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Army thwarted PLA incursion bid firmly: Rajnath

'No fatalities to Indian troops as they pushed back PLA to their posts'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Army "bravely" prevented the Chinese PLA from "transgressing" and changing the status quo in the Indian territory and "compelled them to return to their posts" in the Yangtse area of Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang sector on December 9, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said in Parliament on Tuesday amid walkout by the Opposition parties.

Giving a suo motu statement in the Lok Sabha first, the Defence Minister said there were no fatalities or serious injuries to Indian troops in the scuffle. He made an identical statement in the Rajya Sabha.

Demanding a discussion on the issue, the Opposition staged a walkout in both the Houses of Parliament after Singh concluded his statement. Speaker Om Birla and Deputy Chairman Rajya Sabha Harivansh did not permit any clarifications on the Defence Minister's statement in the respective Houses.

In his brief statement, Singh said Indian troops confronted the attempt in a "firm and resolute manner", and Chinese personnel went back



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh speaks in the Rajya Sabha in New Delhi on Tuesday

PTI

to their locations due to the timely intervention of Indian commanders.

Singh's statement came a day after the Indian Army said troops from two sides clashed along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Tawang sector and the face-off led to "minor injuries to a few personnel from both sides".

"On December 9, PLA troops tried to transgress the LAC in the Yangtse area of the Tawang sector and unilaterally change the status quo. The Chinese attempt was contested by our troops in a firm and resolute manner," Singh said.

"The ensuing face-off led to a physical scuffle in which

the Indian Army bravely prevented the PLA from transgressing into our territory and compelled them to return to their posts," he said.

Singh said the scuffle led to injuries to a few personnel on both sides. "I wish to share with this House that there are no fatalities or serious casualties on our side. Due to the timely intervention of Indian military commanders, PLA soldiers went back to their locations," the Defence Minister said.

Singh said as a follow up of the incident, the local commander of the Indian Army in the area held a flag meeting with his counterpart on December 11 to discuss the

issue in accordance with established mechanisms.

"The Chinese side was asked to refrain from such actions and maintain peace and tranquillity along the border. The issue has also been taken up with the Chinese side through diplomatic channels," he said.

The Defence Minister assured the House that Indian forces are committed to protecting the country's territorial integrity and will continue to thwart any attempt made on it. "I am confident that this entire House will stand united in supporting our soldiers in their brave effort," he said.

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Cong seeks PM's statement on LAC situation

Defence Minister's statement in Parl incomplete: Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Tuesday said Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's statement in Parliament on the Sino-India border clash in Tawang was "incomplete" and accused the Government of hiding the truth from the nation. The Opposition party sought a statement from Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the situation at the border.

Former Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah termed as unfortunate the face-off between the armies of India and China in Arunachal Pradesh and said the two countries should work together to improve their relations.

Congress spokesperson and deputy leader of the party in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi demanded that the Government should tell the truth. Gogoi and party media publicity chairman Pawan Khara accused the Centre of diplomatic failure with China,

claiming that India has lost its pre-eminent position in Southeast Asia.

Rajya Sabha member Randeep Surjewala urged the Prime Minister to make a statement and hold a discussion over the issue in the Rajya Sabha. Similar unconfirmed reports of Chinese transgressions are coming from Doklam area, he said.

"Public interest demands that the PM make a statement in the House and apprise the nation of the Chinese transgressions into Indian territory across the LAC, since April 2020 till date," Surjewala said.

The party leaders demanded that the Government should agree to a detailed discussion on the border situation and ties with China, alleging that Prime Minister Modi's remarks made in June 2020 that "no one has entered Indian territory nor has anyone occupied its territory" has emboldened China to indulge in such misadventures.

"Why did Rajnath Singh give a statement so late, as the incident is of December 9? Why was this not given yesterday in Parliament? What are they hiding? This Government wants to hide the truth from the nation."

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IAF scrambled jets to counter Chinese threat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Air Force (IAF) scrambled fighter jets last week following China's increasing air activities on its side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh.

The IAF's move followed the deployment of some aerial platforms, including drones by China in the region preceding the Chinese attempts on December 9 to unilaterally change the status quo in the Yangtse area of the Tawang sector, officials said.

A number of Chinese drones flew close to the LAC prompting the IAF to scramble the jets and increase the overall combat readiness. The IAF has also increased the frequency of sorties by its combat jets in the region, they said.

The IAF has also stepped up its overall surveillance in areas in view of the Chinese attempt of transgression on December 9 in line with the standard operation procedures (SOPs), including scrambling of fighter jets in case of specific security concerns.

"The situation is being monitored closely by both the



IAF and the Army," another official said.

On Monday, the Indian Army said troops from the two sides clashed along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Tawang sector and the face-off led to "minor injuries to a few personnel from both sides".

The face-off took place amid the over 30-month border standoff between the two sides in eastern Ladakh.

Chief of Air Staff VR Chaudhari reviewed the IAF's operational readiness following the December 9 incident.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said in Parliament on Tuesday that the Indian troops bravely thwarted the attempt by Chinese PLA to "unilaterally" change the status in the Yangtse area of the Tawang sector and there were no fatalities or serious casualties to the Indian troops in the scuffle.

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None can capture an inch of India till Modi is in power, asserts Shah

'FCRA cancellation of Cong's RGF behind their disruption of Parl'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that no one can capture an inch of Indian land till the Narendra Modi Government is in power, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday alleged that the real reason behind the disruption of Parliament by the Congress on Tuesday was not the clash between Indian and Chinese soldiers but the cancellation of FCRA registration of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF).

On the border issue, the Minister made it clear that the "BJP Govt will not allow any incursion on land. We will not leave an inch of land. The bravery shown by soldiers is appreciable, they have saved

our land".

Shah spoke to reporters in Parliament after the Congress targeted the Govt over its handling of the border dispute with China seeking clarification on the LAC clash in both the Houses of Parliament. Shah said if the Question Hour, which was a washout following the Opposition's protest, had continued, then he would have told the House that the RGF's Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration was cancelled as it got ₹1.35 crore from the Chinese embassy for research related to development of the Sino-India relationship while its registration is for social work.

In a swipe at the Congress, Shah said since the RGF might already have conducted the research, has it included the issue of the occupation of thousands of hectares of Indian land by China in 1962? "If research

is conducted on this subject then what is the outcome of it," he told reporters. Shah claimed India lost its membership of the United Nations Security Council because of the personal relationship its leaders had with foreign leaders.

He asked whether the party also researched issues like Jawaharlal Nehru "sacrificing" India's seat in the United Nations Security Council, denial of visa by China to the then Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh Dorjee Khandu and issuing of staple visa to residents of Jammu and Kashmir.

He also said the RGF headed by Congress leader Sonia Gandhi received ₹50 lakh from hate preacher Zakir Naik, founder of the Islamic Research Foundation (IRF), which has been banned for its alleged involvement in terrorism.

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Border situation 'generally stable', claims Beijing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

China on Tuesday said the situation along the "border" with India was "generally stable", days after the troops of the two countries clashed in the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh and soldiers on both sides sustained minor injuries.

Hours after the comments by the Chinese Foreign Ministry on the Indo-China border situation, Senior Colonel Long Shaohua, spokesman of the Western Theatre Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), issued a statement, claiming that the clash on December 9 took place when its troops on regular patrol on the Chinese side of

the Line of Actual Control (LAC) were blocked by Indian soldiers.

Addressing a media briefing in Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said the two sides have maintained smooth communication on border-related issues through diplomatic and military channels.

However, Wang declined to provide details of the December 9 clash at the Yangtse area of Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh.

"As far as we know, the current border situation between China and India is generally stable," Wang said in response to a question on the December 9 incident.

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Reach IGIA 3.5 hrs before flight time, fliers directed

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid complaints of chaos, overcrowding, congestion and major delays at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, airlines have advised passengers to reach the airport at least 3.5 hrs prior to domestic departures.

So, if someone is travelling from Delhi to Chennai and the flight timing is at 12.10 pm, the passenger is supposed to report at 8.40 am at the airport. The airport authorities also asked the passengers to carry only one piece of hand baggage weighing 7 kgs for a smooth security check.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation on Tuesday asked airlines to deploy adequate manpower at all check-in and baggage drop counters to ensure smooth flow of passengers as



Crowd at T3 IGI Airport departure, in New Delhi on Tuesday

PTI

check-in counters at certain airports were found unmanned or inadequately manned leading to congestion and chaos.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture will take up the issue of congestion at Delhi airport with the CEO of airport operator DIAL on December 15.

IndiGo in its social media

post on Twitter said, "The Delhi airports are experiencing high footfalls and the check-in and boarding time is expected to be longer than usual. Passengers are requested to reach the airport at least 3.5 hours prior to domestic departures, and to carry only 1 piece of hand baggage weighing 7 kgs for a smooth security check."

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CAPSULE

LEADERS PAY TRIBUTE TO PARL ATTACK MARTYRS

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu, Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday led the nation in paying tributes to those who laid down their lives during the 2001 Parliament terrorist attack.

KERALA BILL TO REMOVE GUV AS CHANCELLOR OK'D

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala House proceedings on Tuesday saw drama as it passed the Bill to replace the Governor as the Chancellor of universities in the State and appoint eminent academicians in the top post, while the opposition UDF boycotted the House over non-acceptance of its suggestions regarding the bill.

CONG LEADER ARRESTED OVER 'KILL MODI' REMARK

Bhopal/Damoh: Congress leader and former Madhya Pradesh Minister Raja Pateria was arrested on Tuesday morning for his controversial 'be ready to kill Modi to save the Constitution' remark.

Nitish dropped hint at passing mantle to Tejashwi: CPI(ML)

PTI ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Tuesday dropped further hints that he is looking forward to passing on the mantle to his young deputy Tejashwi Yadav, leaders emerging from a meeting of legislators of the ruling "Mahagathbandhan" said.

The septuagenarian JD(U) supremo, once again, ruled himself out as a Prime Ministerial candidate for the next Lok Sabha polls even as he maintained that a "united Opposition" could defeat the Narendra Modi-led BJP in 2024. "The Chief Minister pointed towards Tejashwi and said he is the leader of the future, under whose leadership the 2025 Assembly polls in the State would be fought," said Mahboob Alam, the legislature party leader of the CPI(ML)

Liberation which supports the government from outside.

He also said "we are of the view that it will benefit the grand alliance which is fighting the communal forces represented by the BJP. Tejashwi is a young and energetic leader."

Notably, Yadav, the younger son of RJD's founding president Lalu Prasad, had steered the "Mahagathbandhan", which then did not have the Chief Minister on its side, to an impressive electoral performance in 2020 Assembly polls in which the NDA could barely scrape through. After dumping the BJP in August this year, Kumar, whose love-hate relationship with Lalu is the stuff of legend, had been asserting that he was done with the long association that he has had with the saffron party.

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SC judge recuses self from Bilkis' plea against rape convicts' release

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Supreme Court judge Bela M Trivedi on Tuesday recused herself from hearing a plea filed by Bilkis Bano, who was gang-raped and seven members of her family killed during the 2002 Gujarat riots, challenging the remission of sentence of 11 convicts in the case by the State Government.

As soon as a bench of justices Ajay Rastogi and Bela M Trivedi sat for the day, Justice Rastogi announced his sister judge will not like to hear the case. "List the matter before a bench in which one of us is not a member," the bench headed by Justice Rastogi ordered without specifying any reason for the recusal of Justice Trivedi.

Advocate Shobha Gupta, appearing for Bilkis, said her only predicament is that winter vacation of the court is approaching and she wants the matter to be heard at an earlier date.

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14 mn ha degraded landscape restored across 18 nations

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investments of USD 26 billion across 18 countries have restored 14 million hectares of degraded landscapes — an area about the size of Greece — created 12 million jobs and over 145 million tonnes of carbon sequestered, according to a first-of-its-kind report released on Tuesday by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

India is among four countries, including Ecuador, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan, which are still in the process of finalising the data, the Restoration Barometer report 2022 said.

The report details how 18 countries are using the Restoration Barometer tool to track progress on their restoration commitments under global agreements, which total 48 million hectares by 2030.

At present, only the restoration of inland waters, terrestrial habitats and coast-



lands are covered by the Barometer. Next year, the Barometer will be further extended to include restoration efforts relating to several key marine solutions and habitats including kelp, seagrasses and shallow reefs.

Endorsed by over 50 Governments, the Restoration Barometer was developed by IUCN with the support of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection. It is the only tool that is already being used by Governments to

track restoration and its benefits across all terrestrial ecosystems, including coastal and inland waters, and report on their commitments against global frameworks such as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, Bonn Challenge, Paris Agreement or It.org, said a statement here.

It will also allow countries to track progress against restoration commitments under the forthcoming post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework targets leaders will set at COP15.

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Collegium lists 5 judges for SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Collegium headed by Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud on Tuesday recommended the names of five High Court judges for appointment as Supreme Court judges.

The judges who have been recommended for the elevation to the apex court are: Justice Pankaj Mithal, Chief Justice of Rajasthan High Court; Justice Sanjay Karol, Chief Justice of Patna High Court; Justice PV Sanjay Kumar, Chief Justice of Manipur High Court; Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Judge of Patna High Court; and Justice Manoj Misa, Judge of Allahabad High Court.

Currently, the Supreme Court has 28 judges while the sanctioned strength is 34. Once these recommendations are cleared by the Central Government, the working strength of the Supreme Court will rise to 33. Apart from CJI Chandrachud, senior most five judges were also part of the Tuesday's collegium meeting.

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Insurance holders defrauded in name of RBI, FM, IRDA; 4 held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Using data of insurance policyholders and producing forged letters in the name of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, a Delhi-based gang cheated over 3,000 people on the pretext of providing them money against their insurance policies, police officers said. The Intelligence Fusion & Strategic Operations (IFSO) unit of the Delhi Police said on Tuesday that they busted the gang and arrested the four accused, identified as Mehtab Alam (33), Sartaj Khan (31), Mohd Junaid (29) and Deen Mohd (27). All of them are from Delhi and have previously worked at insurance companies.

Mehtab Alam, the alleged kingpin, also has experience in dealing with websites and email registration. He convinced his associates to work with him to earn easy money. They fraudulently obtained insurance policyholder data and started contacting them with fake email IDs created in the name of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority

(IRDA). The matter came to light after the Finance Ministry approached the Delhi Police Commissioner about the fraud and impersonation, following which the police found a forged letter and several complaints. Similar complaints were also received during the enquiry. In one of the complaints, a man stated that he received a call from a person who posed as a senior RBI official. The accused told him that some amount had been sanctioned against his lapsed policy. The police said one victim was duped of Rs 1,27,000 using the same modus operandi.

According to police, "The victim was asked to provide his email ID. He later received a fake RBI email saying he will receive Rs 12 lakh. The caller asked him to pay Rs 44,000 as processing charges. When he paid the amount, he was again asked to pay Rs 27,000 as NOC charge. The victim then received a forged cheque of Rs 12 lakh via post. The accused then asked him to pay Rs 52,000 as the final fund release charges to get the cheque amount. In total, the victim was cheated of Rs 1.2 lakh." The gang used forged doc-



uments of the Ministry of Finance bearing the signature of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, RBI Regional Director SMN Swamy, the IRDA (Bima Lokpal) and officials from various life insurance companies, the police said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police, IFSO, Prashant Gautam said after analysing the technical aspects and cyber trailing, the team zeroed in on the location and identity of the fraudsters. Despite the accused constantly changing their locations, police managed to arrest Alam from New Delhi's Mostafabad following a raid. Later, his three associates were arrested, Gautam said. Elaborating on the gang's modus operandi, Gautam said the accused used to call the insurance policyholders posing as IRDA, RBI and Ministry of

Finance officials and lured them on the pretext of providing maturity amount against their existing or lapsed policies.

"In order to convince the policy holders, they sent emails using IDs similar to that of Government financial institutions with forged documents, seemingly issued from the RBI, Ministry of Finance and the IRDA," Gautam said.

They also sent forged cheques by post to the victims in order to induce them. After that, they asked for charges, including processing, NOC and fund releasing. "Upon getting the cheques, the victims transferred the amount into the accounts provided by the accused persons and then the accused would withdraw the amount from different locations in Delhi," the senior police official said.

Women to fill all 22 posts of Sub-Registrars in Revenue Dept

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a first, all 22 Sub-Registrars in the Delhi Government's Revenue Department would be women officers. The Government had earlier appointed six women Sub-Registrars in July. Delhi Lieutenant-Governor (L-G) VK Saxena has directed Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar to appoint only all women Sub-Registrars.

The Sub-Registrar's offices are responsible for land registry - sale, purchase and lease, registration of properties, sale deeds, issuing share certificates, marriage registrations, income certificates, verification of documents and other services that have a direct bearing on the common people.

After assuming charge, Saxena, with an aim of empowering women in Government services by placing them in positions of importance, had envisaged that the Sub-Registrar offices be headed by women officials. This, he had, underlined would also ensure more sensitive, corruption-free and empathetic public dealing, as experience around the world had established.



In an official statement, the L-G's office said that it is expected that with women officers at the helm, the "prevalent corruption at such offices will be mitigated". The Sub-Registrar offices are at the cutting edge of Government's interface with the common citizens, it said. The Government believes women officials will be "clean and corruption-free".

"While through an earlier order, six women Sub-Registrars had been appointed, another 16 women officials have been selected and appointed as Sub-Registrars in the remaining 16 Sub-Registrar offices, thereby taking the total number to 22," the statement said.

"It may be noted that of late, many cases of corruption had come to the fore recently, wherein the Lieutenant-Governor had suspended Sub-Registrars. And it is expected that with women officers at the

helm, the prevalent corruption, red-tapism and harassment of people at such offices will be mitigated," the statement added.

Earlier, Naresh Kumar, following Saxena's directions, had also appointed a woman Officer on Special Duty (OSD) on October 8 for developing an 'e-platform' to ensure that all Sub-Registrar offices become faceless and the services are provided to the people through the online mode.

Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) in Delhi on Tuesday welcomed the announcement, saying the

move will empower women. However, the RWAs were sceptical about whether the decision would be able to curb the menace of corruption, saying it is too early to comment on that. "It is a welcome move that will help in the empowerment of women. It will promote gender equality. It is a strategic move. It will change the way society sees women," said Atul Goyal, president, United Residents Joint Action (URJA), a confederation of 2,500 RWAs in Delhi. Goyal, however, questioned whether the decision would have any impact on the menace of corruption.

LG to chair meet along with CM to take stock of G-20 summit preparations

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant-Governor VK Saxena will chair a meeting along with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and other Ministers to review and take stock of preparations in the run up to the G-20 summit and various other meetings preceding the summit on Wednesday.

The meeting comes in the wake of Prime Minister Narendra Modi meeting with all Governors, L-Gs and CMs last week, where he had urged for all to put in their best efforts to make the international event a success. This would be the first meeting between the L-G and the Delhi Chief Minister on the preparations for the projects related to the G20 summit.

Over 40L of Delhi's 57.60L domestic power consumers apply for subsidy

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government's data showed that more than 40 lakh of the national Capital's 57.60 lakh domestic power consumers have applied for subsidy under the ruling AAP Government's free electricity scheme till Tuesday.

The data also showed that 47 lakh consumers received subsidies when consumers didn't need to apply for the scheme.

The Delhi Government revamped its subsidy scheme to make it mandatory for domestic consumers to apply to avail of the benefit of the power subsidy. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had earlier announced that from October, only those consumers who apply for power subsidy would get it.

As of Tuesday evening, 40,28,915 consumers have applied for the subsidy. These include 9.88 lakh consumers of BSES Yamuna Power Limited, 18.28 lakh BSES Rajdhani Power Limited consumers and 11.28 lakh Tata Power Delhi Distribution



was later extended to November 15. Of the 47 lakh consumers who received subsidies earlier, nearly 30 lakh used free electricity up to 200 units per month. The Government provided 50 per cent subsidy (up to Rs 800) to around 16-17 lakh consumers with monthly consumptions of 201-400 units. Any consumer who fails to apply for the subsidy can get it from the next bill cycle after submitting an application.

For the current financial year, the Delhi Government has set aside Rs 3,250 crore for the subsidy scheme. The amount earmarked for the scheme in 2021-22 was Rs 3,090 crore.

Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat said in the order.

"The accused... upon his release shall not get in touch with any of the witnesses nor will tamper with evidence and will provide his mobile (phone) number to the investigating officer (IO) and shall keep his mobile phone open (on) till the period of interim bail," the court said. The court directed Khalid to contact the IO through video calls daily, besides not talking or giving any interviews to "any media, including social media." "He shall not meet any members of the public. He will be entitled to interact with his family members, relatives and friends during the marriage ceremony, but during his entire interim bail period, he shall remain at home... except to attend marriage functions on December 26, 27 and 28 at the designated place," the court said. It said police may guard the house from outside but shall not go inside the premises.

The last date to apply for the subsidy was earlier set at October 31. Over 35 lakh consumers had applied for the scheme by the last date, which

Govt will provide 450 free medical tests: Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP Government will provide 450 types of medical tests free of cost at its hospitals and health centres from January 1, with Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal saying that the move will help those unable to afford private healthcare.

"Until now 212 types of tests were conducted free of cost in Government hospitals, polyclinics and Mohalla Clinics in Delhi. The State Government has decided to further increase the number of types of tests to 450 to provide relief to the people who are already burdened by inflation," said Kejriwal.

The facility will be available to the people of Delhi. "It is the endeavour of the Delhi Government that all sections of the people get all kinds of quality health facilities free of cost in Government

hospitals, polyclinics and Mohalla Clinics, so that the people who are facing financial crisis can get some relief," said Delhi CM Kejriwal.

Kejriwal decided to increase the facility of free tests in government hospitals, polyclinics, mohalla clinics and mobile health clinics. In this regard, he has approved the proposal received from the Health Department. After his approval, the Delhi government will be able to conduct 450 types of tests free of cost for the citizens of Delhi.

"After this expansion, Delhi Government will be able to provide 450 types of tests in its Aam Aadmi Mohalla Clinics, Mahila Mohalla Clinics, Polyclinics and Mobile Health Clinics. The Kejriwal government has also partnered with private laboratories, which ensure testing and sample transportation as per standard operating procedures approved by the authorities," said Delhi CM.

These tests include urine routine pH, specific gravity, sugar, protein, and microscopy; urine microalbumin; stool routine; stool occult blood; haemoglobin (Hb); total leucocytic count (TLC); differential leucocytic count (DLC); total red cell count with MCV, MCH, MCHC, DRW; complete haemoglobin/CBC, Hb, RBC count and indices; and platelet count.

"Currently, the Delhi Government has 522 Aam



Aadmi Mohalla Clinics, four Mahila Mohalla Clinics, 21 Polyclinics and 201 Dispensaries in the city, where the testing facility will be available free of cost to the people," said Kejriwal.

Taking the matter to twitter, Kejriwal commented, "It is our mission to provide good quality health and education to all sections of people. Healthcare has become very expensive. Many people cannot afford private healthcare. This step of the Delhi government will help all such people."

The party hereby appoints Dr. Sandeep Pathak as the Rashtriya Sangathan Mahamantri (National General Secretary Organisation)," AAP said in a release. "He will also see a Permanent Invitee to the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) of the party." Sources in the AAP also said the appointment has been made eyeing the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Sandeep Pathak appointed AAP's national general secretary



STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP has appointed its senior leader and Rajya Sabha member Sandeep Pathak as national general secretary (organisation), after it recently became eligible for national party status. Pathak was the party's election in-charge for Punjab as well as for Gujarat, where Assembly polls were held this month. In Punjab, the AAP wrested the State from the Congress in polls held in March. He was the AAP's surprise pick for the Rajya Sabha after Arvind Kejriwal's party registered a thumping victory in Punjab.

Though the Arvind Kejriwal-headed AAP had won only five of the 182 seats in the Gujarat polls, it got a nearly 13 per cent vote share. On the party's performance, Kejriwal had said that the AAP has not won many seats but the votes the party got helped it attain national party status.

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Khalid to abide by strict conditions imposed by court during interim bail

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

From making daily video calls to an Investigating Officer to staying inside his home while guards keep a watch outside, former JNU student Umar Khalid an accused in the 2020 north east Delhi riots case, will have to abide by strict conditions imposed by a city court that granted him interim bail for one week to attend his sister's wedding. Granting bail to Khalid on Monday, Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat has imposed certain restrictions to him as the prosecution's fears that he may influence witnesses while out on interim bail.

"...In view of the marriage of the real younger sister of the accused, this court is inclined to grant interim bail for attending the marriage-related functions. Regarding apprehensions of prosecution, those can be taken care of by attaching conditions in the bail..."



interim bail," the court said. The court directed Khalid to contact the IO through video calls daily, besides not talking or giving any interviews to "any media, including social media."

"He shall not meet any members of the public. He will be entitled to interact with his family members, relatives and friends during the marriage ceremony, but during his entire interim bail period, he shall remain at home... except to attend marriage functions on December 26, 27 and 28 at the designated place," the court said. It said police may guard the house from outside but shall not go inside the premises.

Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat said in the order.

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JNUTA demands reversal of Centre's decision to withdraw Maulana Azad National Fellowship

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Association on Tuesday demanded an immediate reversal of the Centre's decision to withdraw the Maulana Azad National Fellowship for minority students, terming the move an "anti-minority policy".

"The JNU Teachers' Association (JNUTA) media with deep dismay the news reports appearing on December 10, 2022, that the Ministry of Minority Affairs has decided to withdraw the Maulana Azad Fellowship (MAF), a five-year fellowship provided by the Centre in the

form of financial assistance to six notified minority communities — Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jains, Parsis and Sikhs, to pursue PhDs," it said in a statement.

Last week, in a written reply in the Lok Sabha, Minority Affairs Minister Smriti Irani announced the decision to discontinue the Maulana Azad National Fellowship from the 2022-23 academic session, saying it overlapped with various other fellowship schemes for higher education being implemented by the Government.

Reacting to it, the JNUTA called the discontinuation of the scheme an attack on the

values of "inclusivity and democracy" integral to the higher education system required in India.

"The JNUTA demands an immediate reversal of the anti-minority policy evident in the withdrawal of the MAF and the upholding of the democratic rights of all teachers to participate in higher education with dignity and without fear," the teachers' body said.

In the statement, the JNUTA also noted that academic excellence could only thrive in an environment that was not only free and devoid of fear but one that actively sought to remove social disadvantages.

Winter action plan ready for homeless: Sisodia

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Government has prepared a winter action plan for the homeless which includes food and lodging facilities across all shelter homes in the national capital. There are 195-night shelters for homeless people in Delhi which include 19 for families, 17 for women, four for drug addicts, three recovery shelters.

To ensure the benefit of the facility to the maximum number of people of the Capital, a 24x7 centralised control room has been set up and multiple helpline numbers (14461, 011-23378789 and 011-23370560) have also been issued by the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB).

People can inform DUSIB about the homeless through this helpline and DUSIB's rescue team will reach the location to take the homeless to the nearest shelter. "The Delhi Government is

determined to provide a dignified life to every person residing in the Capital, including homeless people. To ensure that no one is left out in the cold during the peak winter season, the Government has established fooding and lodging facilities for homeless people across 195 shelter homes which have the capacity of accommodating over 17000 people," said Sisodia, while informing about the night shelters.

"The Kejriwal government will increase the capacity of these shelters if needed in winter. Contact can also be established with the control room of the night shelters through helpline numbers 011-23378789 and 011-23370560," Deputy CM said. "Briefing the Deputy Chief Minister about the Winter Action Plan, the officials of DUSIB, who is responsible for managing the night shelter facility across the capital primarily, along with the existing facilities of food, lodging and



medical care at the Rain Basera, DUSIB has also established a 24x7 control room and a helpline 14461," Deputy CMO said, in a statement.

"Anyone willing to get homeless people rescued from any part of Delhi can call on DUSIB's three helpline numbers or the "Rain Basera App". The officials also said that DUSIB has set up 15 rescue teams, each equipped with one

vehicle, for surveillance and rescuing the homeless," it said.

"So far over 1500 homeless people have been rescued by these teams in the past few weeks. On receiving information from the DUSIB control room or from any other sources the rescue teams immediately respond to pick up the homeless from the identified location and take them to the nearest shelter home," it stated.

"It is noteworthy that 195-night shelters for homeless people in Delhi include 19 for families, 17 for women, four for drug addicts, three recovery shelters. The facilities provided to the people in these government shelter homes are food, lodging, lockers, complaint boxes, ambulance and free medical facilities, three meals per day, free medicines, etc," it said.

Concert in Jaipur on Friday to mark 100 days of Yatra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/JAIPUR

To mark 100 days of the Bharat Jodo Yatra, the Congress will organise a concert in Jaipur on Friday with a live performance from singer Sunidhi Chauhan. The yatra started from Kanyakumari on September 7 and has so far covered Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. It will conclude in Jammu and Kashmir in early February 2023.

AICC General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said the 'Bharat Jodo Concert' will be attended by Congress leaders including Rahul Gandhi, who will also address a press conference at Dausa on the day. "The (Bharat Jodo) Yatra will complete 100 days on December 16 and it will be a milestone," Ramesh said at a press conference in Sawai Madhopur.

New Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu and Congress MLAs from the state will join the yatra on Friday. Ramesh added that a huge public meeting would be held in Alwar on December 19. Rajasthan is the only Congress-ruled state the



yatra has entered and will cover about 500 km over 17 days before entering Haryana on December 21.

Former Union minister Namonarain Meena said the yatra had received overwhelming response and added that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's lies had been exposed. The Congress' Rajasthan unit chief Govind Singh Dotasra, on the other hand, said the feedback received during the yatra would be communicated to the government.

Earlier in the day, the yatra resumed its journey from Jeenapur before pausing at Soorwal bypass for its morning break. In the evening phase,

chartered accountants, entrepreneurs and youths from tribal communities walked in separate groups and also spoke to Gandhi.

During the afternoon break, Rahul Gandhi met representatives of several organisations working for the development and welfare of the Dalit community in the state, a party spokesperson said.

Rahul Gandhi listened to their grievances and asked Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot, who was sitting with him, to resolve their problems at the state level.

He said Dalits gave the Constitution to India and should never be forgotten. He

added that the participation of SC, ST and OBC communities in the power structure -- be it administration, judiciary or media -- was not as much as it should be.

While the Bihar Congress announced for a month end beginning of the Bihar Yatra the Uttar Pradesh Congress president Brijlal Khabri too launched the regional Bharat Jodo Yatra from Ravindralaya Charbagh in Lucknow and said the foot march is a sign of change under former party president Rahul Gandhi's leadership. Congress has divided Uttar Pradesh into six zones organisationally and Bharat Jodo Yatra is being organised in every zone.

Who is 'Pappu' now: Mahua's jibe at Centre over fall in industrial output

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

TMC Lok Sabha member Mahua Moitra on Tuesday cited Government data showing fall in the country's industrial output to question the Centre on the economic and employment scenarios, saying who is the 'Pappu' now.

Participating in a debate in the Lower House of Parliament on demands for additional grants for 2022-23, Moitra accused the Narendra Modi government of spreading "falsehood" about India's growth and appealed to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to take control of the economy, which, according to the TMC leader, is going downhill.

She also took a swipe at the BJP over its defeat in the just-concluded Himachal Pradesh assembly elections, saying the ruling party's president could not hold on to his home state. "Who is the Pappu now?" she asked.

Himachal Pradesh is the home state of BJP national president JP Nadda and in the elections, the Congress wrested the state from his party.

Seeking to corner the Centre on the economic front, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) MP said, "This government and the ruling party

coined the term Pappu. You use it to denigrate and signify extreme incompetence. But the statistics tell us who the actual Pappu is."

Referring to the latest data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO), Moitra claimed that while the country's industrial output shrunk by four per cent in October to a 26-month low, the manufacturing sector, which is "still the biggest generator of jobs", has contracted to 5.6 per cent.

"Seventeen of the industry sectors that make up the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) has recorded negative growth rates. Forex reserves have fallen by 72 billion dollars in under a year," she said.

The manufacturing sector's output declined by 5.6 per cent in October 2022 as against a growth of 3.3 per cent recorded in the year-ago month, according to the IIP data released by the NSO.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday mentioned during the Question Hour how 50 per cent of Foreign Institutional Investors inflows into emerging markets are coming to India, but the government in reply to a question told the House last Friday that almost 2 lakh people renounced their Indian citizenship in the first 10 months



of 2022, Moitra said. "This exodus of 2022 takes the total number of Indians renouncing Indian citizenship under this government in the past nine years since 2014 to over 12.5 lakh people," she said.

"Is this sign of a healthy economic environment or a healthy tax environment (in the country)?" she asked, adding, "Who is the Pappu now?"

The TMC member alleged that there is an "atmosphere of terror" in the country today with the "sword" of the Enforcement Directorate hanging over "businessmen and high-net worth individuals" as well as leaders of opposition parties.

"The ruling party buys lawmakers for hundreds of crores of rupees and yet members of the opposition represent 95

per cent of the lawmakers under investigation by the Enforcement Directorate," Moitra alleged.

She accused the government of spreading falsehood over India's growth story under Prime Minister Modi and said demonetisation of high value currency enforced by it 2016 had failed to achieve its targets as cash is "still king" and phasing out of fake currency is still a distant dream.

"This government has us believe every February that this country's economy is going great guns, we are the fastest growing most efficient global player, everyone is getting employment, cylinders, electricity and pucca houses. This falsehood flies for eight to 10 months and the truth comes out limping after it," The TMC leader said.

77% prisoners in country awaiting trial, Centre cites NCRB data in Parl

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday told Parliament that out of the 5.54 lakh prisoners in the country, 4.27 lakh or 77.1%, were awaiting trial.

"The undertrial inmates are detained in prisons on the orders of the court by following the due process of law," the Union Home Ministry said citing the data available with the National Crime Records Bureau as on December 31, 2021.

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Ashish Mishra gave the figures in response to a question by Bahujan Samaj Party leader Shyam Singh Yadav in the Lok Sabha. Mishra said that as per NCRB data, there were 90,606 undertrial prisoners in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

"Out of these, 21,942



belonged to the Scheduled Caste community, 4,657 belonged to the Scheduled Tribe community and 41,678 belonged to Other Backward Class," the Minister said.

Recently, the Supreme Court has asked the Union Home Ministry to collect data of undertrial prisoners from the States. President Darupadi Murmu also in a seminar at Supreme Court, urged Judges to bring out some solution to the increasing number of undertrial prisoners languish-

ing in jails across the country.

In reply to another question the Ministry said that there are about 1,500 complaints of cybercrime reported daily across the country in the last three years of which only two per cent have turned into FIRs. Union Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai shared this information in Lok Sabha while giving data about cybercrime incidents in the country from January 1, 2020 to December 7, 2022 -- about 1,050 days.

Citizenship law row: SC asks lawyers to decide issues for adjudication

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the counsel for the contesting parties to decide issues for adjudication in a batch of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act relating to illegal immigrants in Assam.

A five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud took note of the submissions of senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for one of the petitioners, that the petitions needed to be segregated and the issues needed to be formulated for adjudication.

The Bench, also comprising justices MR Shah, Krishna Murari, Hima Kohli, and PS Narasimha, agreed to the submissions that the petitions be kept for directions on January 10 next year for issuing the directions with regard to laying down parameters for the hear-

ing. "We are going to resolve how the matters have to be segregated. We will sit together and resolve this. Just put it on after vacation," Sibal said.



"The counsel would segregate the cases which fall for decision before this court into distinct categories and the order in which the arguments are to be made," the bench said, adding "We will keep it for directions." The bench directed the apex court registry to provide scanned soft copies of the complete set of pleading filed on the issue.

Section 6A in the Citizenship Act was inserted as special provisions to deal with the citizenship of persons covered by the Assam Accord. The provision provides that those who have come to Assam on or after January 1, 1966, but before March 25, 1971, from specified territories, including Bangladesh in 1985, and since then are residents of Assam, must register themselves under section 18 for citizenship.

As a result, the provision fixes March 25, 1971, as the cut-off date for granting citizenship to Bangladeshi migrants in Assam. As many as 17 petitions, including the one filed by Assam Public Works in 2009, are pending on the issue in the apex court.

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CBI books 6 Def PSU officials for irregularities in award of contracts in IAF's IACCS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has booked six officials of Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Ltd. In a corruption case for irregularities in the award of contracts in the Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) network of the Indian Air Force.

The agency has booked then General Manager and CMD of Network Centric System of BEL, Sunil Kumar Sharma, former GM RK Handa, Senior DGM SS Chaudhary, Senior DGM Gurjit Singh, AGM, Infra, NCS, BP Pahuja and DGM (Infra) of NCS, Manish Goyal and three private firms -- RD Konsultants, SR Ashok and Associates and CS Constructions along with their directors.

The accused persons and entities have been booked for offences under the Indian Penal

Code Sections relating to criminal conspiracy and cheating besides provisions of Prevention of Corruption Act relating to abuse of official position.

The CBI had registered a Preliminary Enquiry (PE) on November 11, 2021 following a reference from the Defence Ministry and the FIR follows prima facie merit in the allegations.

"The enquiry prima facie revealed that during the award of contracts of Preliminary Project Report, Detailed Project Report and Civil Work Contract under IACCS Phase II Project, gross irregularities, violation of contract manual and CVC guidelines were violated by the above mentioned BEL officials in criminal conspiracy with M/s R.D. Consultants and others during the period 2011 to 2017," reads the FIR.

Frequent use of mobile phones to calm kids increases emotional dysregulation: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Frequent use of devices like smartphones and tablets to calm upset children aged 3-5 was associated with increased emotional dysregulation in kids, particularly in boys, according to a Michigan Medicine study in JAMA Pediatrics.

"Using mobile devices to settle down a young child may seem like a harmless, temporary tool to reduce stress in the household, but there may be long term consequences if it's a regular go-to soothing strategy," said lead author Jenny Radesky, developmental behavioral pediatrician at University of Michigan Health CS Mott Children's Hospital.

"Particularly in early childhood, devices may displace opportunities for development of independent and alternative methods to self-regulate."

The study included 422 parents and 422 children ages 3-5 who participated between August 2018 and January 2020, before the COVID-19 pandemic started. Researchers analysed parent and caregiver responses to how often they used devices as a calming tool and associations to symptoms of emotional reactivity or dysregulation over a six-month period.

Signs of increased dysregulation could include rapid shifts between sadness and excitement, a sudden change in mood or feelings and heightened impulsivity.

Findings suggest that the association



between device-calming and emotional consequences was particularly high among young boys and children who may already experience hyperactivity, impulsiveness and a strong temperament that makes them more likely to react intensely to feelings like anger, frustration and sadness.

"Our findings suggest that using devices as a way to appease agitated children may especially be problematic to those who already struggle with emotional coping skills," Radesky said.

Special board convened to promote 246 women Army officers, Centre tells SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Tuesday told the Supreme Court a Special Selection Board has been convened from January 9 to consider around 246 women Army officers for promotion.

Senior advocate R Balasubramanian, appearing for the Centre, informed a bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justice P S Narasimha that the special selection board-III will consider the issue of promotion of these officers.

"We are seized of the matter. They are saying the special selection board will be over by January 23. We will keep it after January 24," the bench noted and posted the matter for further hearing on January 30.

The apex court said the respondent shall file an updated report before setting out the



results of the special selection board. The top court was hearing a plea by 34 women Army officers who have alleged junior male officers are being considered over them for promotions to perform "combat and commanding roles" in the force.

While hearing the matter on December 9, the apex court had asked the Army to put its "house in order", saying it feels the Army has not been "fair" to the women officers who have alleged delay in promotion after being granted permanent commission on the directions of the top court in 2020.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays homage to martyrs who lost their lives in the 2001 Parliament attack on its 21st anniversary, at Parliament House complex in New Delhi on Tuesday. Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

'Easily available, cheap drug Carboplatin increases cure rate of breast cancer'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A commonly available and inexpensive drug, carboplatin, increases the cure rate and survival of a very aggressive type of breast cancer, called triple-negative breast cancer, especially among young women, according to a recent study by the Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai.

The study was conducted at two cancer hospitals in Varanasi - Mahamana Pandit

Madan Mohan Malviya Cancer Centre (MPMCC) and Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital (HBCH) -- both under the purview of TMC. TMC director Dr Rajendra A Badwe is the principal investigator of this study, which was conducted by the Breast Cancer Working Group of TMC.

Dr. Badwe, recently, through a video conferencing, explained the findings and said that carboplatin increased the cure rate and survival of

triple-negative breast cancer. He said that the study was a randomized controlled trial which enrolled women with stage II-III triple negative breast cancer from 2010 to 2020 who were divided into two groups, both of whom received chemotherapy to downstage the disease prior to surgery.

Women in the standard treatment group received standard chemotherapy consisting of once per week paclitaxel for 8 weeks followed by

doxorubicin plus cyclophosphamide every 3 weeks for 4 cycles. In the platinum group, women received the same chemotherapy with the addition of injection carboplatin once per week for 8 weeks, given with paclitaxel.

Women in both groups underwent surgery after the last cycle of chemotherapy. They were then followed up once every 6 months.

Dr Badwe explained the four main findings. First, in

the whole study population cure rate increased by 6.6% from 64.1% in the standard arm to 70.7% in the platinum arm and the overall survival increased by 7.6% from 66.8% in the standard arm to 74.4% in the platinum arm, which was statistically significant.

Second, when the results were analyzed by age, the benefit of weekly carboplatin was almost exclusively confined to women younger than 50 years who had a large 12.5% increase in cure rate

and an 11.2% gain in overall survival. Third, platinum-based chemotherapy wiped the tumour clean as assessed by pathologists in the operated breast specimen in 61% of younger patients compared with 41% by standard chemotherapy. Fourth, carboplatin-based chemotherapy was well tolerated without a high rate of toxicity.

A commonly available and inexpensive treatment like carboplatin will now be routinely offered as part of



pre-operative chemotherapy regimen to women with TNBC. The implications of this result are very important, he said.

The results of the landmark 'TMC Study - Platinum in TNBC' were presented by

Dr Sudeep Gupta, professor of Medical Oncology at the TMC, at the ongoing San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium, which is the largest and most important breast cancer conference in the world.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Flare-up doused

The Tawang clash may not have escalated but India can ill-afford to lower the guard against the Chinese

The physical clash between Indian and Chinese soldiers along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Tawang last week seems to have blown over, with India showing no inclination to escalate the matter and China saying that "situation is stable overall." Chinese forces attempted to "unilaterally change the status quo" in Arunachal Pradesh by transgressing the LAC, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said in parliament on Tuesday. Our soldiers prevented the Chinese from making a land grab in Arunachal Pradesh and "compelled the Chinese troops to return to their posts." A few Indian soldiers were injured but there was neither any serious injury nor death, Singh said. Chinese soldiers too suffered minor injuries. "Both sides immediately disengaged from the area," the Indian Army said. Meanwhile the government opened diplomatic channels soon after the clash. Beijing downplayed the incident. Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said that "the China-India border situation is stable overall." The two sides "maintained unobstructed dialogue on the border issue through diplomatic and military channels," he added. It is good to know that both sides are trying to douse the flare-up, but we should not forget a few facts. First, it is part of China's strategy to keep the border with India ambiguous so that it could lay claim on any piece of land it wants to at any time in future. China accepted the McMahon Line with Burma (now Myanmar) in 1960, but it has obstinately and mischievously refused to accept it as the border with India.

Second, Chinese President Xi Jinping is beleaguered with a variety of crises: the unwise zero-Covid policy has triggered widespread protests across the country; for all his bluff and bluster, he failed to subdue Taiwan which had the courage to invite US House of Representatives' chair Nancy Pelosi; the economic is slowing down; and the Western nations are becoming less accommodative of Beijing's infractions. There is no better way than starting a border skirmish and arousing hyper-nationalistic sentiments to divert people's attention from the failings in governance. Third, the Tawang clash, even if occasioned by Xi's desire to distract his own people, should be seen as an episode of the 'unrestricted warfare' that the CCP is waging against India. It is a well-known fact that China sees India as its rival—at least in its neighbourhood—and tries to restrain it by all means possible. It has been trying to 'encircle' us in a hostile neighbourhood: Pakistan (and now also the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan) in the north-west, a spy ship in Sri Lanka, Beijing-friendly politicians in Nepal, and so on. Fourth, China is an implacable foe. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has gone out of his way to befriend Xi. He had 18 one-on-one meetings with Xi: the denouement was Galwan. Our PM tried to break the ice at Bali where he again met Xi: now there is Tawang. This proves, if any proof is required, that India must remain prepared for any trouble from China.

PICTALK



A procession taken out to mark the first anniversary of the Kashi Vishwanath Dham, in Varanasi

Nepal's very own 'Game of Thrones'

With no party securing a majority in the recent elections, it is a political cliffhanger in Nepal

The second multiparty elections in Nepal on 20 November after the new constitution 2015 have been unique. For the first time, the simultaneous federal and provincial elections were contested as pre-poll alliances with several independent parties, candidates and rebels participating. It is not simple casting four ballot slips in a mixed electoral system (first past the post and proportional representation) that does not throw up a clear majority unless various factions and parties unite to form coalitions. In 2017, Communist parties merged as Nepal Communist Party and swept the elections. This time, no single party dared to fight independently.

This election bucked the trend of local elections in 2017 when Communists took Kathmandu's Parliament as well as six or seven provinces. This time, results are scattered due to the meteoric rise of independent parties like Rashtra Swatantra Party; and Janmat and Nagarik Unmukti parties in Madhes, decimating traditional Madhesi parties. Power equations have changed significantly and neither major coalition - Nepali Congress led by Prime Minister SB Deuba and CPN (UML) led by former Prime Minister KP Oli has managed to reach the 138 majority mark. Deuba's coalition consists of former PM Prachanda's Maoists, former PM Madhav Nepal's Unified Socialist, Mahanta Thakur's Loktantrik Janata Samajwadi Party and Chitrabahadur KC's Rashtriya Jan Morcha. Upendra Yadav's Janata Samajwadi Party, the original constituent of NC coalition jumped ship and joined UML coalition and was replaced by Thakur Saab. Unsurprisingly, CPN (UML) won the highest votes - 28,45,641 - giving it 34 additional PR seats. NC was close behind with 27,15,225 votes and 32 PR seats.

The Game of Thrones started a week ago, to guess which coalition President Bidya Debi Bhandari will invite to prove majority on the floor. Prachanda



is deeply embarrassed by Maoist's poor showing with just 32 seats when he expected at least 45. Similarly, NC, as the single largest party, won 57 plus 32 (89) seats. Its strike rate was 57 of 91 seats it contested. CPN UML which fought 141 of 165 seats won just 44 plus 34 PR (78 seats). The UML coalition has reached 104 against NC's 136 seats. It is Prachanda's Maoists which as third largest party, have progressively declined from 329 to 83 to 51 and now 32 seats in elections since 2008. According to a pre-poll understanding, if Prachanda was to fetch 44 and more seats, NC and Maoists would share power with Prachanda holding the reins for the first two and a half years and later handing over to Mrs Deuba-Arzu Rana Deuba. She is known to have tied a rakhi this year to BJP's Vijay Chauthaiwale, in charge of the party's foreign affairs cell. Power-sharing stabilizes unwieldy coalitions they say. In order to improve Prachanda's bargaining power, Maoists are looking over their shoulder. Party Vice President KB Mahara last week announced that Maoists will "keep all options open" but next day the party reneged saying it

THE GAME OF THRONES STARTED A WEEK AGO, TO GUESS WHICH COALITION PRESIDENT BIDYA DEBI BHANDARI WILL INVITE TO PROVE MAJORITY ON THE FLOOR.

will stick by the NC coalition and signed a press release of coalition partners sans Thakur Saab, to that effect. It seems Maoist well-wishers are campaigning for Prachanda's premiership and working to increase the party's flock by roping in Nagarik Unmukti Party led by Resham Choudhary who is in Kathmandu jail for the fifth year but his party brings along three seats plus one independent. In the four-some are Choudhary's wife and father. Also pledged to join are Prabhushah, a former Maoist who joined Oli and an independent. The surprise star of Madhes, Dr CK Raut, who routed Upendra Yadav, met Deuba and Prachanda and will bring six seats. Onlinexhabhar reported that Prachanda commands support of 60 legislators. Now, even Rabi Lamichhane (21 seats) has offered to support Deuba who will need to be discreet in selecting partners. The contenders for PM are many in NC - Deuba, dark horse Shekhar Koirala and gold star Gagan Thapa. Eventually, as always, experience will trump new blood with Deuba likely chosen by the NC parliamentary party as its leader

for the sixth time. Other options are afloat. First, Oli has offered his bête noir Prachanda a power-sharing deal. #no not again Mr Oli. All three years from 2018 to 2021, Oli and Prachanda fought bitterly over leadership and split the party. Oli has forgotten his clarion call: "Never let Prachanda become Prime Minister". That Oli will make Prachanda PM is make-believe. Overall it appears the NC coalition will cobble an inflated coalition struggling to form a stable government. The constitution cushions such a government with the provision of a two-year bar on no confidence motion. Nepali journalists asked me: who does India want as Prime Minister? My reply: the one whom the alliance will select. India will not micro-manage the selection of PM. The first decision the new PM will make is on Agniveer - one factor that lost BJP Himachal Pradesh last week. (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)



ASHOK K MEHTA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POLITICIANS AND THEIR PROMISES

Sir - While inaugurating development projects in Nagpur, the Prime Minister criticised the attitude of political parties capturing power through false promises, which is inappropriate given his own track record of failing to keep lofty promises. During his first campaign for national office in 2014, he made a memorable pledge that if elected as prime minister, he would launch a crusade to repatriate untaxed wealth stashed abroad by unscrupulous business people and would deposit Rs. 15 lakh in the bank accounts of BPL families after recovering the bounty. He also asked people to open Jan-Dhan bank accounts so that he could deposit Dan-Dan (money) in their names, and then betrayed them. A local broadcaster asked the Indian leader's election mastermind and closest political ally, Amit Shah, what had happened to the PM's promise about a year after he won. Shah said, "Look, this is a jumla." Modi promised doubling farmers' income and housing for all Indians, 24x7 electricity for all, fully operational bullet trains, a USD 5 trillion economy, and two crore job opportunities for the youth. By not fulfilling the lofty promises, he has betrayed the trust of the people. The Prime Minister is expected to give a mature speech, to demonstrate responsibility and seriousness.

KV Chandramouli | Mysuru

BREAST CANCER IS PREVENTABLE

Sir - For years breast cancer has been the major health issue among Indian women. It accounts for 14 percent of all cancers among our women. Statistically, one in every 28 women in India is at risk of developing breast cancer in her lifetime. And, unfortunately, in our country the number of breast cancer cases reported each year is rising at higher rates than ever. ("Awareness & alertness can prevent breast cancer", Dec. 13). Numerous studies have shown that regular screening of women with no symptoms of breast cancer has lowered the number of women who die from the dis-

Afghan plight



The winter had started to be harsher in both Asia as well as in Europe. But the world had hooked their eyes on Ukraine only, which right now is facing harsh and cold winter with temperature dripping down upto minus 20 Degree Celsius. It was after the Ukraine-Russia war, that Ukrainians were compelled to stay without power supply, adequate food, and life of normalcy. Luckily Ukraine had all arms next to help

them out in their time of extreme hardship. But nobody thinks about Afghanistan, who is in the group of cold winters, no food and people under threat of Taliban. After the US forces pull off from Afghanistan, the local peoples are dying every day. Unfortunately there is no one to listen to about their plight. As pandemic economic recovery and Ukraine-Russia war has diverted all of our attention from these poor people.

The world must draw attention to the critical condition of Afghan's too. They too need our help to survive. Just like Ukrainians their fundamental rights too are equally violated, their life is also not normal and the world must voice them too, just like we raise our voices together for the Ukrainian. We must not be biased by forgetting about Afghanistan and its people. We must stress some concern on their conditions too, to establish global peace and stability.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

ease. Women with a strong family history of cancer can take special steps to protect themselves. Increased body weight and weight gain as an adult, are linked with a higher risk of breast cancer after menopause. The American Cancer Society recommends women to stay at a healthy weight throughout their life and avoid excess weight gain by balancing the food intake with physical activities. Diet plays a very small but measurable role in breast cancer prevention. However, women who adhere to a healthy diet should still take other preventive measures, such as having regular mammogram tests.

Rangnathan Sivakumar | Chennai

CONGRESS MAKES IT IN HIMACHAL

Sir - On the face of it, Congress in a show of pragmatic political sagacity has this time successfully tackled its internecine bickering in Himachal Pradesh by appointing Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu from Lower Himachal Pradesh as new Chief Minister, journalist-turned politician Mukesh Agnihotri his deputy

and Pratibha Singh the state PCC chief and thereby pacified all the three stakeholder factions in the party. Coming from humble milieu, Mr Singh has risen to this top job by dint of his grit and perseverance from National Student Union of India(NSUI) president to HP Shimla Mayor to state Congress president to the Chief Minister. Former stalwart and CM Virbhadr Singh's daughter, Pratibha Singh was claimant to the throne notwithstanding, was eventually prevailed upon to relent and give in.

Proverbially speaking 'All's well that ends well', Keeping a Hindi adage 'Savdhani Hati, Durghatna Ghati' in mind and taking a sage editorial advice in this context, the Congress leadership must take every step with a pint of salt before experimenting them in Himachal Pradesh that has a record of alternating the governments between the BJP and the Congress.

Sharafat Manzi | Rampur

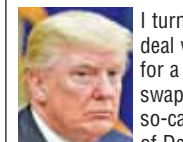
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SOUND BITE

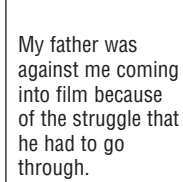
Congress has been trying to "wake up" the government on the Chinese actions on the border but it is silent in order to "protect its political image."



AICC general secretary — Jairam Ramesh



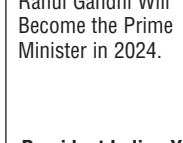
Paul Whelan, Former US President — Donald Trump



My father was against me coming into film because of the struggle that he had to go through. — Actor — Hritik Roshan



Ben Stokes-led side had to dig deep to register a memorable win over Pakistan at Multan. — Former England captain — Nasser Hussain



Rahul Gandhi Will Become the Prime Minister in 2024. — President Indian Youth Congress — Srinivas BV

Carbon credit in India

The passing of bill to curb carbon emission could prove to be revolutionary

Carbon Credit trading has now been allowed in the country. In a major move for climate control, The Energy Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2022 has been passed by the parliament. The Rajya Sabha passed the bill with a voice vote. The Lok Sabha had passed the bill last year in August. The bill is significant as it gives a mandate to use non-fossil energy sources such as biomass, ethanol and green hydrogen and allow carbon credit trading in the country for the first time. In a significant move to arrest greenhouse gases, the bill provides for penalties for violations by industrial units, automobiles, and on manufacturers, if they fail to comply with fuel consumption norms or use unscrupulous means to lower their carbon emissions. However the biggest change that the bill is going to make is in allowing the carbon credit trading in the country. It would promote renewable energy and help the development of domestic carbon which would go a long way in lowering the carbon footprint of the country.

The bill fulfills India's commitment in the Paris agreement to reduce the use of non-fossil fuels for energy requirements and speed up de-carbonization of Indian industry and manufacturing units. Indeed the bill is a step towards reducing carbon emissions. Besides, the Energy Conservation Code for buildings will also apply to office and residential buildings with a connected load of 100 kilowatt or above. Presently, 24 percent of the energy consumption is by the housing sector. Though the state governments could use their discretion in lowering the load up to

50 kilowatt. The country is likely to achieve over 50 percent of its power generation capacity from non-fossil fuels by 2030. The opposition has rightly criticised the government for not consulting them and not sending it to the parliamentary standing committee finalize it. Besides, it has also pointed out that the bill would have been even better than its present form had it been introduced after taking inputs through sharing the bill draft. They have also pointed out that it is not clear who will be responsible for the carbon credit certificate and who will regulate it. But overall the government has done a decent job which is timely and apt, minor hiccups could be taken care of in due course of time. A beginning has been made in the right direction.



FIRST COLUMN

DELINQUENCY OF BENGALURU STUDENTS

students carrying condoms to school need reflection



SOUMYA AGGARWAL



APARNA PATEL

The recent event in Bangalore has sent a wave of shock across the parent and teacher community. There is an increasing trend in risky behaviour amongst students in India. One can easily reminisce from the time they were in school and compare it to the present generation's experience. Never had the parents imagined their wards carrying condoms, oral contraceptives, alcohol, lighters, cigarettes, whitener, and even a substantial amount of money in their school bags. Today substance use is prevalent in about 18% of school students in India.

According to the various reports, what initially began as a drill to check for phones, became an eye-opener for the school authorities. In combination with this, children as young as ten were found using abusive language, obscene gestures, and bullying peers. The schools carefully chose to handle the situation by issuing a notice to parents and suggesting counselling for the students instead of punishing or expelling them. However, counselling alone is not enough. As such behaviour becomes more common at schools, it becomes essential for parents and teachers to understand its root cause.

As students approach their teenage years, they undergo a period of transformation where physical, mental, physiological, and cognitive changes happen while asserting autonomy from their guardians. Their affinity towards experimenting grows exponentially to carry out the task of self-exploration. Adolescents adopt different methods of sexual exploration and other experimentation, which may constitute risky behaviour.



This journey of self-discovery is influenced by multiple factors like environment, peers, and family. The most common reason for such risky behaviour is societal pressure. When children are at a psychologically vulnerable stage, adults should be able to guide them and keep a healthy check on them. When information on any topic is easily accessible and available in multitudes, the parents must supervise the content consumption. Open conversations must be had to build trust amongst the family members, enabling better understanding. Experimentation and exploration should be allowed within a safe space and under specific parameters. Bangalore, is now highly urbanized and exposed to western culture. A race to match up with the speed of growth could be one of the leading factors for a change in the behaviour of adolescents.

Schooling has always been a time of focus where children gain knowledge and undergo experiences to develop personality and build character traits. At times like these, parents and teachers realize the importance of building strong core values in their children from a young age and guiding them toward a higher goal. Be it the sense of "Viveka" or the quality of discernment or "Anushasan" or discipline. It is high time we learn from the age-old wisdom our culture has to offer and go back to our roots to integrate Indian Knowledge Systems for more holistic development of our children.

This can be done primarily in two ways. A large part of this would be to revise the schools' curriculum and teaching methods in India. We need to move to a pre-Macaulay method of education which promotes culture and values over trends and competition and promotes Western values over Indian morals. The current education system fails to ground its students in reality. Another way would be to strengthen the values departed in every household. As the family structure moves to a more nuclear setup where both parents are working, there is a need for conscious and mindful parenting.

(Soumya Aggarwal is COO, Rishihod University; Aparna Patel is Program Coordinator, RishiEd, Rishihod University)

Fountainhead of bad governance

The people of Delhi-NCR benefited due to the work of DDA but today it is synonymous with corruption that breeds incompetence



VK BAHUGUNA

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) was created in 1957 by the Government of India as a role model for systematic urban development. There have been many milestone achievements by it since its creation especially after the civic administration was in turmoil and flooded with migrants from Pakistan occupying vacant lands all over the national capital in the wake of the partition of the country. It prepared its first Master Plan in 1962 so that a well-structured, planned and systematic development of the city can be ensured.

The DDA thereafter became a role model for autonomous bodies for the planned urban development in states and a large number of urban agencies or authorities were created all over the country, including in Noida, Gurgaon and Faridabad in the National Capital Region (NCR). It started several planned housing schemes as well as developed the land in a planned manner after acquiring it and played a key role in creating better civic amenities like electricity, water, sewage disposal and other infrastructural facilities in Delhi.

The people of Delhi and adjoining states in NCR benefited immensely due to the work of the DDA in developing several group housing projects. The population of Delhi is now more than two crore and is steadily increasing due to migration of people. It modified its master plan in 1982, 2007, and 2021. Now the DDA is on way to focus on a master plan for 2041.

However, today the DDA is synonymous with rampant corruption and misgovernance (except when a few honest officers were posted headed it) and it does not augur well for the national capital where such negative publicity tarnishes the name of the country abroad.

One of the negative fallouts of democratic governance in India during the last 75 years has been the increasing encroachments on government properties by people and organised mafia, especially on land resources, due to vote bank politics practiced by political parties and Delhi was no exception. Because of rampant diversion of forest lands, former prime minister Indira Gandhi enacted the Forest conservation Act, 1980. Politicians used to encourage encroachments on forest and other government lands and then nearer to the Assembly elections used to make provisions for regularization of encroachments.

On account of political patronage as much as 50 lakh people live in unauthorised colonies located in private or public land in Delhi; East Delhi has the maximum of such colonies. Most of the illegal colonies came up through agreement to sell through will or general power of attorney which not only was a criminal negligence both in the eyes of law as well



ONE OF THE NEGATIVE FALLOUTS OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN INDIA DURING THE LAST 75 YEARS HAS BEEN THE INCREASING ENCROACHMENTS ON GOVERNMENT PROPERTIES BY PEOPLE AND ORGANISED MAFIA DUE TO VOTE BANK POLITICS

(The author is a former Director-General in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change)



as loss to the government on stamp duty and the sub-registrars were willing partners in this.

In 2011, in a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court declared the sale of property on general power of attorney illegal but it continued unabated nonetheless. In one case when a builder was found committing forgery in sale through the power of attorney, he did not correct the sale deed in where it was originally registered but in another.

This tendency killed the spirit for which the DDA was created and corruption and harassment of people became an integral regular feature in the DDA and no one would bother to take action against any such illegal gratification because most of the powerful politicians and bureaucrats became party to the systematic corruption. Without the connivance and laxity of government officials no illegal settlement can come up. One of the weakest points in government supervision is no penalty provision for deliberate negligence of duty in protecting such open resources like land from the encroachers.

In 2019, Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said in the Lok Sabha that corruption existed in the DDA and it could be checked only when the functioning of the organisation was fully digitised.

However, even after three years of his statement not much is being

done by the DDA to arrest the corruption and provide relief to citizens. The technology vendors are harassed so much that they leave the job mid-way. Though the digitization of the land records has been completed, the top echelons of the DDA have shown absolutely no urgency in reigning in the corrupt babus and middlemen and through nexus want even the non-performers in a consortium to be paid if they can pull wires. In recent years, the Prime Minister's UDAY Yojna announced with great fanfare to regularize around 1731 illegal colonies is the victim of corruption and negligence as well of poor perception of people.

More than four lakh registrations were done but so far a little more than a few thousands conveyance deeds have been registered for regularization of the property. The main reason for this is the corruption at the lower level in DDA which is ignored by senior officers deliberately for obvious reasons or insensitivity. Several people in Gagan Vihar and Preet Vihar area have told me that the DDA office will for PM Uday scheme mark on some flimsy ground the form as incomplete and then ask for two to three lakhs for each property. One Assistant Director Preet Vihar office Mr Pankaj Kumar was arrested by CBI in the month of February 2022 for demanding bribes and was caught red-handed when accepting Rs 30,000.

One of the reasons (according to one political activist) for the BJP's loss in the recent MCD elections has been the tardy implementation of PM Uday scheme due to open corruption.

In the office of Lt Governor Delhi several letters by the Minister and public representatives on DDA corruption remained unattended because no one is serious about bringing transparency and being a long complicated land related complexity the officers are past masters in obfuscating the matters. It is a galore of confusion worse confounded for the common citizens.

The Urban Development Minister and Lt Governor Delhi must seriously review the working of the DDA and rid it of perpetual corruption, incompetence and highhandedness, otherwise the Master Plan 2041 and PM Uday scheme by the Government will keep people facing insurmountable hurdles. The people in power must wonder that only criticising the past rulers will not pay dividends any more.

The Aam Aadmi Party lost in Gujarat though it made a lot of noise about freebies and the BJP won even after 27 years of incumbency because the BJP did extremely well in solving the people's problem and with a clean and transparent model of governance in Gujarat. The future is of performers now as the recent elections results have shown.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

BE READY TO KILL MODI. KILL IN THE SENSE OF DEFEATING HIM.
— EX CONGRESS MINISTER
RAJA PATERIA



INSTIGATING THE PUBLIC AND CONGRESS WORKERS FOR THE MURDER OF NARENDRA MODI BY FORMER MINISTER RAJA PATRIA IS EXTREMELY SERIOUS & CONDEMNABLE.
— BJP MP
VD SHARMA

Cryptocurrencies are risky: Regulate or ban them

Apart from other dangers, Cryptocurrencies also consume a lot of energy which is bad given the world energy crisis

The tulip mania took hold of Europe in the early 17th century and is widely described as the first financial bubble in history. In the 1590s, Carolus Clusius started planting tulips in his private garden at the University of Leiden which gave rise to tulip cultivation in the Netherlands. He devoted the latter years of his life to studying the mysterious tulip phenomenon known as tulip breaking, a strange occurrence in which the petals would change to multi-coloured patterns. This strange phenomenon gave rise to the Tulip Mania as it was suddenly seen as a social symbol to own a tulip and at its peak, accounted for inflation; a normal tulip could be trading between \$50,000 and



NISHIKANT DUBEY

\$150,000, similar to bitcoin prices at its peak.

However, many years later it would be discovered that the strange phenomenon which gave rise to Tulip Mania was nothing but the result of a virus that infected the tulips. This could be seen as a direct comparison to the current cryptocurrency frenzy happening worldwide.

Since the mysterious Satoshi Nakamoto launched Bitcoin in 2009, cryptocurrency has only grown bigger and gained more traction. In this day and age of technology, cryptocurrency is widely viewed as a deregulated anti-establishment currency that gives the people power. Crypto supporters hail the fact that this form of currency takes the power of volatil-

ity, inflation, interest rates, and power to spend from the establishment and gives that power to the people since they can mine the supposed currency through blockchains.

However, this could not be further away from the truth and from the reality behind crypto. Bitcoin has a limited number of 'coins' that can be mined and as more 'coins' are mined the harder it will get to mine more and this has serious environmental complications. According to a study done by the Cambridge Center for Alternative Finance (CCAF), Bitcoin at its peak in 2021 consumed around 110 Terawatt Hours per year, 0.55 per cent of the global electricity production, equivalent to the annual ener-

gy draw of a country like Malaysia.

Given the energy crisis the world is facing today, the sheer wastage of fundamental commodity electricity is obscene. Nevertheless, this barely scratches the surface of the evil of crypto.

Post-2016 newer cryptocurrencies, crypto platforms, and non-fungible tokens have taken the space and have widely done the trick to promote the cryptocurrency and get investors for the 'coins' and 'tokens' as crypto is emerging in India. However, as people come to terms with cryptocurrency, they understand how dangerous it is. Over the past year, the crypto market has lost over \$2 trillion in market cap from its peak of \$3 trillion in

2021. On the eve of launch of 'digital rupee' by RBI, it is not out of place to say that India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been one of the first countries which struck a balance between promoting innovation, human adventure and endeavour via issuance of CBDCs for promoting digital payments using blockchain technology but also at the same time cautioning and protecting the general public from crypto mania.

Our failure as a system to recognise cryptocurrency as nothing but a Ponzi scheme is going to hurt the people most at risk as seen recently with the crash of FTX, where the majority of the losses were taken by people who put their life savings in crypto as

an investment.

In 2018, the RBI banned all its regulated entities from participating in cryptocurrencies but the same was overturned by the Supreme Court in 2020 resulting in mushrooming of various existing crypto exchanges.

Going forward, apart from focusing on the menace of fraud, money laundering, private risks, etc., we should spell out the systemic risks posed by these instruments to the stability of the entire economy and populace at large. The cyber-attack on servers of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Delhi where the breach has compromised personal data of three to four crore of patients and hackers have reportedly demanded an

amount of 200 crore in cryptocurrency is a case in point.

In the history of financial bubbles, deregulation added with a sudden frenzy has given rise to numerous bubbles from Tulip Mania to the 2008 crash. Any legislation for regulation can be effective only after significant international collaboration on evaluation of the risks and benefits and evolution of common taxonomy and standards. Until then, the only viable solution to protect the environment from massive energy surges, protect gullible retail investors from losing their life savings, and to crack down on the illegal activities happening across the internet is to either have a regulated cryptocurrency or ban all cryptocurrencies.

MOROCCO COACH WANTS MORE WC HISTORY

AP ■ DOHA

Never mind the fireworks and deafening pop music that await at Al Bayt stadium — the real pre-match show for the World Cup semi-final between Morocco and France was provided on Tuesday by Walid Regragui.

The 47-year-old coach of the first African and first Arab team to reach the last four of the World Cup took full advantage of the chance to address the world's football press in a Doha auditorium, the day before the clash with Didier Deschamps' team.

The Moroccan exuded pride, optimism, defiance and humour in a refreshing contrast to the usual drone of non-committal clichés that coaches ritually role out before big games.

He mocked the game's modern focus on possession, ridiculed the 'Expected Goals' stats and laughed in the face of those who wrote of his team before they eliminated Spain and Portugal.

But along with the quickfire responses and talking points, there was a defiant refusal to play the role of the satisfied minnow and an evidently burning belief that his team can beat France and then do it again against Argentina or Croatia in Sunday's final.

"We want to win the World Cup," he said. "It's not just words, we have to go further, maybe we won't have another opportunity," he said.

"We are not the favourites but we are confident — maybe that makes me mad, crazy? A bit of crazy can be good," he said with a grin.

Having already dubbed his team as "the Rocky Balboa of



this World Cup" after they knocked out Portugal in the quarter-finals, Regragui was not pulling any punches.

Asked whether his team will continue in the same style, which has seen opponents enjoy plenty of possession, he was unapologetic about his team's approach.

"We will play to our strengths... this idea of possession, it is amazing how football journalists love these figures about 60-70% possession, but it is no good if there are only two shots on goal," he said, perhaps recalling Spain's 77% possession and one shot on target against his team.

'STOP WITH STATISTICS'

"The expected goals too... we should have won, we had 4% expected goals.... Well, we are here to win, that's all," he said.

"If France give us possession, we will take it but I don't think they will. So we will try to stop them," he added.

If Morocco's application of the well-established strategy of mass defence and rapid counter-attack are not in fashion at the moment, statistics certainly are

"We are at 12% now? Well praise be to Allah. We will work on that."

Regragui suggested that his team was being criticised, in part, for refusing to play the role of the entertaining losers.

"European journalists criticise our style, I think it bothers them to see an African team playing as they do.

"They like to see a dance and see (winger Sofiane) Boufal doing two nutmegs and then going back home," he said.

Certainly, though, not even the most critical could question Morocco's determination and work-rate along with their defensive resilience.

"The key for us is spirit, we play a quality game every time with a good spirit. For me the spirit is the most important thing in football — we have to play with the heart and the spirit," he said.

Born in France, in what he called a "difficult" suburb south-east of Paris, Regragui spent the bulk of his playing career in France before moving to Morocco to coach. He only took over the national team in August.

It has been a short reign so far but his impact - and that of his team - has been enormous, resonating well beyond Morocco.

"If we can make young people dream and present as positive image of Africa, the Arab world and our religion that is great," he said.

But what clearly is driving Regragui is the satisfaction of surpassing all expectations and defying sceptics.

"Before every round people thought we would get knocked out," he said.

"But we are still here and we are going to fight to the end."



France won't underestimate Morocco threat: Varane

AP ■ DOHA

World Cup semi-final so we are very pleased, but the only real objective is to win it," he said. "That was always the aim." Fellow defender Jules Kounde was full of praise for a Morocco team that have made history — the first African side to reach a World Cup semi-final and the first Arab team to do so.

Walid Regragui's men beat Portugal 1-0 in the quarter-finals after dumping out Spain on penalties in the last 16.

They also beat Belgium and drew with Croatia during the group phase and have conceded just a single goal, from an own goal, in their five matches so far.

"They are very compact, with lines that are close together, and they leave little time for the player on the ball to organise himself," said Barcelona right-back Kounde.

"They also run really fast, so we'll need to play with few touches, move the ball around quickly and try to unbalance them by moving from one side to the other. It is remarkable to have only conceded one goal at this stage of the competition, all the more so given the teams they have faced."

France defender Raphael Varane has insisted that there will be no complacency from the World Cup holders when they take on surprise package Morocco in the semi-finals on Wednesday.

Having edged out England in the last eight, Les Bleus are strong favourites to return to the final even though Morocco have already eliminated Spain and Portugal in the knockout phase in Qatar.

"We have enough experience in the team to not fall into that trap," said Varane, one of the survivors of France's victorious 2018 World Cup campaign, when asked about the danger of over-confidence.

"We know Morocco are not here by chance. It is up to us experienced players to make sure everyone is prepared for another battle."

France have reached the target set by the country's football federation of getting to the last four but Manchester United defender Varane said the team were hungry for a place in Sunday's final against Argentina or Croatia.

"It is not easy to get to a

Neymar cleared of corruption over Barcelona transfer

AP ■ BARCELONA

Brazilian football superstar Neymar was cleared of corruption charges on Tuesday related to his transfer to Barcelona from Santos in 2013.

A court in Spain acquitted all nine defendants in the trial.

In addition to Neymar, this included his parents, FC Barcelona and former club presidents Josep Maria Bartomeu and Sandro Rosell, Santos FC and former president Odilio Rodrigues Filho, and N&N — the company founded by Neymar's parents to manage his career.

Brazilian company DIS had argued they lost out financially on Neymar's transfer because



they owned 40 percent of Neymar's sporting rights at Santos and believed the true value of the deal had been obscured by those involved.

"According to the court it has not been proved there was a false contract or that DIS was intended to be harmed," said the court in a statement. Neymar's high-profile trial got underway in mid-October in Barcelona, just a month before the start of the World Cup in Qatar.

Lloris urges Kane to 'keep his chin up' after England penalty miss

AP ■ DOHA

Hugo Lloris has revealed he spoke to Harry Kane in the aftermath of the England captain's crucial World Cup penalty miss against France and has backed his Tottenham teammate to bounce back quickly from his Qatar disappointment.

Kane had already scored one penalty in Saturday's quarter-final against France goalkeeper Lloris before blazing another late kick over the bar, allowing the holders to beat England 2-1 and advance to the last four at the expense of Gareth Southgate's side.

"We had a text after the game. It was not easy to find the words straight after and I think he needed some rest," said Lloris, who has played alongside Kane at Spurs since 2013.

"It is a difficult time obviously for the English national team and for Harry but I think he can be proud of what he has done in this World Cup.

"Top players have missed important penalties in their careers, like Leo Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, like Kylian Mbappe.

"I have no doubt Harry will keep his chin up and he will help Tottenham and the national team to shine."

The pair will be reunited at their club after the tournament in Qatar with Tottenham's next Premier League game scheduled for December 26 away against Brentford.



DFB announces think tank to review Germany's World Cup flop

AP ■ DOHA

The German Football Association (DFB) on Tuesday announced a think tank of former internationals, including Karl-Heinz Rummenigge and Matthias Sammer, to help restore the country's fortunes after a dismal performance at the World Cup in Qatar.

Rudi Voller, Oliver Kahn and Oliver Mintzloff will also participate in the group which has been tasked with helping Germany to prepare for Euro 2024, which it will organise in 18 months, said DFB President Bernd Neundorfer.

Germany have struggled on the international stage since winning the World Cup in 2014, winning just three of their last 11 matches at a major tournament.

They failed to get out of the group stage at the 2018 World Cup in Russia and suffered the same fate in Qatar where they lost to Japan, drew with Spain and won their final match against Costa Rica.

Coach Hansi Flick has been confirmed in his role until 2024 despite the early elimination in Qatar but the DFB need to find a new team director after Oliver Bierhoff left his post.



The Germans will also have to line up, on a temporary basis at least, without their experienced goalkeeper and captain, Manuel Neuer.

The 36-year-old Bayern player broke his leg skiing after returning from Qatar and will miss the rest of the season.

OTHER SPORTS

INDIAN WOMEN LOOK TO BUILD ON SPECIAL SUPER OVER WIN

PTI ■ MUMBAI

High on confidence after an inspirational 'Super Over' win, Indian women will look to maintain momentum with improved fielding and bowling performance against the mighty Australia in the third T20I here on Wednesday.

After the first two games at a packed D Y Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai, the cricket caravan moves to the iconic Brabourne Stadium in the Southern part of the 'Maximum City' where another belter of a track awaits the two teams.

The game on Sunday turned out to be a perfect advert for women's cricket with a 47,000 plus crowd witnessing an edge of the seat thriller.

For a change, India, who have often gone suicidal from winning positions against Australia, were finally able to end up on the right side of the result.

However, the famous win is in the past now, and as pointed out by batting coach (acting head coach) Hrishikesh Kanitkar in a stirring speech after the game, India have a lot of work to do with the five-match series locked at 1-1.

The ability has always been there to regularly compete with the likes of Australia but India need to do the lit-



tle things to gain the remarkable consistency of their rivals.

Indian batters have done their job but the bowling and fielding in the first two games left a lot to be desired. The hosts have been able to take only two wickets in the series so far and that is a major concern. The catching too has been pretty sub-standard.

The pace department doesn't give a lot of hope with Meghna Singh leaking runs and rookie left-arm pacer Anjali Sarvani not able to provide early breakthroughs.

Renuka Thakur, who has been India's standout bowler in the last six months, too is yet to take a wicket. To be fair to Renuka, she does need a bit of nip in the air to let the ball do all the talking.

Wrist-spinner Devika Vaidya, who is playing her first T20 series in eight years, is yet to make an impact with the

Mandhana touches career-best ranking points

PTI ■ DUBAI

her superb performances in the first two matches of the ongoing series against India underway in Mumbai.

The 27-year-old Australian had unbeaten knocks of 40 and 70 and overtook compatriots Meg Lanning and Beth Mooney as well as Mandhana to become the fourth Australian and 12th batter to top the women's T20I rankings, according to ICC.

Mooney had been at the top since August 3 this year when she overtook Lanning.

McGrath is No. 1 after only 16 matches. The last woman to reach the top in fewer matches was West Indies' Stafanie Taylor in 2010 (15 matches) while India opener Shafali Verma has been the fastest in recent years, reaching the top ranking after 18 matches.

Two more India batters, Shafali and Jemimah Rodrigues, also figure in the list of top-10 T20I batters, with the former gaining a spot to be at sixth position.

In the T20I ranking for bowlers, India's Deepti Sharma and Renuka Singh Thakur have maintained their third and fourth spots respectively, with England leg-spinner Sarah Glenn up one place to second behind compatriot Sophie Ecclestone.



Ian Chappell not in favour of lifting Warner's captaincy ban

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

lift the ban on Warner, what's that going to do? I mean, you're not going to appoint Warner captain of any Australian team, are you? He's too old," Chappell was quoted as saying by Channel Nine's Wide World of Sports.

"And he's not going to be given the role because the captain has got to be young enough to be able to lead by example, and those days are gone for David."

The former Australia skipper feels Warner wanted his captaincy ban to be lifted as he wanted to lead his BBL side Sydney Thunder.

"I think David probably wanted the leadership for his BBL team (the Sydney Thunder) so that he could help them," Chappell said.

"He (Warner) would have been a very good leader for them, he thinks very aggressively about the game. Whatever leadership position he had, he would be good at it."

The lifetime captaincy ban was imposed on Warner for his role in the 2018 ball tampering scandal in Cape Town, also known as 'Sandpapergate'. Chappell also hit out at Cricket Australia for the way it handled the issue, accusing the board of "protecting its own backside."

The legendary Ian Chappell believes there is no point in lifting David Warner's lifetime captaincy ban as he feels that age is not in favour of the mercurial left-hander.

Chappell, 71, is of the view that Warner would have been a good leader if he was entrusted with the responsibility at a young age.

"If Cricket Australia were to



INDIA TO PUSH FOR WTC FINAL QUALIFICATION

PTI ■ CHATTOGRAM

KL Rahul's tactical acumen will be tested along with his batting prowess when a depleted Indian team clashes with a tricky Bangladesh in the high-stakes two-match series, the result of which will have an impact on India's chances for the World Test Championship final qualification.

India are currently fourth in the WTC table behind Australia, South Africa and Sri Lanka. The only way of qualifying for the final in June is to straightaway win both the Tests against Bangladesh and then all four at home against Pat Cummins' Australia to eliminate any ifs and buts.

The journey starts at the Zahoor Ahmed Stadium, which has traditionally favoured the batters but also offers some turn towards the business end of the match.

The visitors will start as overwhelming favourites in Test format, in which the Bangladesh is yet to beat India but the absence of Rohit Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami and Ravindra Jadeja could hurt the side.

Jadeja's absence on these kind of tracks always puts Indian team on the back-foot especially when the opposition team is batting in the third innings or fourth innings.

Jadeja-Ashwin duo, at least against lesser Test nations on sub-continental tracks could be lethal but Axar Patel has done his hard yards over the past two seasons as the second choice left-arm spinner.

As many as 10 Indian players, if all are fit, select themselves in the playing XI and the most important call that the two Rahuls — skipper KL and head coach Dravid — need to make is about the fifth specialist bowler — a third pacer or a third spinner.

Whether India will field a third



choice specialist spinner in wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav or slow left-arm orthodox Saurabh Kumar is there to be seen.

Saurabh, who has been a star performer for India A team in the recently concluded two-Test series against Bangladesh A with 15 wickets, would feel that he has made his case for a Test Cap in at least one of the two games.

In the past one year, Rahul hasn't been exactly exceptional in terms of cricketing smarts as far as captaincy is concerned and this series where he is likely to get two games will be an acid

test as far as his long-term leadership ambition is concerned.

On Monday, during the trophy unveiling ceremony with his counterpart Shakib Al Hasan, Rahul told the mediapersons that his team "plans to play aggressive cricket" as they know what exactly needs to be done in order to reach the WTC finals for the second consecutive time.

But Rahul, whose performances in white-ball formats has been a bit underwhelming to say the least, will have to walk the talk in terms of showing the required intent and aggression

in batting department.

He will have young Shubman Gill for company with Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli and Shreyas Iyer manning the middle-order.

Rishabh Pant will be back in what could safely be termed as his favourite format where his uncluttered batting has been a delightful spectacle for the Indian fans.

In the bowling department, Umesh Yadav, a master at his craft on barren sub-continental tracks will have Mohammed Siraj, Ashwin and Axar Patel for company.

In case a third pacer is selected instead of an additional spinner, the choice will be between two bowlers of one-Test experience — domestic doyen Jaydev Unadkat and the skiddy Navdeep Saini, who is more remembered for being at the other end when Pant created history at the Gabbra.

As far as Bangladesh team is concerned, it will be keen to change its dismal winless record against India over the past 22 years.

In the traditional format, Bangladesh has never had the bowling resources to trouble teams regularly even when they have played at home. Pacers Taskin Ahmed, Ebadot Hossain, Shoriful Islam along with spinners Shakib and Tajjul Islam would love to alter the script.

But they do have a steady batting line-up for home conditions with skipper Shikhar Dhawan having 4000 plus runs under his belt. Add Mushfiqur Rahim's tally of 5000 plus runs and another former skipper Mominul Haque's 3500 plus aggregate, the batting does have a solid look.

TEAMS

India: KL Rahul (captain), Shubman Gill, Cheteshwar Pujara, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, Rishabh Pant (wk), Ravichandran Ashwin, Axar Patel, Umesh Yadav, Navdeep Saini, Jaydev Unadkat, Mohammed Siraj, Saurabh Kumar, Kona Bharat, Kuldeep Yadav, Abhimanyu Easwaran.

Bangladesh: Shakib Al Hasan (captain), Litton Das (wk), Mushfiqur Rahim (wk), Mominul Haque, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Anamul Haque Bijoy, Khaled Ahmed, Ebadot Hossain, Shoriful Islam, Taskin Ahmed, Tajjul Islam, Najmul Hossain Shanta, Rejaul Rahaman Raja, Zakir Hasan (wk), Nurul Hasan (wk), Yasir Ali.

We never advise Pant on how he should be playing: Mhambrey



PTI ■ CHATTOGRAM

The Indian team management will never advise Rishabh Pant to curb his natural attacking game as he knows his role and expectations from him, bowling coach Paras Mhambrey said on Tuesday.

Pant, one of the most destructive players among the current crop has five Test hundreds and 10 fifties in 31 games with centuries in England, Australia and South Africa.

Ahead of the first Test against Bangladesh, Pant was seen going hammer and tongs at the nets on Tuesday and that prompted a query for Mhambrey about having conversations about the left-hander's approach.

"We are not having any special discussion with

Rishabh. That's his game and we know that. Nothing changes, that's the way he prepares for any format, white ball and he is pretty much aware about his role in the team," he said during the pre-match press conference.

"Our conversations are never around the way he is playing as he knows what the team expects out of him," Mhambrey, who has seen Pant from his India U-19 days, said.

While he didn't disclose whether India will go with a third spinner or a third pacer but he was happy that Umesh Yadav, with all his experience, will spearhead the Indian pace attack.

"Umesh is a very experienced bowler. We all know what Umesh brings to the table. Unfortunately, he hasn't got too many opportunities as we had Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj playing in England," Mhambrey said.

"The team management has spoken to him and had discussions and we have lot of clarity as far as Umesh is concerned. The other way I look at it is that he will spearhead the attack and he has lot of experience going into the series. I am also happy how Siraj has progressed in Tests and happy that he has delivered."

The former India seamer admitted that Bumrah and Shami will be missed.

"Bumrah and Shami will be missed but we look at it as others getting an opportunity to play Test cricket and perform for the country," said Mhambrey.

Babar not taking advice from seniors: Afridi

PTI ■ KARACHI

Former Pakistan cricketer Shahid Afridi has claimed that captain Babar Azam is not taking advice from senior players in strategising and planning while blaming batting coach Mohammad Yousuf for not playing a proactive role in selection matters, as Pakistan lost the Test series to Ben Stokes' England.

"As a captain, I always felt one had to be a good leader and that was possible by uniting all the players. It means that you should discuss your plans with seniors. When you start taking advice from outsiders and not involve seniors, issues come (up)," Afridi said on a TV channel.

Coach Yousuf was asked during the post-match conference about the inconsistent form of vice-captain and wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan so far in the series, and the former Pakistan cricketer said he had "no role in selection matters".

"I think it was not a great answer from Yousuf and I feel Rizwan needs to be given a break and rested and Pakistan should bring in Sarfaraz Ahmed in his place for Test matches," said Afridi.

The former skipper, however, demanded full backing for Babar, the team's top batter.

"If we don't back and value him, who will value? Every player has a bad match here and there. But Babar remains the backbone of this team and he got a century (in the first Test) and 75 in the second Test," he said.

Afridi added he would like to see Sarfaraz and batter Shan Masood get opportunities in the third and final Test at Karachi. Both players are in the squad for the series.

Pakistan coach Saqlain Mushtaq has also come in for criticism for saying that the team will try to get a consolation win in the third Test begin-



ning December 17.

"Instead of talking about where we are going wrong, he is now talking about a consolation win. What sort of a coach is Saqlain?" former Test batter and ex-chief selector and head coach Mohsin Khan said.

Skipper Babar also faced the heat during the post-match conference, being asked uncomfortable questions about his performance in Multan where he failed in the second innings, scoring just one run.

In response to a question, Azam said sarcastically, "When I score runs you say I got them on flat pitches and easy opposition and when I don't get runs, everyone says I can't perform in difficult situations. Please don't forget the 196 runs I got against Australia."



Pakistan to host NZ for two Tests, three ODIs from Dec 26

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan will host New Zealand for two Tests and three ODIs from December 26 to January 14 with most of the matches to be played here.

According to the itinerary released by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Tuesday, the Test series will commence in Karachi on December 26 while the second match will be played and Multan from January 3.

The ODIs are scheduled at the National Stadium in Karachi on January 10, 12 and 14. New Zealand were due to play an ODI and T20I series last year but returned from Rawalpindi without playing any match on the instructions of their government due to an unknown security threat to

them.

This year has proven to be a bonanza for Pakistan cricket as they have already hosted Australia, while England, after playing a seven-match T20I series in October, are now playing a Test series in the country. Pakistan did not host any Test or international series between 2009 and 2019 due to security concerns of foreign teams after militants attacked the Sri Lankan team in Lahore in March 2009.

The series against New Zealand has been brought forward by a day with the consent of both the Boards.

New Zealand last played a Test match in Pakistan in 2003.

New Zealand will also tour Pakistan in April next year for another combined white-ball series.

Stokes, Green headline IPL's 405-strong mini-auction list

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

World's premier all-rounders Ben Stokes of England and Cameron Green of Australia are set to enjoy bidding frenzy as 405 players will go under the hammer for 87 slots at the IPL mini-auction on December 23 in Kochi.

England's Test captain Stokes and the rising Aussie sensation Green are in the highest base price bracket of Rs 2 crore while former England Test captain Joe Root has also put his name up at Rs 1 crore.

"Out of 405 players, 273 are Indians and 132 are overseas players of which 4 players are from associate nations. The total capped players are 119, uncapped players are 282 and 4 from associate nations. A maximum of 87 slots are now available with up to 30 being slotted for overseas players," BCCI secretary Jay Shah was quoted as saying in a media release.

While Kolkata Knight Riders has the lowest purse available at Rs 7.2 crore, Sunrisers Hyderabad, with Rs 42.25 crore and 13 spots available, are expected to go on a buying spree after a poor last season.

Another inconsistent team, Punjab Kings are also likely to come out all guns blazing at the mini-auction with Rs 32.20 crore in its kitty. Chennai Super Kings (Rs 20.45 crore), Lucknow Super Giants (Rs 23.35 crore), Mumbai Indians (Rs 20.55 crore), Delhi Capitals (Rs 19.45 crore) and defending champions Gujarat Titans (Rs 19.25 crore) can also go a fair distance for the players they want.

With hard-hitting, pace bowling all-rounders being the need of the hour, Stokes and Green are likely to command anything in the range of Rs 15-17 crore from at least two to three franchises.

With most of the top Indian players already in one team or the other, out-of-favour national



team players Mayank Agarwal and Manish Pandey at Rs 1 crore base price will command a fair bit of bidding.

But the same cannot be said about veterans Ishant Sharma and Ajinkya Rahane, who have kept their going price at a modest Rs 50 lakh, expecting to get a team or two raise the paddle for them.

One of the players who can cause a bidding war is South African batter Rilee Rossouw, who has been prolific on Indian tracks.

Rising Englishman Harry Brook has kept his base price at Rs 1.5 crore.

Delhi pacers hit back after batters struggled against Maharashtra

PTI ■ PUNE

Young Yash Dhull had a tough initiation into first-class captaincy as Delhi wilted under overcast conditions to be bowled out for 191 before Ishant Sharma-led pace attack left Maharashtra reeling at 80 for 5 on the opening day of their Ranji Trophy Group B match, here Tuesday.

While the sun did peep in time and again but the ball nipped around a fair bit throughout with pacers Manoj Ingale (5/43), Rajvardhan Hangargekar (3/58) and Ashay Palkar (2/67) bowling fast and full in the corridor to cause the damage.

Delhi, though, had started off well with senior opener Dhruv Shorey (41) and Anuj Rawat (24) adding 54 runs for the first wicket before Maharashtra drew first blood.

When Maharashtra batted, Simarjeet Singh (2/16) quickly got rid of Pavan Shah (3) and Kaushal Tambe (0) before Ishant Sharma (1/21) bowled a delivery to Rahul Tripathi, that he had often bowled during his heydays to the best in the world.

HP SKITTLE HARYANA FOR 46

Rohtak: Himachal Pradesh seamers made full use of early morning moisture as they shot hosts Haryana out for a lowly 46 before their batters took full advantage of the eased-out conditions to take control on the opening day of their group A match.

At stumps, HP were 246 for 1, riding on opener Prashant Chopra's century (137) and his 219-run opening stand with Raghav Dhawan (86 batting). Himachal as of now look favourites to win the match outright with three days of play still left.

KARN'S 8 FOR 38

Nagpur: Railways leg-spinner Karn Sharma snared eight wickets in a sensational bowling display but Vidarbha still managed 213, courtesy captain Faiz Fazal's century, on the first day of their Group D match.

Captain Fazal (112 off 219 balls) played a lone hand for Vidarbha as he saw wickets tumbling at the other end, seven of them of Sharma's bowling (8/38). He also fell in the end off Sharma as the ninth Vidarbha batter to be dismissed.



In reply, Railways were 22 for 1 in 6.1 overs at stumps.

In another Group D match played in Mohali, opener Prabhsimran Singh struck a double hundred as Punjab batters toyed with Chandigarh bowlers to post 363 for 3 on the first day of their Group D match.

In Agartala, Gujarat captain Priyank Panchal hit 111 in his side's 271 all out in 75.3 overs against Tripura on the first day.

NADEEM, SINGH SEIZE MOMENTUM

Ranchi: Jharkhand spin twins Shahbaz Nadeem and Utkarsh Singh shared five wickets between them as Kerala failed to convert their strong start to be 276 for six on day one of their group C match.

Left-arm spinner Nadeem took the key wickets of Sanju Samson (72) and Rohan Kunnummal (50) en route to 3/108, while off-spinner Singh ended the dogged resistance of Rohan Prem (79 off 201 balls) in his 2/43 as Jharkhand seized some late momentum going into the second day.

Chandran (39 batting) and Joseph (28 batting) were in the mid-

dle at stumps after a 51-run unbroken partnership.

TARUWAR, GOSWAMI STAND TALL

Nadiad: Meghalaya bowlers, led by Rajesh Bishnoi (4/62), wrecked havoc but Taruwar Kohli produced a captain's knock of 123, while Shreevats Goswami chipped in with a splendid 74 to push Mizoram to 252 on day one of their plate group match.

Opting to bowl, Meghalaya new ball bowlers Abhishek Kumar (2/37) and Akash Choudhary (2/40) blew away the top-order to reduce Mizoram to 8 for 3 inside four overs.

But thereafter, it was skipper Taruwar who took charge of the proceedings in an entertaining fourth wicket partnership with Goswami that yielded 136 runs.

Taruwar hit 15 fours in his 250-ball knock, while the left-handed Goswami smashed eight fours en route to a 122-ball 74 to drive Mizoram forward.

Left-arm spinner Bishnoi then triggered the collapse after he had Goswami L.B.W. Taruwar fell short of partners to see his side fold for 86.1 overs.