Steffen Hebestreit said it was important for Germany not to take a "reckless" step it might regret, adding that a decision will not be rushed. "These are hard questions of life and death," he added. "We have to ask what this means for the defense of our own country."

Pressed on how long a decision on sending tanks might take, Hebestreit said: "I assume that it's not a question of months now." The Ukrainian government says that tanks, and especially the Leopards, are vital to

Kyiv.

Previously, Polish officials have indicated that Finland and Denmark were ready to join Warsaw in sending Leopards to Ukraine. The United Kingdom has pledged to send some of its Challenger tanks. French President Emmanuel Macron said Sunday he doesn't rule out sending Leclerc battle tanks to Ukraine and had asked his defense minister to "work on" the idea.

But Macron said a decision hinged on three criteria that have also weighed on the minds of other Western leaders: that sharing the equipment doesn't lead to an escalation of the conflict; that it would provide efficient and workable help when training time is taken into account; and that it wouldn't weaken his own military. Morawiecki said that while Poland intends to ask Germany for permission to send Leopard tanks to Ukraine, the request is "a secondary matter" as a group of EU countries look at how to help Kyiv.

Norway arrests former top Wagner Group member seeking asylum

AP ■ COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

A former high-ranking member of the Russian private military contractor Wagner Group seeking asylum in Norway is in police custody on suspicion of entering the Scandinavian country illegally, authorities said Monday.

Russian Andrey Medvedev "has been arrested under the Immigration Act and it is being assessed whether he should be produced for detention," Jon Andreas Johansen of Norwegian immigration police told The Associated Press. Norway's VG newspaper said detaining him isn't a punishment, but a security measure.

His Norwegian lawyer,

Brynjulf Risnes, was not immediately available for comment.

Medvedev, who says he fears for his life, is believed to have illegally entered Norway after crossing the country's 198 kilometer-long (123-mile) border with Russia earlier this month.

In a video posted by the Russian dissident group Gulagu.net, Medvedev said he came under Russian gunfire before crossing into the Scandinavian country. Norwegian police said they were notified by Russian border guards about tracks in the snow indicating that someone may have crossed the border illegally.

Norway's National Criminal Investigation Service, which takes part in



the investigation of war crimes in Ukraine said it's questioning Medvedev who "has the status of a witness."

Medvedev, who has been on the run since he defected

from the Wagner Group, has reportedly told Gulagu.net that he is ready to tell everything he knows about the shady paramilitary group and its owner Yevgeny Prigozhin, a millionaire with ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Medvedev said he left the Wagner Group after his contract was extended beyond the July-November timeline without his consent. He said he's willing to testify about any war crimes he witnessed and denied participating in any.

The Wagner Group, which has spearheaded attacks against Ukrainian forces, includes a large number of convicts recruited from Russian prisons. The group has become increasingly influential in Africa.

Myanmar Opp attacks military's population survey

AP ■ BANGKOK

Myanmar's pro-democracy resistance forces have attacked military government personnel conducting a population survey, in an attempt to disrupt preparations for an election later this year that they consider illegitimate.

Units of the People's Defense Force, the loosely organized armed wing of the main opposition group, the National Unity Government,

have claimed responsibility for several attacks in the past few weeks. At least two police officers have been killed, along with other local officials.

The NUG was established by elected lawmakers who were prevented from taking their seats when the army seized power in 2021 and serves as an underground parallel national administration.

Since the population survey began on January 9, at least 13 people have been killed

and four government workers have been detained by the resistance, according to promilitary and independent media and statements issued by resistance groups. It was impossible to verify the details of all the incidents.

The state-run Myanma Alinn newspaper reported on January 14 that survey activities were attacked seven times and two policemen were killed by "terrorist" groups between January 9 and 13.

No support for Sweden's NATO bid: Turkey's Prez

Istanbul (Turkey): Turkey's president said Monday Sweden shouldn't expect support for NATO membership following weekend protests in Stockholm by an anti-Islam activist and pro-Kurdish groups.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan slammed Rasmus Paludan's Quran-burning protest on Saturday, saying it was an insult to everyone, especially to Muslims. He also criticized Swedish authorities for allowing the demonstration to take place outside the Turkish Embassy. AP

Russia, Estonia expel ambassadors amid 'destroyed' relations

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia and Estonia on Monday were expelling the ambassadors from each other's countries in a tit-for-tat move, saying that their diplomatic missions will be headed by charges d'affaires.

The Russian Foreign Ministry summoned Estonian Ambassador Margus Laidre and ordered him to leave the country by Feb. 7.

The statement issued by the ministry said that Estonia's diplomatic representation from now on will be downgraded to a charge d'affaires that heads the European Union country's mission in Moscow.

The ministry said that the move was made in retaliation for Estonia's "new unfriendly step to radically reduce the size



of the Russian Embassy in Tallinn."

In response, Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu said that the Russian ambassador will leave on Feb. 7 too, in accordance with "the principle of parity."

The Estonian Foreign Ministry earlier this month ordered Russia to reduce the number of its embassy staff to eight diplomats and 15 administrative, technical and service staff members in order to

"reach parity in embassy staff" by Feb. 1.

Estonia has reduced its bilateral relations with Moscow "to the absolute minimum" since the Kremlin sent troops into Ukraine, Reinsalu said in a statement on Jan. 11. "Now we are setting a limit to the number of Russian diplomats working in Estonia in order to achieve parity. Today's step is in correlation with the low point of our relations in general," he said.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said Monday that "the Estonian leadership has purposefully destroyed the entire range of relations with Russia."

"Total Russophobia, the cultivation of hostility towards our country have been elevated by Tallinn to the rank of state policy," the statement read.

EU greenlights Armenia mission to ease border tensions

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union agreed on Monday to dispatch a civilian mission to Armenia to help boost security around its border and improve relations with neighboring Azerbaijan, amid tensions over a transport corridor to the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

The mission, which was requested by Armenia and has a mandate for two years, will "conduct routine patrolling" in border areas to "strengthen the EU's understanding of the situation on the ground," the bloc said in a statement.

"The EU will continue to support de-escalation efforts and is committed to work closely with both sides towards the ultimate goal of sustainable peace in the region," the bloc's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell said.

Armenia and Azerbaijan have been locked in a decades-old conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, which is part of Azerbaijan but has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces backed by Armenia since a separatist war there ended in 1994. Now, two years after the former Soviet countries ended a war that killed about 6,800 soldiers and displaced around 90,000 civilians, tensions between them are high again over a dispute focused on a six-kilometer (nearly four-mile) road known as the Lachin Corridor. The winding road is the only land connection between Armenia and the ethnic Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh region in Azerbaijan. It has been blocked by protesters claiming to be environmental activists since mid-December, threatening food supplies to Nagorno-Karabakh's 120,000 people.

The dispute raises fears that new fighting could break out, and casts doubts over the intentions of Russia, whose peacekeeping troops are charged with keeping the road secure.

The EU has been trying to broker an agreement between them, and helped get their two leaders to the negotiating table last October to advance talks on a border mission backed by the Europeans.

Brazil's new President works to reverse Amazon deforestation

AP ■ RIO DE JANEIRO

Shaking a traditional rattle, Brazil's incoming head of Indigenous affairs recently walked through every corner of the agency's headquarters — even its coffee room — as she invoked help from ancestors during a ritual cleansing.

The ritual carried extra meaning for Joenia Wapichana, Brazil's first Indigenous woman to command the agency charged with protecting the Amazon rainforest and its people.

Once she is sworn in next month under newly inaugurated President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Wapichana promises to clean house at an agency that critics say has allowed the Amazon's resources to be exploited at the expense of the environment. As Wapichana performed the ritual, Indigenous people and government officials enthusiastically chanted "Yoohoo! Funai is ours!" — a reference to the agency she will lead.

Environmentalists, Indigenous people and voters sympathetic to their causes



were important to Lula's narrow victory over former President Jair Bolsonaro. Now Lula is seeking to fulfill campaign pledges he made to them on a wide range of issues, from expanding Indigenous territories to halting a surge in illegal deforestation.

To carry out these goals, Lula is appointing well-known environmentalists and Indigenous people to key positions at Funai and other agencies that Bolsonaro had filled with allies of agribusiness and military officers.

In Lula's previous two terms as president, he had a mixed record on environmental and Indigenous issues. And he is certain to face obstacles

from pro-Bolsonaro state governors who still control swaths of the Amazon. But experts say Lula is taking the right first steps. The federal officials Lula has already named to key posts "have the national and international prestige to reverse all the environmental destruction that we have suffered over these four years of the Bolsonaro government," said George Porto Ferreira, an analyst at Ibama, Brazil's environmental law-enforcement agency.

Bolsonaro's supporters, meanwhile, fear that Lula's promise of stronger environmental protections will hurt the economy by reducing the amount of land open for development, and punish people for

activities that had previously been allowed.

Some supporters with ties to agribusiness have been accused of providing financial and logistical assistance to rioters who earlier this month stormed Brazil's presidential palace, Congress and Supreme Court.

When Bolsonaro was president, he defanged Funai and other agencies responsible for environmental oversight.

This enabled deforestation to soar to its highest level since 2006, as developers and miners who took land from Indigenous people faced few consequences.

Between 2019 and 2022, the number of fines handed out for illegal activities in the Amazon declined by 38 percent compared with the previous four years, according to an analysis of Brazilian government data by the Climate Observatory, a network of environmental nonprofit groups.

One of the strongest signs yet of Lula's intentions to reverse these trends was his decision to return Marina Silva to lead the country's environmental ministry.

Nepali Congress to field candidate for post of Prez

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepali Congress Party has said that it will field its candidate for the upcoming election for the post of president, a senior party leader said on Monday.

The election for the post of president is likely to be held around mid-February, though the Election Commission has not yet fixed the date.

As President Bidya Bhandari is retiring from the top post around mid-March there is a practice of holding the presidential election one month prior to the termination of her term.

Nepali Congress leader Prakash Man Singh talking to PTI said the party had decided to run for the presidential election to be held soon and that NC would now focus its attention there.

Nepali Congress being the largest party in the House of Representatives is qualified enough to field its candidate for the post, he pointed out.

Ganesh Shah, secretary of the ruling CPN-Maoist Centre, said his party was ready to forge consensus among the political



parties for the post of president.

"We will try to build consensus even with the opposition parties, including Nepali Congress, for this purpose," Shah said.

Earlier during the election held for the post of Speaker of the House of Representatives on January 19, Nepali Congress lost the election to the ruling CPN-UML candidate.

UML candidate Dev Raj Ghimire has been elected to the post of Speaker of the HoR by defeating NC candidate Ishwori Neupane. Ghimire received 167 votes against 97 votes for Neupane.

CPN-UML has claimed that being the largest member of the ruling alliance, it is eligible for the post of president.

Therefore, tough competition is likely for the presidential election between the opposition Nepali Congress and the ruling CPN-UML.

Nepali Congress, despite being the opposition, had cast its vote in favour of Prachanda when the CPN-Maoist Centre chairperson sought a vote of confidence in the HoR.

The move by the opposition party is seen as a strategy to woo Prachanda's favour during the presidential election.

Biden should be embarrassed by classified docs case: Dems

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Senior Democrats, dismayed by a steady stream of startling disclosures, expressed criticism Sunday of how President Joe Biden handled classified material after leaving office as vice president and disappointment that the White House has not been more forthcoming with the public.

Lawmakers who might have anticipated questions focusing on the debt limit or Ukraine aid when they were booked last week for the Sunday news shows found themselves quizzed about the latest development over the weekend in the document drama that has put Biden's presidency on the defensive. During a search Friday of Biden's home in Wilmington, Delaware, the FBI found additional documents with classified markings and took possession of some of his handwritten notes, the president's lawyer said Saturday.

Biden should be "embarrassed by the situation," said Illinois Sen. Dick Durbin, the second-ranking Democrat in the Senate, adding that the president had ceded the moral high ground on an issue that has

already entangled former President Donald Trump.

Special counsels appointed by Attorney General Merrick Garland are investigating both cases.

"Well, of course. Let's be honest about it. When that information is found, it diminishes the stature of any person who is in possession of it because it's not supposed to happen. ... The elected official bears ultimate responsibility," Durbin said.

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., said Biden "should have a lot of regrets. ... You just might as well say, Listen, it's irresponsible."

The president told reporters on Thursday that he had "no regrets" over how and when the public learned about the documents and that there was "no there there."

Despite their criticism, Biden's fellow Democrats defended what they said was his cooperation with the Justice Department as the search for additional classified material unfolds.

They contrasted it with Trump's resistance to efforts to recover hundreds of documents after he left office.



"It is outrageous that either occurred," Durbin said.

"But the reaction by the former president and the current president could not be in sharper contrast."

Biden voluntarily allowed the FBI into his home on Friday, but the lack of a warrant did not dim the extraordinary nature of the search.

It compounded the embarrassment to Biden that started earlier in January with the disclosure that the president's lawyers had found a "small number" of classified records at a former office at the Penn

undercut his efforts to portray an image of propriety to the American public after the tumultuous presidency of his predecessor, Trump.

Manchin excoriated both men for their handling of sensitive security documents. "It's just hard to believe that in the United States of America, we have a former president and a current president that are basically in the same situation," he said. "How does this happen?"

At the same time, Democrats worried that Biden's travails have created an opening for newly empowered House Republicans.

"We have to worry, since this new group that has taken over control of the House of Representatives has promised us endless investigations, confrontations, impeachments and chaos, what is going to happen," Durbin said.

The new chairman of the House Oversight and Accountability Committee, Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., said he took Biden "at his word when the first set of documents were found. ... But now this is gone from just simply being irresponsible to downright scary."



Gunman in Lunar New Year massacre found dead

AP ■ MONTEREY PARK (US)

Authorities searched for a motive for the gunman who killed 10 people at a Los Angeles-area ballroom dance club during Lunar New Year celebrations, slayings that sent a wave of fear through Asian American communities and cast a shadow over festivities nationwide.

The suspect, 72-year-old Huu Can Tran, was found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound on Sunday in the van that authorities say he used to flee after being prevented from attacking another dance club. The New York Times reported that a man whose family runs that venue wrested the gun from the assailant.

The massacre in Monterey Park was the nation's fifth mass killing this month — and it struck one of California's largest celebrations of a holiday observed in many Asian cultures, dealing another blow to a community that has been the target of high-profile violence in recent years.

It was also the deadliest attack since May 24, when 21 people were killed in an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

No other suspects were at large, according to Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna. He said the motive remained unclear for the attack, which wounded 10 people, seven of whom were still hospitalised. Speaking at a Sunday evening news conference, the sheriff said he didn't have their exact ages but that all of the people killed appeared to be over 50.

The suspect was carrying what Luna described as a semi-automatic pistol with an extended magazine, and a second handgun was discovered in the van where Tran died.

Monterey Park Police Chief Scott Wiese said Sunday evening that within three minutes of receiving the call, officers arrived at the Star Ballroom Dance Studio in Monterey Park. There, they found carnage inside and people trying to flee through all the doors.

"When they came into the parking lot it, was chaos," Wiese said.

Kishida prioritises arms buildup, reversing low birth rate

AP ■ TOKYO

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Monday that Japan faces the severest security environment in the region since the end of World War II and pledged to push a military buildup under a newly adopted security strategy over the next five years and beyond as well as tackle rapidly declining births so the country can sustain national strength.

Kishida's government in December adopted key security and defence reforms, including a counterstrike capability that makes a break from the country's exclusively self-defence-only postwar principle. Japan says the current deployment of missile interceptors is insufficient to defend it from rapid weapons advancement in China and North Korea.

In his policy speech opening this year's parliamentary session, Kishida said active diplomacy should be prioritised, but it requires "defence power to back it up." He said Japan's new security strategy is based on a realistic simulation "as we face the most severe and complex security environment since the end of World War II and a question if we can protect



the people's lives in an emergency."

The strategy seeks to keep in check China's increasingly assertive territorial ambitions, but it's also a sensitive issue for many countries in Asia that were victims of Japanese wartime aggression. Kishida said it's a "drastic turnaround" of Japan's security policy, but still remains within the limitations of its pacifist constitution and international law.

"I make it clear that there will not be even a slightest change from Japan's non-nuclear and self-defence-only principles and our footsteps as a peace-loving country," Kishida said.

This month, Kishida took a five-nation tour, including Washington, to explain Japan's new defence plan and further

develop defence ties with its ally the United States.

Japan plans to nearly double its defence budget within five years to 43 trillion yen (USD 332 billion) and improve cyberspace and intelligence capabilities. While three-quarters of an annual defence budget increase can be squeezed out through spending and fiscal reforms, the remainder needs to come from a possible tax increase, and Kishida has already faced growing criticism from opposition lawmakers and even from his governing party.

Kishida also faces a critical question of population growth. "We cannot waste any time on the policies for children and childrearing support," he said. "We must establish a children-first economic society and turn around the birthrate."

Japan's population of more than 125 million has been declining for 14 years and is projected to fall to 86.7 million by 2060. A shrinking and aging population has huge implications for the economy and national security.

Kishida pledged to bolster financial support for families with children, including more scholarships, and said he would compile a plan by June.

Yellen in Zambia to discuss debt to China, public health

AP ■ LUSAKA (ZAMBIA)

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is in Zambia on the second leg of her African tour, a stop aimed at promoting American investment and ties while she's in a capital city that is visibly dominated by Chinese dollars.

Yellen arrived via the renovated Kenneth Kaunda International Airport, which expanded in 2015 with Chinese financing, and drove past billboards and newly built firms bearing Chinese signage, evidence of Beijing's influence and increasing competition with the US.

But the growth that the country has experienced has come with a heavier debt burden. Zambia became Africa's first pandemic-era sovereign to default when it failed to make a USD 42.5 million bond payment in November 2020. Negotiations over how to deal with the debt load have been ongoing.

How Zambia's debt is renegotiated with the Chinese will provide a test case for how lenient China will be with other overextended nations that face debt distress.



Debt will be a topic of conversation Monday when Yellen meets with Zambia's president and finance minister to push for the Chinese to continue negotiations. She will also tour pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities benefiting from American investment to showcase what she sees as a model of success.

"Many African countries are now plagued by piling, unsustainable debt. And that's undeniably a problem. And much of it is related to Chinese investments in Africa," Yellen said Saturday in an interview with The Associated Press in Senegal, the first leg of her African trip.

Military probing whether cancers linked to nuclear silo work in US

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Nine military officers who had worked decades ago at a nuclear missile base in Montana have been diagnosed with blood cancer and there are "indications" the disease may be linked to their service, according to military briefing slides obtained by The Associated Press.

One of the officers has died.

All of the officers, known as missileers, were assigned as many as 25 years ago to Malmstrom Air Force Base, home to a vast field of 150 Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile silos. The nine officers were diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma, according to a January briefing by U.S. Space Force Lt. Col. Daniel Sebeck.

Missileers ride caged elevators deep underground into a small operations bunker encased in a thick wall of concrete and steel. They remain there sometimes for days, ready to turn the launch keys if ordered to by the president.

"There are indications of a possible association between cancer and missile combat crew service at Malmstrom AFB," Sebeck said in slides presented to his Space Force unit this month.

The "disproportionate number of missileers presenting with cancer, specifically lymphoma" was concerning, he said.

Marcos seeks FM talks with China on sea feuds

AP ■ MANILA

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said on Monday he has proposed to China that the two countries hold talks between their foreign ministers to quickly resolve any new conflicts in the disputed South China Sea, and blamed Chinese actions for the disagreements.

Marcos told Philippine TV networks in an interview that Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed to his proposal in their talks in Beijing early this month and the two sides are ironing out the details of such an arrangement.

There was no immediate reaction from Chinese officials.

China and the Philippines, along with Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, have been locked in an increasingly tense standoff over their overlapping claims in the busy and resource-rich waterway, which is regarded as a potential Asian flashpoint.

In 2017, the Asian neighbours launched regular diplomatic talks called the Bilateral Consultation Mechanism to discuss incidents in the disputed waters and prevent any escalation while discussing other aspects of their relations.

Despite the talks, conflicts have persisted, including a recent incident reported by Filipino fishermen who accused the Chinese coast guard of driving them away from Philippine-occupied Second Thomas Shoal, which Beijing also claims, and then shadowing their vessel as it left the disputed area on January 9. The incident occurred a few days after Marcos made a visit to

China and met Xi.

The Philippine coast guard said it deployed more patrol ships to protect the Filipino fishermen after the incident.

Marcos said he proposed to Xi in their meeting in Beijing that their top diplomats lead the Bilateral Consultation Mechanism, which is currently handled by mid-level diplomats, to allow a more rapid response to future conflicts in the disputed sea.

"My proposal is that we bring that bilateral group to a higher level," Marcos said, adding that he would also ask the Philippine ambassador to China to be part of the higher-level talks.

"I guarantee you that if there is any decision that needs to be made, either of those gentlemen can pick up the telephone and talk to me and within five minutes we will have a decision."

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Pak suffers major power outage after grid failure

Marcos said Xi agreed to his proposal and asked the Chinese foreign minister to discuss the new arrangement with Philippine officials.

"I think that if the president, President Xi, puts out an order that we will not do that anymore, we will do something else," then I think it will be. I think the chain of command is fairly solid," Marcos said. "We will be able to report any violation of whatever agreement we come to."

It remains to be seen whether China will ease its increasingly aggressive actions in the disputed waters and back off in any fresh conflict. Beijing has dismissed and continues to defy a 2016 ruling by a UN-backed arbitration tribunal that invalidated its vast territorial claims on historical grounds in the South China Sea.

Pak suffers major power outage after grid failure



PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan faced a major power breakdown on Monday due to a "frequency variation" in the national grid, leaving millions of people in large parts of the country, including capital Islamabad and financial hub Karachi, without electricity.

According to the Ministry of Energy, the system of frequency of the national grid went down at 7:34 am local time, resulting in the breakdown. "System maintenance work is progressing rapidly," it tweeted.

Energy Minister Khuram Dastgir said the restoration work was going on.

"I can assure you that power will be fully restored across the country within the next 12 hours," he was quoted as saying by Geo News.

Explaining the failure, he said the authorities shut down the power generation system at night due to lower demand in winter to save fuel costs.

EU slaps sanctions on dozens in Iran Govt over stir crackdown

AP ■ BRUSSELS

The European Union on Monday imposed sanctions on dozens of Iranian officials, including a government minister, regional governors and lawmakers, suspected in the security crackdown on protesters, but did not add Iran's Revolutionary Guard to its terror group blacklist.

At a meeting in Brussels, EU foreign ministers agreed to slap a travel ban and asset freeze on Iran's Sports and Youth Minister Hamid Sajjadi, accusing him of pressuring Iran's athletes into silence, including an Iranian climber who competed without Islamic headdress at a competition in Seoul.

The Iranian Special Police Forces were also targeted, accused of using "excessive violence and lethal force against unarmed protesters, including women and children ... by firing automatic weapons at protesters."

Another asset freeze was imposed on the Headquarters for Enjoining Right and Forbidding Evil, an Iranian government institution that the EU believes is responsible "for determining and enforcing excessively strict behavioural models in society."

Companies linked to cyber security, spyware, social media filtering, and the production of security equipment allegedly used in the crackdown were also hit. Restrictive measures were slapped on senior officers



from the Revolutionary Guard and some of its regional units.

The 27-nation bloc had already imposed three rounds of sanctions on Iranian officials and organisations — including ministers, military officers and Iran's morality police — for human rights abuses over the protests that erupted in Iran in mid-September over the death of Mahsa Amini.

The 22-year-old woman died after being arrested by the morality police for allegedly violating the Islamic Republic's strict dress code. Women have played a leading role in the protests, with many publicly removing the compulsory Islamic headscarf, known as the hijab.

At least four people have been executed since the demonstrations began, following rapid, closed-door trials. At least 519 people have been killed and more than 19,200 others arrested, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, a group that's been monitoring the rallies.

The movement has become one of the greatest challenges to Iran's Shiite theocracy since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

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CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866, Website: www.ujvnll.com

RO No: 72 E-Tender Time Extension Notice-2 Date: 23-01-2023
Due to unavoidable circumstances the date of submission and opening of NIT No - NCB/17/EE(E&M)/MB-II/Barrage/2022-23: "Design, Manufacturing, Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of Trashrack panels kane no. Hydraulically Operated Movable Trash Rack Cleaning Machine (TRCM) to safely handle rake capacity of 2.0 Tonne as well as log grappler capacity of 2.0 Tonne including dismantling of existing Trash rack panels & TRCM at Joshiyara Barrage, Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand, India" invited by the office of Executive Engineer (E&M), Joshiyara Barrage, Joshiyara, Uttarkashi is hereby extended as follows:-
Last Date/Time for receipt of bid in the portal - 30.01.2023 up to 16:00 Hrs.
Last Date of receipt of hard copy of bid- 03.02.2023 upto 11:30hrs
Date of opening of bid on the website-03.02.2023 at 11:30 Hrs.
Details of subsequent addendum/corrigendum/cancellation etc. may be obtained from the e-procurement portal <http://uktenders.gov.in>.

Executive Engineer
"SAVE ELECTRICITY IN THE INTEREST OF NATION"

OFFICE OF GENERAL MANAGER, DISTRICT INDUSTRIES CENTRE, MANDIGOBINDGARH DISTRICT FATEHGARH SAHIB
No. 784 Dated: 20.1.23
Notice to Appear/Attend Proceedings of DL-MSFC Fatehgarh Sahib (Pb)
Through this publication this is for constructive notice for Respondent M/s R.K. Forge, B.N. 102-104, IIM G Road, Industrial Area, Ghaziabad (U.P.)-201001 to appear in person or through Authorised representative before the General Manager, District Industries Centre, Mandigobindgarh -Cum- Member Secretary, District Level Micro & Small Facilitation Council, Fatehgarh Sahib (Pb) in his office at District Industries Centre, Mandigobindgarh (Near Bus Stand), District Fatehgarh Sahib (Pb) on 08.02.2023 at 11:00 A.M. regarding claim reference petition submitted by Claimant M/s Amar Forgings, Village Kumbh Amloh Road, Mandi Gobindgarh, District Fatehgarh Sahib-147301 Uts 18(1) of MSMD Act 2006 hearing Reference No. 66 of 2021. If Respondent fails or omits to appear as above then arbitration proceedings shall be conducted as per section 23 & 25 of Arbitration & Conciliation Act and award shall also be passed on the basis of evidence before it.

Member Secretary-cum-General Manager
District Level Micro & Small Facilitation Council, Fatehgarh Sahib (Pb)
Email: gmdicmgg@gmail.com

OFFICE OF GENERAL MANAGER, DISTRICT INDUSTRIES CENTRE, MANDIGOBINDGARH DISTRICT FATEHGARH SAHIB
No.785, Dated 20.1.23
Notice to Appear/Attend Proceedings of DL-MSFC Fatehgarh Sahib (Pb)
Through this publication this is for constructive notice for Respondent M/s R.R. Steels, 297 Patel Marg, Gazabad (U.P.)-201001 to appear in person or through Authorised representative before the General Manager, District Industries Centre, Mandigobindgarh -Cum- Member Secretary, District Level Micro & Small Facilitation Council, Fatehgarh Sahib (Pb) in his office at District Industries Centre, Mandigobindgarh (Near Bus Stand), District Fatehgarh Sahib (Pb) on 08.02.2023 at 11:00 A.M. regarding claim reference petition submitted by Claimant M/s Amar Forgings, Village Kumbh Amloh Road, Mandi Gobindgarh, District Fatehgarh Sahib-147301 Uts 18(1) of MSMD Act 2006 hearing Reference No. 66 of 2021. If Respondent fails or omits to appear as above then arbitration proceedings shall be conducted as per section 23 & 25 of Arbitration & Conciliation Act and award shall also be passed on the basis of evidence before it.

Member Secretary-cum-General Manager
District Level Micro & Small Facilitation Council, Fatehgarh Sahib (Pb)
Email: gmdicmgg@gmail.com

EDELWEISS ASSET RECONSTRUCTION CO. LTD. Edelweiss
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APPENDIX IV-A
(See proviso to Rule 8(6) r/w proviso to Rule 9(1))
E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

Public Notice for E-Auction sale of immovable property under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to rule 8(6) r/w proviso to Rule 9(1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and Borrower & guarantor in particular that the immovable property described herein below ("**Secured Asset**"), mortgaged to Edelweiss Asset Reconstruction Company Limited acting in its capacity as Trustee of EARC Trust SC-30, ("**EARC**"), the physical possession of which has been taken by Authorised Officer of EARC on October 31, 2022, will be sold by way of E-Auction on **February 10, 2023 at 12:00 Noon** with unlimited extension of 5 Minutes each through e-Auction Agency M/s e-Procurement Technologies Limited (Auction Tiger) on the website/portal <https://edelweissarc.auctiontiger.net> or "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" basis for recovery of aggregate dues of **Rs. 505,29,95,872.25/- (Rupees Five Hundred Five Crores Twenty Nine Lac Ninety Five Thousand Eight Hundred Seventy Two and Twenty Five Paise Only)** being due as on date August 23, 2022, together with interest at contractual rates and other costs and expenses thereon to EARC from **KLGS SYSTEL LIMITED (in Liquidation)** ("**Borrower**") and **Mr. Kumud Goel and Ms. Pushpa Lata Goel** ("**Guarantors**").
The Description of Secured Asset, Reserve Price and Earnest Money Deposit for the Secured Assets shall be as follows:

Description of Secured Asset	Reserve Price	Earnest Money Deposit
All that piece and parcel of Industrial plot of land being Plot No. 24, admeasuring 1000 sq. mtr. in Sector-18, Electronics City, Gurgaon, Haryana along with all the building/structures being thereon (total built-up structure - 15,750 Sq. Ft.) and bounded as follows -North: Access Road, South: Plot No.22, East: Access Road West: Plot No. 23	Rs. 11,47,50,000/-	Rs. 1,14,75,000/-

Other important details

Site Inspection	30/01/2023 to 07/02/2023, between 11:00 am to 4:00 pm
Document Verification	On working days between 30/01/2023 to 07/02/2023.
Bid Document Purchase	On working days between 06/02/2023 to 08/02/2023.
EMD amount payment	By 2pm on 09/02/2023
Last Date of Submission of Bid Document	By 5pm on 09/02/2023
Commencement of e-auction sale	12 Noon on 10/02/2023
Bank details	Ac. No. 0004103000054719, IFSC No. IBKL0000004, IDBI Bank, Mittal Court, Nariman Point, Mumbai.
Officer contact details	750642534 Meghraj.deshmukh@edelweissarc.in

For detailed terms and conditions of the auction sale, please refer to the link provided in the Secured Creditor's website i.e. www.edelweissarc.in/PropertySale

Date: 24.01.2023
Place: Mumbai

Authorised Sd/-
Contact No: 750642534

Tata Steel ‘studying’ UK Govt support package

PTI ■ LONDON

Tata Steel said on Monday that it is studying the British government's support package plans for the steel industry and will consider it carefully before arriving at strategic decisions on the future of its UK business.

It comes amid British media reports that UK Chancellor Jeremy Hunt is set to sign off this week on an estimated 600-million pound aid package for both British Steel and Tata Steel UK tied to their switch to green technology.

According to 'The Financial Times', Tata Steel - which owns the UK's largest Port Talbot steelworks in Wales - is set to receive around 300-million to introduce green furnaces at its UK operations.

The company has previously warned that it could be forced to shut down its operations in the UK if it did not receive support in its move towards greener, less carbon-intensive steelmaking.

"We have received communication from the UK government in relation to a framework for the continuity and decarbonisation of steel making in the UK," a Tata Steel spokesperson said.

"We are studying it and will consider it carefully prior to strategic decisions on the future of our UK business," the spokesperson said.

The government move is also aimed at protecting thousands of jobs in Britain's industrial heartlands, with Tata Steel employing around 8,000 in the UK.

The Department for

Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy told the BBC that it is working closely with the steel industry to secure what it describes as "a sustainable and competitive future".

Central to the government offer of support are the companies' blast furnaces. These use vast quantities of coking coal, a treated form of coal, to smelt iron from ore-bearing rock. As a result, they produce huge amounts of carbon dioxide, which drives global warming.

Traditional steel production, with its reliance on coal to produce iron, is seen as incompatible with the UK's legally binding climate action commitment to massively reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the coming decades.

Last week, the UK's Unite workers' union wrote to Business Secretary Grant



Shapps to warn that the steel industry faces huge job losses unless action is taken.

"With little meaningful action on the part of government in areas of UK procurement policy, energy pricing support, green energy generation or support for investment in new plant and technologies, the industry is at breaking point," Steve Turner, Unite's

assistant general secretary, wrote in his letter.

"We are, in the words of many, 'a whisker away from collapse'," he warned. Any government support package is expected to be dependent on pledges of investment from the steel companies and a guarantee that their plants will continue to operate to at least 2030.

Sebi asks PayMate India to refile IPO papers with certain updates

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi has asked B2B payments Sand services provider PayMate India to refile the documents for the initial public offering with certain updates.

PayMate India had filed the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) for a Rs 1,500 crore-IPO with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) in May 2022.

The proposed Initial Public Offering (IPO) comprises fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 1,125 crore and an Offer-for-sale (OFS) of Rs 375 crore by promoters, investors and other shareholders, according to the draft papers.

The company's promoters -- Ajay Adishesan and



Vishvanathan Subramanian and investors -- as well as Lightbox Ventures I, Mayfield FVCI Ltd, RSP India Fund LLC and IPO Wealth Holdings are to sell shares through the OFS. Besides, certain existing

shareholders are offering to offload shares through this route.

Currently, promoter and promoter group hold 66.70 per cent stake in the company and the rest is with public shareholders.

According to an update on Sebi's website on Monday, the regulator returned the company's DRHP on January 17, 2023 with an advise to refile it post applicable updates/revisions.

However, specific details were not disclosed.

PayMate is a multi-payment category platform that incorporates vendor payments, statutory payments, and utility payments, giving its customers a fully-integrated B2B payment stack.

Sensex, Nifty advance on gains in IT, financial shares, global cues

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex rose by 319 points on Monday on gains in IT and financial stocks after positive quarterly results amid supportive global cues.

Snapping its two-day sliding streak, the 30-share BSE barometer rose by 319.90 or 0.53 per cent to close at 60,941.67.

The index opened higher and gained more than 400 points to scale the 61,000 level. It touched a high of 61,113.27 and a low of 60,761.88 in the day.

The broader NSE Nifty gained 90.90 points or 0.5 per cent to settle at 18,118.55 as 32

of its stocks advanced while 18 declined. The index moved between 18,162.60 and 18,063.45 during the day.

Among Sensex stocks, Hindustan Unilever rose the most by 1.89 per cent. Sun Pharma, Tata Motors, Infosys, TCS, Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech, SBI, Kotak Bank, HDFC twins, and Nestle were among major gainers.

ICICI Bank closed flat after the second largest private sector lender on Saturday reported a 34.5 per cent jump in its consolidated net profit at Rs 8,792 crore in the December 2022 quarter, helped by an overall healthy performance.

Kotak Mahindra Bank

spurred 1.13 per cent after posting a 31 per cent growth in Q3 net income at Rs 2,792 crore.

On the other hand, UltraTech Cement was the biggest loser, falling by 4.62 per cent. NTPC, Tata Steel, L&T, Reliance Industries and Titan were also among the laggards.

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd had on Friday reported a 15 per cent drop in net profit for the December 2022 quarter as higher finance costs, the new windfall profit tax and depreciation neutralised strong operating performance.

Market breadth tilted in favour of bulls lifted by financial stocks, amid positive cues

from global peers. Strong corporate earnings reported by banks boosted appetite for financial stocks. Positive global markets owing to possibility of a less aggressive rate hike, further added colour," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

The broader indices traded mixed as the BSE Midcap rose by 0.44 per cent to 25,114.15 while the small-cap declined by 0.30 per cent to 28,544.40.

Among sector indices, BSE IT rose by 1.65 per cent, BSE Tech by 1.48 per cent, Bankex by 0.76 per cent, FMCG by 0.73 per cent, Auto by 0.64 per cent, and Financial Services by 0.57 per cent.

On the other hand, BSE Commodities fell 1.14 per cent and realty by 0.72 per cent. BSE Power, industrials, utilities and services also declined.

Upbeat global cues combined with favourable earnings announcements triggered a gap-up start which further strengthened with renewed buying in the IT majors, said Ajit Mishra, VP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

However, profit taking in energy, banking and cement heavyweights trimmed the gains as the day progressed, he added.

Shares in Europe and Asia also advanced on Monday following a rally in US markets on Friday.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index added 1.3 per cent despite concerns that Japan is facing a severe financial situation after spending heavily to counter the pandemic and other troubles. Most Asian markets were closed for Lunar New Year holidays.

In Europe, Germany's DAX edged 0.1 per cent higher, the CAC 40 in Paris gained 0.1 per cent and Britain's FTSE 100 added 0.2 per cent.

On Friday, the S&P 500 rose 1.9 per cent, the Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 1 per cent and the Nasdaq spurred 2.7 per cent.

Brent crude, the price



benchmark for international trading, declined 17 cents to USD 87.46 per barrel.

The rupee fell 21 paise to close as 81.38 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday amid rise in crude

prices.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital market on Friday as they sold shares worth Rs 2,002.25 crore, according to exchange data.

Banks get time till Dec-end to execute revised agreement with locker holders

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The RBI on Monday extended the time till December-end for banks to enter into revised agreements with safe deposit locker holders as a large number of customers are yet to do so.

In August, 2021 the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had asked banks to enter into revised agreements with the existing locker holders by January 1, 2023 in view of various developments in the area of banking and technology, nature of consumer grievances and also the feedback received.

"However, it has come to the notice of RBI that a large number of customers are yet to sign the revised agreement.

"In many cases, the banks are yet to inform the customers about the need to do so before the stipulated date

(January 1, 2023)," the central bank said in a statement while extending the deadline for banks to complete the process of renewal of agreements for the existing safe deposit lockers in a phased manner by December 31, 2023.

Banks have been asked to notify all their customers of the revised requirements by April 30, 2023 and ensure that at least 50 per cent and 75 per cent of their existing customers have executed the revised agreements by June 30 and September 30, 2023, respectively.

Banks also have to facilitate execution of the fresh/supplementary stamped agreements with their customers by taking measures such as arranging stamp papers, electronic execution of agreement, e-stamping, and providing a copy of the executed agreement to the customer.



The RBI also said in cases where operations in lockers have been frozen for non-execution of agreement by January 1, 2023, "the same shall be unfrozen with immediate effect".

The August 2021 guidelines pertain to customer due diligence, model locker agreement, locker rent, security of strong rooms, and attachment and recovery of contents in a locker and the articles by any law enforcement authority,

among others.

The RBI further said there is a need for revision in the Model Agreement drafted by the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) to fully comply with the revised instructions.

"IBA is being advised separately to review and revise the Model Agreement to ensure that it complies with the requirements of circular dated August 18, 2021 and circulate a revised version to all banks by February 28, 2023," it said in a circular.

Vistara turns profitable for first time since inception in Dec 2022 quarter

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Full service carrier Vistara on Monday said it reported a profit for the first time since inception in the three months ended December 2022.

Without disclosing the exact profit figure in the December quarter, the airline also said it crossed the USD 1 billion revenue mark and remained EBITDA positive in the current fiscal year.

EBITDA refers to Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortisation.

"For the first time since inception, the airline reported a net profit (excluding unrealised foreign currency loss and non-operating income) for the quarter ended December 2022," it said in a release.

A joint venture between

Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines, the airline started operations on January 9, 2015, and currently has a fleet of 52 planes.

Vistara CEO Vinod Kannan said with significant network and fleet expansion and sustained growth over the last few months, 2022 has been a phenomenal year for Vistara in terms of operational and financial performance.

"Each member of the Vistara family is incredibly proud of our collective achievements in an extremely challenging business environment that included the third wave of pandemic and escalating costs. We are now aiming for higher goals as we enter the next phase of our growth journey," he said. The airline -- which has more than 5,000 employees



and operates close to 8,500 flights per month -- had a domestic market share of 9.2 per cent in December 2022.

In November last year, Singapore Airlines said Vistara will be merged with Tata group-owned Air India.

Off-beat Indian destinations top trending spots on Airbnb

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Off-the-beaten-path destinations in India saw a spike in tourists' interest in 2022, with places like Madhapur, Telangana; Rameswaram and Vellore in Tamil Nadu; Cherrapunji?, Meghalaya; and Pimpri-Chinchwad, Maharashtra; being the top-trending spots, according to data released by Airbnb on Monday.

International travel saw a strong recovery in 2022, a trend that should continue to rise in 2023, found the round-up of key trends presented by Airbnb, with Indians searching for the most iconic cities around the world, and solo travel emerging as the most popular type of international travel as of the third quarter (July-September) of 2022, followed by couple and family travel.

Benefiting local communities by travelling to off-the-beaten-path destinations will further help in tourism recovery, Airbnb stated, observing that domestically, Indians are exploring off-beat destinations in states like Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Meghalaya and Telangana.

Dubai, London, Paris, Toronto and New York were the most searched for destinations internationally by Indian guests as of Q3 2022.



"In India, hospitality is deeply rooted in the diversity found in local culture, cuisine, lifestyle preferences and the way we welcome people into our homes. Delhi, Goa, Kerala, Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh are topping the charts when it comes to hospitality, with the highest share of 5-star reviews from guests on Airbnb.

Airbnb data also revealed that guests chose to enjoy city life as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Kolkata were the most searched for domestic destinations by Indians in 2022.

In 2022, travellers found themselves sitting pool-side or catching rays on a sandy beach. Both of these water-related categories occupied the top spots amongst Indian travellers, with tropical, iconic city

and national parks also making appearances, it said.

Amanpreet Bajaj, Airbnb's General Manager for India, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Taiwan, said: "The past year was about the revival and recovery of the travel industry. This year is expected to see travellers taking much-awaited international trips as well as exploring lesser known destinations in India and around the world. People are preparing their bucket lists for the year, and this growing appetite for travel is a positive sign".

The top five hosts in India with the highest number of bookings in 2022 were from Mumbai (Maharashtra), New Delhi (Delhi), Guwahati (Assam), Goa and (Hyderabad) Telangana, the Airbnb data said.

Honda lining up multiple EV models for domestic market; first electric scooter to debut next year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India is lining up multiple products in the electric vehicle segment with the first model expected to make debut in March next year, company's Managing Director, President and CEO Atsushi Ogata said on Monday.

The company, which on Monday launched a new version of its Activa scooter which conforms to the upcoming stricter emission norms, with price starting at Rs 74,536 (ex-showroom Delhi), plans to come up with charging infrastructure to support its electric vehicle customers.

Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI), which remains the leader in the scooter segment with a market share of 56 per cent, is also looking to consolidate its position in the motorcycle segment with the introduction of a 100 cc bike next month.

The company is looking to consolidate its position in the rural and semi urban markets with the introduction of the bike.

"We are looking to launch the first electric model in March 2024... It is being developed on a completely new platform and is based on the requirements of the Indian market," Ogata said

on the sidelines of the launch.

The first model next year would have a fixed battery while the second one would come with a swappable battery system, he said while outlining the details about the upcoming products.

Ogata said the company is considering utilising its existing sales infrastructure of over 6,000 outlets to set up charging infrastructure for its EV range and later depending on the market situation would take a call on expanding it further.

When asked about the launch timelines for the EV product range, he said: "It will not be far away from the launch of the first model. So in a very



short period, we will launch new products."

On the company's plans to introduce an electric version of its Activa scooter, Ogata said: "...The concept is futuristic Activa."

When asked about the company's late entry into the EV segment as compared to the competition, Ogata noted that the company focussed on "making the company's constitution strong in the last three years".

ADB to provide \$131 mn loan to support Jawaharlal Nehru Port Container Terminal upgrade

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Nhava Sheva Freeport Terminal Private Limited (NSFT-PL) have signed a USD 131 million (about Rs 1,066 crore) loan agreement to upgrade the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Container Terminal, Navi Mumbai, to enhance international trade in India through efficient, transparent, and state-of-the-art logistics infrastructure.

NSFTPL is a special purpose vehicle jointly owned by J M Baxi Ports and Logistics Limited (JMBPL) and CMA Terminals.

The financing package comprises USD 61.4 million from ADB's ordinary capital resources and USD 69.6 million from Leading Asia's Private Infrastructure



Fund (LEAP) administered by ADB, the Manila-based multilateral lending agency said in a statement.

"The funds will be used to upgrade existing berths and yards and install additional energy efficient

equipment such as electric quay cranes," it said.

ADB further said these upgrades will expand the terminal's container handling capacity and attract vessels operating on important international shipping lanes.

"Global trade and supply chains are vulnerable to shocks, and enhancing countries' capacity for trade is critical to the region's recovery from COVID-19 and its ongoing prosperity," ADB Vice-President for Private Sector Operations and Public-Private Partnerships Ashok Lavasa said.

Lavasa added that long-term financial support from ADB can boost economic competitiveness in India by developing world-class mega ports and boosting the efficiency of containerised cargo terminal operations.

‘BEST DAY SO FAR’ FOR DJOKOVIC



AP ■ MELBOURNE

A ruthless Novak Djokovic ominously warned Monday his hamstring injury was on the mend after his "best day so far" at the Australian Open as he surged into a 13th Melbourne Park quarter-final.

The Serbian fourth seed demolished Alex de Minaur 6-2, 6-1, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena to move a step closer to a 10th Australian title and 22nd major crown.

With his left thigh again strapped, the 35-year-old was a man on a mission, expending as little energy as possible in a 2hrs 6mins romp to inch within sight of Rafael Nadal's slam record.

Djokovic aggravated his hamstring during his run to a 92nd title at the Adelaide International this month and has been struggling with it since.

But he moved freely against De Minaur to set up a clash with fifth seed Andrey Rublev for a semi-final berth after the Russian toppled Danish teen Holger Rune in a tense five-set clash on the same court. "I didn't feel anything today, so today was great," Djokovic, who will return to world number one for the first time since June if he wins the tournament, said of the hamstring.

"I thank my medical team, physio, God — anybody that really helped me. I keep on going.

"Obviously I don't want to celebrate too early, I'm still in the tournament.

"I was feeling very good in the first match (in Melbourne), in the second match not so great, so I know things can change really quickly and I don't take things for granted.

"But I'm really pleased with the way I played today, the way I moved, the way I hit the ball. I played the best match of this year so far."

Djokovic added that he had been pumping himself full of anti-inflammatory pills "trying to mask the pain".

"But I had to find a way with my team. Today was the best day so far of

the tournament and hopefully it stays that way."

VERY HIGH LEVEL

Victory put him into a 13th Melbourne quarter-final to move fourth on the all-time list behind Roger Federer, Nadal and John Newcombe.

It is his 54th Grand Slam quarter-final in total — second only to the retired Federer's 58.

De Minaur, who recorded his first

victory against a top-five player in November when he beat Daniil Medvedev at the Paris Masters, was always facing an uphill climb.

Djokovic has not lost in Melbourne since 2018 — he did not play in 2022 — and has now won 25 consecutive matches at the Australian Open.

"I came up against a very good opponent with a very high level today," said De Minaur. "I think what I experienced today was probably Novak very

close to his best, I would say. To me, if that's the level, I think he's definitely the guy that's going to take the title."

Djokovic always had the measure of the young Australian and broke to love in game six, consolidating without dropping a point for 5-2.

With De Minaur struggling under the pressure, he sent a baseline forehand long to hand the Serb another break and the set in just 35 minutes.

Only 54 percent of De Minaur's

first serves went in, compared with Djokovic's 76 percent, with the winners 9-1 in favour of the dominant Serb.

De Minaur won the sixth game in the second set, ending a run of nine consecutive losses, but it was only a brief moment of respite.

Djokovic stretched his hamstring at the changeover and immediately applied pressure on De Minaur's first service game to break again in the third set, all but ending the match.



Pliskova powers into Aus Open last eight

AP ■ MADRID

Former world number one Karolina Pliskova kept herself on track for a maiden Grand Slam title on Monday with a "super aggressive" performance to destroy Zhang Shuai 6-0, 6-4 in the Australian Open fourth round.

The Czech 30th seed continued her confident run at Melbourne Park with a sizzling serving display, banging down 12 aces as she crushed the 23rd seed from China on the Kia Arena show-court.

"I thought I started really well today, super aggressive," said Pliskova, who raced through the first set in just 21 minutes. "But I was going for it, especially the first set. A little bit slowed down in the second set, but also she started to play a bit better. Maybe a bit smarter.

"But I'm just happy that I made it because the second set, it could go, I think, both ways."

Pliskova, who endured a torrid 2022 and missed last year's Australian Open with a wrist injury, was imperious in reaching her 11th Grand Slam quarter-final.

The 30-year-old has won 16 WTA Tour titles and reached the semi-final at Melbourne Park in 2019.

Pliskova is yet to drop a set and on this form has an opportunity to go all the way, especially with the top two seeds, Iga Swiatek and Ons Jabeur, already out.

"I think the serve was really working for me well in these matches," she told reporters.

"I think this is so far the best match I played here, definitely, especially the first set. I'm feeling the ball quite well, so happy for that."

Pliskova will face Polish world number 45 Magda Linette, who stunned fourth seed Caroline Garcia of France, for a place in the semi-final.

Marry Kom to lead Oversight Committee to probe allegations against WFI president

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Boxing great M C Mary Kom will lead a five-member Oversight Committee that will probe the sexual harassment charges against Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. The government-appointed committee will also run the day-to-day affairs of WFI for the next one month.

The other members of the panel are Olympic medallist wrestler Yogeshwar Dutt, former badminton player and Mission Olympic Cell member Trupti Murgunde, ex-TOPS CEO Rajagopalan and former SAI executive director — teams — Radhica Sreeman.

The announcement of the panel was made by Sports Minister Anurag Thakur on Monday. Thakur had decided to form the committee on Saturday following a three-day sit-in protest by some of the country's top wrestlers including Vinesh Phogat, Bajrang Punia, Sakshi Malik and Ravi Dahiya against the WFI and its chief.

The wrestlers ended their



gunde, former TOPS CEO Rajagopalan and former ED Teams, SAI Radica Sreeman will be part of the committee.

"In the next one month, this committee will probe into the sexual allegations and other charges after talking to all parties and submit its report. Till then all the day-to-day decisions and workings of WFI will be taken care of by this committee," he added.

Both Mary Kom and Yogeshwar are also part of the seven-member committee formed by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to probe the allegations of sexual harassment and corruption against the WFI chief.

Besides legendary boxer Mary Kom and wrestler Yogeshwar Dutt, the IOA panel includes archer Dola Banerjee and Indian Weightlifting Federation (IWLFF) president and IOA treasurer Sahdev Yadav.

The other members of the IOA committee are two advocates — Talish Ray and Shlok Chandra — besides former shuttler and IOA joint secretary Alaknanda Ashok, who is its vice chairperson.



Ronaldo starts with a win

AP ■ RIYADH

Cristiano Ronaldo made a winning start to life in the Saudi Pro League as he led Al Nassr to a 1-0 victory over Ettifaq on Sunday in his first match since becoming the best paid footballer in history.

The Portuguese superstar didn't score but there were promising signs for Al Nassr, who are eyeing domestic and continental silverware after the 37-year-old moved for deals totalling more than 400 million euros.

However, Ronaldo's league debut had an anticlimactic feel in front of 22,862 fans after he

scored twice in this week's lively 5-4 exhibition defeat to Lionel Messi's Paris Saint-Germain.

"He's one of the best players in the history of football, so it's very important for us to do everything possible to put him in the best condition," said Al Nassr coach Rudi Garcia.

"I want him to enjoy playing and tonight he was happy to play for the first time with his new team."

Ronaldo, leading out Al Nassr as captain, made a low-key start in the first half, twice losing the ball with attempted trickery as his team-mates struggled to get him on the ball.

Real, Barca win in La Liga



AP ■ MADRID

Barcelona last weekend, anxiety had increased in the capital, but a stirring Copa del Rey comeback against Villarreal on Thursday settled nerves.

This victory in Bilbao will reassure Los Blancos fans further, ahead of their derby clash in the cup with Atletico Madrid next week.

"It's clear that the team is defending well again, (we were) compact, solid," Real coach Carlo Ancelotti told DAZN.

"With us ahead in the game we needed to defend and we did it well. We did not give things away and in the end we won."

Madrid had let in eight goals in their previous four games across all competitions, but despite the injury absences of David Alaba and Aurelien Tchouameni, they were far more sturdy in the Basque Country.

Earlier, Pedri Gonzalez's goal made the difference for Barcelona in their single goal win over Getafe.

Without suspended striker Robert Lewandowski, Barcelona created few noteworthy chances, but did just enough to emerge with the three points to drive on their bid for a first league title since 2019.

Harmanpreet's sudden drop in form is concerning: Tirkey

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Disappointed Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey on Monday said captain Harmanpreet Singh's "sudden drop in form" was a matter of concern, though lack of penalty corner goals was not the sole reason for the home side's shock and premature exit from the FIH Men's World Cup here.

India lost to New Zealand in their crossover match on Sunday in the penalty shootout after the two sides were locked 3-3 at the end of regulation time.

Tirkey said any talk regarding change of coach and captain is premature as the World Cup is going on and India are to play in the 9th to 16th classification matches.

"Harmanpreet was doing very well in the FIH Pro League matches and in the (five match) Australia series just before the World Cup. We had a lot of expectation from him but suddenly dropping form in the World Cup is a matter of concern," Tirkey, one of the finest penalty corner hitters of his time, said.

"There are also some up and coming drag-flickers in the team. Drag-flickers are very important in modern hockey and we will plan accordingly," added Tirkey, who had a long meeting with the team on Monday.

"Just one-and-half years



"Kahi na kahi jita huwa match ko humne unko de diya hey (We have gifted the match to New Zealand from winning position)," he said.

Harmanpreet could have sealed the match for India in sudden death but he wasted the chance.

"We played aggressive hock-

ey and we got chances (against New Zealand). We got 10 PCs and we scored just two from them, we could have scored more," Tirkey said.

"Some players from whom we had a lot of expectations, they somehow could not perform. We all have accepted it."

Tirkey, one of the best

defenders of his generation, was also not happy with the performance of the defensive unit of the home side, of which Harmanpreet is the bulwark.

"If we speak about our defence, I feel there was something missing in our defensive structure, we could have done better (against New Zealand).

India writes to BWF to host Sudirman Cup, Junior Worlds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Badminton Association of India (BAI) has written to the sport's world body (BWF), expressing its interest to host the Sudirman Cup Finals this year.

India was scheduled to host the mixed team championship in 2023, but the Badminton World Federation awarded the rights to Suzhou, China, while giving the 2026 World Championships to India.

Suzhou was due to host the championships in 2021 but, due to the COVID-19 situation in China, the BWF was not able to stage any tournaments in the country and the event was shifted to Vantaa in Finland.

Owing to the current COVID situation in China, there is again uncertainty regarding the Sudirman Cup, scheduled to be held there from May 14 to 21.

"India is keen to host Sudirman Cup this year. We have written to BWF expressing our interest, we are expecting a positive response in a fortnight," BAI general secretary Sanjay Mishra said.

The season-ending Badminton World Tour Finals tournament was shifted out of Guangzhou to Bangkok due to the COVID-19 situation in the Chinese city last December.

All eyes are now on the China Masters Super 100 sched-

uled to be held at Ruichang, China from March 14-19.

Mishra said that India has also expressed its eagerness to host the Junior World Championships.

"We have also expressed our interest for the Junior world championship, which was allotted to the USA but they have now backed out. India has expressed interest but we are yet to hear back from BWF.

"However, if we get Sudirman Cup then we may have to wait for another cycle for the world junior championship."

Honolulu was awarded the rights to host the World Junior Championships in November 2018.

India's S Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian claimed a silver medal at the World Junior Championships in Santander, Spain in October last year.

India hosted the World Badminton Championships in 2009 and the Thomas and Uber Cup in 2014. The World Junior Championships was held once in 2008. The country also hosted the Badminton Asia Championships in 1965, 1983 2005 and 2010 before hosting the Team Event in 2016.

The India Open, which was upgraded to a Super 750 tournament, saw a good crowd at the IG stadium throughout the event, despite the early exit of the Indian shuttlers.

India eye series sweep against NZ



PTI ■ INDORE

With a series sweep in sight, the middle order will be eager to give a better account of themselves as the Indian team management contemplates rotating its bowlers in the third and final ODI against New Zealand here on Tuesday.

Opener Shubman Gill has been in excellent form, having scored a sensational double hundred in the opener, followed by a 40-run knock in the low-scoring second ODI. Skipper Rohit Sharma, too, is having a good run.

However, the home team is

aware that despite enjoying an unsailable 2-0 lead in the series, Shubman and Rohit have been the only two batters among runs for the hosts.

At the same time, it is also a fact that the others haven't been tested and the dead rubber will be the perfect opportunity for the likes Ishan Kishan, Hardik Pandya and Suryakumar Yadav to get some batting practice in match situations.

Kohli's problem against left-arm spin has come to the fore once again as the talismanic batter has repeatedly gotten dismissed by Mitchell Santner.

After notching three hundreds in

four innings, the former skipper was dismissed cheaply in both the ODIs as New Zealand's star left-arm spinner exposed the chinks in Kohli's armour. With the World Cup just months away, Kohli would be keen for some much-needed course correction.

In the absence of Shreyas Iyer, Suryakumar was expected to provide some firepower at the back end.

However, the premier T20 batter failed to do that in the series-opener. Hardik, too, has been underwhelming with the bat of late. He has had a mediocre series against Sri Lanka and hasn't impressed against New Zealand yet.

With the T20 fixtures scheduled later this week and the all-important Australia series due to begin next month, the team management may also be tempted to rest players and hand Rajat Patidar, who was added to the squad as a replacement for the injured Iyer, a debut.

Patidar has impressed in the domestic circuit as well as in the IPL.

There could also be changes in the bowling department with express pacer Umran Malik coming back into the side or spinner leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal replacing Kuldeep Yadav.

Both Chahal and Umran have not featured in the series so far and

with the ODI World Cup later this year, the team management is looking to test the core players while carefully monitoring the workload.

The Indian bowlers were guilty of letting New Zealand score over 300 runs after being 131 for six in the first ODI, but the seamers came back strongly in the Raipur game.

Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj and Hardik were clinical while the spinners have also done a decent job.

New Zealand, on the other hand, will be eager to grab a consolation win to boost their morale. For that to happen, the Black Caps, who are without the services of regular skipper Kane Williamson, will have to address their batting woes.

New Zealand's top six batters have scored 40 or more on just seven occasions in the last 30 innings. The only batter that has impressed in their line-up is Michael Bracewell, who along with Mitchell Santner almost took his side over the line in Hyderabad.

Besides Williamson, New Zealand are without the services of pacers Trent Boult and Tim Southee, while coach Gary Stead has also given the white-ball series a miss.

"Not having Kane here I think is a great opportunity for the group to test out some new formations and different balances and give some of the guys the experience of playing in India.

"I think it's a great chance for us to keep building to where we want to be as a group," Mitchell said on the eve of the third ODI here.

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'Absence of Kane opportunity to try out new formations'

PTI ■ INDORE

New Zealand might be without some of their senior players, including skipper Kane Williamson, but all-rounder Daryl Mitchell feels the tour of India is helping the Black Caps try out new formations and different balances.

Besides Williamson, New Zealand are without the services of pacers Trent Boult and Tim Southee, while coach Gary Stead has also given the white-ball series a miss.

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"I think it's a great chance for us to keep building to where we want to be as a group," Mitchell said on the eve of the third ODI here.

The top-order has struggled immensely to contribute runs. In the opener, the Kiwis seemed down and out at 131-6, before

number seven Michael Bracewell played a blinder to almost take them over the line.

However, Bracewell could not repeat the feat as the visitors were skittled out for a paltry 108 in the second match, in Raipur. But Mitchell is not thinking too much about last Saturday's performance.

"Everyone knows that games of cricket like the other day (second ODI) happen, it's the nature of the game, you lose the toss and get out on a slightly challenging surface.

"As a group, we are pretty liberal we don't run the highs too much or the lows. Just stay consistent. So, really excited about tomorrow," he added.

With the ODI World Cup scheduled to be played in India later this year, New Zealand will be keen to pick up at least one win to boost their morale.

"For us, it's about adapting to the situations out here, communicating as a group especially the opening partnerships, what the surface is doing and how we want to go about it," Mitchell added.

Haroon Rasheed appointed as Pak chief selector

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan's former batter Haroon Rasheed has been appointed as the chief selector of the national selection committee.

Najam Sethi, the chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), told reporters in Lahore on Monday that Haroon will be heading the new selection committee but the remaining members would be decided later.

Haroon, 69, was also named on the 14-member cricket management committee to run the PCB, on December 22.

"Haroon has now resigned from the management committee as we don't want a conflict of interest as he is now chief selector," Sethi said.

Haroon who played 23 Tests and 12 ODIs for Pakistan had retired as Director of the High Performance Centre of the PCB last year.

The cricket management committee had named Shahid Afridi as interim chief selector soon after coming into power, and Sethi had wanted him to continue on long-term basis but the former all-rounder refused, insisting he had lot of commitments with his foundation and charity work.

Sethi also made it clear that negotiations with Mickey Arthur were still going on and in next two or three days a final announcement would be made on the new head coach of the Pakistan team.

Kohli, SKY, Pandya in ICC T20 Team of 2022

PTI ■ DUBAI

Former India captain Virat Kohli, all-rounder Hardik Pandya and shortest format's number one batter Suryakumar Yadav were on Monday picked in ICC 'Men's T20I team of 2022'.

The ICC also announced the Women's Team of 2022 with four Indians in the lineup -- Smriti Mandhana, Deepti Sharma, Richa Ghosh and Renuka Singh.

Kohli returned to his vintage form in 2022 and took the Asia Cup by storm, finishing as the second-highest run-getter with 276 runs in five games.

He also brought an end to his century drought of close to three years with a magnificent century against Afghanistan.

Kohli played one of the greatest T20I innings of 82 not out in India's heist against Pakistan in the World Cup opener in Melbourne.

Kohli ended the tournament with three more fifties and finished as the highest run-scorer with 296 runs.

Surya became the only second batter to score more than 1000 runs in a calendar year. He ended as the top-run getter (1164 runs) with two hundreds and nine half-centuries while striking at a stunning 187.43.

In the World Cup, he amassed 239 runs at a strike rate of 189.68 and finished the year as the No 1 batter in the T20I Rankings.

On the back of leading Gujarat Titans to their IPL title in their maiden appearance, Hardik came into his own



as the all-rounder.

He enjoyed his best year by numbers in the Indian colours, scoring 607 runs while also picking up 20 wickets.

The 11-member side is led by World Cup-winning England skipper Jos Buttler and has runners-up Pakistan's Mohammed Rizwan as the opener, and Haris Rauf as one of the two pace spearheads.

India's batting superstar Smriti Mandhana finished the year as the fourth highest run-

scorer with 594 runs at an average of 33.00 and a strike-rate of 133.48.

She also made two half-centuries and played a key role in India winning a historic silver at the Commonwealth Games.

Off-spin all-rounder Deepti had a standout year and was the Player of the Tournament in India's Asia Cup triumph.

She finished the year with 29 wickets, the joint third high-

est. She also made 370 runs averaging 37 with a strike-rate of 136.02.

Richa was named the wicketkeeper-batter following a stupendous year that saw her accumulate 259 runs in 18 matches.

With 22 T20I wickets at an average of 23.95 and an economy rate of 6.50, Renuka had a standout year and was one of the nominees for the ICC Women's Emerging Cricketer of the Year.

ACC board to meet on February 4 to discuss Asia Cup & India's participation in it: PCB chief

PTI ■ KARACHI

The Asian Cricket Council (ACC) has accepted Pakistan Cricket Board's request to hold an executive board meeting on February 4 in Bahrain to discuss this year's Asia Cup and India's participation in the tournament in neighbouring country.

PCB chairman Najam Sethi told media in Lahore on Monday that during his recent visit to Dubai, he had succeeded in convincing the ACC members to hold the board meeting.

"It is a major development that the ACC the board will meet on 4th February in Bahrain and matters relating to the Asia Cup will be discussed," he said.

"There will also be a ICC meeting in March and I don't want to go public with what negotiations I had with ACC members in Dubai or what I plan to do, argue or discuss at the coming meetings. But yes definitely India and Pakistan cricket relations are important."

The PCB was upset last year when the ACC president Jay Shah said that the Indian team would not travel to Pakistan for the Asia Cup and the event would be relocated elsewhere, like it had happened in 2018.

The PCB, led at that time by Ramiz Raja, had shot back by threatening that if India didn't come to Pakistan then it would also not sent its team for the ODI World Cup to be held in India later this year.

Ramiz later also threatened that Pakistan could also consid-



ICC withdraws demerit point to Rawalpindi stadium

PTI ■ KARACHI

The ICC has withdrawn its demerit point awarded to the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium for producing a below-par pitch during the Test match between Pakistan and England Test in December last year.

Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) chairman Najam Sethi said they had written a strong letter to the ICC challenging their decision to award the demerit point to the Pindi stadium. "We wrote a long and strong letter to the ICC as soon as I became chairman, outlining the records of other venues

and challenging on what grounds Pindi stadium should be given a demerit point when we even had a result in the said match," Sethi told the media in Lahore.

"I am glad to announce the ICC have accepted our point of view and withdrawn the demerit point."

England won the first Test against Pakistan played at Pindi in December after scoring 500 runs on the first day.

The ICC had also awarded a demerit point to the Pindi stadium after a high scoring Test match between Pakistan and Australia in March last year.

er withdrawing from the Asia Cup.

Sethi agreed that cricket matters between India and Pakistan need some clarity so that ACC and the ICC events are not affected.

First priority is to get 100 per cent fit: Jadeja

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Star India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, who is making a return to competitive cricket after close to six months, on Monday said his first priority is to get "100 percent" match fit ahead of the crucial Test series against Australia.

"I am feeling good to be back on the field. Very excited. Hopefully it will come good as a team and as an individual also," Jadeja, who will lead Saurashtra in their final Ranji Trophy Group B league match against Tamil Nadu beginning here on Tuesday, told reporters.

"...See my first priority is to get on the field and be fit...100 per cent fit. Once I am 100 per cent fit, I will work more on my skills, whether it is batting or bowling. Now, my first

priority is fitness..."

Jadeja had to undergo a knee surgery last year after playing for India last in August.

He said he had spent time at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru and added that he wanted game time before the Test series against the visiting Australians.

"I was at the NCA for 20 days. I was doing batting and bowling. Match scenario is different. I wanted one game before the Australia series, that's why I am here."

He has been picked in the India squad for the first two Tests subject to fitness.

When asked if there was any discomfort now, Jadeja said: "Not really...After five months I am playing competitive cricket, so you



don't feel confident initially. But as you progress, then definitely you get better and better. Injury is part of any sport. If you get injured, you

have to start from scratch. The same thing in cricket.

"I was out of action for 5 months. I have to build my fitness.

JADEJA HAD TO UNDERGO A KNEE SURGERY LAST YEAR AFTER PLAYING FOR INDIA LAST IN AUGUST. HE SAID HE HAD SPENT TIME AT THE NATIONAL CRICKET ACADEMY IN BENGALURU AND ADDED THAT HE WANTED GAME TIME BEFORE THE TEST SERIES AGAINST THE VISITING AUSTRALIANS

Once I get the confidence, I will definitely work on my skills and I will get better day by day."

He mentioned that it probably was his longest time out of the game.

"I think so...Because of surgery," Jadeja revealed it was a ligament tear.

"You feel bad. Nobody wants to get injured at your peak time. It is part of the game. You have to keep that in mind and be prepared for it. You can't do anything. There is no guarantee that one won't get injured in cricket."

"It was a ligament tear. It is coming good. I am slowly getting confident."

Jadeja emphasised that though he had been practising at the NCA, a match is a different ball game.

"As I said, a match is a different

thing. Different ball game...I will try to give my 100 per cent. I will try to go slowly, slowly. Let's see how my leg is feeling and then we will see."

With star keeper-batter Rishabh Pant expected to be out of action for a considerable time after being involved in a road mishap last month, the focus would be on the player to don the big gloves in the Tests against the Aussies and Jadeja gave both Srikr Bharat and Ishan Kishan a thumbs up for the role.

"I am comfortable with everyone. First, I need to be comfortable...(laughs) They both are very good keepers. Srikr Bharat is coming into the squad now. He has to learn a lot of things. He will learn and get better and better as he plays more number of games."