

OPINION 6
RESTORE DETERRENCE
ALONG LAC FOR PEACE

WORLD 9
WESTERN NEW YORK HIT BY COLD,
STORM; DEATH TOLL UPS TO 28

MONEY 10
SENSEX, NIFTY RISE FOR 2ND DAY AS
BANKING, METAL SHARES SHINE

DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol. 15 Issue 352
*Air Surcharge Extra If Applicable

RANCHI, WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 28, 2022; PAGES 12 3



the pioneer

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

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

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

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court on Tuesday quashed the State Government's draft notification on urban local body elections and ordered holding the polls without reservation for the OBCs. The verdict passed by a division bench of Justice DK Upadhyay and Justice Saurav Lavania annulled the December 5 draft notification issued by the Uttar Pradesh Government providing reservation to Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the urban local body elections.

The bench ordered the State Election Commission to immediately issue notification for the election. Unfazed by the HC order, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the elections would not be held before the grant of reservation to the OBCs and the State would go to the Supreme Court to challenge the High Court's order for immediate notification of elections, if need be. "The UP Government will



constitute a commission as directed by the Allahabad High Court that will conduct a survey of OBCs as per the Supreme Court guidelines. We will not go for the elections without ensuring reservation for the OBCs. If required, we will go to the Supreme Court against the High Court's order," Yogi said.

The verdict comes in the light of PILs challenging the preparation of the OBC reservation draft without following the triple test formula prescribed by the Supreme Court.

The petitioners had pleaded that the State Government must follow the apex court formula and constitute a dedicated commission to study the political backwardness of OBCs before fixing the reservation.

The State Government contended that it had conducted a rapid survey and said it was as good as the triple test. But the HC brushed aside the argument that a rapid survey was as good as the triple test.

The UP Government had earlier this month issued a provisional list of reserved seats for mayors of 17 municipal corporations, chairpersons of 200 municipal councils and 545 nagar panchayats and sought suggestions/objections within seven days.

According to the December 5 draft, four mayoral seats — Aligarh, Mathura-Vrindavan, Meerut and Prayagraj — were reserved for OBC candidates. Of these, the mayor's posts in Aligarh and Mathura-Vrindavan were reserved for OBC women.

SP, BSP, Congress tear into Yogi Govt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Congress launched a scathing attack on the Yogi Adityanath Government over the decision of the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court, which ordered holding the local body polls without reservation for the OBCs.

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav slammed the Government and said it was the result of a conspiracy by the BJP Government to deprive the backward classes of reservation.

"The Allahabad High Court directing conduct of the urban local body elections without OBC quota is unfortunate. Relevant facts were deliberately not placed before the bench of the Allahabad High Court by the Uttar Pradesh Government. The OBCs who constitute 60 per cent of the population have been deprived of their constitutional right of reservation," Yadav said on Tuesday. He added that the "BJP manipulated the issue of reservation for

the OBCs only for its political interests."

BSP supremo Mayawati tweeted that the State Government had to finalise the process of elections by fixing the system of OBC reservation on the basis of a triple test, following the instructions of the Supreme Court with full devotion and honesty, which didn't happen.

"The OBC society will definitely punish the BJP for this mistake," she said.

The Backward Classes Department of the Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee too slammed the Yogi Government, alleging that the present BJP Government is systematically denying the backwards and Dalits their rights in the civic elections.

Manoj Yadav, president of the backward classes department of UPCC, said the BJP and the Yogi Government wanted to end reservation. He said that under the guise of the HC order, the BJP was determined to end the reservation system for the deprived communities in the elections.

No foul play in citizens' death: Russian embassy

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As mystery shrouds the death of two Russian citizens within a span of two days in Odisha at the same hotel, the Russian embassy said here on Tuesday the local police have not found any criminal link in the deaths.

This assertion came against the backdrop of reports alleging foul play.

The two deceased were identified as Pavel Antov and Vladimir Bidenov. Their post-mortem was conducted on Monday.

Authorities and the Russian Embassy are treating it a suicide case.

Antov, a multi-millionaire and elected politician, was reportedly highly critical of President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine and called it "terror".

"We are in constant contact with the relatives of the deceased as well as with local authorities. As we know, police do not yet see a criminal component in these tragic events," the Russian Embassy said.

Antov, 65, was found dead in a pool of blood at a hotel in Odisha's Rayagada district on



Saturday, December 24. Reports say he fell from the terrace of the hotel and died.

Antov was in Odisha for his 66th birthday celebrations.

He was travelling with 61-year-old Vladimir Bidenov, his associate, and a couple, Mikhail Turov and Natalia Panasenko. They were also accompanied by an Indian tourist guide.

Bidenov was found dead in the same hotel just two days before Antov's death. He was found lying unconscious in his room on the first floor of the hotel.

As per police, Bidenov died due to a stroke and was cremated. His friend, Antov, was depressed after Vladimir's death and he too died on December 25, the police further said.

The police are investigating

Pavel's death from all angles, including the possibility that he has fallen from the terrace accidentally.

"First tourist was found unconscious, after medical examination he was found dead. Second tourist was mentally disturbed after his friend's cremation, he was found lying on hotel premises. When taken to hospital, he was found dead," the owner of hotel Sai International in Rayagada, where the Russian tourists stayed, told the media.

Pavel Antov is not the first high-profile Russian to have died a mysterious and sudden death. In September this year, oil boss Ravil Maganov died after falling to his death from the sixth floor of a hospital in Russia. He was reportedly on antidepressants.

China ends Covid ban on foreigners' arrival from Jan 8

PTI ■ BEIJING

Days after it faced nationwide anti-government protests against its stringent zero-Covid policy, China in a major shift of its coronavirus response policies has announced that it will scrap quarantine for international travellers from January 8 next year as it reopens its borders and comes out of international isolation after nearly three years.

The National Health Commission (NHC) on Monday announced that Covid-19 management will be downgraded from Class A to B from next month, in the same category as less-severe diseases, such as dengue fever.

China will cancel inbound quarantine for international arrivals starting from January 8, 2023, it said.

Previously passengers coming from abroad had to mandatorily stay in over two weeks of quarantine in government accommodations, which was gradually reduced to five days with three days' of observation.

These announcements come at a time when the country is grappling with a sudden spurt in coronavirus infections fuelled by the Omicron variant after the Xi Jinping regime relaxed its stringent zero-Covid policy earlier this month following a wave of anti-government protests.

Nationwide mock drills assess Covid combat readiness

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday held Covid response mock drill across the country as part of precautionary measures to check its preparedness to deal with any surge in cases with Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya cautioning that the country might witness a spike in cases and there is a need to be on the guard.

"It is important that the entire Covid infrastructure in terms of equipment, processes and human resources are at a state of operational readiness," Mandaviya said after reviewing the Covid response mock drill at the centre-run Safdarjung Hospital here to check its readiness to deal

with any increase in the number of coronavirus cases.

"I reviewed the Covid response mock drill at Safdarjung Hospital. This mock drill was necessary to know how prepared our hospitals are," the minister said.

"Covid cases are rising all over the world and India might witness a spike in cases too. Hence it is important that the entire Covid infrastructure in terms of equipment, processes and human resources are at a state of operational readiness," he stated.

Meanwhile, representatives of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and other top doctors and public health experts on Tuesday urged the Minister to allow people to take their second coronavirus booster doses.

The meeting, over a video conference, was called to discuss the preparedness for any possible surges in the outbreak.



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

PTI

On rethink, BJP to contest MCD mayor, deputy polls

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a U-turn on its earlier stand on not contesting the mayoral elections in Delhi, the BJP on Tuesday named Rekha Gupta and Kamal Bagdi as its candidates for the posts of mayor and deputy mayor of the MCD. Gupta is a three-term councillor from Shalimar Bagh, while Bagdi is a first-timer from Ram Nagar.

The elections for the post of mayor and deputy mayor will be held on January 6.

The BJP has also named Kamaljeet Sehrawat, Gajendra Daral and Pankaj Luthra for the standing committee member posts.

The AAP has named Dr Shelly Oberoi and Aaley Mohammad Iqbal for the mayor and deputy mayor posts.

The AAP ended the BJP's 15-year-rule in the MCD winning 134 of the 250 wards in the civic body polls earlier this month. The BJP managed to win 104 wards. One indepen-



dent candidate joined the BJP on Monday. The Congress has nine councillors, while there are two independent councillors.

The BJP's mayor candidate, Gupta, has been a general secretary and member of the party's national executive. She was the president of the Delhi University Students Union from 1996 to 1997. She has a

stronghold in North Delhi's Pitampura area.

Gupta, after filing her nomination, asserted that she will contest the election with full strength. "I appeal to all the councillors that vote for the development and betterment of Delhi. I hope they will choose the right mayor for the city by listening to the voice of their conscience," she said.

Maha resolution plans to merge Marathi-speaking K'taka villages into State

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Reiterating its stand that it would pursue its litigation in the Supreme Court for inclusion of 865 disputed border villages in the State, the Maharashtra Assembly on Tuesday adopted a resolution urging the Centre to implement the decision taken at the recent joint meeting chaired by Union Home Minister Amit Shah with the Chief Minister of Maharashtra Eknath Shinde and Chief Minister of Karnataka Basavaraj Bommai in New Delhi.

In its resolution passed unanimously in the ongoing winter session of the State Legislature in Nagpur, the Maharashtra Assembly expressed its solidarity with the Marathi-speaking people in border areas and asked Union Home Minister Amit Shah to seek an undertaking from the Karnataka Government for the safety of

its people living in the border areas.

Condemning the Karnataka Government for its acts of "oppressing and terrorising the Marathi population" and also for its "anti-Marathi" stand in the border areas, the Eknath Shinde Government reiterated its claim for inclusion of 865 Marathi-speaking areas in Maharashtra.

While moving the resolution on Maharashtra-Karnataka border issue, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde said, "All the necessary efforts would be made in the Supreme Court for inclusion of Belgaum, Karwar, Nipani, Bhalki, Bidar towns and 865 Marathi-speaking villages of Karnataka in Maharashtra under any circumstance."

The resolution said, "The Maharashtra Government stands firmly with the Marathi-speaking people in 865 Marathi-speaking villages in the border areas."

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

PTI ■ MYSURU

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's brother Prahlad Modi and family members sustained injuries when the car in which they were travelling met with an accident near here, police said on Tuesday.

According to sources, other than the driver, Prahlad Modi, his son, daughter-in-law and a grandchild were in the car.

They are said to have suffered some injuries and have been shifted to JSS Hospital for treatment.

As per the police, the injuries are said to be "minor" in nature.

The incident happened near Kadakola around 1.30 pm when their car, on the way to Bandipur, is said to have hit the road divider.

Mysuru Superintendent of Police Seema Latkar has visited the spot and the hospital, sources said.

A doctor at the hospital said, "all were stable with minor injuries when they came, they



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

PTI

were immediately attended and are out of danger without any major bleeding. X-rays and CT scans have been done...Only the child has suffered a small fracture on left leg tibia, but it is not major and is being treated."

Member of Parliament

from Mysuru-Kodagu constituency Pratap Simha, who visited the hospital too, said the family that was on a private visit had sustained "minor" injuries, and the child has suffered a minor fracture, and is undergoing treatment.

CAPSULE

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

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

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

Health Minister says State ready to combat Corona infection



Health Minister Banna Gupta participates in the national level mock drill for the prevention and preparation of new variant BF.7 of Corona virus (COVID-19), at Sadar Hospital in Ranchi on Tuesday. Pix by Ratan Lal

PNS : RANCHI corona patient reaches the door of Covid Hospital at Sadar Hospital. As soon as the ambulance reaches the hospital premises, the medical staff wearing PPE kits takes the patient on a

MOCK DRILL HELD AT SADAR HOSPITAL, RIMS

stretcher inside the hospital. Along with this, they are also advising the patient to have courage. The patient's blood pressure, pulse and oxygen level are checked as soon as they are admitted inside the hospital. The doctor on the spot prescribes medicines and other advice to the patient. After this, the nurse and other staff take the patient to the ICU unit and immediately his treatment is started by applying oxygen mask.

Such a scene is seen in Ranchi Sadar Hospital. Following the instructions of the Central Government, a mock drill was held at hospital assessing the hospital arrangements in its fight against the pandemic. State Health Minister Banna Gupta, Health Secretary Arun Kumar Singh and doctors of the hospital were present on the occasion.

After the Mock drill at Sadar hospital, the health

minister said that there are a total of 19,356 beds present across various hospitals in Ranchi out of which 1,456 are ventilator beds and 1,435 are ICU beds.

Moreover, there are 11,356 oxygenated beds, eight functional RT-PCR labs and 300 TrueNat machines operational across the city.

Gupta said that not only Sadar Hospital but the entire Jharkhand is ready to fight Covid-19. The health minister said that there is no need to fear as the system is fine. At present, beds with ventilators, ICU, and oxygen beds are available in Sadar hospital. There is also sufficient stock of medicines.

"The doctors of Sadar Hospital have gained a lot of experience from the past Corona era, so we have experienced doctors. We don't need to worry either way," he said.

Similar to Sadar hospital, a mock drill was also con-

ducted at Rajendra Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) where the RIMS Director, Medical Superintendent and all the officials took stock of the resources available in RIMS.

In view of the danger of increasing infection of Covid-19, some preparations were also seen in RIMS and there are some shortcomings as well. The RIMS management will soon be ready for any eventuality by taking it away. There is a shortage of manpower, and the process of removing it is going on. However, at present only two patients of Corona are being treated in RIMS and the situation is under control.

RIMS Director Dr Kameshwar Prasad, who came out after inspection, said that all the temporary Covid hospitals that were built are in order and as per the situation, they will be operated. Beds, mattresses,

and oxygen supply are all there during the inspection.

He told that the LMA tank of oxygen is empty and will be refilled. Along with this, the supply of oxygen will also start. There will never be a shortage of oxygen during the wave.

While addressing this, he said that this year there will be neither shortage of medicines nor a shortage of oxygen. He added that currently, enough medicines are available in RIMS.

"As the number of patients increases, the stock of medicines will also be increased," he said.

Notably, RIMS has a total of 2,200 beds, which are oxygen supported. He told that the manpower is also not less and another 310 nurses are to be reinstated whose names have been sent to the Jharkhand Staff Commission.

The facts derived from the mock drill at RIMS are



Medic during a national level mock drill for the prevention and preparation of new variant BF.7 of Corona virus (COVID-19), at RIMS in Ranchi on Tuesday. Pix by Ratan Lal

that a 330-bed hospital is ready in RIMS parking. An 800 D-type jumbo oxygen cylinder has been refilled. 400 small B-type oxygen cylinders are kept and 56,000 kilolitres of medical oxygen liquid plant are active. The PSA plant is also active.

IMA honours Dr Bharti, Dr BP Kashyap for their service in medical field



PNS : RANCHI

Renowned ophthalmologist Dr. Bharti Kashyap and Dr. BP Kashyap were felicitated by Indian Medical Association (IMA) by Dr. Sahajanand Prasad Singh, President of Indian Medical Association in a grand ceremony organized Prayagraj (Allahabad).

While, Dr. Bharti Kashyap has been honored with Kanak Goyal Award and Dr. BP Kashyap was honored with Jyoti Ganguly Award on the first day of the Annual Conference of Indian Medical Association held at Prayagraj.

The IMA highlighted the work done by Dr. B.P.

Kashyap in eye treatment. Dr Kashyap has been credited of performing first eye transplant in Jharkhand/Bihar. Dr Kashyap also started the robotic laser cataract surgery and electrophysiology in Jharkhand. Along with this, Dr BP Kashyap also started the DCB course of medical students.

Dr. Bharti Kashyap not only organized cervical and breast cancer eradication camps in the direction of eradication of women's cancer and eradicated cervical pre-cancer by cry treatment in the camp itself, but she has also trained large number of government gynecologists. Dr Bharti Kashyap helped the government in

preparing Cervical pre-cancer post-treatment machines have also been installed in 12 major government hospitals.

Thousands of women have received free treatment for diseases like anemia and leucorrhoea in mega women's health camps being organized since 2015. Under the Eye Protection Campaign, Kashyap memorial hospital examines 20 symptoms of government school children and provided spectacles to the children who had left the school suffering from cataract and got them started school again after surgery. Every year since 2005, the eye donation campaign Run for Vision is being organized continuously.

Guv Bais speaks on economic growth, reforms 105th annual conference of IEA



Governor Ramesh Bais alongwith others during the Indian Economic Association Annual Conference, in Ranchi on Tuesday. Pix by Ratan Lal

PNS : RANCHI

The Indian Economic Association, in collaboration with Ranchi University and Dr Shyama Prasad University on Tuesday, inaugurated the three-day 105th annual conference on the theme 'India at 75: Reviewing Indian Economy for Sustainable Development' at the DSPMU premises.

Governor-cum-Chancellor of Universities in State Ramesh Bais addressing the gathering said that today our country's economy is one of the fastest growing economies of the world. We have set a target of making our economy a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025. There is also a target of housing, drinking water and electricity supply to all, for this work is being done in the direction of policy action, technology and financial resources. The increase in the number of GST returns indicates the strength of the economy. This will speed up the process of progress of development in Country.

The Governor also talked

social worker Ashok Bhagat was present as the guest of honour. Present along with them were MP, Founder of KISS and KIT and Chairman of IEA, Bhuwaneshwar, Prof Dr Achyuta Samanta; Arun Diwaker Nath Bajpai, Conference Chairman and Vice-Chancellor, Atal Bihari Vajpayee University, Bilaspur; Prof Dr Ajit Kumar Sinha, VC, RU; and Prof Dr Tapan Kumar Shandilya, VC, DSPMU.

The Governor also said that the country has made remarkable progress in sectors like tourism, communication and information technology, defence, energy, environment, industry, transport, water resources and rural development. All these are signs of the rise of new India.

ADN Vajpai, as the conference president, while addressing the audience said, "The IEA is a brand for economics students. This association has always faced every problem with grace and poise."

He added, "Two kinds of ideologies destroyed our economy. One was the theory of Adam Smith's 'Capitalism' and another Karl Marx's 'Socialism'. These two limited the economy on both sides. Even though they are different, they are dictated by the same thoughts of consumption, materialism, money, and advertisement, among others. One says a person should have the rights, while the other says that the state should have the rights."

Ashok Bhagat said that from the perspective of the global economy the economics of our world did not affect much in India much. Either the middle class or the upper class may have been affected; however, the lower class residing in villages was not much affected by the recession in the world.

Jharkhand Governor and Chancellor to universities of the state Ramesh Bais was present on the occasion as Chief Guest, while eminent

Rs 461 cr allocated under Chief Minister Drought Relief Scheme

PNS : RANCHI

Addressing the State Level Rabi Workshop Agriculture Minister, Badal said, on Tuesday, that Rs 461 crore has been allocated to all the districts under the Chief Minister's Drought Relief Scheme. The department is going to give its visiting card to the farmer so that he can be assured that the state government is with him.

Badal said to make the concept of Smart Village a reality, there is a need to make co-ordination with all the concerned departments. He asked the office bearers to cooperate with those farmers who are not able to reach the Pragya Kendra and are not getting the benefit of the scheme by taking cooperation from Kisan Mitra. Talking about linking the deprived farmers with the schemes, he said that a list of such farmers should be prepared so that the benefits of the schemes could reach them. "In 3 years of Government, we are reaching 30 lakh farmer families of the State, this is a big achievement, but the target is to reach 5800000 farmers and ensure the contribution up to 20 per cent in the GDP of the State," he added.

The Minister said that more than five lakh new members have joined the cooperative, monitoring should also be done to see how active the new members are in the cooperative. While addressing 129 new officers, he said that the Government has high hopes from them and the senior officials should share their experience so that they can perform better in the field of agriculture. He said that the commitment in the department should be visible from top to bottom, so that we can play our role honestly in fulfilling the dreams of Birsas farmers.

Addressing the State Level

Rabi Workshop, Agriculture Secretary, Abu Bakar Siddiqui said the officials should cooperate with the farmers and every farmer should be able to earn lakhs of rupees and workshops should be organized at the district and block level to provide technical help to the farmers. He asked the newly appointed officers to have any suggestions related to the agriculture sector or to boost up the agriculture sector, then they can give, because there is a need to bring changes, so that the farmer can be made self-reliant." There is a need to explore the possibilities by studying this. If you have any excellent suggestions, provision can be made in the budget for the same. He said that Jharkhand has possibilities of production of turmeric, black pepper and garlic," he added.

Director Agriculture, Nisha Oraon said that this time the challenge was quite unique, 226 blocks were in the grip of drought, which were declared as drought areas. For this, we have demanded Rs 9000 crore from the Central Government. This time we conducted site inspection of 10 villages of each block, along with geo tagging of 5 villages was also ensured. After that the recommendation to declare these areas as drought was sent to the Centre. Last year's Kharif production was 53 lakh metric tonnes and the Kharif crop was grown on a total of 28 lakh hectares of land. The State Government is giving 90 percent and 100 per cent subsidy in seed distribution, whereas till last year this subsidy was only 50 per cent. This time we have distributed 80 thousand quintals of seeds, which is a record. FPOs have been engaged in the work of seed distribution, which has yielded positive results. Many new FPOs have also been given licenses," she added.

In the historic inauguration program, Dr Devsharan Bhagat, Rajesh Gupta, Alok Kumar Dubey, Vijeta Verma, Lal Kishore Nath Shahdev, Bharat Kashi, National General Secretary of Throwball Association Raman Sahni, Director Throwball International Federation, Yogesh Pandey, Indian Throwball Association, Prakash Singh Parihar, social worker Deval Sahay were mainly present.

While giving the inaugural speech, Oraon welcomed the players, managers and national office bearers from



Social workers Tara Jha, Indu Devi alongwith others during inaugural ceremony of New Year festival 'CARNIVAL-2022-23', at Aqua world, in Ranchi on Tuesday. Pix by Ratan Lal

32ND National Junior Throwball Tournament inaugurated

PNS : RANCHI

The National Throwball Competition was inaugurated grandly with a glimpse of Jharkhand culture and civilization. From 27 to 29 December, the three-day Competition was inaugurated by State Finance cum Food Supply Minister, Dr Rameshwar Oraon and former Deputy Chief Minister Sudesh Mahto.

In the historic inauguration program, Dr Devsharan Bhagat, Rajesh Gupta, Alok Kumar Dubey, Vijeta Verma, Lal Kishore Nath Shahdev, Bharat Kashi, National General Secretary of Throwball Association Raman Sahni, Director Throwball International Federation, Yogesh Pandey, Indian Throwball Association, Prakash Singh Parihar, social worker Deval Sahay were mainly present.

While giving the inaugural speech, Oraon welcomed the players, managers and national office bearers from



all over the Country and said that the way degree holders get employment and employment, in the same way the Government should make such a sports policy that the players should also be given priority. Like the children who get the degree, the players should also get government and private jobs, where will the players go after spending all their time in the game," he added. "Throwball has not yet been recognized by the Government, we will try to get recognized as soon as possible. If throwball can be recognized in Chhattisgarh, which has emerged with us, then Jharkhand will also not lag behind," said Oraon.

On the occasion Sudesh Kumar Mahto congratulated the sportspersons from all over the Country and said that there is no infrastructure like sports village in any corner of the Country for sportspersons, it should be used continuously. He said that sports and players are disciplined and leaders. He called upon the players that the country needs your leadership, make your state, district and locality famous.

President of Jharkhand State Throwball Association, Rajesh Gupta while delivering the welcome speech, expressed gratitude on behalf of the people of the State for showing trust and faith in

Jharkhand to Indian Throwball Association.

The inauguration ceremony was jointly conducted by Chief Associate Lal Kishore Nath Shahdev and Vice President Gautam Singh.

Before this, there was a colorful inauguration with Chhau dance and songs according to the culture of Jharkhand. Children of all the States did a march past with their respective flags and banners and saluted. Indian Throwball Association General Secretary Raman Sahni presented memento and organ clothes to Oraon and Mahto. An exhibition match was also organized between Jharkhand and West Bengal.

Gautam Kumar Singh, Sunil Chakraborty, Nagina Kumar, Jamil Ansari, Sonu Singh, Abhishek Sahu, Sanjit Yadav, Nagina Kumar, Jamil Ansari, Devvrat Kumar, Sonu Singh, Neeraj Verma, Nitish Singh, Rahul Pandey, Anshutosh Kumar, Amit Kumar, Anurag Kumar, Sanjay Mandal.

BJP should field Raghubar Das in Ramgarh bypoll: Supriyo

PNS : RANCHI

Ruling party is the State, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), on Tuesday, demanded that Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) should field former Chief Minister, Raghubar Das in upcoming bypoll for Ramgarh State assembly constituency so that this time Das could bite the dust with 56, 000 votes. Addressing a press meet at the party headquarter in the State Capital, JMM General Secretary and Spokesperson, Supriyo Bhattacharya said that during the last State Assembly poll Congress Party candidate, Mamta Devi had won the seat by the margin of 28,000 votes this time BJP started spreading illusion among people about the incumbent State Government led by Chief Minister, Hemant Soren. The former Chief Minister and his party showing immense confidence for upcoming bypoll for the seat so that JMM is demanding that BJP should field Das from the seat so that he could lose the seat by margin of 56, 000 votes, he added. It may be mentioned here that the Assembly membership of Ramgarh MLA, Mamta Devi ended. On the orders of Jharkhand Vidhansabha Speaker, Rabinranath Mahto, a notification has been issued regarding the disqualification order. With the issue of this notification, now the seat of Ramgarh assembly has become vacant. Now the Election Commission of India will issue a new notification for holding the by-elections within 6 months. Hazaribagh district court had sentenced her to five years. On December 13, the day the court pronounced the sentence, she was disqualified from membership.

Expressing satisfaction over the work of the State Government Bhattacharya said that the Government is going to complete its three years after some hours. "During these three years we face various challenges like COVID and conspiracies of opposition parties but with skilled management of the State Government in leadership we are crossing every hurdles. During the last three years we have provided means of livelihood to the people of the State through various ways like MNRGA, Government jobs and others," he added.



AIADMK will lead mega alliance for 2024 LS polls: Palaniswami

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

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



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

Value education should be included in curriculum: Murmu

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



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

Principals, teachers face CBI-ED in Bengal job scam

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

BSF jawan murdered by 7 members of family in Guj

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Vijayan meets Modi in Delhi

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



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

Kashmiri Pandit staff move CAT challenging order prohibiting transfer from Valley

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



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

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PAPER WITH PASSION

National parties?

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

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



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

PICTALK



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

PTI

Nature's wrath

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

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



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

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

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

Restore deterrence along LAC for peace



ASHOK K MEHTA

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT ANYWAY?

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

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

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

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

A good decision



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

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

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

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

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

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

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai
Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

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

Former President — Ram Nath Kovind

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

Ukrainian President — Volodymyr Zelensky

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

Actor — Vicky Kaushal

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

Pakistan cricketer — Shahid Afridi

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

Congress Social Media incharge — Supriya Srinetra

FIRST COLUMN

HEALTHY, FIT INDIA IS MUST FOR WELLBEING

Govt is addressing numerous critical health challenges



MONIKA ARORA

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

(The author is Vice-President, Public Health Foundation of India)

Teachers should play role of friend, parent

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



DR BIJU DHARMAPALAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

(The author is a science communicator and academic)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

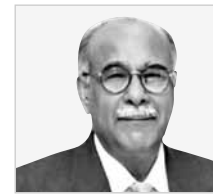
The problem we face in our education system is that we lack teachers who are passionate about the profession. Many have taken up the job either by accident or by peer pressure.

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

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

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

— EX-CHAIRMAN OF PAKISTAN CRICKET BOARD RAMEEZ RAJA



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

— CHAIRMAN PAKISTAN CRICKET BOARD NAJAM SETHI

Next year will be crucial for India on several counts

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

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

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

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



KALYANI SHANKAR

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

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

The coronation of King Charles 111 is a colourful

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AP ■ BUFFALO

Buffalo residents hovered around space heaters, hunted for cars buried in snow drifts and looked for more victims Monday, after 28 people died in one of the worst weather-related disasters ever to hit western New York.

The rest of the United States also was reeling from the ferocious winter storm, with at least another two dozen deaths reported in other parts of the country.

Up to 9 more inches of snow (23 centimeters) could fall in some areas of western New York through Tuesday, the National Weather Service said.

"This is not the end yet," said Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz, calling the blizzard "the worst storm probably in our lifetime," even for an area accustomed to punishing snow.

Some people, he noted, were stranded in their cars for more than two days.

President Joe Biden said his prayers were with the victims' families, and offered federal assistance Monday to the hard-hit state.

Those who lost their lives around Buffalo were found in cars, homes and snowbanks.

Some died while shovelling snow, others when emergency crews could not respond in time to medical crises.

Melissa Carrick, a doula, said the blizzard forced her to coach a pregnant client through childbirth by telephone. An ambulance crew transported the woman to a hospital about 45 minutes south of Buffalo because none of the closer hospitals were reachable.

"In any other normal Buffalo storm? I would just go because that's what you do — just drive through the snow," she said. "But you knew this was different."

Scientists say the climate change crisis may have contributed to the intensity of the storm. That's because the atmosphere can carry more water vapour, which acts as fuel, said Mark Serreze, director of the National Snow and Ice Data Center at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Victor Gensini, a meteorology professor at Northern Illinois University, likened a single weather event to an "at-bat" — and the climate as your "batting average."

"It's hard to say," Serreze said. "But are the dice a little bit loaded now? Absolutely."



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

The blizzard roared across western New York Friday and Saturday. With many grocery stores in the Buffalo area closed and driving bans in place, some people pleaded on social media for donations of food and diapers.

"It was like looking at a white wall for 14 to 18 hours straight," Poloncarz, the county official, said.

Relief is coming later this week, as forecasts call for temperatures to slowly rise, said Ashton Robinson Cook, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

Cook said the bomb cyclone — when atmospheric pressure drops very quickly in

a strong storm — was weakened. It developed near the Great Lakes, stirring up blizzard conditions including heavy winds and snow.

Some 3,410 domestic and international flights were cancelled Monday as of about 3 p.m. EDT, according to the tracking site FlightAware. The site said Southwest Airlines had 2,497 cancellations — about 60% of its scheduled flights and about 10 times as many as any other major US carrier.

Southwest said the weather was improving, which would "stabilize and improve our situation."

Based on FlightAware data, airports all across the US were suffering from cancellations and delays, including Denver, Atlanta, Las Vegas, Seattle, Baltimore and Chicago.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul toured the aftermath in Buffalo — her hometown — on Monday, calling the blizzard "one for the ages". Almost every fire truck in the city became stranded Saturday, she said.

Hochul noted the storm came a little over a month after the region was inundated with another "historic" snowfall. Between the two storms, snow-

fall totals are not far off from the 242 centimeters the area normally sees in an entire winter season.

The National Weather Service said the snow total at the Buffalo Niagara International Airport stood at 1.25 metres at 10 am Monday. Officials say the airport will be shut through Wednesday morning.

Shahida Muhammad told WKBW that an outage knocked out power to her 1-year-old son's ventilator. She and the child's father manually administered breaths from Friday until Sunday when rescuers saw her desperate social media posts and came to their aid.

In a makeshift hut in her living room, Trisha LoGrasso was still huddled around a space heater Monday with three of her children and her eldest daughter's boyfriend. The temperature inside her Buffalo home was 5.5 degrees Celsius. She was without heat because of a gas leak, and burst pipes left her with no running water.

"I've lived here my whole life, and this is the worst storm I've ever seen," the 48-year-old said. Melissa Osmon and her husband James were without

power for more than 72 hours in the Buffalo suburb of Williamsville, and would retreat to their car to stay warm for hours at a time.

"We even watched the Buffalo Bills game on our phone," Osmon said, speaking by phone from her GMC Acadia. "You can see your breath inside the house," she said. "That's how cold it is."

The storm knocked out power in communities from Maine to Seattle.

Storm-related deaths were reported practically nationwide, including at least eight killed in crashes in Missouri, Kansas and Kentucky. A woman fell through Wisconsin river ice, and there was a fatal fire at a Kansas homeless persons camp.

In Jackson, Mississippi, crews struggled Monday to get water through the capital city's beleaguered water system, authorities said. Many areas had no water or low water pressure. On Christmas Day, residents were told to boil their drinking water due to water lines bursting in the frigid temperatures.

"The issue has to be significant leaks in the system that we have yet to identify," the city said in a statement Monday.

More Rohingya refugees reach Indonesia after weeks at sea

AP ■ PIDIE

A second group in two days of weak and exhausted Rohingya Muslims landed on a beach in Indonesia's northernmost province of Aceh on Monday after weeks at sea, officials said.

At least 185 men, women and children disembarked from a rickety wooden boat at dusk on Ujong Pie beach at Muara Tiga, a coastal village in Aceh's Pidie district, said local police chief Fauzi, who goes by a single name.

"They are very weak because of dehydration and exhaustion after weeks at sea," Fauzi said. They were taken to the village hall and will stay there while they receive help

from residents, health workers and others. Fauzi said that immigration officials and police were trying to identify the refugee to determine if they were from the group of 190 Rohingya who were reported by United Nations to be drifting in a small boat in the Andaman Sea for a month.

The UNHCR on Friday urged countries to rescue the refugees, saying reports indicated they were in dire condition with insufficient food or water.

"Many are women and children, with reports of up to 20 people dying on the unseaworthy vessel during the journey," the agency said.

Also on Friday, another group of 58 Rohingya — all



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

men — arrived in Ladong village in Aceh Besar district.

Azharul Husna, who heads the Aceh branch of KontraS, an Indonesian rights group, said Monday that the men in the group all carried UNHCR cards from refugee camps in Bangladesh and had left in search of a better life in Malaysia.

Citing one of them, Husna said the 58 refugees left Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, where more than 700,000 Rohingya from Myanmar had fled, to work on plantations in Malaysia. Their boat was damaged and the engine failed, leaving them drifting at sea until they came ashore in Aceh.

Since 2017, Myanmar security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and burning of thousands of homes belonging to Rohingya.

UN agency probes origin of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia

AP ■ PIDIE

A United Nations agency is seeking information about the voyage of over 100 Rohingya Muslim refugees who landed on an Indonesian beach this week, and warned Tuesday that there will likely be more.

A distressing video circulated widely in social media showed the dehydrated and exhausted Rohingya, crumpled weakly and emaciated, many crying for help.

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Muhammad Rafki Syukri, the Protection Associate at United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

said the agency would provide Rohingya language translators and counselling to determine if they were from the group of 190 Rohingya who were reported by United Nations to be drifting in a small boat in the Andaman Sea for a month.

"With prolonged-conflict and insecure situations in their country of origin, it is possible that the movement of refugees to find safe places will continue to grow," he said.

Chris Lewa, the director of the Arakan Project, which works in support of Myanmar's Rohingya, confirmed Tuesday that the boat that landed Monday on Ujong Pie beach was from the group of 190 Rohingya. But Syukri said the UNHCR could not verify that information and was still coordinating with governments in the region.

"But we will continue to search for further information to ensure the actual data," Syukri told reporters on Tuesday while visiting the Rohingya refugees.

Israeli air force veterans say incoming government a danger



Israeli doctors reject Netanyahu ally's anti-LGBTQ remarks. AP ■ JERUSALEM

Over 1,000 senior Israeli air force veterans, including a former Israeli chief of staff, on Monday urged the country's top legal officials to stand tough against the incoming government.

In a letter to the chief of Israel's Supreme Court and other top officials, they said the alliance of religious and ultranationalist parties threatens Israel's future. The letter was delivered days before the new government is to take office.

"We come from all strata of society and from across the political spectrum. What we have in common today is the fear that the democratic state of Israel is in danger," the letter said.

It called the legal officials "the final line of defence" and "implored them to 'do' everything in your reach to stop the disaster that is affecting our country."

Among the nearly 1,200 signatories were Dan Halutz, who served as military chief from 2005-2007; Avihu Ben-

Israeli doctors reject Netanyahu ally's anti-LGBTQ remarks

Israeli doctors have rejected remarks by an ally of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that the government is a danger to the LGBTQ community.

The remarks, made by a member of the far-right Religious Zionism party, called for the government to take action against the LGBTQ community, which has faced discrimination in Israel.

The doctors' response was a clear statement of opposition to such rhetoric, emphasizing the importance of protecting the rights and health of all citizens.

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

AP ■ TOKYO

Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Tuesday dismissed his fourth minister in two months to patch a scandal-tainted Cabinet that has raised questions over his judgment of staff credentials.

Kenya Akiba, minister in charge of reconstruction of Fukushima and other disaster-hit areas, has faced allegations of mishandling political and election funds and of having murky ties to the Unification Church, whose cozy political ties and practices surrounding followers' huge donations have

raised controversy.

"I have made a heavy decision and submitted my resignation," Akiba told reporters after meeting with Kishida. He repeated that he has never violated any law in relation to the issues for which he has been criticised.

Kishida tapped former reconstruction minister Hiromichi Watanabe as a replacement. Watanabe's appointment was to be official after a palace ceremony.

Akiba's dismissal was seen as Kishida's attempt to remove an administration's soft spot.

Israel's largest medical centre and healthcare workers from hospitals around the country have spoken out against remarks by allies of Benjamin Netanyahu calling for a law to allow discrimination against LGBTQ people in hospitals and businesses.

It was part of a broader backlash against remarks made this week by Religious Zionism politicians calling for legal discrimination against LGBTQ people.

Netanyahu's new government — the most religious and hard-line in Israel's history — is made up of ultra-Orthodox parties, an ultranationalist religious faction, and his Likud party. It is to be sworn in on Thursday.

Nun, a former commander of the air force and Amos Yadlin, a former head of military intelligence.

All three are former fighter pilots. Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his ultra-Orthodox and far-right partners captured a parliamentary majority in Nov. 1 elections.

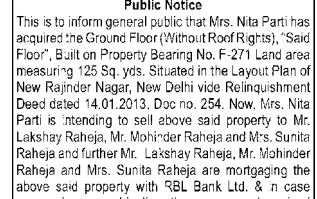
Foreign firms happy as China ends quarantine

AP ■ BEIJING

Foreign companies welcomed China's decision to end quarantines for travellers from abroad as an important step to revive slumping business activity while Japan on Tuesday joined India in announcing restrictions on visitors from the country as infections surge.

The ruling Communist Party's abrupt decision to lift some of the world's strictest anti-virus controls comes as it tries reverse an economic downturn. It has ended curbs that confined millions of people to their homes and sparked protests, but hospitals have been flooded with feverish, wheezing patients as the virus spreads.

The announcement late Monday that quarantines for travellers from abroad will end Jan. 8 is the biggest step toward ending limits that have kept



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

chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, Colm Rafferty, said in a statement. He said ending the quarantine "clears the way for resumption of normal business travel." Business groups have warned companies were shifting investment away from China because foreign executives were blocked from visiting.

The American chamber said more than 70% of companies that responded to a poll this month expect the impact of

the latest wave of outbreaks to last no more than three months, ending in early 2023.

The British Chamber of Commerce expressed hope China will restart normal processing of business visas to allow "resumption of crucial people to people exchanges." It said that will "contribute to restoring optimism and reinstating China as a priority investment destination."

The move "will potentially boost business confidence," but companies are likely to "wait to see how the situation on the ground evolves" before making long-term decisions, the European Chamber of Commerce in China said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Japan announced visitors from China will undergo virus tests starting Friday as a "temporary emergency measure."

UN agency probes origin of Rohingya refugees in Indonesia

AP ■ PIDIE

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Public Notice
 BIHAR BANDHU CO-OPERATIVE GROUP HOUSING SOCIETY LTD
 Flat No. 3, Pocket-5, DDA Flats, Sector-12 Dwarka, New Delhi-110075

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

Secretary - Bihar Bandhu CGHS Ltd.

PUBLIC NOTICE
 It is to inform to the public at large that Mrs. Rama Chauhan W/o. Mr. Arun Kumar Chauhan who is/are purchasing the Fourth Floor, built up on Eastern Side Portion, area measuring 75 Sq. Yds, part of Property bearing Municipal No. XV/1980, 1981, 1983 & 1984, Ward No. XV, comprised in Khata No. 375 (743/218/216) and 376 min. Situated at Chuna Mandi, Patkar Ganj, New Delhi-110055; from (1) Mr. Anil Kumar and (2) Mr. Parveen Kumar both S/o Late Mr. Ramesh Chand vide Relinquishment Deed dated 08.10.2018, vide Document No. 9227, registered with the Office of Sub-Registrar-II, Asaf Ali Road, Delhi, registered on 15.10.2018 and same to be financed & mortgaged by Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Limited. To comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim/right/ title/ interest/ creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 7 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of Encumbrances, lien etc.

Lucem Legal LLP
 136, Basement Floor, Uday Park, near Mother Dairy, New Delhi-110049 Contact: 011-40046316, 41667327

OFFICE OF THE PROJECT MANAGER, CONSTRUCTION UNIT, UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL NIGAM
 GHINGARIKHAL, RANIKHET, DISTT- ALMORA 283645

Letter No.: 3052/Nivda/247 E-Tender Notice Date: 26-12-2022

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

PROJECT MANAGER

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited

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

Tender Enquiry No. QQ-243/PO-C Date: 27.12.2022
Chief Purchase Officer/MM, Central Purchase Organization, PSPCL, 2nd Floor Multi-storey Building, The Mall Road, Patiala, invites E-tender for procurement of 15.3 MT ISI Marked Polypropylene yellow coloured rope, 3 strand, Hawser Laid, conforming to IS:5175-1992 (with latest amendments) and PSPCL Specification QQ-243 for 10mm, 16mm & 20mm sizes.
For detailed NIT & Tender specifications please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 06.01.2023 at 11:00 PM onwards.
Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at: https://eproc.punjab.gov.in
C 490/22 PR-Advtr. No.-761 55/12/1308/2022/200218

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

RO No. 961 Tender Notice Date: 27.12.2022

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

REDS MAKE FLYING START ON PL RETURN

AP ■ BIRMINGHAM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Leon Bailey and Watkins were both guilty of wasteful finishing.

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

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

Van Dijk was not so forgiv-

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

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

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

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

Watkins made one of his

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

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

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

Liverpool agree deal for Gakpo

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

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

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

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

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

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

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

Arsenal comeback opens up 7-point lead on top

AP ■ LONDON

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

and Manchester United to come in January alone.

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

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

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

Behardien calls it a day

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ DUBAI



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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Ishaan Bhatnagar and Tanisha Crasto, Venkat Gaurav

HS Prannoy regains career-best rankings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Among others, Lakshya

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

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

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

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

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

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

Djoker, Nadal to kickstart bid for 2023 supremacy in Australia

AP ■ SYDNEY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

He will face a top-notch field

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

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

14th French Open.

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

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

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

Perth and Sydney hosting group games in a round-robin format.

Ties comprise two men's and two women's singles matches and one mixed doubles.

The finals series will be played in Sydney.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Novak due to return to Australia, tennis boss says

AP ■ SYDNEY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DIDN'T FEEL PRESSURE OF REPLACING KULDEEP: UNADKAT

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



him for keeping his hopes to bare minimum.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Did he feel the pressure of replacing Kuldeep?

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

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

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

tained Saurashtra to unprecedented success.

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

"I knew if I will stick to my strengths, there will be something coming my way and that is how I got that extra bounce."

Unadkat could be the next left-arm pacer India have been looking for years but he is not thinking about that. When Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammad Shami are back, finding a spot in the XI will be much tougher.

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

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

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

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

India beat SA by 54 runs

PTI ■ PRETORIA

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

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

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

But the start was far from rosy for the Indians as they lost skipper Shafali Verma in the first delivery of the match.

But Sehrawat and Tiwari then joined hands and stitched 70 runs off 74 balls for the second wicket to set the platform for India's total.

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Warner retires in pain after making 200 in 100th Test



AP ■ MELBOURNE

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

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

for 189.

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

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

Smith and Warner's 239-run partnership took the game further away from South Africa, whose bowlers toiled in temper-

atures touching 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 Fahrenheit).

Opener Warner, 36, snapped a near-three-year century drought in typically aggressive and gritty fashion, reaching three figures for a 25th time after coming into the game under pressure on a lean run.

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

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

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

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

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

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



England to tour B'desh for white-ball series in March

PTI ■ LONDON

The England men's team will undertake its first tour of Bangladesh since 2016 when it travels to the country to play three One-day Internationals and an equal number of T20Is in March next year.

The tour will commence with three ODIs, the first two matches taking place at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka on March 1 and 3. The final match of the series will take place on March 6 at Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram.

The three-match T20I series will start on March 9 in Chattogram, with the final two matches, on March 12 and 14, scheduled to be played in Dhaka.

The last time the teams

played a series was in 2016, when England won the ODIs 2-1.

The England squad is expected to play two warm-up fixtures ahead of the ODIs, the dates for which will be announced in due course, said an England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) statement.

"It is exciting that the England Men's white-ball squad will return to Bangladesh for the first time since 2016. The atmosphere generated in Dhaka and Chattogram for this eagerly-anticipated tour will be fantastic," said ECB interim CEO Clare Connor.

"There is a great passion for cricket across Bangladesh, and we expect a tough challenge against a side who have an excellent record in home conditions."

Conway, Latham take New Zealand to 165-0

AP ■ KARACHI

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

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

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

Conway also completed 1,000 Test runs in 19 innings, taking the national record previously held by John F. Reid.

Both batters used their feet well against Abrar, who took 17 wickets in two Test matches against England earlier this month. Conway reached his half century off 89 balls with nine fours, including four against Abrar.

Latham followed in reaching his 50 off 96 balls with six fours as both batters grew in confidence and didn't hesitate to even reverse sweep on a wicket which still has some turn for the spinners.

Pakistan's weakened pace



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

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

Earlier, the 29-year-old Salman batted resolutely in

the company of tailenders to score 103 with 17 fours. He was the last batter to be dismissed when Pakistan was bowled out an hour after lunch.

Tim Southee, the Kiwis' new test captain, picked up his 350th Test wicket and wrapped up the innings when Salman tried to play across the seamer,

was struck on the back leg and was ruled out leg before wicket. Southee was the pick of the bowlers with 3-69 while three spinners -- Michael Bracewell (2-72), Ish Sodhi (2-87) and Ajaz Patel (2-112) - shared six wickets.

Avesh picks four as MP bowl out Railways for 274

PTI ■ INDORE

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

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

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

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

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

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

Skipper Upendra Yadav scored for Railways with a gritty 61

off 123 balls and hit eight boundaries in the process.

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

SAMARTH'S TON DRIVES K'TAKA

Porvorum: Opener R Samarth's fine knock of 140 and his century partnerships with skipper Mayank Agarwal and Vishal Onat powered Karnataka to 294/3 against Goa in their Group C match.

Agarwal won the toss, opted to bat and provided a strong start for the team by adding 116 runs with Samarth. The two looked untroubled against the Goa attack and completed a century stand after a cautious start.

Agarwal appeared set for a big score before he fell LBW to Lakshay Garg for 50, which included five boundaries and two sixes. Samarth and Onat (73 batting, 172 balls, 9 fours) built on the platform provided by the opening partnership and piled on the Goa bowlers' misery.

The home team attack comprising Arjun Tendulkar, Garg,



Darshan Misal and Mohit Radkar was taken to the task by Samarth and Onat.

Samarth raced to a ton and was batting on 120 at tea. He added 20 more runs to his score before being dismissed by Tendulkar (1 for 30). It was a third straight first-class century for Samarth, after having done so against Services and Puducherry in previous games.

At Thumba, Kerala ended the day at 100 for 2 after having dismissed Chhattisgarh for 149 in under 50 overs with the experienced spinner Jalaj Saxena picking up five wickets.

TN RESTRICT DELHI

New Delhi: In-form Dhruv Shorey blew away an opportunity to score his third successive hundred in as

many innings as Tamil Nadu restricted hosts Delhi to 212 for six on opening day of a Group B Ranji Trophy game here on Tuesday.

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