

OPINION 6

RESTORE DETERRENCE
ALONG LAC FOR PEACE

WORLD 9

WESTERN NEW YORK HIT BY COLD,
STORM; DEATH TOLL UPS TO 28

MONEY 10

SENSEX, NIFTY RISE FOR 2ND DAY AS
BANKING, METAL SHARES SHINE

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WARNER SCORES
200 IN 100TH TEST
MATCH FOR OZ
12 SPORT

Hold local body polls sans OBC quota: HC to UP Govt

Yogi says 'will hold elections only after ensuring quota', UP Govt to move SC

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court on Tuesday quashed the State Government's draft notification on urban local body elections and ordered holding the polls without reservation for the OBCs. The verdict passed by a division bench of Justice DK Upadhyay and Justice Saurav Lavania annulled the December 5 draft notification issued by the Uttar Pradesh Government providing reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the urban local body elections. The bench ordered the State Election Commission to immediately issue notification for the election. Unfazed by the HC order, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the elections would not be held before the grant of reservation to the OBCs and the State would go to the Supreme Court to challenge the High Court's order for immediate notification of elections, if need be. "The UP Government will



constitute a commission as directed by the Allahabad High Court that will conduct a survey of OBCs as per the Supreme Court guidelines. We will not go for the elections without ensuring reservation for the OBCs. If required, we will go to the Supreme Court against the High Court's order," Yogi said. The verdict comes in the light of PILs challenging the preparation of the OBC reservation draft without following the triple test formula prescribed by the Supreme Court. The petitioners had pleaded that the State Government must follow the apex court formula and constitute a dedicated commission to study the political backwardness of OBCs before fixing the reservation.

SP, BSP, Congress tear into Yogi Govt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Congress launched a scathing attack on the Yogi Adityanath Government over the decision of the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court, which ordered holding the local body polls without reservation for the OBCs. Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav slammed the Government and said it was the result of a conspiracy by the BJP Government to deprive the backward classes of reservation. "The Allahabad High Court directing conduct of the urban local body elections without OBC quota is unfortunate. Relevant facts were deliberately not placed before the bench of the Allahabad High Court by the Uttar Pradesh Government. The OBCs who constitute 60 per cent of the population have been deprived of their constitutional right of reservation," Yadav said on Tuesday. He added that the "BJP manipulated the issue of reservation for

the OBCs only for its political interests." BSP supremo Mayawati tweeted that the State Government had to finalise the process of elections by fixing the system of OBC reservation on the basis of a triple test, following the instructions of the Supreme Court with full devotion and honesty, which didn't happen. "The OBC society will definitely punish the BJP for this mistake," she said. The Backward Classes Department of the Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee too slammed the Yogi Government, alleging that the present BJP Government is systematically denying the backwards and Dalits their rights in the civic elections. Manoj Yadav, president of the backward classes department of UPCC, said the BJP and the Yogi Government wanted to end reservation. He said that under the guise of the HC order, the BJP was determined to end the reservation system for the deprived communities in the elections.

No foul play in citizens' death: Russian embassy

Antov, vocal against Putin's Ukraine attack, and his friend, found dead in 2 days in Odisha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As mystery shrouds the death of two Russian citizens within a span of two days in Odisha at the same hotel, the Russian embassy said here on Tuesday the local police have not found any criminal link in the deaths. This assertion came against the backdrop of reports alleging foul play. The two deceased were identified as Pavel Antov and Vladimir Bidenov. Their post-mortem was conducted on Monday. Authorities and the Russian Embassy are treating it a suicide case. Antov, a multi-millionaire and elected politician, was reportedly highly critical of President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine and called it "terror". "We are in constant contact with the relatives of the deceased as well as with local authorities. As we know, police do not yet see a criminal component in these tragic events," the Russian Embassy said. Antov, 65, was found dead in a pool of blood at a hotel in Odisha's Rayagada district on



Saturday, December 24. Reports say he fell from the terrace of the hotel and died. Antov was in Odisha for his 66th birthday celebrations. He was travelling with 61-year-old Vladimir Bidenov, his associate, and a couple, Mikhail Turov and Natalia Panasenko. They were also accompanied by an Indian tourist guide. Bidenov was found dead in the same hotel just two days before Antov's death. He was found lying unconscious in his room on the first floor of the hotel. As per police, Bidenov died due to a stroke and was cremated. His friend, Antonov, was depressed after Vladimir's death and he too died on December 25, the police further said. The police are investigating Pavel's death from all angles, including the possibility that he has fallen from the terrace accidentally. "First tourist was found unconscious, after medical examination he was found dead. Second tourist was mentally disturbed after his friend's cremation, he was found lying on hotel premises. When taken to hospital, he was found dead," the owner of hotel Sai International in Rayagada, where the Russian tourists stayed, told the media. Pavel Antov is not the first high-profile Russian to have died a mysterious and sudden death. In September this year, oil boss Ravil Maganov died after falling to his death from the sixth floor of a hospital in Russia. He was reportedly on antidepressants.

State Cabinet Direct flights to Dubai, Singapore approved

Rs 367.19 cr for women empowerment schemes Okayed

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The State Cabinet on Tuesday in a meeting presided over by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik approved as many as 17 proposals. The proposals included increase in grant-in-aid period of Upper Primary School teachers and extension of the period aided private high schools. A proposal for flight services from Bhubaneswar to Dubai, Singapore and Bangkok was also approved by the Cabinet.

Nationwide mock drills assess Covid combat readiness

IMA, top doctors urge Govt to allow people to take 2nd booster dose

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday held Covid response mock drill across the country as part of precautionary measures to check its preparedness to deal with any surge in cases with Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya cautioning that the country might witness a spike in cases and there is a need to be on the guard. "It is important that the entire Covid infrastructure in terms of equipment, processes and human resources are at a state of operational readiness," Mandaviya said after reviewing the Covid response mock drill at the centre-run Safdarjung Hospital here to check its readiness to deal

with any increase in the number of coronavirus cases. "I reviewed the Covid response mock drill at Safdarjung Hospital. This mock drill was necessary to know how prepared our hospitals are," the minister said. "Covid cases are rising all over the world and India might witness a spike in cases too. Hence it is important that the entire Covid infrastructure in terms of equipment, processes and human resources are at a state of operational readiness," he stated. Meanwhile, representatives of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and other top doctors and public health experts on Tuesday urged the Minister to allow people to take their second coronavirus booster doses. The meeting, over a video conference, was called to discuss the preparedness for any possible surges in the outbreak.



Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya speaks with a doctor as a medic collects swab sample of a woman, during a nationwide mock drill for Covid-19 preparedness, at Safdarjung hospital in New Delhi on Tuesday

CAPSULE

KOCHHAR, HUSBAND APPROACH BOMBAY HC
Mumbai: Former ICICI Bank CEO and MD Chanda Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar on Tuesday approached the Bombay High Court, calling their arrest by the Central Bureau of Investigation in a loan fraud case illegal.

7 FRESH MEASLES CASES IN MUMBAI
Mumbai: At least seven fresh cases of measles were reported and 15 children hospitalised in Mumbai on Tuesday, an official from the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation said.

GOVT TWEAKS GST RULES FOR TAX CREDIT CLAIM
New Delhi: GST taxpayers will be required to reverse by November 30 the input tax credit (ITC) claimed in the last fiscal in case their suppliers fail to deposit the due tax by September 30, the Finance Ministry has said. The taxpayers can reclaim the ITC later following the deposit of taxes by the supplier. P10

Dy Collector's assets worth crores detected

PNS ■ CUTTACK/JAGATSINGHPUR

The Vigilance police on Tuesday conducted searches on the properties of Chitta Ranjan Pilla, Deputy Collector, Jagatsinghpur, on the allegation of possession of assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. Movable and immovable assets, including Flat No. 207, Block-3(B), 2nd floor, Space Town Apartment at Gadakana in Bhubaneswar, Flat No.202, Sai Anumadana Re at Nuagaon in Bhubaneswar. Flat No.101, Harsapriya Enclave (Saraswati), at Rangamatia in Bhubaneswar, Flat No.101, Type-A, Block-IV, 1st floor, and Flat No.103, Type-A,



Block-IV, 1st floor at Sunahat in Baleswar, a double-storied building at Sonepur town and one double-storied building at Naighati in Baleswar were found. The Vigilance Technical Wing is carrying out detailed

measurement and valuation of the properties. Besides, 11 plots, including one in prime area of Bhubaneswar, 10 in Birmaharajpur, Sonepur, Baliapal, Narayanpur and Baleswar, cash of Rs1.85 lakh, bank and insurance deposits and investment in mutual funds worth Rs 48.71 lakh, two four-wheelers (Mahindra Bolero and Maruti Alto) worth Rs 11.40 lakh, three two-wheelers worth over Rs 3.24 lakh and gold and household articles worth over Rs 13.64 lakh were detected. Further searches were continuing. Unearthing of more assets was likely and overall valuation was likely to increase.

Dense fog in State for 2 more days



No change in temp for 4 to 5 days

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Regional Office of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) here on Tuesday issued yellow warning of dense fog for several districts of the State for the next two days. Dense fog is very likely to occur at one or two places in the districts of Angul, Dhenkanal, Khordha, Cuttack, Bhadrak, Kendrapada, Puri, Ganjam, Gajapati, Kandhamal, Kalahandi, Jajpur and Jagatsinghpur till 8.30 am on Wednesday. On Thursday, dense fog is very likely to occur at isolated places in the districts of Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Khordha, Puri, Gajapati, Ganjam, Kandhamal, Kendrapada, Rayagada, Kalahandi and Koraput. The IMD also added that shallow to moderate fog is very likely to occur at a few places in the interior districts and at one or two places in the coastal districts during the period. There would be no large change in minimum temperature (night temperature) during next four to five days in the State, the IMD said.

Modi's brother, family injured in road accident near Mysuru

PTI ■ MYSURU

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brother Prahlad Modi and family members sustained injuries when the car in which they were travelling met with an accident near here, police said on Tuesday. According to sources, other than the driver, Prahlad Modi, his son, daughter-in-law and a grandchild were in the car. They are said to have suffered some injuries and have been shifted to JSS Hospital for treatment. As per the police, the injuries are said to be "minor" in nature. The incident happened near Kadakola around 1.30 pm when their car, on the way to Bandipur, is said to have hit the road divider. Mysuru Superintendent of Police Seema Latkar has visited the spot and the hospital, sources said. A doctor at the hospital said, "all were stable with minor injuries when they came, they



Wrecked remains of the car after an accident in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brother Prahlad Modi and family members were reportedly travelling, in Mysuru on Tuesday

were immediately attended and are out of danger without any major bleeding. X-rays and CT scans have been done...Only the child has suffered a small fracture on left leg tibia, but it is not major and is being treated." Member of Parliament from Mysuru-Kodagu constituency Pratap Simha, who visited the hospital too, said the family that was on a private visit had sustained "minor" injuries, and the child has suffered a minor fracture, and is undergoing treatment.

BPUT Academic Meet

Must focus on reshaping tech edu: CM

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday said, "Technology is dominating every bit of our life, every part of our society. So, we must focus on reshaping our technology education for the changing needs of the 21st century." He was speaking at an academic session organised by the Biju Patnaik University of Technology (BPUT) on the theme "Transformation of Technical and Professional education in Line with New Education Policy-2020". He said, "Our future depends on how successfully we prepare our children for the future. Higher education is critical for societal aspirations, developmental priorities and social values, all of which must be assessed,



nurtured and refined regularly." He said the National Education Policy 2020 is a meaningful attempt to bring about relevance and set the tone and the direction

at all levels of education. Minister for Skill Development and Technical Education Priti Ranjan Ghadai spoke about the transformation of the State in various fields by the application of a unique governance model 5T. BPUT VC Prof Banshdhar Majhi gave the welcome address. Notably, the BPUT has plans for implementation of the new policy and discussion on various aspects of it such as introduction of multi-disciplinary courses, bringing improvement in research, innovation and rankings, capacity building, creation of broad framework for technical institutions, promotion of local language in engineering education, faculty development and many other issues.

Rs 22-cr scam

4 executives of ponzi firm get jail terms

Special Judge OPID (Odisha Protection of Interest of Depositors) Court Biswajit Das on Tuesday convicted four accused involved in a multilevel marketing scam and awarded different quantum of jail terms and penalties. The convicts associated with the ponzi firm Sastra Enterprises Pvt Limited were tried under IPC and PCMC (Prize Cheats and Money Circulation Schemes) banning Act and OPID Act. They are identified as V Sampath, MD of the company, resident of Mugappair, Tamil Nadu; B

Mallikarjun Raju of board of directors, resident of Tirupati of Andhra Pradesh; Sadasiva Nayak, resident of Kusuda, Baisinga, Mayurbhanj; and Tapan Kumar Barik of Tulasichaura, Takatpur, Mayurbhanj. "The court held them guilty in the scam. While Sampath and Raju were sentenced to seven-year RI and Rs 4,21,000 penalty each, the other two Nayak and Barik were awarded with three-year RI and fine of Rs 60,000 each. Another accused was acquitted, said Special Public Prosecutor, OPID, Pranab Panda. The case had been registered by the Baripada police in October 2010 on the complaint of an investor, Khirod Chandra Barik, who alleged that the Sastra Enterprises which collected funds promising high returns and other benefits having a business office at Baripada had duped a large number of investors. The company's office was closed and its managers fled when the investors demanded their returns along with principal amounts. Reports added that as many as over 10,000 investors, including 1,357 of Mayurbhanj district, were affected by the scam. The money involved in the scam was nearly Rs 22 crore in the State, including Rs 4.2 crore in Mayurbhanj district.

Ching-Han's Odishi enchants audience



The Taiwanese artist js Kasturi Pattnaik's disciple Although from Taiwan, Ching-Han Weng has mastered performing pure expressions of emotions contained in an Odia song or lyric. Being a devoted disciple of seasoned Odishi Dance exponent Kasturi Pattnaik, Ching-Han Weng captivated the audience with her

engrossing solo Abhinaya "Mare Bana Dhara Shravana Ki..." in the opening day of International Odissi Dance Festival-2022 at the Rabindra Mandap here. The Abhinaya, based on Raag Shankaravaran and Taal Ektali, choreographed by Vidushi Kasturi Pattanaik with music composition by Pandit Bhubaneswar Mishra and Pandit Nityananda Mohapatra, is a masterpiece Abhinaya by Kasturi Pattanaik. The vibrancy of the Abhinaya was enlivened by maestros of Odishi Music Guru Satchidananda Das (mardal), Surmani Guru Ramesh Chandra Das (violin), Rajesh Kumar Swain (vocal), Guru Swapneswar Chakraborty (sitar) and Kasturi Pattanaik (manjira). Ching-Han Weng with her ecstatic expressions of emotions demonstrated that she is equally in ease with Odishi Dance as her Indian counterparts.

3-day IEA Int'l Conf begins in FM Varsity

A three-day Annual International Conference of the Indian Economic Association (IEA) for the year 2022 kicked off at the Fakir Mohan University on Tuesday. The conference is being organised by the Post-Graduate Department of Social Science of the university. More than 500 delegates from across different parts of the country are participating in the conference on the theme "Post-Pandemic Economic Recovery of India: Policies and Challenges". As chief guest, National Commodity Derivative Exchange (NCDEX) MD Arun Raste stressed on the need for translating research outcomes in the field of science and social science for greater benefit of the society. Conference president Prof Adya Prasad Pandey said the theme that has been identified for discussion and deliberation was quite relevant. IEA president Prof Ghanashyam Narayan Singh highlighted the objective of the conference. Joining the event as guest of eminence, eminent economist and former



Vice-Chancellor of Rajiv Gandhi Central University, Prof Atul Sharma advised the delegates and participants to come up with a set of solid policy recommendations to be formally submitted to the Minister of Finance for consideration and policy action to make the conference more fruitful. Distinguished Professor of Economics in the University of Southampton Dr Tapas Mishra in his address discussed the policy issues associated with the revival of global economy and more particularly in post-pandemic contexts. Vice-Chancellor of FM University Professor Santosh Kumar Tripathy in his address expressed his gratitude towards Indian Economic Association (IEA) for choosing Fakir Mohan University to host this year's international conference which is being organized in Odisha after a gap of nearly 20 years. On the occasion, Director, Indian Institute of Plantation Management (IIPM) Bangalore, Prof Rakesh Mohan Joshi was conferred with Atal Bihari Vajpayee Award for his contribution in the field of economics and trade. Fakir Mohan University Registrar Kukumina Das gave the welcome address and organising secretary Dr Sunil Kumar Padhi spoke on the theme and objective of the conference.

Thinkers' Club talk 'Justice delayed is Justice denied'

The dignitaries from the field of legal fraternity in the 54th webinar of the Thinkers Club discussed the necessary changes to be made in the legal system of the country. They were of the opinion that, the delay in the process of giving justice is much painful and it hatters the very purpose of establishing a judiciary system in the country. Prof Satya Narayan Misra of the KIIT University, former District Judge Uma Charan Mishra, who were chief speakers, emphasised on quick disposal of the cases. Under the existing procedures, the aggrieved party is denied to redress his grievances within reasonable time, they said. The process of justice is becoming costlier and it is beyond the reach of the general citizens. Earlier in our country, certain disputes were solved in the Panchayat level and it was saving time from litigation and there was speedy decision, they said and insisted on re-installation of the system. The participants opined that some rigorous system is adopted in selecting judges for the High Court and the Supreme Court. The candidates should be screened on the basis of written tests and other relevant procedures, they suggested. The number of undecided cases is high in number. Wherever possible, some retired judges be hired and a system adopted to quickly dispose of the accumulated cases, they stressed. The experts also suggested changing the dress code for practicing advocates and the bar council has to take a decision on the same. Technology needs to be adopted with suitable opinion from the experts to expediate justice. Virtual hearing of cases, mapping of the brain waves, polygraph tests need to supplement the judiciary process, they told. President of the Club, Barada Prasanna Das announced that, a quick decision will be taken on the present problems and very soon a memorandum will be sent to the appropriate authorities. The meeting was attended by Dr Rajat Satapathy, Principal of a Law College in Madhya Pradesh, Dr Santosh Mohapatra, Pravat Kumar Samal, Dr Nanda Nandan Das and Professor Umasankar Misra.

Another aircraft on BBSR-Jeypore route

Following success of direct flight service between Bhubaneswar and Jeypore, the IndiaOne Air has added another aircraft on this route. State Water Resources, Commerce & Transport Minister Tukuni Sahu has informed this in a tweet. In view of public demand for more aircrafts on this particular route connecting distant Koraput district, rich in mineral deposits and forest resources, Jeypore Congress MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati had been demanding for a second aircraft. The direct flight service

between Bhubaneswar and Jeypore under the UDAN scheme was launched on October 31. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had flagged off the flight operated by Ahmedabad-based IndiaOne Air at the Bhubaneswar airport. A week after the launch, the flight departed for Visakhapatnam from Bhubaneswar via Jeypore. Except Sunday, the flight takes off from Bhubaneswar at 11.35 am daily and reaches Jeypore at 12.40 pm. After a 15-minute halt, the aircraft departs for Visakhapatnam. In return direction, the flight starts from Jeypore to Bhubaneswar at 3.40 pm.

Ex-Cadre Primary Teachers hold demo

Teachers under the banner of the Primary Teachers Ex-Cadre Federation led by its president Sarat Chandra Nayak held a massive demonstration at the Lower PMG in the city demanding fulfillment of eight-point charter of demands. The demands included cancellation of their deputation, abolition of the ex-cadre provision and cadre inclusion provision from March 1, 2017. Among other demands, the agitating teachers also sought salary to be disbursed through treasury, implementation of the old pension scheme and payment of ex-gratia to the deceased teachers. The Government should also issue clear cut instruction to the block and district-level officials, the agitators demanded. The teachers came in a rally from Master



Canteen Square and held a demonstration at the Lower PMG. The teachers said they would continue their agitation till Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik intervenes in the matter. If any untoward incident occurred, then the State Government should be liable for it, said association working president Jayantilal Sahu.

In Rayagada Mystery shrouds Russian lawmaker's death in hotel

Mystery has deepened in the case of death of foreigner Pavel Antov at a hotel in Rayagada district as he has now been identified as a Russian lawmaker and philanthropist. As per police, he was found dead after allegedly falling from the third floor window of the hotel on December 24. The incident took place while the millionaire was on a vacation and celebrating his 65th birthday. Antov had recently



criticised the Russian attack on Ukraine but later retracted the statement as per media reports. Incidentally, Antov's death took place two days after that of his 62-year-old friend Vladimir Videnov, who was also staying in the same room and died after falling ill. According to reports, Antov, Videnov, a Russian couple and tourist guide Jitendra Singh had come to visit south Odisha districts. All of them checked into the hotel on December 21. Next morning, Videnov fell sick and was rushed to the Rayagada District Headquarters Hospital, where he was declared dead. Antov was reportedly upset after the death of his friend. The Russian couple and the tourist guide were being questioned by police in connection with the case. Odisha DGP Sunil Bansal said the State Crime Branch would assist the district police in the investigation. If required, the Crime Branch would take over the probe of the case, he added.

BJP wants normalcy back in S'pur courts

Panel comprising MPs, MLAs meets lawyers NIMAI CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR Three MPs and six MLAs of BJP accompanied by the local leaders visited Sambalpur on Tuesday to have direct interaction with all sections of people including judiciary and administration. They decided to bring the December 12 incident inside the Sambalpur court to the notice of both Central and State

Governments for a suitable solution and put an end to the present stalemate. The team comprised MPs Suresh Pujari, Nitesh Ganga Dev, Basant Panda and MLAs Mukesh Mahaling, Nauri Naik, Kusum Tete, Shankar Oram, Bhawani Shankar Bhoi and Subash Panigrahi. Addressing a mediapersons after holding discussions with different officials and members of the civil societies, Pujari said: "It would have been better if an incident like December 12 could have been averted." "But the opinion of the

Judges is praiseworthy. They said us (the BJP team), we have forgotten everything," informed Pujari, adding that this creates a new hope for a good beginning in the New Year and a good relationship between the Bar and the Bench like before. While discussing with the RDC (ND), IG of Police, Collector and SP, the team asked them not to create fear psychosis among the public. "BJP will raise the HC bench issue in the coming session of both Assembly and Parliament. At the same time we will take up the

matter of cancellations of licences of advocates with the Union Law Minister and Bar Council of India," Pujari said. "During discussion with advocates inside jail, they informed that they are satisfied with treatment from the jail authorities. But a few of them told about brutal atrocity during police custody," informed Pujari. He opine that a detailed inquiry can only reveal the fact as to how such an uncalled-for incident took place in a historic and peace loving place like Sambalpur.

Javelin piercing student's neck NHRC seeks ATR from Balangir DM

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Monday directed the Balangir Collector to submit an action-taken report (ATR) within eight weeks in the case of a javelin piercing the neck of a boy during the annual sports meet of a high school in the district.

The commission passed the direction taking cognisance of a petition filed by rights activist and lawyer Radhakanta Tripathy.

Tripathy in his petition stated that a javelin pierced through the neck of a Class IX student Sadananda Mehera (14), of Agalpur Boy's High School during the annual sports meet on December 17. The petitioner alleged that the incident occurred due to



the negligence of school authorities and School and Mass Education Department. The accident reflects the negligence by the school

authorities towards the safety and security of the students, he alleged.

Tripathy urged the commission to direct the

concerned department to frame guidelines for holding sports meets in the schools and provide compensation to the victim.

CBI probe into Swamiji murder demanded



PNS ■ DHENKANAL

The 7th Grand Satya Sanatan Dharma Yatra and Sammilani was organised by the Odisha Satya Sanatan Praja Samiti at Dhenkanal Town. In the event, more than 5,000 persons from nearby places actively participated.

The grand Dharma Yatra started from Dakshinakali Temple at 10 am and ended at Bus Stand. Then the Sammilani began. On the occasion entire Dhenkanal town was decorated with saffron flags.

In the Sammilani, Samiti's State president Er Debashisha Hota urged former Dhenkanal MP Rudra Narayan Pany to demand CBI inquiry into the murder of Swami Laxmanananda to unfold the conspirators and bring them to book. He lamented that while Dara Singh is in jail for killing Christian missionary Graham Staines, the murderers of Swamiji at the Jaleshpeta Ashram in Kandhamal are roaming free. He also charged that one of the conspirators of Swamiji murder is a Rajya Sabha member.

In Baleswar CHC doc assaulted as patient dies

PNS ■ BALESWAR

Tension prevailed as irate locals assaulted a doctor and staged an agitation following the death of a patient due to alleged medical negligence at a Government hospital in Jaleswar town of Baleswar district on Tuesday.

The deceased was identified as Akhaya Jena, a resident of Nampo, who had been admitted to the GK Bhattar Community Health Centre

(CHC) in the morning. As his death news spread, residents from his village reached the hospital and staged agitation alleging that the death was due to negligence of the hospital staffs. The protestors also assaulted the doctor on duty Sanjay Panda, who somehow managed to escape. Police on getting information reached the spot and tried to pacify the villagers. The stir was called off after the protestors were assured of needful action.

BBP to contest 2024 polls for Assembly, Parliament

Announces its manifesto

KRUSHNA CHANDRA PANDA
■ BRAHMAMPUR

The Bharatiya Bikash Parishad (BBP) will fight the upcoming 2024 general election. A decision was taken in this regard in a meeting here on Wednesday.

Social activist and president of BBP Surendra Panigrahi told the mediapersons that December 14 is a historic day for the people of Odisha since the BBP has emerged as a political outfit and a viable alternative to the BJD, BJP and Congress.

The BBP will submit its application with all relevant documents before the Election Commission soon seeking recognition/registration of the party u/s 29 of the Peoples' Representation Act of 1951, he pointed out.

He further said that, the



constitution of the BBP as a political party has been well drafted by a team of Constitutional experts and senior lawyers keeping the emerging needs of the people and the country in view.

As per the new constitution of the party, there will be 50 members elected to the National Council of the party. Besides, the party will have State Council and District Council to be headed by State district presidents.

There will be 50 members

Indian Men's Hockey Team reaches

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Indian Men's Hockey Team reached here on Tuesday ahead of the 'FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023 Bhubaneswar-Rourkela'.

The team arrived at the Biju Patnaik International Airport to a grand welcome.

The players will fly to Rourkela, where they are scheduled to start practice at the newly-built Birs Munda International Hockey Stadium from Wednesday. They will stay at the hostel constructed in the stadium.

The 18-member team is led by ace drag-flicker Harmanpreet Singh with Odisha's Amit Rohidas as the Vice-Captain.

The Hockey World Cup will be held from January 13 to 29 at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar and the Birs Munda International Hockey Stadium in Rourkela.



The 16 teams competing in the tournament are Australia, Belgium, the Netherlands, India, Argentina, Germany, New Zealand, England, France, Korea, Malaysia, Spain, South Africa, Japan, Chile and Wales.

India will begin their World Cup campaign against Spain on January 13 in Rourkela followed by their second pool D match against England. They will move to Bhubaneswar to play their third

knockout stage will begin with crossover matches on January 22 and 23 and the Quarterfinals on January 25 and Semifinals on January 27. The Bronze Medal match and the Final will be held on January 29.

People cross river on rope NHRC summons Kandhamal Collector

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued summons to the Kandhamal district Collector on his failure in acting over the issue of people crossing a river using a rope due to the absence of a bridge.

Acting on a petition filed by rights activist and lawyer Radhakanta Tripathy, the NHRC directed the Kandhamal Collector to appear before the commission

on January 31, 2023 along with requisite reports.

Tripathy had brought to the notice of the NHRC about the sorry plight of the hundreds of villagers of Daridsahi and Pandamah under Kotagad block in the district, who cross Dakubandha river with the help of a rope endangering their lives.

The children, senior citizens, pregnant women face untold miseries and suffer immensely due to the communication problem that

has existed for years.

Besides, the people have to travel seven kilometre to the Panchayat office and carry the ration and other goods on their heads and cross the river with the help of a rope. Sometimes patients die due to absence of a bridge and proper road.

People cross river with the help of rope after keeping rice, ration and other goods on their head which they bring from Panchayat office. A total 55 families were staying in these

two villages. Electricity is yet to be supplied for these villages. Sometimes, patients died due to absence of bridge and proper road, alleged Tripathy and sought the commission's intervention.

However, despite repeated reminders there was no reply from the Collector.

Taking a serious view of the non-responsive attitude of the Kandhamal administration, the NHRC issued summons to the Collector for personal appearance,

DCBL's 'DSP Har Ghar Happy Offer'

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Dalmia Cement (Bharat) Limited (DCBL) has made building homes a rewarding experience for customers with its exciting new Dalmia Cement 'DSP Har Ghar Happy Offer' across the east region where DCBL has a presence.

The company has kept the connection with the Indian tradition that a new beginning especially as momentous as creating a new home must be accompanied by tokens of good wishes and gifts that add to the joy.

Therefore, all customers will get guaranteed rewards and

luckier ones in the eastern States would win bumper prizes bikes, TVs and smart watches.

The Dalmia Cement 'DSP Har Ghar Happy Offer' encourages consumers to start building homes as December - March is the ideal season for home construction. DCBL is also providing guidance on various important aspects of building homes from pre-construction to post construction phase in its website www.dalmiacement.com and through helpline number 18002020. The consumer promo will go live in the market started from December 15 to February 15, 2023.

Curbing Covid: China's failed strategy

For the last three years, the Chinese people have endured sweeping Covid-19 restrictions. One hundred-day lockdowns were not uncommon. That's 100 days confined to an apartment, eating from plastic trays of food delivered to the door, and no physical contact with others outside the household.

Authorities justified the massive restrictions by pointing to the deadly danger posed by the virus. Unlike the supposedly western countries, the regime implied that it actually cared about its citizens and could guarantee their safety. The strict zero-Covid policies were essential to preventing millions of deaths, it was said.

The Chinese Government was at crossroads to decide between ideology and pragmatism. This is when China took its own unique path. With each passing month, the country moved closer to an impasse. The



SOURAJEET PRADHAN

regime's actions were no longer primarily about fighting the pandemic, but about ideological goals. China wanted to prove the superiority of its own system above the rest of the world.

Then protests erupted in various cities. Given the omnipresent surveillance and repression protesters would face, their participation showed how many had reached the limits of what they could tolerate.

The Chinese Government went from one extreme point to another. This has surprised everyone since a strong

autocratic state like China had to reverse its policy decisions on the premise of public outcry and protest. It reflects the fear that the State has regarding public sentiment.

What remains surprising and incomprehensible is how the Chinese State, which prides itself on its technocratic administration, has reacted. Virtually overnight, the Covid restrictions were lifted and the testing regimen was abolished - shifting the policies from one extreme to another.

If the Communist Party had ever cared about the safety of its citizens, it would have fostered a transitional period, initiated a comprehensive vaccination campaign, and strengthened the healthcare system. But none of that happened.

There are multiple reasons for China to be in the current scenario. Firstly, China decided to vaccinate people in the high-risk jobs first like the members of the military. Mostly, preference and

priority were given to the working population. Senior citizens were completely neglected. The senior citizens, owing to their immune system, were actually the most vulnerable population towards getting infected by the virus. The senior citizens were sceptical and hesitant to get themselves vaccinated.

Secondly, China's initial success of curbing the spread of virus ironically limited the required data for research and analysis. The vaccines developed in China were tested in few countries outside China. This in fact turned out to be a big limitation.

Thirdly, the Chinese Government has been unable to produce its own mRNA shots, and refused to import Western mRNA versions, apparently on nationalist grounds. Even China didn't import shots offered by India.

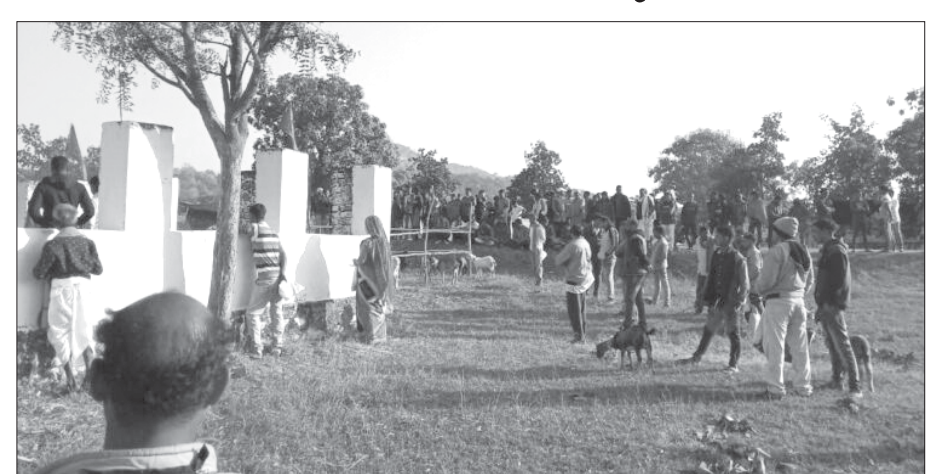
Finally, after the initial success, they lifted the lockdown too soon. By doing so, Chinese President Xi

Jinping was projected as a decorated global figure vis-à-vis the western countries.

While there were serious debates on the strategies adopted by the western countries and India to curb the spread of Covid, China on the other hand sat on their laurels and kept patting themselves on the superior Beijing model. It defied data and logic, persisting with their own model.

For India, the other Asian superpower, which is always compared with China, has demonstrated substantial success in curbing the spread of Covid. The population of India is as big and diversified as that of the Chinese population. Hence, we must acknowledge the fact that India was able to manage the situation through its democratic approach. This reflects the popularity and the huge mandate that the incumbent Government enjoys among its electorate.

Animal sacrifice marks Balangir Sulia Yatra



PNS ■ BALANGIR

Hundreds of tribals observed the annual Sulia Yatra at Khaiguda village in Balangir district on Tuesday by sacrificing animals. The tribals marched in a procession to the ritual site at Khaiguda and performed animal sacrifice in morning.

To propagate the presiding deity, the devotees through the Khaiguda village of Kultapada panchayat under the Tusura police limits of Balangir district on the second Tuesday

of Pousa month every year with hens and goats for sacrifice.

They believe that offering blood of animals and birds to Sulia, their traditional deity, brings good harvest resulting in prosperity and happiness to their families and the community as a whole.

Notably, there had been a tussle between the district administration and the Zilla Adivasi Sangha in the past following Orissa High Court orders to abolish such practice and mass killing of animals.

But after the Supreme Court's verdict to respect tribal rituals and traditions, the district administration has kept itself away from opposing the animal offering. It only beefs up security during the festival to avoid any untoward situation.

Adequate security arrangement was made to maintain law and order situation this year as well. In the absence of any prohibitory order, police limited its role to crowd control.

BJP slams Khurshid for likening Rahul with Ram

Stop using Lord Ram's name, riding roughshod over Hindu sentiments, says BJP to Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid comparing Rahul Gandhi "going out in T-Shirts in freezing cold" for his Bharat Jodo Yatra to 'Lord Ram' and describing him a 'yogi doing tapasya', the BJP on Tuesday lashed out at him asking "if he would make similar analogies with other faith" and for putting "parivaar ki bhakti" (devotion to family) above "bhagwaan and rashtra ki bhakti" (devotion to God and nation).

The BJP also alleged that the Congress, when in power, had questioned the existence of Lord Ram and accused its leaders of repeatedly riding roughshod over Hindu sentiments.

"Will Salman ji ever make similar analogies for other faith? Can he? BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla tweeted. It is important to note that this is the same Congress which has doubted the existence of Lord Ram and has filed an affidavit in the court stating that Sri Ram does not exist and is a mythological character, he said.



Hitting out at the opposition party leaders for their show of "sycophancy", the BJP said comparing a person out on bail in a corruption case, a reference to the National Herald probe, to a God worshipped by so many people not only hurts the feelings of Hindus but also the entire society.

BJP leader and SC advocate Nalin Kohli accused the Congress of "conveniently accepting and refusing the existence of Lord Ram". "Congress should resist from taking Lord Ram's name into

all this. They use the name of Sri Ram according to their convenience," he said. Khurshid had on Monday said: "Rahul Gandhi is superhuman. While we are freezing in cold and wearing jackets, he is going out in t-Shirts for his Bharat Jodo Yatra. He is like a 'yogi' doing his 'tapasya' with focus."

Khurshid, a former Cabinet minister, also likened Congress workers to Lord Ram's brother Bharat. "Lord Ram's 'khadau' (wooden slipper) goes very far. Sometimes when Ram ji is not able to reach, Bharat takes his 'khadau' and goes to places. Like that, we have carried the 'khadau' in Uttar Pradesh.

Now that 'khadau' has reached Uttar Pradesh. Ram ji will also come, this is our belief," he maintained while responding to a question about

the Gandhi-led yatra not passing through Uttar Pradesh till now. Asked about BJP's reaction to his remarks, Khurshid told reporters on Tuesday, "If I believe somebody is following the path shown by God, then what will I say if I have to praise him? How do you praise a person if he has attained such a height? Isn't this said that he is like God? No one can replace God but everyone can try to walk the path shown by him.

"Why should anyone object if I say someone is following that path and that people can again see the story they associate with God. If the BJP has never seen a good man, then it's their problem."

The yatra will enter Uttar Pradesh on January 3 through Lonni in Ghaziabad. It will then pass through Baghpat and Shamli to enter Haryana.

'Kattar paapi' Sonia, Rahul should break silence on Vadra's graft: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Demanding that Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi break their "silence" on corruption and money-laundering allegations against Robert Vadra, the BJP on Tuesday dubbed the Gandhi family as "kattar paapi parivaar".

It cited the Rajasthan High Court's rejection of Vadra's plea to quash a money laundering probe against him. The Congress slammed the BJP questioning why the ED has not filed a chargesheet in the case in the last eight years.

The Rajasthan High Court had last week rejected a petition seeking the quashing of an Enforcement Directorate investigation into the purchase of land in Bikaner by a company (Skylight Hospitality), linked to Vadra and his mother, through alleged shady means.

BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia described the purchase of land in Bikaner as fictitious and a complete fraud and facilitated by the Congress state government to benefit Vadra at the instance of the Gandhi family. Vadra is married to

Rahul's sister and Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi. The Congress has often claimed that the corruption charges against Vadra are politically motivated.

"This is a 'kattar paapi parivaar' (extremely immoral family) of India. Its only work has been to do corruption and grab land to hand over to Vadra," Bhatia alleged and rejected the Congress's claim of a witch hunt against Vadra, claiming that it amounted to casting aspersions on the judiciary which has refused to quash charges against him.

"They are the most corrupt family in Indian politics. Three members of the family are out on bail in corruption cases.

It is a serious matter of concern for a government with zero tolerance for corruption," he said, in reference to the corruption probe against Sonia and Rahul, both former Congress presidents, in the National Herald case.

Bhatia cited the details of the case against Vadra in Rajasthan and said the Congress government there during 2008-13 acquired land and allotted it to non-existing people. Huge parcel of land

ended up in the ownership of the company in which Vadra and his mother were partners through a maze of transactions involving fictitious entities, he alleged.

"The then government headed by Ashok Gehlot bypassed laws and rules to appease Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law," he claimed, alleging that Vadra became the lead of a land mafia.

Gehlot is the current chief minister as well. Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala slammed the BJP and questioned why the ED has not filed a charge sheet in the case in the last eight years.

He claimed that the BJP is working overtime to throw spanners and obstacles in the way of the Bharat Jodo Yatra, from a malicious disinformation campaign about the Yatra and Yatri to taking cover behind Corona to secretly block the Yatra, and now, to level false allegations against the Congress government in Rajasthan and Vadra.

"Objective is clear - distract, mislead and misinform - from the focus on the issues of Inflation, unemployment, unequal distribution of wealth

and politics of hate," the Congress Rajya Sabha MP said.

Taking on the BJP's charge, Surjewala said, "BJP today indulged in fakery by stating two things. First, they said that between 2008-13 Congress snatched 1,000 bighas of land in Bikaner from farmers and allotted the same to two people - Hariram and Natharam, both of whom are fictional people. An FIR was then registered."

"Secondly, this land was then sold to Skylight Hospitality of Vadra and the Rajasthan High Court has rejected a case to quash the FIR," he said. "These are devious and bogus attempts at fakery and to peddle lies.

The Congress government in Rajasthan did not take an inch of the land of farmers between 2008 and 2013 or allot it to Hariram and Natharam," he said, adding that the land was sold during the BJP government in Rajasthan.

Surjewala claimed it was the BJP government that allotted land in Bikaner's Gajner village in February 2007 to Hariram and Natharam.

EC begins delimitation of Parliamentary, Assembly seats on 2001 census in Assam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday initiated the delimitation process of Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies in Assam and will use the 2001 census figures for the readjustment of seats.

The move follows request received from the Union ministry of law and justice. In its order, the EC said a ban has been put in place effective January 1, 2023 on the creation of new administrative units in the state till the exercise is completed.

Delimitation is the process of fixing limits or boundaries of the territorial constituencies in a country or a state with a



legislative body. The term of the current Assam Legislative Assembly will end on May 20, 2026. The state has 14 Lok Sabha, 126 assembly and seven Rajya Sabha seats.

Sources said that earlier this month, the Assam government has written to the Centre saying that the law and order scenario in the state is now conducive for the EC to carry out the delimitation exercise to redraw the boundaries of its parliamentary and assembly constituencies. Muslim voters in Assam account for about 37% of the state's electorate.

The current assembly of 126 MLAs has as many 30 Muslim legislators - 16 from Congress and 14 from AIUDE.

Muslim voters hold the key in six of the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies of the state. "As mandated under Article 170 of the Constitution, census figures (2001) shall be used for the purpose of readjustment of parliamentary and assembly constituencies in the state.

Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will be provided as per Articles 330 and 332 of the Constitution of India," the poll panel said in a statement.

"Under the provisions of the Delimitation Act, 1972, the last delimitation of constituencies in Assam was effected on the basis of 1971 census figures by the then Delimitation Commission in 1976.

The move to redraw the assembly and parliamentary seats of Assam as per Section 8A of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 has been initiated following a request from the Union Law Ministry," it said. There will be a complete

ban on the creation of new administrative units with effect from January 1, 2023 till the completion of delimitation exercise in the state.

The delimitation of Assam's assembly constituencies is long overdue. The Delimitation Commission, which was set up in 2002 to readjust the division of assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies on the basis of the 2001 Census figures, completed the exercise in 25 states and Union Territories.

But the work was suspended in Assam following stay orders of the Gauhati High Court on a PIL challenging the validity of the 2001 Census report in 2007.

On February 28, 2020, the central government cancelled its earlier notifications which deferred delimitation in Assam, Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh due to security issues, saying the exercise could be carried out "now" as previous circumstances cease to exist.

More training on extradition matters needed: MHA Secy

New Delhi: Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Tuesday inaugurated Interpol Liaison Officers Workshop organised by CBI here. The theme of conference was "LRs/MLAT AND Extradition Matters".

The participants including Interpol Liaison Officers (ILOs) from States, Union Territories, other Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) and officers from CBI attended Workshop. Addressing workshop, Bhalla said Union Home Ministry has designed a new online portal on Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) / Letter Rogatory (LR) requests which can be utilised for purpose and assured further assistance, if needed.

For effective law enforcement in respect of crimes having transnational footprints, Bhalla emphasised the need to further impart training on LRs and MLATs to the personnel in law enforcement chain and offered all assistance, including organising workshops/conferences in States. The Union Home Secretary further stressed

that requests from other countries for legal assistance should also be treated on priority as part of reciprocity. He invited feedback and practical suggestions towards improving efficacy of international cooperation channels for assistance in criminal matters.

It was underlined that LEAs should make use of informal channels of police cooperation for seeking and sharing information on I 24X7 platform of Interpol through CBI as NCB India (National Central Bureau). The workshop also focused on utilising Interpol Notices and drafting requests on crime investigation cooperation.

The daylong workshop deliberated on subject "Presentation on Guidelines of MLA/LRs & Procedural aspects of drafting LRs/MLA requests; Presentation on new MLA/LR portal, Presentation on extradition guidelines & procedural aspect of drafting extradition requests; Informal Cooperation through Interpol and points to be kept in mind while making urge for Interpol Matters".

Centre, Manipur ink peace pact with ZUF towards making NE insurgency-free

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday signed a peace agreement with a Manipur insurgent group, which agreed to give up violence and join the peaceful democratic process. The tripartite agreement was signed by the Central and Manipur Governments and the Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF) rebel group which mostly operated in Manipur.

In a statement, the Union Home Ministry said fulfilling the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi of an 'insurgency-free and prosperous Northeast' and under the guidance of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the government of India and the government of Manipur entered into a cessation of operation agreement in New Delhi with ZUF that had been active for more than a decade. Representatives of the



armed group agreed to abjure violence and join the peaceful democratic process as established by law of the land, the statement said.

The agreement provides for rehabilitation and re-settlement of the armed cadres. A joint monitoring group will be constituted to oversee enforcement of the agreed ground rules. This will be a significant boost to the peace process in Manipur, the statement said.

The agreement was signed by senior home ministry officials and the government of Manipur and the representatives of ZUF in presence of Chief Minister N Biren Singh.

IN SHORT

MHA OK'S NAME CHANGE OF 2 PLACES IN UP

New Delhi: The MHA has given its consent to change the names of two places - Mundera Bazaar municipal council in Gorakhpur and Telia Afghan village in Deoria district - in Uttar Pradesh, following recommendations from the state government. The MHA issued no-objection certificates to change name of municipal council to Chauri-Chaura and that of village to Telia Shukla

SC STAYS NGT ORDER OF FINE ON KENDRAPADA

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has stayed an order of National Green Tribunal imposing a penalty of Rs 24 lakh on Odisha's Kendrapada municipality for failing to control discharge of waste water into Gobari river. A bench of Justices K M Joseph and BV Nagarathna issued notices to Centre, Odisha government and others while seeking their replies to plea.

EAM CONGRATULATES KUWAITI NEW FOREIGN MIN

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday congratulated his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on his appointment as the foreign minister, saying he looks forward to working together for strengthening bilateral ties. In October this year, Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait.

YATRAS ON ANAEMIA AWARENESS IN 5 STATES

New Delhi: The Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecological Societies of India is undertaking a yatra across five States to raise awareness about mitigating the rising incidence of anaemia among women.

Plea in SC against KGB panel to examine grant of SC tag to converts

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the formation of a commission headed by former CJI K G Balakrishnan to examine giving Scheduled Caste status to people who claim to have historically belonged to the SCs but have converted to Christianity or Islam.

The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 (amended from time to time) says that no person professing a religion other than Hinduism or Sikhism, or Buddhism can be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste.

The plea filed by advocate Pratap Baburao Pandit contended he was a Christian of Scheduled Caste origin belonging to the Mahar community. The petitioner submitted that



the Union government has formed multiple commissions over the years and the appointment of a new commission will further delay the hearing of the issue in the apex court.

The top court is already seized of a number of petitions which were filed in 2004. "The petitioner is aggrieved because the main Writ Petition (Civil) No. 180/2004 and related petitions are pending for the past 18 years. The apprehension of the petitioner is that if the pre-

sent commission is allowed, the hearing on the main petition may be further delayed causing irreparable damage to the Christians of Scheduled caste origin, who are denied this SC privileges for the last 72 years.

"It is also affecting the fundamental rights of the affected community, giving speedy justice is mandatory as per Article 21," the plea, filed through advocate Franklin Caesar Thomas, said. Besides Balakrishnan, the three-member panel includes retired IAS officer Ravinder Kumar Jain and member UGC Professor Sushma Yadav, according to a gazette notification issued by the Social Justice and Empowerment ministry.

The panel will examine the matter of giving Scheduled Caste status to new persons, who claim to have historically

belonged to the Scheduled Castes but have converted to a religion other than those mentioned in the Presidential Orders issued from time to time under article 341 of the Constitution.

The Centre had earlier told the apex court that the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 does not suffer from any "unconstitutionality" and the exclusion of Christianity and Islam was due to the reason that the "oppressive system" of untouchability was not prevalent in either of these two religions.

The government had said it has not accepted the report of the Justice Ranganath Misra Commission, which had recommended inclusion of Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims in the Scheduled Castes list, as it was "flawed".

SC to hear on Jan 2 pleas challenging State laws regulating conversions due to inter-faith marriage

New Delhi: The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on January 2 a batch of pleas challenging controversial State laws regulating religious conversions due to interfaith marriage.

A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice PS Narasimha is scheduled to hear the PILs filed by advocate Vishal Thakre and an NGO 'Citizens for Justice and Peace'.

The Supreme Court will also hear a plea by Muslim body 'Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind' which it had allowed last year to become a party to the petitions as it claimed a large number of Muslims are being

harassed under these laws across the country. As per the office report uploaded on the apex court website, so far no reply has been filed by the Centre or any of the states which have been made parties to the litigation.

On February 17, 2021, the top court had permitted the NGO to make Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh the parties to its pending petition by which it had challenged some controversial state laws regulating conversions due to interfaith marriages. The apex court had on January 6, 2021 agreed to examine certain controversial new laws of Uttar

Pradesh and Uttarakhand regulating religious conversions due to such marriages.

It had, however, refused to stay the controversial provisions of the laws and issued notices to both the state governments (Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh) on the petitions.

The pleas, filed by Thakre and the NGO, have challenged the Constitutional validity of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020 and the Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018 which regulate religious conversion of people in interfaith marriages.

Inspection of Maiden Pharma held over quality concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of the controversy surrounding the quality of the cough syrup produced and exported by Haryana-based Maiden Pharma to Gambia, the DCGI along with State drugs officials has started conducting joint inspection of identified drug manufacturing units to ensure high standards of quality compliance with respect to drugs manufactured in the country. Though officials in the Union Health

Drugs Controller General of India

Ministry said that the step was initiated following directions from Union Health Minister Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya and it had nothing to do with the Maiden Pharma case, sources said that the move comes amidst a Gambian Parliamentary Committee allegations that concluded that the cough syrups imported from India linked to

the deaths of 70 children were contaminated with toxic substances. "The Select Committee is convinced that Maiden Pharmaceuticals Ltd is culpable and should be held accountable for exporting the contaminated medicines that was linked to the death of at least 70 children in The Gambia in 2022," the Parliamentary panel had said.

The Union Health Ministry officials, however said, the joint inspections are being conducted all over the country as per the Standard Operating Procedures. The serious complaint from the Gambia parliamentary committee had come days after the Union Health Ministry virtually gave a clean chit to the pharma firm.

A committee of two Joint Drugs Controllers has been constituted at CDSCO (HQ) to monitor the process of inspection, reporting & subsequent action so as to ensure compli-

ance to the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules. This will ensure high standards of quality compliance with respect to drugs manufactured in the country, said the official. An action plan for nationwide inspection of manufacturing units which are identified to be at the risk of manufacturing Not of Standard Quality (NSQ) /adulterated/spurious drugs was made prior to carrying out inspections. The objective of drug regulation is to ensure safety, efficacy and quality of drugs available in country.

Consider posting staffer with 85% hearing disability to native place: Centre to Depts

New Delhi: The Centre has asked all its departments to explore the possibility of posting one of its employees with 85 per cent hearing disability to his native place in Kerala, according to an official order. The case relates to Vishnu S Nair (a person with benchmark disability or PwBD) with 85% hearing disability in both ears. Nair, a regular Section Officer of the Central Secretariat Service, is presently posted in the Ministry of

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME). He had requested for a transfer to his native place Ernakulam district in Kerala due to his hearing disability.

Nair had also approached the Commission for Persons with Disabilities for its intervention to arrange for his posting in any government organisation near his home district, said the order issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT). PTI

AIADMK will lead mega alliance for 2024 LS polls: Palaniswami

PTI ■ CHENNAI
AIADMK interim general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami on Tuesday urged party members to strive hard and improve the tally in the 2024 Lok Sabha election and said the party would lead a mega alliance for the poll.
Palaniswami, who is confronted by estranged colleague O Panneerselvam over the leadership tussle, hopes to resurrect the party, surmounting all odds, and steer it to victory, a senior leader said.
"His agenda is to form an alliance and win the Lok Sabha polls decimating the DMK," he said.
At the district secretaries meeting held here, Palaniswami told the functionaries that the AIADMK will forge a mega alliance and that the party

members should strive hard to ensure victory at the hustings.
The party should be strengthened at the booth level and the members should focus more on people's issues, Palaniswami said at the meeting attended by several senior leaders.
The AIADMK leadership would decide on the number of seats to be allocated to the alliance constituents, he said.
"The year 2023 is very crucial for us. We hope to make a turnaround in our political fortunes and ensure the AIADMK registers a huge victory in the 2024 Lok Sabha election," former state minister D Jayakumar said.
Speaking to reporters after the district secretaries' meet, Jayakumar reiterated that the alliance would be formed under the AIADMK leader-



ship.
Asked about the constituents, he replied, "there's still a year to go. You will come to know about those parties."
"Honestly speaking there was no discussion about O Panneerselvam, V K Sasikala or T T V Dhinakaran at today's meet. Our sole objective is to

Value education should be included in curriculum: Murmu

PTI ■ HYDERABAD
President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday stressed on the importance of teaching value education to children to make them good citizens.
Murmu, who addressed the students and faculty members of the Keshav Memorial Educational Society at a function organised as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav here, said parents also, in view of competition, focus on children studying the syllabus taught in their books.
"I say everywhere that value education should be added in our curriculum, our system, our syllabus," she said.
If value education is imparted from the beginning, it will help in ushering in a good society, she said.
She was responding to a query from a student that the absence of study of ethical val-



ues is leading to unwanted incidents in the society.
In her speech, she expressed confidence that the implementation of National Education Policy 2020 will create a learner-centric education system to foster critical thinking and creativity.
This shift in focus will not only benefit the students as individuals, but will also contribute to the overall progress and development of the nation, she said.
Emphasising on the importance of reading, the President said the habit of reading is one of the most effective means for self-development. It is a skill that would serve students well throughout their life, she said.
"In an age of internet and social media when attention span is getting shorter and communication is limited in characters, I will urge you to read more in order to improve your understanding and widen your perspective," she said.

Principals, teachers face CBI-ED in Bengal job scam

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA
A number of college principals and lecturers may soon come under the scanner of the Enforcement Directorate and Central Bureau of Investigation for their alleged role in the multi-crore school level recruitment scam.
According to sources the agencies have stumbled upon the names of some professors and college principals during the course of investigation and are preparing a list of these persons who have allegedly acted as intermediaries in the SSC and TET recruitment scam.
According to sources many of these functionaries had concluded with then TET chairman and Trinamool Congress MLA Manik Bhattacharya and then SSC chairman Subires Bhattacharyya.
Both of these persons are presently in jail along with former Bengal Education Minister Partha Chatterjee who was also the second senior most minister in the Mamata

Banerjee cabinet.
"Though their exact role is not known it seems that these people acted as conduits who presented the names of would be appointees and also probably reached the cash they paid to the people higher up in the chain ... this was easier for them to do as they came from the same education department ... besides they were on high posts which increased their credibility," agency sources said.
Scores of illegally appointed people have already lost their jobs following directives issued by the Calcutta High Court.
Thousands of people purchased jobs in schools in what is being called a multi-layered scam.
While lakhs of aspiring candidates appeared for TET and SSC exams in successive years several thousands of them managed to purchase their jobs as school teachers in the primary, upper primary, secondary and higher secondary

levels. On the other hand many eligible candidates despite having qualified the exams were bracketed in the waiting lists.
The scam also took place in the appointment of Group C and D employees.
The candidates' marks were arbitrarily increased whereas thousands of OMR sheets written by them were destroyed in a bid to obliterate the footprint of the crime.
Notwithstanding, the investigating agencies in due course of investigation managed to recover a few thousand OMR sheets and hard discs of various exams from Uttar Pradesh.
While many of these OMR sheets showed that some candidates had obtained "Zero" mark. Mysteriously however, their marks were artificially increased in the website of the SSC.
According to sources these jobs were sold for anywhere between Rs 5 and Rs 30 lakh, Meanwhile, Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu



Adhikari on Tuesday said that the big thieves of Bengal who had masterminded the scams would go to Tihar jail.
Asking the people to prepare for the panchayat elections Adhikari said "soon the biggest fishes that had perpetrated cattle smuggling, coal smuggling, teachers' scam and even usurped the poor people's houses in the PM Awas Yojna scheme would be banished to Tihar Jail.
"The ill-gotten cash from all these scams had finally found their ways to Kolkata where the TMC's top leadership gobbled

I&B Min buildings' audit led to vacating 11 lakh sqft space in 20 cities: Thakur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI
Union Minister Anurag Thakur on Tuesday said a space audit of buildings of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting led to vacating space of over 11 lakh square feet across 20 cities.
During an informal interaction with reporters, Thakur said a space audit and efficient management of buildings carried out as part of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan also led to earnings of about Rs 22 crore. The space audit was started on September 29 by Thakur's visit to Doordarshan Kendra in Ahmedabad and concluded in Bhopal on Monday.
Personal inspection by Thakur in buildings housing offices of the ministry in Mumbai led to clearing of 90,000 square feet of space at prime locations which, if rent-



ed out, could earn the government crores in revenue. The vacated space is spread across 20 cities -- Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kurnool, Chennai, Thirissur, Thiruvananthapuram, Jabalpur, Chandigarh, Lucknow, Coimbatore, Panaji, Amritsar, Sambalpur, Bhawanipatna, Puducherry, Mangaluru, Berhampur and Bhopal.
The Ministry now plans to co-locate its various offices in the space vacated during the audit to bring about greater synergy among sister organisations and effective dissemination of information through integrated publicity plans, Thakur said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had also mentioned the space audit carried out by the ministry in his 'Mann ki Baat' programme on December 25.

BSF jawan murdered by 7 members of family in Guj

PTI ■ KHEDA
A 42-year-old Border Security Force jawan was murdered allegedly by seven members of a family in Gujarat's Kheda district after he went to their house to protest while holding one of them responsible for circulating an objectionable video of his minor daughter on social media, police said on Tuesday.
The incident took place at around 10 pm on Saturday and the seven accused were arrested on Sunday, they said.
BSF jawan Melaji Vaghela, his wife and son went to the house of Dinesh Jadav at Chaklasi village in Nadiad taluka of the district to protest against the objectionable video of Vaghela's daughter, which they claimed was circulated on



social media by Jadav's son.
"After a heated argument over the issue, Jadav and his six other family members attacked Vaghela and his family members with sticks and sharp weapons," Nadiad's Deputy Superintendent of Police V R Bajpai told reporters.
Vaghela received injuries on his head and other body parts and died on the spot, he said.
His son Navdeep too suffered severe head injuries and his wife was also injured, the

official said.
An FIR was registered on Sunday night at Chaklasi police station under various Indian Penal Code Sections including 302 (murder), 307 (attempt to murder), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 504 (intentional insult) and 143 (unlawful assembly), he said.
All the seven accused were arrested. They were sent to judicial custody on Monday, the official said.
An investigation was on into the incident. A forensic team was in the process of collecting evidence, he said.
The incident took place when Vaghela was visiting his family on a holiday before his transfer to Barmer in Rajasthan from Ambasan in Mehsana, Superintendent of Police Rajesh Gadhiya said.

Deshmukh to walk out of jail, HC refuses stay on his bail

PTI ■ MUMBAI
Former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh is likely to walk out of jail on Wednesday as the Bombay High Court on Tuesday refused to extend its stay on an order granting him bail in a corruption case registered by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).
Justice M S Karnik had granted bail to the 73-year-old Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader on December 12, but stayed the order for 10 days as the CBI sought time to challenge it in the Supreme Court.
The probe agency moved the apex court but the appeal would be heard only in January 2023 as the court is closed for vacation.
Last week, the high court had extended the stay till December 27 on the CBI's request.
On Tuesday, the central agency sought another extension.

Deshmukh's lawyers Aniket Nikam and Inderpal Singh claimed that the CBI was trying to "overreach" the earlier order of the HC which had stated that under no circumstances another extension will be granted.
"They are failing to make out any urgency in the Supreme Court, and coming here seeking stay. This cannot be permitted," Nikam argued.
The vacation bench of the High Court, after hearing the arguments, said that "no further extension can be granted".
With the court refusing to extend the stay, Deshmukh could be released on bail on Wednesday, his lawyers told PTI.
The high court, while granting bail to Deshmukh, had noted that except for dismissed police officer Sachin Waze's statement, no testimony recorded by the CBI indicated that money was being extorted from bar owners in Mumbai at the behest of the NCP leader.

Deshmukh approached the high court after a special CBI court rejected his bail plea last month. He sought bail both on medical grounds and merits of the case.
He has been in jail since November 2021 after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested him in an alleged money laundering case.
In April this year, the CBI arrested him in a corruption case.
Deshmukh, who has denied the allegations levelled against him, is in judicial custody at the Arthur Road Jail in Mumbai.
In October, the high court had granted him bail in the ED case.
Former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh in March 2021 alleged that Deshmukh, the then home minister, had given a target to police officers to collect Rs 100 crore per month from restaurants and bars in Mumbai.
Former assistant police inspector Waze, who was



arrested in the case of an explosives-laden vehicle found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house in Mumbai last year, also levelled similar allegations.
The high court in April 2021 directed the CBI to carry out a preliminary inquiry.
Based on this inquiry, the CBI registered an FIR against Deshmukh and others for alleged corruption and misuse of official powers.
The NCP on Tuesday welcomed the court's decision.
In a statement, Mahesh Tapase, chief spokesperson of the party, said, "It has been proved that Anil Deshmukh was wrongfully framed in a fake case and he will come out of the jail tomorrow after spending more than one year behind the bars. We will take his case to the people and make them aware of the injustice meted out to him."
The allegations against Deshmukh were politically motivated and no "money trail" was found, he said.
"The party extends its support to Deshmukh and we will continue to fight against the people who falsely framed him," Tapase added.

TMC's Mondal arrested for cattle smuggling gets bail in attempt to murder case

PTI ■ DUBRAJPUR
A court in West Bengal's Birbhum district on Tuesday granted bail to TMC leader Anubrata Mondal in an attempt to murder case.
Mondal, arrested by the CBI in August in the cattle smuggling case, was booked by the police under IPC sections 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 325 (causing grievous hurt) and 307 (attempt to murder) on the complaint of a TMC worker

who alleged that he was assaulted.
The sub-divisional court in Dubrajpur granted bail to Mondal when he was produced, after the expiry of his seven-day police custody.
Public prosecutor Rajendra Prasad Dey said, "The investigating officer prayed for police custody but the court after examining the case diary and other records granted him bail. On behalf of the state, I opposed the bail petition."

Vijayan meets Modi in Delhi

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/NEW DELHI
Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Tuesday met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the latter's official residence in New Delhi, an official source said.
The Chief Minister's Office shared photographs of the meeting which is being held in the wake of farmers and residents of areas close to forested parts of the southern state protesting against implementation of the one-kilometre eco-sensitive zones (ESZ) in those places.
Other than photographs of the meeting, no other details were released by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO).
An official source on Monday had said that the ESZ issue was likely to be discussed during the meeting.
Besides that, the delay in getting the Central govern-



ment's clearance for the semi-high speed rail project SilverLine, connecting Kasaragod in the north to Thiruvananthapuram in the south, and the financial crisis that has gripped the state during the time of COVID-19 pandemic may also be topics of discussion, the source had said.
The state government has

Kashmiri Pandit staff move CAT challenging order prohibiting transfer from Valley

PTI ■ JAMMU
Protesting Kashmiri Pandit employees have approached the Central Administrative Tribunal against a Jammu and Kashmir administration order stating those granted employment under the prime minister's special package cannot be transferred.
The move to approach the CAT's Srinagar bench comes days after Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha announced that the striking employees would not be given salaries, a statement criticised by all major political parties.
Kashmiri Pandit employees have been on a strike for over seven months to demand their "relocation" from the Valley in view of targeted killings by terrorists.
The protesting employees



have also sought interim relief from being forced to join work at their respective postings till the government provides them a secure work environment and releases their pending salaries.
The petition filed by Boopinder Bhat and Yogesh Pandita is likely to be listed for hearing after the tribunal resumes functioning on December 30.
They have challenged sub-rule 4 of rule 4 of the Jammu and Kashmir Kashmiri Migrants (Special Drive) Recruitment Rules, 2009, which provides that "in case the appointee migrates from valley again for any reason whatsoever, he shall lose the job without any notice and shall stand terminated".

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PAPER WITH PASSION

National parties?

Both the BJP and Congress units in Maharashtra and Karnataka have opposite views on land dispute

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has upped the ante by presenting a resolution on the decades-old border dispute with Karnataka in the state Assembly. It enunciates Maharashtra's resolve to contest the pending case in the Supreme Court with full strength for the inclusion of each and "every inch" of 865 villages including Belgavi, Karwar, Nipani, and Bidar Bhalki. This is reminiscent of the resolution that both houses of our Parliament unanimously adopted on February 22, 1994, stressing that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India, and that Pakistan must vacate parts of the state under its occupation. But Pakistan is an enemy nation that has illegally grabbed the territory; in the present instance, both states involved are Indian and following the Indian Constitution. In both states, the Bharatiya Janata Party, which prides itself on its nationalist credentials, is in power. Such a resolution is an affront to national unity. To be fair to Shinde and his deputy, Devendra Fadnis, their Government was apparently responding to an equally deplorable resolution passed by the Karnataka Assembly a few days ago. Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai moved the resolution which was unanimously adopted by a voice-vote. "There is no compromise on the matters relating to Karnataka's land, water, language and Kannadiga's interest. The feelings of Karnataka's people and members [of the Assembly] is one of this subject, and if it is affected, we are all committed to unitedly take constitutional and legal measures to protect the interest of the state."



Since both resolutions were unanimously adopted in the respective Assemblies, all parties, including the BJP and the Indian National Congress, consented to their contents. A question arises: where do these national parties stand on the land dispute between the two states? The state units of BJP and Congress Maharashtra believe that "every inch" of the land in dispute belongs to Maharashtra; similarly, the state units of BJP and Congress Karnataka believe that "every inch" of the land in dispute belongs to Karnataka. What, pray, do the BJP and the Congress believe — that is, if they believe in anything other than power? For how long can national parties keep pandering to the groups which thrive on sentimentalism, be it region, linguistic, or religious? Governance is a serious business, which must be carried out with reliance on facts, commonsense, and reason; it cannot be allowed to run amok, following the vicissitudes of demagogic politicians. But, unfortunately, that is exactly what seems to be happening. Former Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray is of the view that the Centre should declare "Karnataka-occupied Maharashtra" areas as a Union Territory. Despite the inappropriate description of the dispute areas, his suggestion is worth examining; it can be a UT till the Supreme Court decides over the matter. It is, however, not just the duty of the Centre to sort out the dispute but also of the two national parties.

PICTALK



Snow-covered Himalayas mountain range after fresh snowfall, seen from Shimla

PTI

Nature's wrath

Extreme weather is playing havoc in the USA where such a big chill is being witnessed after decades

At least 48 people have already died and thousands of flights have been canceled in the USA due to storms and severe cold conditions which are being touted as one of the biggest chills in decades. The cold is so stark that it is posing danger not only to humans but to entire ecosystem. Though it has been over a week there are no signs of any let-up and it is feared that the worst is yet to come. Buffalo, New York is one of the severest hit areas by the storm which is causing high-speed wind, rains, and snow across the US. According to the forecasts, the extreme cold settling over the US this week will be biting, as a blast of arctic air and strong winds threaten to plunge several regions into subzero temperatures. Roughly 150 million people across the US are facing the frigid conditions, posing life-threatening dangers to anyone without shelter, wrecking havoc on holiday travelers and causing power outages, and blocking supply lines. Since this extreme weather is not normally witnessed in the USA it is not as prepared to face it as Canada where sub-normal temperatures are routine. Govt agencies across the country are urging households to prepare for the worst, with strong winds adding to the possibility of disruption in power supply. People are being advised to keep extra supplies, including blankets, to face any eventuality. This could be life saver.



Ironically, worldwide stark winters are becoming less common. The dramatic and sudden shift in temperatures, can have a profound effect on adaptation, especially for plants, animals, and ecosystem. The extreme weather and storms may be direct consequence of upheaval in climate change, and fall out of human actions and interference. But it's clear that the underlying impacts caused by global heating may make them harder to endure. The abruptness of the drop in temperatures is also expected to impact aquatic life. It may be intriguing to know that such conditions can prevail in warmer climates like ours as some scientists are indicating. What has been the reason for such a sharp decrease in such a short span of time is still being debated but the reason for so many deaths can be attributed to a lack of preparedness and lesser tolerance for extreme cold conditions. This extreme winter is also a reminder that no matter how technically advanced you might be, you cannot beat nature which can take away what it gives. Life!

But the fact remains that it was Jinnah's call of "Direct Action Day" that provoked the year-long Great Calcutta Killings and resulted in thousands of innocents being butchered to death. Jinnah's dream of Pakistan got fulfilled at the expense of the lives of millions. And those who survived the mayhem found themselves raped, widowed, orphaned, uprooted, and homeless overnight. After achieving his goal, Jinnah acted piously by promising equality for all Pakistanis, irrespective of their religious affiliation! But that rhetoric is not enough to absolve Jinnah of the deadly crime that he had perpetrated against humanity. So painting him as "originally secular" is meaningless in the context of his future deeds.

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

NEW GOVT IN NEPAL

Sir — Instability in Nepal for the last few decades has cast an ugly shadow on both its internal and external affairs. The November general election failed to produce a single candidate as no party could claim to form the govt despite Nepali Congress emerging as the single largest party. However, in a dramatic turn of events after weeks of speculation and negotiations were put to rest as former Maoist rebel leader Pushpa Kumar Dahal, Prachanda, is set to become the PM of the Himalayan state. His previous two terms in 2008, 2009 and 2015-16

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT ANYWAY?

Sir — This is in response to Prafull Goradia's article titled "The life & career of Mohammad Ali Jinnah" (December 24). Though it would be unfair to say that the Partition of India was the handiwork of MA Jinnah only, the whole world knows that the Muslim League leader played a pivotal role in that gory episode. Had Pakistan been achieved by taking resort to non-violence dialogues debates and the population of the sub-continent not got adversely affected; perhaps a favorable case could have been made for Jinnah.

But the fact remains that it was Jinnah's call of "Direct Action Day" that provoked the year-long Great Calcutta Killings and resulted in thousands of innocents being butchered to death. Jinnah's dream of Pakistan got fulfilled at the expense of the lives of millions. And those who survived the mayhem found themselves raped, widowed, orphaned, uprooted, and homeless overnight. After achieving his goal, Jinnah acted piously by promising equality for all Pakistanis, irrespective of their religious affiliation! But that rhetoric is not enough to absolve Jinnah of the deadly crime that he had perpetrated against humanity. So painting him as "originally secular" is meaningless in the context of his future deeds.

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SPORTSPERSONS' CAREERS

Sir — Sportspersons' careers often hang on slender threads, waltzing amidst swings in fortunes. None can be a better example of this fact than the two soccer giants - Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, whose contrasting campaigns were the highlights in the recently con-

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A good decision



The decision or initiative of the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi who invited Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati and Jayant Singh of Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) to participate in the Bharat Jodo Yatra (BJY), as per

sources for the unity of the country is a welcome step. A formal letter has been written by the Congress leader but its not received consent from these leaders.

The Bharat Jodo Yatra will resume on January 3 from Ghaziabad in UP and it is said that Congress wants all like-minded parties to participate in the Yatra which is already successful in other states with a very large participation of people from all castes, communities, and religions. Earlier, many non-Congress leaders and celebrities including actor and politician Kamal Haasan joined the yatra. It is high time leaders of political parties must join the Yatra irrespective of different ideologies.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

were marred in controversy owing to a political crisis over sharing of power. His decade-long armed struggle from 1996 to 2006 only ended with establishing peace in November 2006 by means of an agreement.

In a nation clouded by political and economic instability where smaller parties role as brokers by siding either with Mr Deoba or Mr Oli, it is no surprise then that its pressing problems like maintaining law and order, fighting corruption, creating jobs, improving economic conditions, providing health and quality education remain as elusive as ever. The new govt has its task cut out. The political changes may not bode well for India as the guerrilla leader's proximity to China and his pro-China stance will pose problems for a healthy relationship.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

cluded FIFA 2022 World Cup. While Messi reached the pinnacle of glory by winning the cup, in contrast, Ronaldo's extraordinary career has undergone a sudden, undeniable, and maybe irreversible shift. It is really sad that the Portugal star, post world cup, has been relegated to a state where he has millions of die-hard fans, yet still being lonely. Imagine a football giant, who everyone came to watch, yet was stuck on the bench often because of the rift in the relationship between him and Coach Fernando Santos. Or precisely, being Cristiano Ronaldo, yet not being wanted now.

Hitting the football into the net with regularity was what Ronaldo had been doing for years. But when he can't do that anymore, his value plummets. Sadly, just in the space of one world cup, Ronaldo's legacy has been battered beyond repair. As for Messi, completing the set of trophies with the summit clash of the game is not only phenomenal but also like cutting through the knife in the heart of Ronaldo.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Restore deterrence along LAC for peace



ASHOK K MEHTA

A 'Snow Leopard' style operation is needed to dissuade China from doing another Yangtse. The lasting peace can come only through quid pro quo.

Ram Madhav, once a powerful RSS voice who counted in the government, recently remarked that Indian action at Yangtse was only defensive but India is now prepared for China, adding that only Operation Snow Leopard against China was proactive. On the 15,000 feet high Yangtse plateau, the LAC follows Yangtse Ridge, the watershed where Indian border posts are located along a stone wall. Overlooking the plateau are the Yangtse heights which command a towering 360-degree view, especially of Tawang bowl 30 km away extending to Sela Pass where a tunnel is being built. It is one among several disputed areas resulting from the patchy marking of the McMahon Line on an 8-inch map and perhaps the only disputed area in Indian possession. This riles China as it was under its possession for two months in 1962. China's new border law 2022 equates territory with sovereignty and makes recovery of lost territory sacred.

The PLA's attempt to unilaterally alter the status quo at Yangtse is not their first. They've done so regularly since 2016 to assert China's claim over disputed territory. According to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, supported by satellite imagery Dec 2022 of Planet Labs, Chinese infrastructure has improved significantly in one year with a road now 150 m short of LAC with new villages coming up close by. China's infrastructure development along LAC has created an 'escalation trap' for India which it tries to compensate for with increased readiness and surveillance to reduce the risk of accidental escalation. On 9 December, the PLA operation started around 3 am in foggy conditions, expecting to overwhelm Indian troops who were forewarned and beat back intruders with clubs and sticks. Through these attempts, says ASPI, China is testing Indian willingness and readiness to resist while eroding the status quo.



INDIA HAS GONE SILENT ON DOKLAM IN BHUTAN WHERE IN 2017, INDIAN TROOPS ALLEGEDLY 'ILLEGALLY CROSSED LAC' INTO CHINESE TERRITORY TO PREVENT THE CONSTRUCTION OF A ROAD TO THE DISPUTED TRI-JUNCTION INVOKING ITS TREATY OBLIGATIONS WITH BHUTAN

India has gone silent on Doklam in Bhutan where in 2017, Indian troops allegedly 'illegally crossed LAC' into Chinese territory to prevent the construction of a road to the disputed tri-junction invoking its treaty obligations with Bhutan. Following an agreement, the Indian and Chinese disengaged after 73 days. But the Chinese feigned withdrawal and soon returned. According to Planet Lab's, imagery obtained this month Chinese village 9 km east of Doklam at Pangda is inside Bhutan with now a bridge over Torsa Nullah. This will create a new red-line situation for India with Indian troops at Dokla just meters away from PLA at Doklam. India has allowed the Doklam front to reopen as Bhutanese would any day settle their differences with China but for India's security concerns in Chumbi valley.

It is increasingly clear China will neither clarify LAC nor settle the border question. It will repeat its 2020 tricks in East Ladakh in other areas as its infrastructure expands further. After withdrawal from Hot Springs in September, China said it would not accept the status quo of 2020 created by India's 'illegal crossing of LAC'. This fiction China has

used after every clash with Indian troops in shifting the onus of blame to India. High time India paused to rethink its China policy of diplomacy which has hit a cul de sac. PM Modi's handshake at Bali with President Xi Jinping has made little difference. Last week's 17th round of military talks produced a blank with zero progress on friction points Depsang and Demchok. It is the end of Disengagement without any Deescalation.

Madhav is wrong claiming India is prepared for China. Far from it. Deterrence has broken down and military diplomacy has also failed. The government's resolve to keep Parliament in the dark and Modi's reluctance to utter the 'C' word add to the complexity of the LAC dilemma. China is extracting maximum advantage from it. One way to rebuild deterrence is through QPQ (Quid Pro Quo) operations like Snow Leopard. Political will is needed for QPQ but so is a worthy allocation to next year's defence budget to boost deterrence.

(The writer, a retired Lt Gen, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, & founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff; views expressed are personal)

SOUNDBITE

He (Vajpayee) was a rare combination of a politician, poet, fearless human being, and sympathetic leader who had no enemies, like Ajatshatru.



Former President — Ram Nath Kovind



I wished (Modi) a successful G20 presidency...now I count on India's participation in its implementation. I also thanked (him) for humanitarian aid and support in the UN.

Ukrainian President — Volodymyr Zelensky

... I was coming out of some serious cinema with Uri, Bhoot. As an actor, even I was hungry to explore.

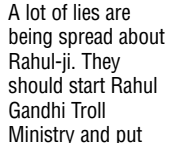


Actor — Vicky Kaushal



I feel honoured to have been assigned this responsibility by the PCB Management Committee and will have no stone unturned in fulfilling this responsibility to the best of my abilities.

Pakistan cricketer — Shahid Afridi



A lot of lies are being spread about Rahul Gandhi Troll Ministry and put Smriti Irani as the in-charge. She does not talk about when atrocities are committed against women.

Congress Social Media incharge — Supriya Srinetra

FIRST COLUMN

HEALTHY, FIT INDIA IS MUST FOR WELLBEING

Govt is addressing numerous critical health challenges



MONIKA ARORA

Health is the building block for the prosperity of a nation. The Covid-19 has brought the focus back on healthy living and the need for robust health infrastructure, and the Indian government has been quick to respond. Even before the pandemic struck, the government was emphasising on the holistic health and well-being of all.

With programmes like Ayushman Bharat and Mission Indradhanush, the government has been addressing numerous critical health challenges and promoting Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Another important but often ignored area for health programming has been women and adolescents. The health of the nation depends on the health of its women, children, and youth but health-seeking data among them in India is less than one per cent as per a study.

Similarly, only a few adolescents (5 per cent young men and 8 per cent young women) are aware of AFHC in India. Health Promotion among adolescents is the need of the hour as their empowerment is crucial to address the looming burden of overweight – obesity and NCDs among adolescents alongside the unfinished agenda of malnutrition and communicable diseases.

POSHAN Abhiyaan is a path-breaking government flagship programme to improve nutritional outcomes for children, adolescent girls, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.



CNNS data has highlighted huge overweight-obesity prevalence among 10-19 years in India with five per cent in both girls and boys. Over 17 million children, aged 5-19 years in India are affected by obesity. If left unchecked, these numbers will increase to 27 million by 2030-34. Thus, addressing the food environment to enable healthy choices for children and adolescents is crucial. Findings of a recent study conducted by the PHFI's research team with support from the WHO country office for India in 2021 highlighted that the advertising environment in and around schools is obesogenic, despite government and educational institutes guidelines on restricting the availability and accessibility of HFSS foods.

Another PHFI study conducted a content analysis of food advertisements on popular television channels among children and youth in India. The results revealed that a total of 88.6 per cent of 1735 food advertisements were for HFSS foods and a higher proportion of food advertisements were seen on children's channels (38 per cent) than on youth channels (23 per cent). The study highlighted that the majority (90-95 per cent) of advertisements broadcast on television channels targeting children and youth were of HFSS foods. These studies laid the foundation for designing and initiating the 'Let's Fix Our Food' (LFOF) campaign to combat an obesogenic environment for children and youth.

Better adolescent health can only be achieved by meaningfully engaging adolescents in intervention design and implementation. Recently, when multiple stakeholders convened nationally on the issue of addressing obesity among children and adolescents in India, it was noted that adolescents' voices were missing in these academic and scientific debates. It led to the launch of the 'LFOF initiative, which is co-created with adolescents. Under this initiative, their meaningful engagement in creating a healthy food environment in the country and leading to ownership of issues as campaigns are designed and delivered by the youth themselves. It will create health-promoting norms among adolescents, in families, and communities and will also support policies that will enable addressing malnutrition by addressing both ends of malnutrition: obesity and undernutrition. The time is ripe to come together and work towards the nation of our dreams, a healthier and happier India, by bringing all the relevant stakeholders for strengthening awareness and adoption of healthy behaviours around nutrition and physical activity among adolescents. (The author is Vice-President, Public Health Foundation of India)

Teachers should play role of friend, parent



DR BIJU DHARMAPALAN

A teacher's job is to equip the students to overcome the travails they face in their later life

There was a time when a teacher was looked upon as a role model by students. Apart from imbibing knowledge, students also copied their teacher's attitude and character in their private life. A teacher is considered as par with God; whatever they deliver is considered divine by the students and the parents. They were the sole provider of knowledge for students. Before the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, corporal punishment by teachers was never considered a punishable act.

There are instances where parents supported the action of the teachers, for they knew that teachers punish students only for their betterment. Situations have changed recently, and parents consider even compelling a student to learn as a grave crime! If a student commits suicide, authorities make the teacher a culprit, and the media also goes against the teachers. A true teacher should act as a guiding light in the life of students, correcting them when they make mistakes and acting as a philosopher to provide tips to manage the travails in life.

But in today's digital era, the public perception of teachers has changed a lot. They are no longer considered a provider of knowledge. For today's generation, Google and YouTube are the knowledge sources. Even a kindergarten child knows how to use these on a laptop and smartphone. Today's children learn to attain every skill through the internet. They learn foreign languages, learn music and other skills easily using apps available on the internet.

Suppose the purpose of a university is to facilitate the advancement of knowledge and the development of high cognitive skills in the community. In that case, Google can aptly be called a 'Google University'.

In this era of 'Google University', a teacher is considered secondary, mostly to act as an intermediate between humans and machines. For teachers to survive in this new world is challenging, especially for school and college teachers.

Teachers in the earlier generations ranked based on their knowledge in their domain and their attitude. Today if a teacher has to earn respect in the knowledge domain, they need to overpower the 'Google University'. This is a difficult task for many. The attitude of a teacher in the present generation is hard to define. Indian society gives high respect to teachers and the teaching profession. Our tradition considers teachers as par with God, and hence they expect some qualities from a teacher that a student can emulate.

Truthfully speaking, most teachers are just moving with the trends of the society and never try to keep their individuality at the forefront. They try to satisfy the needs of the present generation of students.



IN THIS ERA OF 'GOOGLE UNIVERSITY', A TEACHER IS CONSIDERED SECONDARY, MOSTLY TO ACT AS AN INTERMEDIATE BETWEEN HUMANS AND MACHINES. FOR TEACHERS TO SURVIVE IN THIS NEW WORLD IS CHALLENGING, ESPECIALLY FOR SCHOOL AND COLLEGE TEACHERS

(The author is a science communicator and academic)

Many of today's teachers try to be friends with students to be in their good books and be among them. Partying with students, dancing with them and being with them on social media are new means of impressing students. There are hardly very few students who expect their teachers to be a knowledge repository.

Everyone in our society, be it students or teachers, has become an attention seeker through social media. Seeking attention is the basic human instinct. Toddler seeks attention from their parents; a student seeks attention from their teachers; a teenager from friends of the opposite sex, a professional from their peers; in every sphere of life and every stratum of society, people have become attention seekers.

The quantum of posts available on various social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, or Pixstory is ample proof of this. A teacher being a part of this new digital society is no exception. Teachers dancing with students, partying with students, or even dating students and posting their photos and videos on social media has become a new norm in this new world. Many teachers play appeasement politics with their students for their survival.

Of course, like any other person, a teacher has a professional as well as private life. There is no need to intrude into their private life. That doesn't make sense to have the teacher and student consuming alcohol together or taking a smoke together. There are excellent teachers who have their tempta-

tions like any other person. The authorities should check whether the teacher is doing their profession judiciously.

Even though a good teacher should be a friend to a student, they should know where to draw the line. They should know how to keep a distance from students. Too much closeness to students may be misused by some.

Many institutions have put forth a dress code for teachers, driven mainly by the prevailing traditions in that society. The dress code also gives dignity to the profession and helps demarcate teachers from students. Otherwise, it would be tough to identify a young teacher from a student. Imagine how our army men/women would look without proper uniforms.

The unwritten rules and codes of ethics formulated by society are based on the experience our ancestors gained through their experience. The teachers are dealing with students, who are mostly in the age group of adolescents or teenagers. Their brain is fluid and is driven by the temptations caused by body chemicals. Many times the outward behaviour a student expresses is beyond their control. It's the duty of every teacher not to instigate their physiological status to extremes. In a recent affidavit filed by the Kerala University of Health Sciences at the Kerala High Court, it was stated that "absolute freedom on attaining the age of 18 may not be appropriate and good for the society, and maturation is fully accomplished at the age of 25".

In this digital communication world, a teacher must be more cautious in their attitude and behaviour on social media, as their students are constantly monitoring them. In this era, it is the duty of teachers to teach students how to behave on social media and how to tackle crimes associated with it. They should teach students how to use the internet judiciously.

With the emergence of AI technologies, all creative things like writing, drawing, compositions, etc., where human brains need to be used, can be done using the internet within minutes. In this situation, evaluating a student and developing content for teaching is an arduous task for the teachers.

A teacher's job is not only to complete the syllabus or pass examinations but to equip the students to overcome the travails they face in their later life. A good teacher should play the role of a good student, friend and parent. Only if they consider themselves a student will they be curious to learn more from their domain. Similarly, they should be a good friend to students, listening to their concerns. They should also play the role of parents showing empathy and correcting them when they make mistakes.

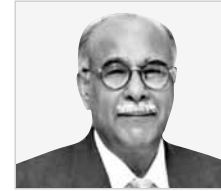
The problem we face in our education system is that we lack teachers who are passionate about the profession. Many have taken up the job either by accident or by peer pressure.

Teaching is a divine profession, and teachers should show divinity by inculcating the spirit gained from our rich heritage.

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

YOU CHANGED THE ENTIRE [PCB] CONSTITUTION TO BRING IN ONE PERSON, NAJAM SETHI, AND TO ADJUST HIM. I'VE NEVER SEEN THIS ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD.

— EX-CHAIRMAN OF PAKISTAN CRICKET BOARD RAMEEZ RAJA



THE CRICKET REGIME HEADED BY RAMIZ RAJA IS NO MORE. THE 2014 PCB CONSTITUTION STANDS RESTORED. THOUSANDS OF CRICKETERS WILL BE EMPLOYED AGAIN. THE FAMINE IN CRICKET WILL COME TO AN END.

— CHAIRMAN PAKISTAN CRICKET BOARD NAJAM SETHI

Next year will be crucial for India on several counts

Economy, politics and foreign affairs will hog limelight with keen global interests in 2023

What is in store for the year 2023? Will it be good or bad? For the past three years, the world has faced an unprecedented pandemic, Covid-19, which has devastated the globe. Crystal-ball gazers are hoping for a better scenario next year. They expect the economy's health will be restored and hope to resolve the war-like situation in Ukraine.



KALYANI SHANKAR

But the famous French astrologer Nostradamus predicted that in 2023 the Ukraine crisis might lead to a world war. He foretold a temperature rise and heralded the arrival of a new Pope, a civil war in America, civil unrest in the world, and a Mars landing.

The Economist magazine notes the global interlocking challenges, including the war

(The author is a senior journalist)

in Ukraine, food and fuel prices, the fight against inflation, the transition to renewable energy, and China's uncertain post-pandemic path. India might overtake China as the world's most populous country next year. It has the world's largest youth population.

On foreign policy, India will host the prestigious 18th G20 Heads of State and Governments summit on September 9-10, 2023 in New Delhi. As part of the Summit, India will hold more than 200 events spread across major metro cities. Prime Minister Modi plans to showcase himself and India in a grand show to project himself as a world leader ahead of the 2024 polls.

The coronation of King Charles 111 is a colourful

event next year. Politically, for India, the upcoming nine state elections are the most significant in 2023. It will decide the fate of several parties and their leaders, including Congress, the BJP, and other regional parties. The strength of Rahul Gandhi will be tested in these polls after his current Bharat Jodo yatra ends in February.

Nine states will go to polls over the next 12 months. They are—Meghalaya, Tripura, and Nagaland in February; Karnataka in May; Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Telangana, and Rajasthan in November. The government might also hold elections in Jammu and Kashmir. The results will be a precursor for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Who wins and

who loses will impact the electorate and the workers' morale.

The ruling BJP is making all efforts to expand its base. For the Opposition, it is vital to ensure that non-BJP parties win to stop the BJP juggernaut. There is a direct fight between the BJP and the Congress in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh. In Karnataka, there will be a triangular contest between BJP, Congress, and JDS. In Telangana, a triangular fight will be between TRS, Congress, and BJP. In Tripura, too, there will be a triangular fight between the BJP, the Congress, and the Left Front.

Of these, the BJP rules Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. Both are critical for Congress and the BJP. And so are Chhattisgarh and

Rajasthan, the only two states Congress currently holds. The BJP wants to wrest Telangana from chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, who fancies himself as the challenger to Modi. Confident because his party has maintained over 40 per cent vote share, establishing its formidable position in Telangana, KCR wants to perform a hat trick. Though he has finished the Congress and Telugu Desam, to his dismay, the BJP has emerged as the main opposition party in the space vacated.

The immediate focus is on Karnataka. The BJP has high stakes as that is the only state the BJP is ruling in the south. The Congress-JD(S) combine has a chance to wrest the government from the BJP.

Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland, and Mizoram are poll bound in the Northeast. The BJP currently rules Tripura. In Meghalaya and Nagaland, the BJP-backed governments are in power. The Mizo National Front government is ruling in Mizoram. The once pre-eminent Congress is almost finished now.

Will Congress revive its strength? Will Rahul Gandhi emerge stronger? The Himachal Pradesh win this month has boosted the morale of the Congress. It has allowed a chance for Congress to unite the Opposition.

The opposition parties have realised that Modi will get a third term unless they combine. They will decide on the prime ministerial candi-

date only after the polls. There are at least half a dozen contenders, mostly the egoistic regional satraps like Mamata Banerjee, KCR, and Arvind Kejriwal.

The return of covid with a new variant is a new threat. India managed to contain the pandemic by vaccinating a billion plus people. Still, the government should be on guard against any new variants.

On the economy, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget on February 1. Inflation and price rise are two critical issues. The World Bank expects India's GDP growth to be better than expected, but inflation would stay above 7 per cent.

Overall, 2023 might bring us better prospects in most spheres.

Russia says it shot down Ukrainian drone near airbase

AP ■ KYIV

The Russian military reported Monday that it shot down a Ukrainian drone approaching an air base deep inside Russia, the second time the facility has been targeted this month - again revealing weaknesses in Russia's air defenses.

Russia's Defense Ministry said debris killed three servicemen at the Engels air base, which houses Tu-95 and Tu-160 nuclear-capable strategic bomber planes that have struck Ukraine with missiles in the 10-month-old war.

Russia's Baza news outlet reported that four people were wounded and said a fire had broken out, with explosions, sirens and flashes on a video it posted on its Telegram channel. The Defense Ministry claimed no Russian aircraft were damaged. It wasn't clear whether the drone had been launched from Ukraine or Russian territory.

If the drone had been launched from Ukraine, it would have traveled more than 600 kilometers (370 miles) to reach Engels, located in Russia's Saratov region on the Volga River. Shooting the drone down

after such a long trip inside Russia again raises questions about the effectiveness of Russia's air defenses, particularly those intended to protect its most strategic military assets such as warplanes capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

In keeping with the Kyiv government's long-standing practice of not confirming cross-border attacks but welcoming their results, Ukrainian air force spokesperson Yuri Ihnat didn't directly acknowledge his country's involvement in Monday's incident in an interview on Ukrainian television, but said: "These are the consequences of Russian aggression."

He added: "If the Russians thought that the war wouldn't affect them deep behind their lines, they were deeply mistaken."

Russia has suffered numerous cross-border attacks during the war on its main territory, as well as on the Crimean Peninsula, which it illegally annexed in 2014. The incidents have outraged Russian military bloggers who say they show the country's weak air defenses and security systems in general.

In another cross-border



incident that couldn't be independently confirmed, Russia's Tass news agency reported Monday that the country's security forces had killed four Ukrainian saboteurs attempting to enter the Bryansk region from Ukraine. The report claimed the infiltrators carried explosive materials when they were caught Sunday.

The cross-border attacks on Russian military and other strategic sites prompted Russian President Vladimir

Putin to order almost weekly missile and weaponized drone attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, causing widespread blackouts that also knocked out heating and water supplies in increasingly frigid weather. The attacks, which began in October across much of the country, have been occurring as ground fighting focused on Ukraine's southern and eastern regions.

In eastern Ukraine on Monday, Luhansk's Ukrainian

governor, Serhiy Haidai, said Russian forces have withdrawn from their military command operations post in the town of Kreminna as Ukrainian forces were approaching after months of intense fighting. Russia's Defense Ministry didn't comment on the withdrawal claim.

Russian forces relocated to Kreminna and several other areas in September after they pulled back from the Kharkiv region in eastern Ukraine.

Kreminna is in the eastern

Luhansk region, which is almost entirely under Moscow's control, and is on an important supply route for Russian forces and serves as a gateway for movement into other strategic positions.

Earlier, Haidai reported that Russia had withdrawn its occupying government administration from Svatove, 51 kilometers north of Kreminna.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address Monday that "the situation there is difficult, painful. The occupiers are expending all the resources available to them - and they are considerable resources - to squeeze out at least some advance."

Haidai told Ukrainian television on Monday that Russian forces in the region are "suffering huge losses and medical facilities are overwhelmed with wounded soldiers." The Russian army is redeploying paratroopers from the Kherson region to the area, he added.

In neighbouring Donetsk region, partially occupied by Russia, fierce battles continue around the city of Bakhmut, which Russian forces have been trying to seize for weeks to consolidate their grip on Ukraine's

east. Zelenskyy said last week Bakhmut was the hottest spot on the war's 1,300-kilometre front line.

Ukrainian officials have maintained ambiguity over previous high-profile attacks, including drone strikes on Russian military bases earlier this month.

On Dec. 5, unprecedented drone strikes on Engels and the Dyagilevo base in the Ryazan region in western Russia killed a total of three servicemen and wounded four others. In retaliation, Russia launched a massive missile barrage in Ukraine that struck homes and buildings and killed civilians.

Elsewhere on the battlefield, at least four civilians were wounded in Russian shelling of five Ukrainian southeast regions over the past 24 hours, according to the deputy head of Ukraine's presidential office, Kyrylo Tymoshenko. Overall, the intensity of the shelling from Sunday night into Monday was significantly lower.

For the first time in weeks, Russian forces didn't shell the Dnipropetrovsk region, which borders the partially occupied southern regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, its governor,

Valentyn Reznichenko, reported on Telegram.

"This is the third quiet night in 5.5 months since the Russians started shelling" the areas around the city of Nikopol, Reznichenko wrote. Nikopol is located across the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, which is under the control of Russian forces and whose six reactors are shut down.

Ukrainian-controlled areas of the neighboring Kherson region were shelled 33 times over the past 24 hours, according to Kherson's Ukrainian Gov. Yaroslav Yanushevich. No casualties were reported.

On Sunday, Russian forces attacked the city of Kramatorsk, where Ukrainian forces are headquartered. Three missiles hit an industrial facility and damaged residential buildings, but no casualties were reported, according to local officials.

On Saturday, a deadly attack on the city of Kherson, which Kyiv's forces recaptured last month, killed and wounded scores of people. Local residents are lining up to donate blood for the wounded, Yanushevich said Monday.

Ukraine FM aims for February peace summit

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine's foreign minister said Monday that his nation wants a summit to end the war but he doesn't anticipate Russia taking part, a statement making it hard to foresee the devastating invasion ending soon.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told The Associated Press that his government wants a "peace" summit within two months at the United Nations with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as mediator.

The UN gave a very cautious response.

"As the secretary-general has said many times in the past, he can only mediate if all parties want him to mediate," UN associate spokesperson Florencia Soto Nino-Martinez said Monday.

Kuleba said Russia must face a war-crimes tribunal before his country directly talks with Moscow. He said, however, that other nations should feel free to engage with Russians, as happened before a grain agreement between Turkey and Russia.

The AP interview offered a glimpse at Ukraine's vision of how the war with Russia could one day end, although any peace talks would be months away and highly contingent on complex international negotiations.

Kuleba also said he was "absolutely satisfied" with the results of President Volodymyr

Zelenskyy's visit to the US last week, and he revealed that the US government had made a special plan to get the Patriot missile battery ready to be operational in the country in less than six months. Usually, the training takes up to a year.

Kuleba said during the interview at the Foreign Ministry that Ukraine will do whatever it can to win the war in 2023.

"Every war ends in a diplomatic way," he said. "Every war ends as a result of the actions taken on the battlefield and at the negotiating table."

Commenting on Kuleba's proposal, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told the state RIA Novosti news agency that Russia "never followed conditions set by others. Only our own and common sense."

A Kremlin spokesman said last week that no Ukrainian peace plan can succeed without taking into account "the realities of today that can't be ignored" - a reference to Moscow's demand that Ukraine recognise Russia's sovereignty over the Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed in 2014, as well as other territorial gains.

Kuleba said the Ukrainian government would like to have the "peace" summit by the end of February.

"The United Nations could be the best venue for holding this summit, because this is not about making a favour to a certain country," he said. "This is really about bringing everyone



on board."

At the Group of 20 summit in Bali in November, Zelenskyy made a long-distance presentation of a 10-point peace formula that includes the restoration of Ukraine's territorial integrity, the withdrawal of Russian troops, the release of all prisoners, a tribunal for those responsible for the aggression and security guarantees for Ukraine.

Asked about whether Ukraine would invite Russia to the summit, he said that Moscow would first need to face prosecution for war crimes at an international court.

"They can only be invited to this step in this way," Kuleba said. About the UN Secretary-General's role, Kuleba said: "He has proven himself to be an efficient mediator and an efficient negotiator, and most importantly, as a man of principle and integrity. So we would welcome his active participation."

The UN spokesman's office had no immediate comment.

Other world leaders have also offered to mediate, such as those in Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

The foreign minister again downplayed comments by Russian authorities that they are ready for talks.

"They (Russians) regularly say that they are ready for negotiations, which is not true, because everything they do on the battlefield proves the opposite," he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin claimed few days ago that his country is ready for talks to end the war in Ukraine, but suggested that the Ukrainians are the ones refusing to take that step. Despite Putin's comments, Moscow's forces have kept attacking Ukraine - a sign that peace isn't imminent.

Zelenskyy's visit to the US was his first foreign trip since the war started on February 24. Kuleba praised Washington's efforts and underlined the significance of the visit.

Ukraine secured a new USD 1.8 billion military aid package, including a Patriot

missile battery, during the trip. Kuleba said that the move "opens the door for other countries to do the same."

He said that the US government developed a programme for Ukrainian troops to complete training faster than usual "without any damage to the quality of the use of this weapon on the battlefield."

While Kuleba didn't mention a specific time frame, he said only that it will be "very much less than six months." And he added that the training will be done "outside" Ukraine.

During Russia's ground and air war in Ukraine, Kuleba has been second only to Zelenskyy in carrying Ukraine's message and needs to an international audience, whether through Twitter posts or meetings with friendly foreign officials.

On Monday, Ukraine called on UN member states to deprive Russia of its status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and to exclude it from the world body. Kuleba said they have long "prepared for this step to uncover the fraud and deprive Russia of its status."

The Foreign Ministry says that Russia never went through the legal procedure for acquiring membership and taking the place of the USSR at the UN Security Council after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"This is the beginning of an uphill battle, but we will fight, because nothing is impossible," he told the AP.

Amid Ukraine conflict, COVID-inflicted crises, India emerges as voice of Global South

PTI ■ UNITED NATIONS

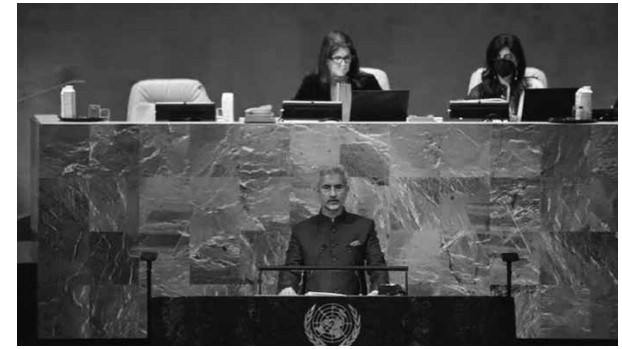
India emerged as a voice of the Global South during its two-year term in the powerful UN Security Council, which acrimoniously deliberated on Russia's invasion of Ukraine that led to unprecedented levels of global food and fuel insecurity as the world continued to grapple with inequalities amplified by the pandemic.

Before relinquishing its non-permanent seat in the 15-member Council on December 31, 2022, India presided over the powerful UN body in December with the country's first woman Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj sitting in the President's seat at the horse-shoe table.

Just about two months into India's second year of its 2021-2022 term on the Council as elected non-permanent member, Russian President Vladimir Putin launched a 'special military operation' in eastern Ukraine on February 24.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres made a direct and strong appeal to Putin to "stop your troops from attacking Ukraine" and give peace a chance as the UN chief called the invasion the "saddest moment in my tenure as Secretary-General of the United Nations."

As the Russian invasion unfolded, India's then UN



envoy Ambassador T S Tirumurti in February underscored New Delhi's call for urgent de-escalation of tensions and cautioned that the situation was in danger of spiralling into a major crisis.

In statements in the Council and the General Assembly throughout the year, India consistently called for an immediate cessation of hostilities and an end to violence. New Delhi emphasised that dialogue and diplomacy are the only way forward and actions that exacerbate the conflict should be avoided.

"Our world faced many trials and tests in 2022 - some familiar, others we might not have imagined just one year ago," Guterres said, adding that even in the brutal war in Ukraine, the power of determined, discreet diplomacy has helped people and tackle unprecedented levels of global food insecurity.

India abstained on most

resolutions related to the Russia-Ukraine war in the Security Council, General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, including on a Security Council procedural resolution to convene a rare emergency special session of the General Assembly.

The 193-member General Assembly, the most representative body of the United Nations, convened the rare emergency session on February 28 on Russia's aggression against Ukraine, only the 11th such emergency session of the UNGA since 1950.

Kamboj, who took charge of India's Permanent Mission in New York in August, has asserted that in the course of the Ukraine conflict, India has "spoken in one voice that we are for peace. Peace is also a side and we favour diplomacy and dialogue... We are among the few countries, dare I say, which are speaking to both sides."

Assassination bid on Imran 'planned conspiracy', says JIT



PTI ■ LAHORE

The assassination bid on Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan during his long march to Islamabad last month was a "well-thought-out conspiracy," according to the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) probing the incident.

Khan, the chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, suffered bullet injuries in the right leg on November 3 when two gunmen fired a volley of bullets at him and others standing on a container-mounted truck in the Wazirabad area (some 150-km from Lahore), where he was leading the long march to press for snap polls.

Briefing the media on the findings of the JIT headed by Lahore police chief Ghulam Mahmood Dogar, Punjab Home Minister Omar Sarfraz Cheema said on Monday that

the gun attack on Khan was "organised one and well-thought-out conspiracy."

He said the JIT investigation found that more than one attacker tried to assassinate 70-year-old Khan in the rally.

Police had arrested the prime suspect, Muhammad Naveed, who has been in the JIT custody on a physical remand till January 3 for interrogation.

The minister said Naveed is a "trained assassin and he was present at the crime scene with his accomplices."

He said Naveed also failed a polygraph test. Naveed had told police he wanted to kill Khan as music was played during Azan time during his long march/rally.

Naveed's cousin Muhammad Waqas has also been in the JIT's custody till January 3 for a controversial

social media post. Waqas on November 3 had tweeted "something big is going to happen today in Imran Khan's rally".

Khan had blamed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and Major General Faisal Naseer of ISI for hatching a plot to assassinate him.

The Punjab police had registered the FIR in connection with the assassination attempt on Khan but didn't mention the high-profile suspects including ISI's top man Khan held responsible for the attack.

Khan dismissed the FIR, saying without nominating Sharif, Sanaullah, and ISI Counter Intelligence Wing head Maj-Gen Faisal in the FIR it is a mere "piece of trash".

The Punjab police said they nabbed Naveed from the crime scene and he had confessed to his crime. Naveed in his confessional statement said that he wanted to kill Khan as music was played during Azan time during his long march.

Indirectly blaming the powerful military establishment, Khan had said: "I wonder if I, being former Prime Minister of Pakistan, can't get an FIR registered in connection with the attack on me and other PTI workers what will happen to the common man."

Sharif pledges to eliminate terrorism from Pakistan



PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

As Pakistan reels from multiple incidents of terrorism, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed his vow to eradicate the menace amid criticism from ousted premier Imran Khan on the government's "failure" to curb militancy during its eight-month stint.

Addressing a gathering in the Dera Ismail Khan district of the restive Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province on Monday, Sharif said that the menace of terrorism was on the rise and the state would crush it very soon, the Dawn newspaper quoted him as saying.

He said that with the help of provincial governments and security forces, the government would eliminate terrorism in all its forms.

Sharif said that a meeting of the National Security

Committee (NSC) would be summoned in a few days to take stock of the security situation.

Commenting on the attack on a security compound claimed by the outlawed Pakistani Taliban (TTP) terror group in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu district last week, Sharif said it was heart-breaking and added that the law enforcement agencies conducted a successful operation, killing all terrorists who had taken over the compound.

Meanwhile, former prime minister Khan, who wants snap polls in the country at all costs and is likely to dissolve Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies, lambasted the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government for its "failure" to rein in terrorism after coming to power

in April this year.

During a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf meeting at his residence in Lahore, Khan, the chairman of the party, claimed that his government had "controlled terrorism and was proudly leading the country towards making it one of the world's top tourism destinations".

He expressed his concern over the situation at the Pakistan-Afghan border as well. He claimed there was a 52 per cent increase in terror incidents since April and chided the government for the resurgence of terrorism.

"At least 52 per cent increase has been recorded in terrorism cases across the country that claimed some 270 precious lives and left over 550 people injured," the former premier said.

Separately, PTI party leader Fawad Chaudhry told reporters that terrorism was returning to Pakistan.

He said that during its tenure, the PTI government was proudly projecting Pakistan as the world's top tourist destination, and now the nation was being pushed into the "fire of terrorism, and the embassies were issuing advisories to their employees to avoid five-star hotels" in Islamabad.



Pakistan makes 'special' security plan for Islamabad amid terror alert

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Police on Tuesday announced special security measures, including setting up 25 new check-posts, to tighten security in the federal capital here after several countries, including the US, UK, Saudi Arabia and Australia asked their citizens to restrict their movement, warning of a possible terror threat.

According to the security plan, shared on Islamabad police's official Twitter account, entry points of the Red Zone will be recorded via Safe City cameras while video surveillance of metro bus passengers would also be conducted.

Pakistani citizens as well as foreign nationals have been asked to carry their identification documents with them.

"Special security plan issued in view of the current

security situation in Islamabad. Temporary security check posts have been established at 25 different locations in Islamabad," it said.

Police also advised the local people to register tenants and employees at the nearest police station and warned that those employing unregistered local or foreign workers will be investigated.

All motorists have been instructed to ensure their vehicles had number plates issued by the excise office. People have been asked to inform authorities of any unusual activity on the helpline.

The security plan comes in the wake of the US, UK, Saudi Arabian and Australian governments issuing advisories to their respective citizens in Pakistan to restrict their movements due to possible terror threats.

Western New York hit by cold, storm; death toll ups to 28

AP ■ BUFFALO
Buffalo residents hovered around space heaters, hunted for cars buried in snow drifts and looked for more victims Monday, after 28 people died in one of the worst weather-related disasters ever to hit western New York.
The rest of the United States also was reeling from the ferocious winter storm, with at least another two dozen deaths reported in other parts of the country.
Up to 9 more inches of snow (23 centimeters) could fall in some areas of western New York through Tuesday, the National Weather Service said. "This is not the end yet," said Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz, calling the blizzard "the worst storm probably in our lifetime," even for an area accustomed to punishing snow.
Some people, he noted, were stranded in their cars for more than two days.
President Joe Biden said his prayers were with the victims' families, and offered federal assistance Monday to the hard-hit state.
Those who lost their lives around Buffalo were found in cars, homes and snowbanks.

Some died while shovelling snow, others when emergency crews could not respond in time to medical crises.
Melissa Carrick, a doula, said the blizzard forced her to coach a pregnant client through childbirth by telephone. An ambulance crew transported the woman to a hospital about 45 minutes south of Buffalo because none of the closer hospitals were reachable.
"In any other normal Buffalo storm? I would just go because that's what you do — just drive through the snow," she said. "But you knew this was different."
Scientists say the climate change crisis may have contributed to the intensity of the storm. That's because the atmosphere can carry more water vapour, which acts as fuel, said Mark Serreze, director of the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado, Boulder.
Victor Gensini, a meteorology professor at Northern Illinois University, likened a single weather event to an "at-bat" — and the climate as your "batting average."
"It's hard to say," Serreze said. "But are the dice a little bit loaded now? Absolutely."



Utility trucks line up in Buffalo, N.Y., where thousands remain without power after blizzard conditions on Monday. AP | PTI

The blizzard roared across western New York Friday and Saturday. With many grocery stores in the Buffalo area closed and driving bans in place, some people pleaded on social media for donations of food and diapers.
"It was like looking at a white wall for 14 to 18 hours straight," Poloncarz, the county official, said.
Relief is coming later this week, as forecasts call for temperatures to slowly rise, said Ashtun Robinson Cook, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.
Cook said the bomb cyclone — when atmospheric pressure drops very quickly in

a strong storm — was weakened. It developed near the Great Lakes, stirring up blizzard conditions including heavy winds and snow.
Some 3,410 domestic and international flights were cancelled Monday as of about 3 p.m. EDT, according to the tracking site FlightAware. The site said Southwest Airlines had 2,497 cancellations — about 60% of its scheduled flights and about 10 times as many as any other major US carrier.
Southwest said the weather was improving, which would "stabilize and improve our situation."
Based on FlightAware data, airports all across the US were suffering from cancellations and delays, including Denver, Atlanta, Las Vegas, Seattle, Baltimore and Chicago.
New York Gov. Kathy Hochul toured the aftermath in Buffalo — her hometown — on Monday, calling the blizzard "one for the ages". Almost every fire truck in the city became stranded Saturday, she said.
Hochul noted the storm came a little over a month after the region was inundated with another "historic" snowfall. Between the two storms, snow-

fall totals are not far off from the 242 centimeters the area normally sees in an entire winter season.
The National Weather Service said the snow total at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport stood at 1.25 metres at 10 a.m. Monday. Officials say the airport will be shut through Wednesday morning.
Shahida Muhammad told WKBW that an outage knocked out power to her 1-year-old son's ventilator. She and the child's father manually administered breaths from Friday until Sunday when rescuers saw her desperate social media posts and came to their aid.
In a makeshift hut in her living room, Trisha LoGrasso was still huddled around a space heater Monday with three of her children and her eldest daughter's boyfriend. The temperature inside her Buffalo home was 5.5 degrees Celsius. She was without heat because of a gas leak, and burst pipes left her with no running water.
"I've lived here my whole life, and this is the worst storm I've ever seen," the 48-year-old said. Melissa Osmon and her husband James were without

power for more than 72 hours in the Buffalo suburb of Williamsville, and would retreat to their car to stay warm for hours at a time.
"We even watched the Buffalo Bills game on our phone," Osmon said, speaking by phone from her GMC Acadia. "You can see your breath inside the house," she said. "That's how cold it is."
The storm knocked out power in communities from Maine to Seattle.
Storm-related deaths were reported practically nationwide, including at least eight killed in crashes in Missouri, Kansas and Kentucky. A woman fell through Wisconsin river ice, and there was a fatal fire at a Kansas homeless persons camp.
In Jackson, Mississippi, crews struggled Monday to get water through the capital city's beleaguered water system, authorities said. Many areas had no water or low water pressure. On Christmas Day, residents were told to boil their drinking water due to water lines bursting in the frigid temperatures.
"The issue has to be significant leaks in the system that we have yet to identify," the city said in a statement Monday.

More Rohingya refugees reach Indonesia after weeks at sea

AP ■ PIDIE
A second group in two days of weak and exhausted Rohingya Muslims landed on a beach in Indonesia's northernmost province of Aceh on Monday after weeks at sea, officials said.
At least 185 men, women and children disembarked from a rickety wooden boat at dusk on Ujong Pie beach at Muara Tiga, a coastal village in Aceh's Pidie district, said local police chief Fauzi, who goes by a single name.
"They are very weak because of dehydration and exhaustion after weeks at sea," Fauzi said. They were taken to the village hall and will stay there while they receive help

from residents, health workers and others. Fauzi said that immigration officials and police were trying to identify the refugee to determine if they were from the group of 190 Rohingya who were reported by United Nations to be drifting in a small boat in the Andaman Sea for a month.
The UNHCR on Friday urged countries to rescue the refugees, saying reports indicated they were in dire condition with insufficient food or water.
"Many are women and children, with reports of up to 20 people dying on the unseaworthy vessel during the journey," the agency said.
Also on Friday, another group of 58 Rohingya — all



Indonesian soldiers help ethnic Rohingya women and children to step out of a military truck upon arrival at a temporary shelter after their boat landed in Pidie, Aceh province, Indonesia on Monday. AP | PTI

men — arrived in Ladong village in Aceh Besar district.
Azharul Husna, who heads the Aceh branch of KontraS, an Indonesian rights group, said Monday that the men in the group all carried UNHCR cards from refugee camps in Bangladesh and had left in search of a better life in Malaysia.
Citing one of them, Husna said the 58 refugees left Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, where more than 700,000 Rohingya from Myanmar had fled, to work on plantations in Malaysia. Their boat was damaged and the engine failed, leaving them drifting at sea until they came ashore in Aceh.
Since 2017, Myanmar security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and burning of thousands of homes belonging to Rohingya.

UN agency probes origin of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia

AP ■ PIDIE
A United Nations agency is seeking information about the voyage of over 100 Rohingya Muslim refugees who landed on an Indonesian beach this week, and warned Tuesday that there will likely be more.
A distressing video circulated widely in social media showed the dehydrated and exhausted Rohingya, crumpled weakly and emaciated, many crying for help.
At least 185 men, women and children disembarked from a rickety wooden boat Monday at dusk on Ujong Pie beach at Muara Tiga, a coastal village in Aceh's Pidie district, said local police chief Fauzi, who goes by a single name.
"They are very weak because of dehydration and exhaustion after weeks at sea," Fauzi said.
Muhammad Rafki Syukri, the Protection Associate at United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

said the agency would provide Rohingya language translators and counselling to determine if they were from the group of 190 Rohingya who were reported by United Nations to be drifting in a small boat in the Andaman Sea for a month.
"With prolonged-conflict and insecure situations in their country of origin, it is possible that the movement of refugees to find safe places will continue to grow," he said.
Chris Lewa, the director of the Arakan Project, which works in support of Myanmar's Rohingya, confirmed Tuesday that the boat that landed Monday on Ujong Pie beach was from the group of 190 Rohingya. But Syukri said the UNHCR could not verify that information and was still coordinating with governments in the region.
"But we will continue to search for further information to ensure the actual data," Syukri told reporters on Tuesday while visiting the Rohingya refugees.

Israeli air force veterans say incoming government a danger

Israeli doctors reject Netanyahu ally's anti-LGBTQ remarks
AP ■ JERUSALEM
Israel's largest medical centre and healthcare workers from hospitals around the country have spoken out against remarks by allies of Benjamin Netanyahu calling for a law to allow discrimination against LGBTQ people in hospitals and businesses.
It was part of a broader backlash against remarks made this week by Religious Zionism politicians calling for legal discrimination against LGBTQ people.
Netanyahu's new government — the most religious and hard-line in Israel's history — is made up of ultra-Orthodox parties, an ultranationalist religious faction, and his Likud party. It is to be sworn in on Thursday.
Nun, a former commander of the air force and Amos Yadlin, a former head of military intelligence.
All three are former fighter pilots. Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his ultra-Orthodox and far-right partners captured a parliamentary majority in Nov. 1 elections.

Japan PM sacks 4th minister to patch up scandal-hit Cabinet

AP ■ TOKYO
Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Tuesday dismissed his fourth minister in two months to patch a scandal-tainted Cabinet that has raised questions over his judgment of staff credentials.
Kenya Akiba, minister in charge of reconstruction of Fukushima and other disaster-hit areas, has faced allegations of mishandling political and election funds and of having murky ties to the Unification Church, whose cozy political ties and practices surrounding followers' huge donations have

raised controversy.
"I have made a heavy decision and submitted my resignation," Akiba told reporters after meeting with Kishida. He repeated that he has never violated any law in relation to the issues for which he has been criticised.
Kishida tapped former reconstruction minister Hiromichi Watanabe as a replacement. Watanabe's appointment was to be official after a palace ceremony.
Akiba's dismissal was seen as Kishida's attempt to remove an administration's soft spot.

Foreign firms happy as China ends quarantine

AP ■ BEIJING
Foreign companies welcomed China's decision to end quarantines for travellers from abroad as an important step to revive slumping business activity while Japan on Tuesday joined India in announcing restrictions on visitors from the country as infections surge.
The ruling Communist Party's abrupt decision to lift some of the world's strictest anti-virus controls comes as it tries reverse an economic downturn. It has ended curbs that confined millions of people to their homes and sparked protests, but hospitals have been flooded with feverish, wheezing patients as the virus spreads.
The announcement late Monday that quarantines for travellers from abroad will end Jan. 8 is the biggest step toward ending limits that have kept

most foreign visitors out of China since early 2020. Quarantines were reduced last month from seven days to five.
Also Monday, the government downgraded the official seriousness of Covid-19 and dropped a requirement for people with the virus to be quarantined. That added to a rapid drumbeat of steps to dismantle controls that had been expected to stay in place at least through mid-2023.
"It finally feels like China has turned the corner," the

chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, Colm Rafferty, said in a statement. He said ending the quarantine "clears the way for resumption of normal business travel." Business groups have warned companies were shifting investment away from China because foreign executives were blocked from visiting.
The American chamber said more than 70% of companies that responded to a poll this month expect the impact of

the latest wave of outbreaks to last no more than three months, ending in early 2023.
The British Chamber of Commerce expressed hope China will restart normal processing of business visas to allow "resumption of crucial people to people exchanges." It said that will "contribute to restoring optimism and reinstating China as a priority investment destination."
The move "will potentially boost business confidence," but companies are likely to "wait to see how the situation on the ground evolves" before making long-term decisions, the European Chamber of Commerce in China said in a statement.
Meanwhile, Japan announced visitors from China will undergo virus tests starting Friday as a "temporary emergency measure."

PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given that Rashmi Kaushik (hereinafter called the said property) by virtue of Relinquishment Deed Dated 04.07.2018, Initially Ravi Parkash Kaushik was the Owner of said property by virtue of Conveyance Deed executed by POI registered vide Doc No. 588 / and after the death of said Ravi Parkash Kaushik, his legal heirs of late Ravi Parkash Kaushik had executed a relinquishment deed same is registered vide Doc No. 3950 SR IV A / Shahdara in favour of Rashmi Kaushik and Said Rashmi Kaushik has agreed to sell the said Property to Naveen Kumar & Chanchal Upadhyay and Said Naveen Kumar & Chanchal Upadhyay has agreed to create a mortgage in favour of our clients, IDFC FIRST BANK LTD., Rajendra Place Branch, New Delhi.
All persons having any claim against or in respect of the said Property, or any part thereof, by way of sale, exchange, mortgage (equitable/registered or otherwise), gift, trust, inheritance, lien or otherwise, however, are hereby requested to notify the same in writing to us with supporting documentary evidence at the address mentioned below within 10 days from the date hereof, failing which the claim or claims, if any, of such person or persons will be considered to have been waived and/or abandoned and our client shall proceed with the disbursement of loan against the said property and subsequent creation of mortgage in respect thereof.
Vishal Diwan (Advocate)
For Diwan and Company LLP
Advocates and Solicitors
House No. 2 (LGF), NRI Complex New Delhi - 19
Mobile No. 9818269929

Public Notice
This is to inform general public that Mrs. Nita Parti has acquired the Ground Floor (Without Roof Rights), "Said Floor", Built on Property Bearing No. F.271 Land area measuring 125 Sq. yds. Situated in the Layout Plan of New Repliner Nagar, New Delhi vice Relinquishment Deed dated 14.01.2013. Doc no. 254, New Delhi. Mrs. Nita Parti is intending to sell above said property to Mr. Lakshay Rajeev, Mr. Mohinder Rajeev and Mrs. Sunita Rajeev and further Mr. Lakshay Rajeev, Mr. Mohinder Rajeev and Mrs. Sunita Rajeev are mortgaging the above said property with "SBI Bank Ltd. & in case anyone has any objection, the same may be raised within 07 days of this publication to Mr. Muneesh Dhawan/ Mr. Sudhir Jain (Advocates), Law Veritas North, Unit No. 507, 5th Floor, G3-111, Tower, (B-08), Naital Subhash Place, Delhi-110034 or contact at 9066707172/981822636 (SBI).

Public Notice
My client Shri Ram Lal/s/o Late Shiv Lal r/o 603, Sunlight Colony-II, New Delhi-110014, hereby disown his (1) grand-son Shri Tarun Kumar s/o Shri Harbans Lal, (2) grand-daughter-in-law Smt. Anita, w/o Shri Tarun Kumar, both r/o 619, Sunlight Colony-II, New Delhi-110014, and debar them from inheriting any share in entire property No.619, Sunlight Colony-II, New Delhi-110014, belonging to my client, as my client Shri Ram Lal has already transferred the said property in favour of his son Shri Tarun Kumar & Smt. Anita. My client will be doing so at his own risks and consequences.
Kapil Gupta, Advocate
525-A, Jangpura B, New Delhi-110014

Public Notice
BIHAR BANDHU CO-OPERATIVE GROUP HOUSING SOCIETY LTD
Flat No.3, Pocket-5, DDA Flats, Sector-12 Dwarka, New Delhi-110075
In accordance with rule 19(2) of DCS rules, 2007, it is to inform publicly that the 2 members of the Bihar Bandhu CGHS Ltd. have resigned from the society and they have been paid their share money & contributions. The names of resigned member are
1. Sh. Mahesh Chandra Pant (M. No. 129) and
2. Smt. Anshu Sharma (M. No. 237).
If anyone who is having objections, may lodge objections at the society office, which is located at Flat No.3, Pocket-5, DDA Flats, Sector-12, Dwarka, New Delhi-78, or at the RCS office, Parliament Street, New Delhi within 7 day from the date of publication of the public notice.
Secretary - Bihar Bandhu CGHS Ltd.

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Rama Chauhan w/o. Mr. Arun Kumar Chauhan who is/are purchasing the Fourth Floor, built up on Eastern Side Portion, area measuring 75 Sq. Yds., part of Property bearing Municipal No.XV/1980, 1981, 1983 & 1984, Ward No. XV, comprised in Khata No.375 (743/218/216) and 376 min. Situated at Chuna Mandi, Pahar Ganj, New Delhi-110055; from (1) Mr. Anil Kumar and (2) Mr. Parveen Kumar both S/o Late Mr. Ramesh Chand vide Relinquishment Deed dated 08.10.2018, vide Document No.9221, registered with the Office of Sub-Registrar-II, Asaf Ali Road, Delhi, registered on 15.10.2018 and same to be financed by mortgage by Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Limited. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim/right/ title/ interest/ creating mortgage 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 etc.
Lucem Legal LLP
136, Basement Floor, Uday Park, near Mother Dairy, New Delhi-110049 Contact: 011-40046316, 41667327

कार्यालय अधिवासी अभियन्ता, अनुराखण्ड जल संस्थान
उत्तराखण्ड जल संस्थान
लेन नं.-1, लखन विहार, मोपरवाला रोड, देहरादून-248001
Phone/Fax No.: 0135-2671940, E-mail - eemdujs@rediffmail.com

क्र.सं.	विवरण	अनुसूची
1	ऑनलाईन प्रकाशन की तिथि	30.12.2022 at 11:00 Hrs
2	निविदा प्रपत्र डाउनलोड करने की तिथि	30.12.2022 at 11:00 Hrs
3	प्री-बिड मीटिंग की तिथि	03.01.2023 at 11:00 Hrs
4	बिड ऑनलाईन जमा करने की प्रारम्भ तिथि	07.01.2023 at 11:00 Hrs
5	बिड ऑनलाईन जमा करने की अन्तिम तिथि	12.01.2023 up to 17:00 Hrs
6	ऑफ लाईन रूप से जमा किये जाने वाले प्रपत्र (निविदा प्रपत्र हेतु निर्धारित बुलक, बिड सिक्वोरिटि, स्टॉम्प पेपर एवं अन्य सम्बन्धित दस्तावेज)	12.01.2023 up to 17:00 Hrs
7	तकनीकी बिड खोलने की तिथि	13.01.2023 at 11:00 Hrs
8	विशेष निविदा खोलने की तिथि	सूचना पृष्ठ से दी जायेगी

शेष नियम एवं शर्तें निविदा के अनुपत्र अथवा वल रहेगें।
"जल संयंत्र-जीवन संयंत्र"
अधिवासी अभियन्ता

OFFICE OF THE PROJECT MANAGER, CONSTRUCTION UNIT, UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL NIGAM
GHINGARIKHAL, RANIKHET, DISTT- ALMORA 283645
Letter No.: 3052/Nivida/247 E-Tender Notice Date: 26-12-2022

- Name of the work:- CONSTRUCTION OF PROPOSE SURFACE PARKING AT MAJKHALI, DISTRICT-ALMORA.
- Estimated Cost:- Rs. 48.81 Lakh
- Period of Completion:- 6 Month
- Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal:- 27-12-2022 (17.00hrs)
- Online Bid submission: End date: -16-01-2023 (17.00 hrs)
- Date & Time of Technical bid Opening :-18-01-2023 (11.00 hrs)
- Name and Address of the Officer inviting bid :- Project Manager, Construction Unit, Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Ranikhet.
- Pre-bid meeting details (if required) Date & Place: 30-12-2022 (11.00 hrs) Project Manager, Construction Unit, Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Ranikhet.
- For further details, details of subsequent Amendment / correction documentation etc. may be obtained from the e-Procurement portal www.uktenders.gov.in

PROJECT MANAGER

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001
Corporate Identification Number(CIN):U40109PB2010SGC033813
Website www.pspcl.in e-tendering portal: <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>
Contact No.: 96461-19383, 96461-11036

Tender Enquiry No. QQ-243/PO-C Date: 27.12.2022
Chief Purchase Officer/MM, Central Purchase Organization, PSPCL, 2nd Floor Multi-storey Building, The Mall Road, Patiala, invites E-tender for procurement of 15.3 MT ISI Marked Polypropylene yellow coloured rope, 3 strand, Hawser Laid, conforming to IS:5175-1992 (with latest amendments) and PSPCL Specification QQ-243 for 10mm, 16mm & 20mm sizes.
For detailed NIT & Tender specifications please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 06.01.2023 at 11:00 PM onwards.
Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at: <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>
C 490/22 PR-Advr. No.-761 55/12/1308/2022/202022

UJVN LIMITED
H.O.: "UJJWAL", Maharanji Bagh, GMS Road, Dehradun-248006
Telephone: 0135-22763808 Fax: 0135-2763508
CIN No. U40101UR2001SGC025866 Website www.ujvn.com

Tender Notice Date: 27.12.2022
Office of the Executive Engineer (Test), Dhakrani invites Tenders from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:
Tender No.08/EE(Test)/DKN/2022-23
Name of work : Supply, Installation, and Testing & Commissioning of 48 Volt /20 Amp. Float and float cum boost charger and 48 V/100AH Plant's Battery Bank for Kulhal Powerhouse.
Estimated cost: Rs. 13.00 Lakh (GST extra)
Date of Availability of bid document on website: 27.12.2022
Last date for submission of bids: 18.01.2023 up to 16:00 hrs
For fuller & further details, kindly visit our website: www.ujvn.com. The tender document can be downloaded from the Nigam's website www.ujvn.com.
Executive Engineer (Test), Dhakrani
"Avoid wasteful use of Electricity"

Govt tweaks GST rules for claiming input tax credit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

GST taxpayers will be required to reverse by November 30 the input tax credit (ITC) claimed in the last fiscal in case their suppliers fail to deposit the due tax by September 30, the Finance Ministry has said.

The taxpayers, however, can reclaim the ITC later following the deposit of taxes by the supplier.

The ministry has inserted Rule 37A in Central Goods and Services Tax rules to give effect to the new provision.

"Where input tax credit has been availed by a registered person..., but the return in Form GSTR-3B for the tax period corresponding to the said statement of outward supplies has not been furnished by such supplier till September 30..., the...input tax credit shall be reversed...On or before November 30 following the end of the such financial year," the ministry said.

KPMG in India, Partner Indirect Tax, Abhishek Jain said insertion of Rule 37A merits attention as the same provides for the instances and the manner where ITC is required to be reversed in case of non-payment of tax by the supplier.

"Companies should take note of these changes and align business practices accordingly," Jain said.



AMRG & Associates Senior Partner Rajat Mohan said this change would benefit only select cases in litigation due to two reasons.

"Firstly, it is a prospective change only that will not curate any benefit till fiscal 2021-22. Secondly, very few cases will be able to qualify the conditions stipulated in these rules," Mohan said.

Saurabh Agarwal, Tax Partner, EY, said while the GSTR 1 would capture the details of supplies made by the seller to multiple buyers, it

would be very difficult for the buyer to ascertain whether the tax has been discharged by the seller on GSTR 3B against their invoices or not as the said return doesn't capture invoice wise tax payment.

"The amendments made would further increase the onus of compliance on the recipient of goods/services. It is advisable that industry should look at digitalising this process of compliance either through IRP or through ASPs in order to avoid undue leakages in the system," Agarwal added.

Sensex, Nifty rise for 2nd day as banking, metal shares shine

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher for a second straight day on Tuesday on gains in banking, IT and metal shares following a firm trend in the global markets.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 361.01 points or 0.60 per cent to settle at 60,927.43. During the day, it rallied 420.26 points or 0.69 per cent to 60,986.68.

The broader NSE Nifty climbed 117.70 points or 0.65 per cent to end at 18,132.30.

From the Sensex pack, Tata Steel, Tata Motors, Larsen & Toubro, Asian Paints, Wipro, Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Tech Mahindra and Titan were the major winners.

Hindustan Unilever, ITC, Mahindra & Mahindra and Nestle were the laggards.

"With strong support from global peers, the domestic market is attempting to recoup its previous week's losses. Metal stocks shone amid hopes of a demand revival in China on reports of loosening Covid restrictions. This, along with fears over supply disruptions from winter storms in the US, resulted in oil prices rising," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

"Markets gained over half a per cent in a range bound ses-



sion, tracking firm global cues. After the initial uptick, the Nifty surrendered all the gains in no time however buying in select index majors pushed the index to the day's high again as the day progressed," said Ajit Mishra, VP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

In the broader market, the BSE smallcap gauge climbed 1.46 per cent and midcap index advanced 0.78 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, metal jumped 4.59 per cent, commodities climbed 2.34 per cent, telecommunication (1.54 per cent), industrials (1.38 per cent), realty (1.38 per cent) and power (1.15 per cent).

FMCG remained the only laggard.

Elsewhere in Asia, equity markets in Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai ended with gains.

Equity exchanges in Europe were trading in the positive territory in mid-session deals. Markets in the US were closed on Monday.

Indian banks' GNPA's decline to 5% in Sept 2022: RBI

'But current situation can impact health'

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Indian banks' gross non-performing assets declined to 5.8 per cent, but the present macroeconomic environment can impact lenders' health, the Reserve Bank said on Tuesday.

The GNPA's, which touched a peak in FY18 following the asset quality review, have been declining sequentially to reach 5 per cent in September, the RBI said in the 'Trends and Progress of Banking in India' report for FY22 released on Tuesday.

The number stood at 5.8 per cent in March 2022, according to the report which also had a strong commitment by the RBI to be not complacent, given the present environment.

"Although presently the Indian banking sector remains robust and resilient with improved asset quality and strong capital buffers, the policymakers remain mindful of dynamically evolving macroeconomic conditions that may impinge on the health of regulated entities," the report said.

The decrease in the GNPA's was attributed to lower slippages and also a reduction in outstanding GNPA's through



recoveries, upgradations and write-offs, the report said.

However, the restructured assets ratio increased by 1.1 percentage points for all the borrowers and by 0.5 percentage points for large borrowers, the report said, adding that the efforts to help individuals and small businesses with the loan recast scheme has been successful.

In what can be called as a divergent trend between the state-run lenders and the private lenders, the report said, the reduction in the stock of GNPA's was due to write-offs in the public sector banks in FY22, while in the case of private banks, upgradation of loans was the primary driver for asset quality improvements.

Interestingly, all the bank groups showed a decline in the

GNPA's, except the foreign banks, where the loss assets increased in FY22 to 0.5 per cent from 0.2 per cent in FY21.

The reliance on large borrowers for loans seems to be going down with the increase in the retail business and accounts of over ₹5 crore accounted for 47.8 per cent of the outstanding credit in FY22 as against 48.4 per cent in FY21.

However, such accounts' contribution to overall dud assets improved more substantially to 63.4 per cent of the overall NPAs in FY22 as against 66.4 per cent in FY21.

An acceleration in income and contraction in expenditure boosted the profitability of SCBs in 2021-22, measured in terms of return on equity and return on assets, the RBI said.

'Coal India to meet 700 MT production target of FY23'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Coal India Chairman Pramod Agrawal on Tuesday exuded confidence that the PSU will achieve the production target of 700 million tonnes for the current financial year.

Coal India (CIL) accounts for over 80 per cent of the domestic coal output. "I am confident...Coal India will achieve the 700 million tonne coal production target this financial year," the chairman was quoted as saying in a statement.

Addressing virtually a team of CIL-arm MCL, Agrawal congratulated company officials for registering a growth of 15.9 per cent over the targeted production of coal, which is almost 19 million tonne.

Stating that the demand for power will increase in coming days, Agrawal said, "There will be

increased demand for coal from Coal India, and MCL, which is successfully supplying about 435,000 tonne of coal daily to the power sector, will have to increase its contribution."

Quality of domestic coal increased considerably: Govt

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government on Tuesday said the quality of domestic coal has increased considerably as the grade conformity of fossil fuel has improved to 69 per cent in the current fiscal. The Government and the coal companies, including Coal India, have taken several steps to achieve the objective of supplying quality coal to all consumers.

Rupee falls 25 paise against US dollar on forex outflows

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee declined 25 paise to close at 82.90 against the US dollar on Tuesday, as month-end dollar demand from importers and significant foreign fund outflows sapped investor appetite.

Moreover, the risk-off mood among investors and firm crude oil prices in the international market weighed on the rupee, forex dealers said.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened lower at 82.71 against the greenback and witnessed an intraday high of 82.69 and a low of 82.90.

It finally settled at 82.90, down 25 paise over its previous close of 82.65.

"Month-end dollar demand from oil importers and year-end rebalancing foreign fund outflows weighed on the Indian rupee in Tuesday's trade as it surrendered



Monday's gain. The surge in crude and precious metal prices also weighed on the local unit," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities.

The rupee has been stuck in the range of 82.40 to 82.90, lacking the directional move ahead of the year-end.

"In the near term, the rupee is expected to trade between 82.40 to 82.90 against the dollar. The bias for the local currency remains weak as long as it trades below 82.40," Parmar added.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.27 per cent lower at 104.02.

Global oil benchmark

Brent crude futures rose 0.83 per cent to USD 84.62 per barrel.

The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 361.01 points or 0.60 per cent higher at 60,927.43, while the broader NSE Nifty climbed 117.70 points or 0.65 per cent to 18,132.30.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in capital markets on Tuesday as they sold shares worth ₹867.65 crore, according to exchange data.

The gold price rose ₹173 to ₹55,074 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid gains in precious metal internationally, according to HDFC Securities.

According to an official announcement on Monday, China will scrap quarantine for international travellers from January 8 next year, as it reopens its international borders and comes out of international isolation after nearly three years.

Sebi bans Moneytree Research, its proprietor from securities mkts for three yrs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has barred Moneytree Research and its proprietor Narendra Madan Rathod from the securities markets for three years for providing unauthorised investment services.

The order came after Sebi received a complaint against Moneytree and Rathod. Thereafter, the regulator examined the matter and subsequently issued a show-cause notice to Moneytree Research and Rathod in August 2021.

Moneytree Research and Rathod are collectively referred to as noticees.

In its order, the regulator found that noticees was never registered with Sebi in any capacity as an intermediary.

By operating as an 'investment adviser', without obtaining a registration from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi), the regulator found that noticees have violated the IA (Investment



Adviser) rules.

The noticees had received a total amount of ₹41.07 lakh during June 2017 to November 2018, Sebi said in its order passed on Friday.

Sebi has directed the noticees to refund, within three months, the money received from investors in respect of their unregistered investment advisory activities.

Also, the regulator has debarred the noticees from accessing as well as dealing in the securities markets for a period of three years from the date of completion of refunds to clients along with depositing of the balance amount with Sebi, whichever is later.

Gold rises ₹173; silver zooms ₹926

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price rose ₹173 to ₹55,074 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid gains in precious metal internationally, according to HDFC Securities.

The yellow metal had ended at ₹54,901 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

Silver also zoomed ₹926 to ₹70,205 per kilogram.

"Gold price continue to trade higher, helped by a softer dollar," Navneet Damani, Senior VP - Commodity Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, said.

In the international market, gold was trading higher at \$1,807.60 per ounce while silver was up at \$24.19 per ounce.

"Comex gold prices rose in the asian trading hours supported by a softer dollar, although trading was thin after the long Christmas weekend," an analyst at HDFC Securities said.

Punjab & Sind Bank board to consider fundraising of ₹ 250cr on December 30

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

City-based Punjab & Sind Bank on Tuesday said its board will meet on December 30 to consider a proposal for raising up to ₹250 crore by various modes, including equity and bonds issuance, the bank said on Tuesday.

The bank said it plans to raise capital up to an amount and aggregating to ₹250 crore in any combinations of equity shares or debt in the form of Basel III compliant bonds.

The capital will be raised in one or more tranches within a period of 12 months from the date of approval by way of issue of these instruments, the lender said.

Govt proposing to grant status of national importance to IIFT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Government is proposing to declare the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) as 'institution of national importance' with an aim to empower it to attain standards of global excellence. IIFT has three branches in New Delhi, Kolkata and Kakinada. The institute is a deemed university.

It was set up in 1963 by the government as an autonomous organisation to help professionalise the country's foreign trade management and increase exports by developing human resources, analysing and disseminating data and conducting research.

According to the draft bill posted on the commerce ministry's website, all the Indian Institutes of Foreign Trade would be declared as 'institutions of national importance with a view to empowering these institutions in attaining standards of global excellence in international trade (management and international economics) and allied areas of knowledge'.

The draft - The Indian Institutes of Foreign Trade Bill, 2022 - stated that the director would be the chief executive officer of every institute, and would be responsible for proper administration.

Govt mulls offloading 15-20 lakh tons of wheat from FCI to contain prices in 2023

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government is considering releasing 15-20 lakh tonnes of wheat next year from the FCI stock for bulk consumers like flour millers, under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) to contain rising retail prices, according to official sources.

According to the data maintained by the consumer affairs ministry, the average retail price of wheat was at ₹32.25 per kg on December 27, higher than ₹28.53 per kg in the year-ago period. Wheat flour (atta) price too remained higher at ₹37.25 per kg than ₹31.74 per kg a year ago.

Under the OMSS policy, the government allows state-run Food Corporation of India (FCI) to sell foodgrains, espe-



cially wheat and rice, at pre-determined prices in the open market from time to time to bulk consumers and private traders. The purpose is to boost the supply during the lean season and moderate the general open market prices.

An official source said, "The nodal Food Ministry has moved an OMSS policy for 2023 for wheat and the plan is to release 15-20 lakh tonnes from the FCI for bulk users under the OMSS."

Wheat grown in the last two crops will be issued from

Hindustan Power Exchange crosses one billion units power trading-mark

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hindustan Power Exchange (HPX) on Tuesday said it has reached the milestone of one billion units of power traded within six months of its launch.

With more than 360 market participants, HPX has also raced to register participants comprising 80 per cent buy volume of overall Day Ahead Market (DAM); 90 per cent sell volume of Green DAM and 70 per cent buy of Real-Time Market (RTM), an HPX statement said.

HPX - promoted by PTC India, Bombay Stock Exchange and ICICI Bank - has reached the milestone of one billion units of power traded within six months of its launch, it stat-



ed. It is now the number two exchange of the country in the contingency segment, and the total settlement registered on its platform was ₹1,250 crore, it claimed.

Though eastern entities have contributed about 51 per cent in this amount since the commencement of operations of the exchange, the participation from Southern entities has increased in the last two months, and they contributed 41 per cent in December.

Max Healthcare partners with genomics biotech firm Anuva

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Max Healthcare on Tuesday said it has entered into a partnership with genomics biotech firm Anuva to conduct genomic-based research on various communicable and non-communicable diseases in India.

The two partners have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for a five-year engagement, Max



Healthcare said in a statement.

The objective of the research will be to identify insights for precision medicine application across diseases including breast cancer, lung

cancer, diabetes, cardiac disease, kidney disease, drug resistant tuberculosis, and others, it added.

Under the collaboration, Max Healthcare will provide its expertise in clinical research and will serve as the clinical centre for data and/or sample collection from individuals who consent to share their data for the purpose of research.

"There is a lot to discover

in the field of genetic and lifestyle diseases. With the coming of precision medicine and genomics, it has the potential to provide efficient solutions and transform the way we look at modern medicine today," Max Healthcare Group Medical Director, Sandeep Budhiraja said.

Anuva CEO Jonathan Picker said the promise and potential of genomics to transform medicine is enormous.

Airbag industry in India to grow to ₹7K cr by FY27: Icra

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The industry size of airbags, a key safety feature in vehicles, is expected to grow to up to ₹7,000 crore by FY2027 in India, from the current levels of around ₹2,500 crore, according to ratings agency Icra.

The growth in the airbag industry, which is one of the fastest growing auto component segments, is expected to be fuelled by the increase in content per vehicle arising

from higher regulatory requirements and voluntary increase in the number of airbags per vehicle for enhancing safety, Icra said in a statement.

"The mandatory content per vehicle for airbag manufacturers is expected to rise from ₹3,000-4,000 currently to ₹8,000-10,000 by October 1, 2023. The average number of airbags per car sold is about three currently, and this is expected to increase signifi-



cantly post the mandatory implementation of six airbags per car from October 1, 2023," Icra Vice President and Sector Head Vinutaa S said.

Accordingly, Icra said it expects the industry to grow to

₹6,000-7,000 crore by FY27, from the current levels of ₹2,400-2,500 crore, at a four-year CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 25-30 per cent.

The ratings agency pointed out that earlier, only one airbag per car (driver airbag) was mandatory from July 2019. This increased to two airbags (dual front airbags) for category M1 vehicles (vehicles that can seat up to eight passengers and weigh less than 3.5 tonne) manufactured from Jan 1, 2022.

REDS MAKE FLYING START ON PL RETURN

AP ■ BIRMINGHAM

Liverpool got off to the flying start they craved on the Premier League's return from the World Cup as a 3-1 win at Aston Villa on Monday cut the gap on the top four to five points.

Mohamed Salah and Virgil van Dijk put the Reds in a commanding position before half-time.

But Jurgen Klopp's men had to endure some nervy moments in the second half after Ollie Watkins pulled a goal back for Villa before teenager Stefan Bajcetic came off the bench to secure the three points with his first senior goal.

Liverpool struggled to match their standards of recent seasons during the first part of the season, but looked refreshed to inflict Unai Emery's first league defeat since taking charge of Villa.

Salah is one of a number of Klopp's key players who was not involved in Qatar and took just five minutes to net his 15th goal of the season.

The Egyptian swept home Andy Robertson's pass after Trent Alexander-Arnold's through ball had opened up the Villa defence.

Emery's men were left to rue a host of big chances to get immediately back on level terms



as Liverpool showed no sign of remedying their defensive issues so far this season.

Leon Bailey and Watkins were both guilty of wasteful finishing.

At the other end, Darwin Nunez was even more profligate despite causing chaos with his powerful running in behind the Villa backline.

The Uruguayan headed over Robertson's inviting cross and then fired straight at Villa's stand-in goalkeeper Robin Olsen with just the Swede to beat after Ezri Konsa's error.

Van Dijk was not so forgiv-

ing to finally give the visitors a two-goal cushion as the Dutch defender calmly steered home Salah's pass from a corner.

But Villa refused to accept their fate in a breathless second half.

Watkins had the ball in the net within three minutes of the restart but had just strayed off-side before firing into the far corner.

John McGinn also fluffed his lines with just goalkeeper Alisson to beat before the home side got the goal their start to the second half deserved.

more difficult chances count with a brilliant header back across goal to halve Villa's arrears.

Liverpool's relative lack of strength in depth compared to their competitors for a place in the top four was exposed by Klopp needing to turn to two teenagers off the bench as 17-year-old Ben Doak also made his first Premier League appearance.

But 18-year-old Bajcetic showed a maturity beyond his years with a calm finish after Nunez had been denied once more by Olsen.

Liverpool agree deal for Gakpo

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Liverpool appear to have won the race to sign Dutch international forward Cody Gakpo after PSV Eindhoven announced an agreement with the English giants on Monday.

Gakpo, who scored three goals at the World Cup for the Netherlands, had previously been linked with a move to Liverpool's rivals Manchester United.

"PSV and Liverpool FC have reached an agreement on the proposed transfer of Cody Gakpo," PSV said.

"The 23-year-old attacker will leave for England imminently where he will be subjected to the necessary formalities ahead of the completion of the transfer."

PSV general manager Marcel Brands said the transfer fee would be a club record for the Dutch club.

According to reports, the fee could rise to as much as 50 million euros (\$53 million, £44 million).

Arsenal comeback opens up 7-point lead on top

AP ■ LONDON

Arsenal opened up a seven-point lead at the top of the Premier League after coming from behind to beat West Ham 3-1 at the Emirates on Monday.

Bukayo Saka and Gabriel Martinelli turned the game around in the space of five second half minutes before Eddie Nketiah stepped up in the absence of Gabriel Jesus to seal all three points.

Said Benrahma's first half penalty had given the Hammers the lead, but David Moyes' men remain just one point above the relegation zone in 16th.

Arsenal's momentum towards a first league title since 2004 could have been halted by a six-week break for the World Cup.

Mikel Arteta made no allowances for his stars that have been away in Qatar as William Saliba started just eight days after being part of the French squad that lost the final on penalties to Argentina.

However, that decision backfired when Saliba hesitated to allow Michail Antonio latch onto a ball over the top and then dived in on Jarrod Bowen.

Despite Bowen not going to ground immediately, referee Michael Oliver pointed to the spot and Benrahma confidently dispatched the penalty.

Arsenal thought they had a spot-kick of their own in first half stoppage time but Oliver reversed his initial decision



after seeing a replay of Martin Odegaard's shot come off Aaron Cresswell's head rather than the left-back's arm.

The Gunners got the break they needed to turn the tide eight minutes after the break when Odegaard's mishit shot fell perfectly into the path of Saka to sidefoot home.

Martinelli added the second goal moments later with the help of West Ham goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski, who was far too easily beaten at his near post.

A prolonged injury layoff for Jesus had raised doubts over Arsenal's ability to maintain their title challenge in the coming months with games against Newcastle, Tottenham

and Manchester United to come in January alone.

But Nketiah grabbed his opportunity on his first Premier League start of the season with a brilliant spin and low finish into the far corner from Odegaard's pass 21 minutes from time.

Manchester City can reduce the gap at the top to five points and move back above Newcastle into second place with victory when they travel to Leeds on Wednesday night.

However, another show of resilience from Arsenal showed the fight that lies ahead of the defending champions if they are to retain the title once more in the second half of the season.

Behardien calls it a day

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

South African white-ball specialist and former T20I skipper Farhaan Behardien announced his retirement from professional cricket on Tuesday.

The 39-year-old, who played 59 ODIs and 38 T20Is and captained the Proteas in a three-match T20 series against Sri Lanka in 2017, took to social media to announce his decision to retire.

The all-rounder said the decision to quit professional cricket after playing for more than 18 years was tough, and the last couple of weeks were especially tough for him.

Predominantly a batter, he made 1074 ODI runs and 518 T20I runs, though it was his prolific run-scoring in domestic cricket which stood out. Behardien made his first-class debut in 2004 and scored more than 7,000 runs in 125 games with his highest being an unbeaten 150. He had to wait eight years to make his South Africa debut and became a regular in the white-ball sides.

He was part of the Proteas' T20 World Cup campaigns in 2012, 2014 and 2016 as well as the ODI World Cup in 2015.

Gardner new No.1 in women's T20I all-rounders' ranking



PTI ■ DUBAI

Australian all-rounder Ashleigh Gardner has overtaken West Indies skipper Haylee Matthews, India's Deepti Sharma and New Zealand captain Sophie Devine to attain a career-best No.1 spot in the latest ICC Women's T20I player rankings for all-rounders released on Tuesday.

Following a closely-fought five-match T20I series, which Australia won 4-1, Gardner, who was named Player of the Match in the last game for her 32-ball unbeaten 66 and bowling figures of 2/20, has topped

the all-rounders' list for the first time after moving up three spots.

Gardner (417 points) holds a big advantage over Devine (389) and Deepti (387) in second and third spots respectively, with Matthews dropping two places (381) to fourth.

The 25-year-old Australian is also up two places to a career-best seventh position among batters and progressed three places to a career-best 14th among bowlers in the latest weekly update.

Deepti Sharma, who is third on the all-rounders' list with 387 points, is also maintaining a similar position in the T20I bowlers' ranking, while her 34-ball 53 in the fifth and final T20I sees her move up three places to 29th in the batting rankings.

Among batters, India's Smriti Mandhana is third with 727 points with Australia's Tahlia McGrath leading the charts with 814 points, followed by country-mate Beth Mooney (760 points). India's Jemimah Rodrigues has slipped two places (607) to 12th in the ranking for batters.

Saina named for selection trials of Asian Mixed Team C'ship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Two-time Commonwealth Games champion Saina Nehwal has been named for next month's selection trials of Asian Mixed Team Championships, to be held in Dubai from February 14 to 19.

The senior selection committee had a virtual meeting on December 25 to finalise the trials for picking the team for the Asian event.

Based on their superior world rankings, the committee decided to give direct entry to singles players Lakshya Sen, HS Prannoy, PV Sindhu and men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Ranikreddy and Chirag Shetty.

The rest of the 14-member team will be picked in the selection trials, scheduled to be held in Delhi on January 2 and 3.

"The members unanimously agreed that since it is a big competition with limited number of entries, only BWF rankings from 16-50 should be considered for inviting players for the trials for the



rest of the available spots," the BAI said in a letter.

In women's singles, apart from Saina, Malvika Bansod and Aakarshi Kashyap have been invited for the trials, while in men's doubles -- Arjun/Dhruv Kapila, Krishna Prasad Garga/Vishnuvardhan Goud P and Ishaan Bhatnagar/Sai Patheek K were named.

For the two spots in women's doubles, Commonwealth Games bronze medallists Treasa Jolly and Gayatri P Gopichand, Sikki Reddy and Ashwini Ponnappa, Ashwini Bhatt and Shikha Gautam and Haritha Manazhijil and Ashna Roy were invited.

Ishaan Bhatnagar and Tanisha Crasto, Venkat Gaurav

HS Prannoy regains career-best rankings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star Indian shuttler HS Prannoy regained his career-best number eight position in the latest BWF world rankings issued on Tuesday.

The 30-year-old from Kerala, who has been in good form this year, had achieved the number eight ranking in 2018 for the first time before slipping to 34 in 2019.

However, some memorable performances in the season, including the Thomas Cup win, seven quarterfinals, two semifinals and a runner-up finish at the Swiss Open, saw him rise like a phoenix in 2022.

Among others, Lakshya

Sen remained static at world number seven, while Kidambi Srikanth lost a place to be at the 12th position.

P V Sindhu slipped a place to world number seven in women's singles, while Satwiksairaj Ranikreddy and Chirag Shetty were steady at number five.

The fast-rising pairing of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila gained three places to be world number 21, while women's doubles combination of Gayatri Gopichand and Treasa Jolly, which had won a bronze in Birmingham CWG, climbed a place to world number 17.

In mixed doubles, Ishaan Bhatnagar and Tanisha Crasto also moved two places to achieve the 18th spot.

Prasad and Juhi Dewangan and Rohan Kapoor and Sikki Reddy were invited for the tri-

als which will pick the one mixed doubles pair for the event.

Djoker, Nadal to kickstart bid for 2023 supremacy in Australia

AP ■ SYDNEY

Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal kickstart their 2023 campaigns this week in Adelaide and Sydney respectively, with the superstar veterans and great rivals eyeing up yet more Australian Open glory.

With the pair sharing 43 Grand Slam titles between them -- Djokovic has 21 and Nadal 22 -- the scene is set for an epic showdown at Melbourne Park in January.

Nadal is the defending Australian Open champion and Djokovic is a nine-time winner.

Djokovic returns Down Under for the first time since being sensationally detained and then deported ahead of the 2022 Australian Open because of his refusal to get vaccinated for Covid-19.

He starts his bid for an incredible 10th Australian Open title at the Adelaide International from Sunday, following a troubled and truncated year in which he missed two majors because of his vaccine status.

Djokovic was initially barred from entering Australia before 2025, but a new government in Canberra reversed the ruling and he is now gunning for more silverware at his most successful Grand Slam venue.

"Over the years I've been really fortunate to start very strong in Australia and I love playing



there," said the world number five in Dubai last week, after ending 2022 with a record-equalling sixth ATP Tour Finals crown.

"After obviously what happened earlier this year, hopefully I can have a decent reception there and hopefully that can help me play some good tennis."

He will face a top-notch field

in Adelaide, including Felix Auger-Aliassime, Daniil Medvedev and Andrey Rublev, ranked six, seven and eight respectively.

In Djokovic's absence this year, Spanish great Nadal swept past Medvedev to win the Australian Open in an epic five-setter -- then backed it up with a

14th French Open.

Nadal will begin his preparations in Sydney at the United Cup, a new mixed-teams event, where a blockbuster showdown with Australian showman Nick Kyrgios will test his credentials.

Eighteen countries will compete in the event across 11 days from Thursday, with Brisbane,

DJOKOVIC RETURNS DOWN UNDER FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE BEING SENSATIONALLY DETAINED AND THEN DEPORTED AHEAD OF THE 2022 AUSTRALIAN OPEN BECAUSE OF HIS REFUSAL TO GET VACCINATED FOR COVID-19

Perth and Sydney hosting group games in a round-robin format. Ties comprise two men's and two women's singles matches and one mixed doubles.

The finals series will be played in Sydney.

World number three Casper Ruud and Germany's Alexander Zverev, who is returning from a serious ankle injury, will participate.

Top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz will warm up at the Kooyong Classic exhibition in Melbourne from January 10-12 as he battles back from the abdominal injury that shortened his pre-season training block.

The 19-year-old Spaniard, a major threat to Djokovic and Nadal, missed the season-ending ATP Finals and Davis Cup Finals

with a muscle tear, but is confident he will be ready.

"I would say the key is to practise a lot, spend a lot of hours on court," he said this month.

"I will be ready and 100 percent heading into Australia."

Italy's Jannik Sinner and world number nine Taylor Fritz, among others, will also use Kooyong to fine-tune.

Women's world number one Iga Swiatek will acclimatise in Perth with her Polish teammates at the United Cup on the back of winning the French Open and US Open in 2022.

The three-time Grand Slam champion is targeting a first Australian Open title after losing in the semis this year to Danielle Collins, who then crashed to Ashleigh Barty in the final.

Swiatek inherited the top ranking following the shock retirement of Barty in March, and has been dominant ever since.

American world number three Jessica Pegula and resurgent French world number four Caroline Garcia, fresh from beating Aryna Sabalenka to win the WTA Finals, also feature at the United Cup.

Four of the other top 10 women begin the year in Adelaide, with second-ranked Ons Jabeur, world number five Sabalenka, world number eight Daria Kasatkina and world number nine Veronika Kudrmetova all entered.

Novak due to return to Australia, tennis boss says

AP ■ SYDNEY

Former world number one Novak Djokovic was due to return to Australia on Tuesday, almost one year after he was deported for refusing to be vaccinated against Covid-19, the country's tennis boss said.

Nine-time Australian Open champion Djokovic was initially banned from the country for three years after losing a high-stakes legal battle earlier this year over his vaccine status.

Australia has since lifted its requirement for visitors to show proof of vaccination against Covid.

The government confirmed in November that the unvaccinated Serb was no longer banned and had been granted a visa allowing him to play in the next Australian Open, which starts in January.

Tennis Australia chief executive Craig Tiley said he hoped local fans would embrace Djokovic's return.

"We welcome him back to Australia," he told reporters.

"I think as we speak he's landing in Adelaide and I think that he is going to be again the player to beat.

"I have a great deal of confidence in the Australian public. I have a lot of confidence that the fans will react how we hope they will react."

DIDN'T FEEL PRESSURE OF REPLACING KULDEEP: UNADKAT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Jaydev Unadkat did get his much-awaited chance with the red ball and he kept his "promise" with a spirited effort in his first Test for India after 12 years.

His love for the longer version of the game became apparent more than ever in January when he typed a tweet that went viral.

"Dear red ball, please give me one more chance... I'll make you proud, promise!" the left-arm pacer had posted.

"Everyone thought that I was referring to a national comeback. I was just missing red ball cricket in general as Ranji Trophy was postponed for a second time (due to COVID)," Unadkat said after his arrival from Bangladesh.

The 31-year-old, who had played his first and only Test way back in 2010 with the great Sachin Tendulkar and current head coach Rahul Dravid being his celebrated teammates, featured in his second outing last week in remarkable circumstances.

Having not been on selectors' radar despite a record-breaking performance in the 2020 Ranji Trophy, a national recall came for Unadkat when he expected it the least.

He was not even part of the India A side that toured Bangladesh before the Test series, so one could not fault



him for keeping his hopes to bare minimum.

Eventually, his patience and perseverance prevailed as he was flown to Bangladesh as a backup pace option, with Mohammad Shami not regaining full fitness for the series.

The visa delays meant he could only reach Chattogram after the start of the first Test

but against all expectations, stand-in skipper K L Rahul gave Unadkat the big break he was waiting for while toiling on the domestic circuit for years.

The opportunity came at the expense of spinner Kuldeep Yadav, whose exclusion after an eight-wicket haul in the series opener triggered a selection controversy.

The scoreboard would show that Unadkat took three wickets in his comeback Test but his impact was bigger in the game.

With years of first-class experience under his belt since his Test debut in South Africa, Unadkat relished the pressure. Getting the most out of flat tracks in Rajkot is something

Unadkat had done for years and the Porbandar-born cricketer found himself in similar territory in Mirpur.

It did not take long for him to make his presence felt as he removed previous game's centurion Zakir Hasan with a ball that jumped from good length. That was his maiden wicket in Tests and Unadkat says that moment will remain the most special of his career.

"I was trying to extract bounce off length and I felt I could do that. The feeling (when it happened) will remain one of the most special memories of my cricketing career. Getting a Test wicket is something I visualised 1000 times," said Unadkat.

Did he feel the pressure of replacing Kuldeep? "Absolutely not. When you don't expect things and they happen, I take it in my stride. I just wanted to contribute. If not take a wicket then create pressure from the other end. That was the thought."

"Domestic cricket has helped me immensely that way. You always have a role to play as a bowler even when you aren't getting the wickets. You can create pressure and put batter in doubt and other bowlers can capitalise on that."

What worked for Unadkat was his ability to bowl long spells on flat decks. 12 years from his debut, he was also a much wiser man having cap-

tained Saurashtra to unprecedented success.

"I got my chance as the management felt I was suited to the pitch. Like you said the conditions were similar (to Rajkot), not a lot of pace off the wicket and you will have to extract whatever you can by hitting the length hard."

"I knew if I will stick to my strengths, there will be something coming my way and that is how I got that extra bounce." Unadkat could be the next left-arm pacer India have been looking for years but he is not thinking about that. When Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Shami are back, finding a spot in the XI will be much tougher.

"I was pretty young when I made my debut. All these years (at Ranji level) I never felt like a veteran. I am still 31 and at my peak. These four to five years would be the peak of my career and I want to continue as much as I can."

Does he see himself retaining his place for the Border Gavaskar Trophy beginning next month?

"I don't want to expect things as that has been helping me honestly. I am looking forward to the next round of Ranji (against Delhi), and that is all I am thinking about. If it has to happen, it will happen."

"I hope India dominate Australia. It is going to be a great series," he said.

India beat SA by 54 runs

PTI ■ PRETORIA

The Indian U-19 women's cricket team produced an all-round effort to beat South Africa by 54 runs in the first T20I of the five-match series here on Tuesday.

The series serves as preparation for both teams ahead of the ICC U-19 Women's T20 World Cup to be held in South Africa from January 14 to 29.

Opener Sheweta Sehrawat and Soumya Tiwari scored 40 each off 39 and 46 balls respectively to guide India to 137 for five after being asked to bat.

But the start was far from rosy for the Indians as they lost skipper Shafali Verma in the first delivery of the match. Sehrawat and Tiwari then joined hands and stitched 70 runs off 74 balls for the second wicket to set the platform for India's total.

While Sehrawat decorated her innings with five boundaries, Tiwari hit three fours and six.

Besides the duo, wicketkeeper Richa Ghosh made 15, while Titas Sandhu (13 not out) and Hurley Gala (11 not out) also played useful hands towards the end.

Kayla Reyneke (2/13) and Ayanda Hlubi (2/22) picked up two wickets each for the home team.

Defending the modest



total, medium pacer Shabnam Shakil (3/15) shone bright with the ball as Indian bowlers picked up wickets at regular intervals to restrict South Africa to 83 for eight.

Shakil struck in her opening two overs to reduce South Africa to 10 for 2 inside three overs, a position from which the hosts never recovered.

Besides Shakil, off-spinner Archana Devi (3/14) also sparked with the ball in the middle overs.

Hurley Gala (1/13) and Sonam Yadav (1/15) also chipped in with a wicket each.

Only three South Africa batters -- Kayla Reyneke (20), Madison Landsman (10) and Jemma Botha (10 not out) -- managed double digit scores.

The second match of the series will be played here on Thursday.

Warner retires in pain after making 200 in 100th Test

AP ■ MELBOURNE

David Warner battled through searing heat to hit an epic unbeaten 200 in his 100th Test on Tuesday before retiring in pain as Australia consolidated their advantage against South Africa at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

On a scorching day, the hosts were 386-3 at stumps on day two of the second Test, leading by 197 after the Proteas were dismissed in their first innings for 189.

Travis Head was not out 48 with Alex Carey on nine.

Steve Smith (85) and Marnus Labuschagne (14) were the only wickets to fall. But worryingly for Australia, Cameron Green, who took 5-27 in South Africa's first innings, also retired hurt after a nasty rap on the finger from Anrich Nortje.

Smith and Warner's 239-run partnership took the game further away from South Africa, whose bowlers toiled in temperatures touching 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 Fahrenheit).

Opener Warner, 36, snapped a near-three-year cen-



tury drought in typically aggressive and gritty fashion, reaching three figures for a 25th time after coming into the game under pressure on a lean run.

It was his first Test hundred since January 2020 and as the opposition bowlers tired, he battled the elements and converted it to 200 for only the third time.

His wife Candice told host broadcaster Fox: "You'd think by now people would know writing David Warner off is the wrong thing to do."

But it was an exhausting effort, as he passed 8,000 Test runs en route.

Chairs had to be brought out for Warner and Smith to rest on in the drinks breaks, with towels draped over their heads and ice-packs on their shoulders.

Warner needed treatment for cramp several times and retired in pain after reaching 200 and dropping to his knees, eventually helped from the field by support staff.

"The boys were cramping left, right and centre," Smith told reporters. "So, difficult (conditions) but nice to get us to the position where we are now. I think we're in a nice spot."

Conway, Latham take New Zealand to 165-0

AP ■ KARACHI

New Zealand's opening pair of left-handed batters responded with a solid 165-0 in the first cricket Test on Tuesday after Agha Salman had scored his first Test century and led Pakistan to 438.

Devon Conway and Tom Latham batted confidently against the challenging spin of Abrar Ahmed on a dry wicket to remain unbeaten on 82 and 78, respectively, at stumps on the second day.

New Zealand trails by 273 in its first Test tour to Pakistan since 2002.

Conway also completed 1,000 Test runs in 19 innings,



taking the national record previously held by John F. Reid.

Both batters used their feet well against Abrar, who took 17 wickets in two Test matches against England earlier this

month. Conway reached his half century off 89 balls with nine fours, including four against Abrar.

Latham followed in reaching his 50 off 96 balls with six

fours as both batters grew in confidence and didn't hesitate to even reverse sweep on a wicket which still has some turn for the spinners.

Pakistan's weakened pace attack in the absence of injured Shaheen Afridi, Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah, didn't offer a challenge to Conway and Latham with the new ball as both batters took New Zealand to 41-0 by tea before adding 124 more runs in the final session.

Leftarm fast bowler Mir Hamza, recalled after four years since playing his only Test against Australia in 2018, and Mohammad Wasim, also playing only his second Test, couldn't break through.

Earlier, the 29-year-old Salman batted resolutely in the company of tailenders to score 103 with 17 fours. He was the last batter to be dismissed when Pakistan was bowled out an hour after lunch.

Tim Southee, the Kiwis' new test captain, picked up his 350th Test wicket and wrapped up the innings when Salman tried to play across the seamer, was struck on the back leg and was ruled out before wicket. Southee was the pick of the bowlers with 3-69 while three spinners -- Michael Bracewell (2-72), Ish Sodhi (2-87) and Ajaz Patel (2-112) -- shared six wickets.

Avesh picks four as MP bowl out Railways for 274

PTI ■ INDORE

Avesh Khan took four wickets as defending champions Madhya Pradesh bowled out Railways for 274 on the opening day of their Ranji Trophy Group D match here on Tuesday.

Avesh returned with figures of 4 for 69, while Saransh Jain and Puneet Datey (2/52) shared four wickets between them as Madhya Pradesh took 87.4 overs to fold Railways' innings.

Besides, Kumar Kartikeya (1/57) and Shubham Sharma (1/8) picked up a wicket each.

Electing to bat, Railways did not have the best of starts as Avesh struck in the fifth delivery of the match, removing Vivek Singh.

The India pacer came back in the 16th over to account for the wicket of Shivam Chaudhary (21) before Shubham Sharma dismissed Rahul Rawat (29) to reduce Railways to 68 for 3 in the 25th over.

Mohammad Saif (39) and Shubham Chaube (24) added 44 runs for the fourth wicket before both the batters departed.

Skipper Upendra Yadav top-scored for Railways with a gritty 61 off 123 balls and hit

eight boundaries in the process.

Towards the end, Akash Pandey (24 not out) and Adarsh Singh (24) played useful hands to take Railways past the 250-run mark.

TN RESTRICT DELHI

New Delhi: In-form Dhruv Shorey blew away an opportunity to score his third successive hundred in as many innings as Tamil Nadu restricted hosts Delhi to 212 for six on opening day of a Group B Ranji Trophy game here on Tuesday.

Shorey (66, 168 balls) and left-handed Jonty Sidhu (57, 107 balls) added 105 runs for the third wicket but the home team could hardly dominate on a Feroz Shah Kotla track which became good for batting after the first hour and half.

But the manner in which Sidhu and Vaibhav Rawal (11) were out defending slow bouncers from pacer Sandeep Warrier (3/59 in 22 overs) was embarrassing to say the least.

Warrier and fellow seamer L Vignesh (3/42 in 19 overs) were disciplined as they bowled a probing line and hit good lengths time and again.

PHULBANI (KENDULEAVES) DIVISION, PHULBANI.
TENDER NOTICE
Tender Notice No. 01 of 2022
Dated, 26th December 2022

The interested farms/Agencies/Contractors are invited to express their willingness for "construction of 2 (two) nos. of Permanent Phadi in Phulbani KL Division jurisdiction" for the year 2022-23". The application Form of the said item along with the detailed terms and conditions shall be available in the office of the undersigned from 28.12.2022 in the office hours of all working days.

Sl. No.	Item of Service	Last Date of submission of Tender	Date of Opening of Tender
1	CONSTRUCTION OF 2 (TWO) NOS. OF PERMANENT PHADI IN PHULBANI KL DIVISION JURISDICTION" FOR THE YEAR 2022-23"	4.00 PM of 02.01.2023	4.30 PM of 02.01.2023

Divisional Forest Officer,
Phulbani (Kenduleaves) Division.
OIPR-08069/11/0003/2223

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, BOLANGIR (R&B) DIVISION, BOLANGIR
e - Procurement Notice
BID IDENTIFICATION No: BGR R&B/ 27/ 2022-23
No. 5339 // Dtd.21.12.22

- The Executive Engineer, Bolangir (R&B) Division, Bolangir on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in Single cover system in ONLINE MODE for construction of building work detailed in the table below from eligible contractors.
- Nature of work : Building Work
- No of tender : 4 Nos. Bridge Work
- Tender cost : Rs.4,000/-,Rs. 6,000/- (Tender paper cost)
- Class of Contractor : "D", "C" and "B" (Registered With CDMS)
- Date & Time of sale & Receipt of Bids : From Dt. 30.12.2022, 11.00 A.M
Dt. 11.01.2023 up to 5.00 P.M
- Date of opening bid : Dt. 12.01.2023 at 11.30 A.M
- The bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: <http://tendersodisha.gov.in>.
OIPR-34028/11/0027/2223

Executive Engineer
Bolangir (R&B) Division

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER DHENKANAL (R&B) DIVISION, DHENKANAL
Email - eedklpvd@gmail.com
INVIATION FOR BIDS THROUGH e-Procurement
BID IDENTIFICATION No. DKL - I TENDER CALL NOTICE NO. 29 OF 2022-23
Invitation for Bids

- The Superintendent Engineer Dhenkanal (R&B) Division, Dhenkanal, on behalf of Governor of Odisha, invites percentage rate bids in double cover system in ONLINE MODE only, for Construction of Building works as detailed below.
- Nature of work : Road works
- No. of work : 01 nos.
- Bid Cost. : ₹.10,000/- (each)
- Class of Contractor : B Class
- Availability of Bid Documents in the website : From 10.00 AM of 29.12.2022 to 5.00 PM of 12.01.2023
- Date of Opening of Bid : Dt.13.01.2023 at 11:00 AM.
- The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website : <https://tendersodisha.gov.in>. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website only.

Superintending Engineer
Dhenkanal (R&B) Division, Dhenkanal
OIPR-34016/11/0019/2223

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)
"e" Procurement Notice-4 / 2022-23
BID IDENTIFICATION NO.SAL-BDK-4-P1 OF 2022-23

- Name of work:- Maintenance of Canal and Embankment (River & Saline) works
- Class of Contractor:- Varies from "D" Class to "B" Class
- No of works:- 16Nos (Details as per NIT available in website)
- Value of Work:- Rs. 1.73 Lakhs to 23.89 lakhs
- Time of Completion:- 1 & 3 Calendar Months .
- Type of Bid :- Percentage Bid.
- Summary for key dates is provided below.

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No	Availability of tender for online bidding		Date & time of opening Bid
		From	To	
Superintending Engineer, Salandi Canal Division, Bhradak	SAL-BDK-4 P1 OF 2022-23	28.12.2022 at 11.00AM	11.01.2023 UPTO 5.00PM	12.01.2023 at 11.00 A.M.

Further details can be seen from the website <http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in> / www.dowrodisha.gov.in
Any addendum/ Corrigendum/ Cancellation to the above notice will be published in this web site only.
Superintending Engineer
Salandi Canal Division
Bhradak
OIPR-32005/11/0006/2223

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER, EASTERN CIRCLE-II, CHANDIKHOLE
Email ID : see2chandikhole@gmail.com
"e" Procurement Notice No. ACE, EC-II 11 of 2022-23 (On-line)

Name of the works	No	Availability of tender On-line for bidding		Date of Opening of Technical Bid (Cover-I)
		From	To	
1 Raising & strengthening to Kharasuan right embankment from Tantighal to Mahammadzampur Protection to Scoured bank on Kharasuan left from Malapada Sasan to Paridabad. Strengthening and widening of Baltarani left embankment from Akhuapada Anticut to Balghal. Protection to scoured bank of Hansua left from RD 6500 Mtr to 6860 Mtr on Rajnagar Gopalpur Saline embankment near village Praharapur in Rajnagar Block of Kendrapara District. Bank protection to scoured bank near village Barunadiha on river Kharasota left from RD 3495 Mtr to 4575 Mtr. Protection to scoured bank on Kani Kharasuan right near village Lokapada.	1	29/12/2022 at 10 AM	16/01/2023 up to 5.00 PM	17/01/2023 at 11.30 AM
	2	Rs.800.83 Lakh (Approximately)		
	3	Rs.788.86 Lakh (Approximately)		
	4	Rs.774.08 Lakh (Approximately)		
	5	Rs. 655.50 Lakh (Approximately)		
	6	Rs. 822.79 Lakh (Approximately)		
7	Rs. 661.60 Lakh (Approximately)			
8	Rs. 10,000.00 (On-line payment) for each Package			
9	"Bid Security Declaration" is to be furnished as per Finance Department Office Memorandum No.8484/F dated 05.04.2022. The bids without "Bid Security Declaration" will be summarily rejected.			
10	"special class" & "A"			
11	12 (Twelve) calendar months			

Other details are as follows

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding		Date of Opening of Technical Bid (Cover-I)
		From	To	
Additional Chief Engineer, Eastern Circle-II, Chandikhole	ACE, EC-II JPD 14 OF 2022-23 ACE, EC-II JPD 16 OF 2022-23 ACE, EC-II JPD 16 OF 2022-23 ACE, EC-II AUL 11 OF 2022-23 ACE, EC-II AUL 12 OF 2022-23 ACE, EC-II AUL 13 OF 2022-23	29/12/2022 at 10 AM	16/01/2023 up to 5.00 PM	17/01/2023 at 11.30 AM

e-mail id see2chandikhole@gmail.com
Further detailed conditions can be seen from the Govt website www.tendersorissa.gov.in
OIPR-32522/11/0014/2223
Additional Chief Engineer
Eastern Circle-II, Chandikhole